L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 4

RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

by

K. MANNHEIM

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE (UNIVERSITY OF LONDON), FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF FRANKFURT/MAIN

Delivered on 7 MARCH 1934
at Bedford College for Women
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RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

THERE is, I think, no way in which I could more fittingly pay tribute to the memory of the man with whose name this lecture is coupled, than by choosing as its subject-matter a problem to which he, too, attached primary significance: namely, the problem of the role of reason and morality in our society. The question which I wish especially to consider is: In what respects has the part played by rationality, irrationality, and morality in present-day society changed since Hobhouse's decease? The name of Hobhouse gives me encouragement to venture on a discussion of this somewhat far-reaching and comprehensive problem. For it is from his works that sociologists have learned always to combine investigations into the empirical minutiae of social organisms with careful analyses of the major trends of social developments. I follow him in this approach all the more willingly since I believe that our society has reached a decisive turning-point in its history, and that in situations such as confront us to-day we must have both the will and the vision to take an all-inclusive view of society and its historical background. Let us then turn at once to the subject before us.

It seems advisable for expository purposes to begin with a vivid analogy which will lead up to the three propositions on which the central thesis of this discussion rests.

Imagine yourselves standing at a street corner of a large and busy city. Everything in front of you is bustling, moving. Here, to your left, a man laboriously

pushes a wheelbarrow. There, in measured trot, a horse is pulling a carriage; on all sides you see a constant stream of cars and buses. Above you, somewhere in the distance, can be heard the buzzing noise of an aeroplane. In all this there is nothing unusual; nothing that would to-day call for surprise or astonishment; it is only when concentrated analysis has revealed the problematic aspect of even the most obvious things in life that we discover sociological problems underlying these everyday phenomena. Wheelbarrow, carriage, automobile, and aeroplane are each typical of the means of conveyance in different phases of historical development. They originate in different times, thus they represent different phases of technical development; and yet they are all used simultaneously. This particular phenomenon has been called the law of the 'contemporaneousness of the non-contemporaneous'.[1] However well these different phases of history seem to exist side by side in the picture before us, in certain situations and under particular circumstances they can lead to the most convulsive disturbances in our social life.

No sooner does this thought occur to us than we can see a different picture unfolding itself. The pilot who only a minute ago seemed to be flying quietly above us hurls a hurricane of bombs and in the twinkle of an eye lays waste everything and annihilates everybody underneath him. You know that this idea is far from being a figment of the imagination, and the uneasiness which its horrors awakens in you leads involuntarily to a modification of your previous admiration of human progress. In his scientific and technical

[1] Pinder, W., *Das Problem der Generation*, 1926.

knowledge man has, indeed, made miraculous strides forward in the span of time that separates us from the days when the carriage came into use; but is human reason and rationality, in other than the technical field, to-day so very different from what it was in the distant past of which the wheelbarrow is a symbol? Do our motives and impulses really operate on a higher plane than those of our ancestors? What, in essence, does the action of the pilot who drops bombs signify?

Surely this: that man is availing himself of the most up-to-date results of technical ingenuity in order to satisfy ancient impulses and primitive motives. If, therefore, the city is destroyed by the deadly means of modern warfare this must be attributed solely to the fact that the development of man's technical powers over nature is far ahead of the development of his moral faculties and his knowledge of the guidance and government of society. The phenomenon suggested by this whole analogy can now be given a sociological designation: it is the phenomenon of a *disproportionate development* of human faculties. This phenomenon of a disproportionate development can be observed not only in the life of groups but also in that of individuals. We know from child-psychology that a child may be intellectually extremely precocious, whilst the development of his moral or temperamental qualities has been arrested at an infantile stage. Such an unevenly balanced development of his various faculties may be a source of acute danger to an individual; in the case of society, it is nothing short of catastrophic.

We can, therefore, define our first proposition as follows: contemporary society must break down unless this disproportionality is eliminated; that is to say,

unless we can make the rational control of our individual selves, of the society in which we move, and of the things we handle keep pace with the rationality attained in the spheres of technique and industry.

But the term 'disproportionality in the development of human faculties' has a double meaning. In the first sense it means that the range of technical knowledge possessed by the members of a given society may be much greater than their moral qualities or rational insight into the social mechanism which it is their task to control. This kind of disproportionality I shall call the *general disproportionality in the development of human faculties*.

The second sense in which the term 'disproportionality' can be used is that the various types or forms of rationality which exist in a society are unequally distributed amongst the various social groups and strata. Our second statement therefore asserts a *disproportionality in the social division of rational and moral qualities*. If the past and present are looked upon from this standpoint, it can be said that there has so far never been a society in which the understanding and morality necessary to the solution of the multifarious economic and social problems were equally developed in all the social groups and strata. Corresponding to the particular forms of the division of labour and social functions, there have always been only small minorities who enjoyed a monopoly of knowledge and were able to evolve a technique of initiative and decision. In all activities it was for them to show the requisite foresight and prudence and to bear the onus of making decisions in economic, social, political, and other questions. Those, on the other hand, who did not share in the control and

regulation of the social process had just that bare general intelligence and passivity of will which the smooth functioning of these processes necessitated. In Hindu civilization, for instance, this division of spiritual and authoritarian functions gradually acquired a real caste-like form, since the religious caste concentrated within itself the cultivation of the soul and spirit, whilst the warrior caste assumed all the virtues of a militaristic group. In the Middle Ages, too, there was a similar, though less steeply graded, social division of military and spiritual functions between the nobility and the Church.

Lastly, the third of our statements is as follows: all former societies could allow those general and social disproportionalities in the division of knowledge and the moral forces to prevail because ultimately those societies were based on this unequal balance of rational and moral elements. For it is the essence of a despotically governed society that the intelligence and initiative needed for its control reside in the despot and in the leading groups, whilst the others, the slaves and subjects, are kept uneducated and without any independent initiative. Now, as I see it, the basic innovation in our modern society consists just in this: that it cannot for any length of time stand the strain either of an excessive general or of an excessive social disproportionality.

Having made these assertions, I must now show *why* our society cannot for any length of time bear the disproportionalities in question, for one might legitimately ask why, if society could endure until now on the basis of such disproportionalities, it cannot continue to exist on the same basis?

There are two fundamental facts which render the

prolonged existence of these disproportionalities in modern society impossible. First, our industrial society makes those strata and groups, which formerly played only a passive role in political life, politically more and more active. This spreading of a vigorous political activity in all social groups and strata I shall call the *Fundamental Democratization* of society.

In spite of the mushroom-like rise of dictators around us, I speak of the fundamental democratization of contemporary society. I do so advisedly, because the modern forms of authoritarianism differ in one vital respect from the monarchical absolutisms of earlier times. Under the latter, the large bulk of the population had never known political rights and were passively detached from the ruling *élite*. To-day, on the other hand, dictatorships are backed by the masses who play an increasingly active part on the political scene. I believe that in the long run this fundamental democratization of the masses[1] will prove to be of far greater

[1] If it is desired more accurately to establish the balance of forces resulting from the interplay of antagonistic and contradictory tendencies, all the relevant factors and instances must be carefully weighed and examined.

Every form of concentration of the economic means of production and of the instruments of political domination, predicted respectively by Marx and Max Weber, becomes increasingly a force which works against the fundamental democratization of society. Though it will continue to remain the dynamic social principle, this fundamental democratization has been pushed somewhat prominently to the forefront in the text, and it is therefore necessary briefly to allude to the main tendencies which operate against it. These tendencies, which both in the capitalistic framework as well as under communism might lead to a new kind of minority rule, are:

(*a*) The growing concentration of the engines of warfare, which holds out to that small section of society that happens at any moment to be in control of them the chance to arrogate to itself a mighty monopoly of force. The form which the concentration of the instruments of war is now taking makes it possible that new dictatorships from the

importance than the specific and ephemeral forms of political rule under which they choose to live. Formerly

Right and Left will create a kind of Janissary army consisting of war-technicians and specialists. This army, like the one which founded the Turkish Empire, would be socially so remote from the civil population that it could, perhaps even after a lost war, be used against the civil population. This kind of concentration of the instruments of war diminishes not only the chances of any kind of successful insurrection and revolution, but also of the execution of the political will of the democratic masses.

The secret of the successful revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which aimed at the extension of democratic rights, lay in the simple fact that, since at that time *one* man meant *one gun*, the resistance of a thousand individuals meant a thousand guns. Today the relative strength of the opposed forces is to be weighed not by the number of heads, but by the question how many people can be killed or kept in a state of terror-stricken panic by a single bomb. The strongest guarantee for the maintenance of general democratization in the last century lay not so much in the spreading of industrialization and its concomitants as in the fact of 'compulsory military service' which, especially after a lost war, could become a means of general insubordination and revolt. In this respect everything will henceforth depend on how far the modern technique of warfare will make it necessary for the authorities to have, besides their relatively small professional army, the support of the general population.

(*b*) The second important kind of concentration tending, despite the counter-acting force of fundamental democratization, to bring about minority rule, is the concentration of social administration in the hands of a bureaucracy which can likewise be at a great social distance from the rest of the population.

(*c*) About the concentration of political and social understanding and judgement in a few heads, viz. in those of politicians, bankers, industrial experts, &c., we shall have something to say later, when the most important points connected with the problem of rationality have been discussed.

If, despite the afore-mentioned forces counteracting it, we think that fundamental democratization is not doomed, this is because, in our view, it springs from a bed of fermentation of modern life deeper even than that of the forces we have mentioned and because it is a permanent factor which, whilst it may be repulsed, will always re-emerge anew from the finely spun texture of industrialized society which can never be wholly destroyed. This fundamental activity of the atoms of modern society will constantly be on the watch for new ways and means of meeting its opposing forces on a higher plane and with more suitable methods. It can safely be predicted that revolutionary propaganda

it might have been in the interest of the *élites* to keep the politically passive masses ignorant. But the fundamental democratization of the masses makes it essential that they should be culturally enlightened; for anything that the politically active but ignorant masses do can be a potential danger to the future of these *élites* themselves.

Now that the bulk of society is politically alive, it will sooner or later be in the interests of the *élites* to eliminate the social disproportionality in the diffusion of culture. True, modern dictatorships are still founded, and in the main rely, on the political ignorance of the masses for their preservation of power. But unless they educate these masses in time, even they will be overthrown by still more primitive groups.

The second fundamental fact which renders the disproportionate development of the rational and moral qualities impossible, is the circumstance that our modern society has tended increasingly to become a network of interdependent facts and interacting forces.[1] This was

will counter the concentration of the technique of modern warfare and the creation of modern praetorian guards by devising a new kind of strategy for the disintegration of armies. How revolutionary propaganda could lead quite ridiculously poorly armed revolutionary troops to victory has already been witnessed in the past. In this connexion Lasswell, for instance, points out that in the Cantonal rebellion 2,000 storm troopers had between them only 200 bombs and 27 revolvers. In Shanghai, only 150 out of 6,000 men had weapons. The Petrograd garrison had been infused with revolutionary propaganda already before it allied itself with the Bolshevists in 1917. Cf. Lasswell, H.D., 'The Strategy of Revolutionary and War Propaganda', in *Public Opinion and World Politics*, ed. Wright, Qu., Chicago, 1933, p. 215. On the technique of the modern *coup d'état* see Malaparte, C., *Technique du Coup d'État*, Paris, 1931. On the question as to the prospects of forming a new aristocracy in the Capitalist era see Brinkman, C., 'Die Aristokratie im kapitalistischen Zeitalter' in the *Grundriss der Sozialoekonomik*, section ix, part i, p. 22 et seq, Tübingen, 1931.

[1] *Cf.* Muir, R., *The Interdependent World and its Problems*, London, 1932.

not the case in the natural economies of earlier times; and it was not a feature of the pre-monopolistic stage of capitalistic society, which was an aggregate of small and more or less freely competing, easily self-adjusting, economic units. When in the somewhat primitive natural economy of pre-war Russia millions of people perished of starvation, their fate did not visibly affect the rest of the world. But in the all-pervading and delicate economic and political interwovenness of the world of to-day, not only does the over-production of some commodity in one market entail repercussions in all the other markets, but the political insanity of one country becomes the misfortune of another country; and the impulsive outbursts of the masses are catastrophes for all social strata and for the whole world.

If, therefore, we can ascertain that the fundamental democratization as well as the interdependence of forces in the modern world make this social disproportionality in the social distribution of the rational and moral good an ominous factor in our society, it is all the more urgent to inquire whether there is any prospect of improving this state of affairs.

If the development of the rational, irrational, and moral human faculties were subject to some arbitrary forces or dependent on the chance decision of individuals, then, obviously, the whole question would not admit of sociological investigation. But it is precisely because we have come to realize *that a definite correlation subsists between the growth of rational and moral forces and certain social situations and conditions* that the problems of the development of the rational and irrational elements in contemporary society are amenable to scientific treatment. In the light of these observations

the most urgent task in the immediate future will be to study the phenomena of the human psyche in a wholly different manner and according to broader principles than has been the case so far. Hitherto psychologists and psycho-analysts have treated those phenomena too much apart from their social background. Henceforth, they must be studied in their exact relations to those particular sociological constellations and forces which tend to stimulate some psychic characteristics and to suppress others. That is to say, we need an exact psychology which takes careful account of typical social situations and forces. Only when such a psychology exists will it be at all possible to judge what particular *social* factors must be changed or modified if human beings are to be changed.

To arrive at fruitful results, therefore, we must adopt the sociological technique of investigation. We must begin by considering the following vital questions: *What, in any industrial society, are the characteristic situations which tend to heighten certain forms of rationality? What, in the same society, are the situations which give rise to irrationality? What, lastly, are the social circumstances and conditions, e.g. in the family, the educational process, and all the various other social institutions, which may be expected to breed in the members of a society a certain form of moral self-discipline and to inculcate in them a capacity to shoulder responsibility?* These questions at once resolve the problem of progress into concretely observable partial-connexions, which may perhaps shed important light on the question before us. But before we turn to consider this fundamental question we must, clearly, have some idea of the different types of rationality and

irrationality; for probably few words have been used with more varying connotations than the words 'rational' and 'irrational'. Of these we shall discuss the two which are the most important for the sociologist. It should be noted that these two connotations of rational and irrational may be of less interest to other disciplines, like economics for instance.[1]

[1] It would take us too far, were we to quote even the most important writings on the 'rational' and 'irrational', let alone to analyse the different points of view from which these concepts have been treated. We shall, therefore, confine our references to those theories which have proved to be of greatest service to sociology.

German sociological literature has put the concept 'rational' and 'irrational' fairly prominently in the centre of discussion. The most important sociologists in this connexion are Simmel, G., and Max Weber. The former's book, *Die Philosophie des Geldes*, Leipzig, 1900 (*The Philosophy of Money*), endeavours to analyse the sociological consequences which flow from the rationalization of conduct produced by money. Max Weber's whole work is, in the last analysis, concerned with the question: What social forces have brought about Western rationalization? In this context he uses the concept 'rational' in numerous senses, of which 'purposive action' constitutes but one type. Despite H. J. Grab's little book, *Der Begriff des Rationalen in der Soziologie Max Webers*, Karlsruhe, 1927 (*The Concept of the Rational in Max Weber's Sociology*), there is still a great need for enlightening research on this subject.

Beside Max Weber's use of the word 'rational', mention should be made of the Italian Pareto's differentiation between 'logical' and 'illogical actions', a distinction of great use for the Sociology of Political Thought. Cf. the latter's *Traité de Sociologie générale*, Paris-Lausanne, 1917, and his *Les Systèmes Socialistes*, Paris, 1926. Cf. also the short summary of his whole work *Grundriss der Sociologie nach Vilfredo Pareto* by Bousquet, J. H., 1926.

In *Anglo-Saxon* literature, J. Dewey's various attempts to define the concept of 'Thought' seems to me to be sociologically the most fruitful. Here only his works *How we think*, Boston, 1910, and *Human Nature and Conduct*, New York, 1930, need be referred to. In this connexion attention should also be drawn to Santayana, G., *Reason in Society*, 3rd ed., London, 1927. In English literature on the subject these are the theories which have so far paid most attention to the connexion between 'Knowledge' and 'Action', a problem, by the way, which, albeit in a different manner, has been treated exhaustively in German literature under the headings 'Ideologienlehre' and 'Wissenssoziologie'. For further

Sociologists use the words rational and irrational in two senses. In what follows I shall distinguish between *substantial* and *functional* rationality and the corresponding conceptions of substantial and functional irrationality.

1. The nature of substantial rationality can be easily explained. I mean by this term simply the processes of thinking and understanding; in short, everything which is cogitative in substance I shall designate as 'substantial rationality'. By the corresponding term 'substantial irrationality', therefore, I understand all those psychic phenomena which are not cogitative in substance; that is to say, instincts, impulses, wishes, feelings.

2. But in sociology, as in everyday speech, we also use the word 'rational' in other connexions and other senses; e.g. when we say that this or that industry or bureaucracy is 'rationalized'. In such cases we mean by the word 'rational' not that a man is executing cogitative, cognitive acts, but that a series of actions is so organized as to lead to a preconceived end, wherefore every link in this series receives a *functional* value. Moreover, such a functionally organized series of actions is also *optimal* if the means adopted for the attainment of the end in view are so arranged as to attain their goal with the smallest effort. But for functional rationality, in our sense, to obtain, it is not at all necessary either that this optimum should be achieved or that the end aimed at should in itself be rational. One may seek redemption through irrational means of

references on this subject cf. my article on 'Wissenssoziologie' (Sociology of Knowledge) in the *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*, ed. Vierkandt, 1931. Cf. further M. Ginsberg, 'The Rôle of Reason and Will', in his *The Psychology of Society*, 3rd ed., 1928. Last, but not least, L. T. Hobhouse's own theory calls for critical discussion. Cf. *inter alia* his book *The Rational Good; a study in the Logic of Practice*, London, 1921.

salvation and so organize one's ascetic actions that they lead to a preconceived end or ecstatic sensation: because it is so rationalized that every action obtains a functional value with respect to the end in view, even this form of behaviour will, in our sense, be deemed rational.

For us, therefore, there are two criteria of a rationalized series of actions: (*a*) the above-mentioned functional organization of activities directed towards a given end; (*b*) calculability of these activities from the standpoint of the external observer.

At first sight the difference between 'substantial' and 'functional' rationality does not seem to be so very great. For it may be suggested that since even the functionally rational series of actions must have been cogitatively planned by some one, and since, moreover, the agents executing these actions must also have been thinking, the two concepts are merely two sides of the same rationality. But this view is not at all, or at least not in all cases, correct. One need but think of an army to see that the two types of rationality do not invariably coincide. The common soldier, for instance, carries out a series of functionally rational actions quite exactly, without having the faintest notion either of the final aim of his movements or of the functional value of the single movement or action. Yet they are all functionally rational since the two criteria are satisfied: they are organized for a specific end, and one can reckon with them, i.e. can fit them into one's own calculations. But we shall speak of functional rationality not only when—as in the case of the army—this organization is the result of planning by others. We shall also use that term whenever this organization and calculability are regulated by tradition. Traditional societies

are also functionally rational—in our sense of the term—since calculability is guaranteed and the individual actions have a locational value.

If in the definition of functional rationality, therefore, the main stress is laid on organization directed towards a given end, everything which frustrates or disturbs this functional order is functionally irrational. Such disturbances can be caused not only by substantial irrationality, through day-dreams or the fits of temper of furious individuals—to mention only the extreme cases—but also by wholly cogitative acts which do not fit in with the particular series of actions in view. An example may, perhaps, serve to elucidate this. When, for instance, the diplomatic corps of a country has planned and embarked on a series of co-ordinated actions and one of the attachés, owing to a sudden nervous break-down, acts against the plan, this substantial irrationality will frustrate the pre-arranged sequence of actions. But the functional rationality of this sequence will be disturbed just as much by a plan embarked on by the Ministry of War—a plan no less carefully worked out than that of the diplomats—which runs counter to and therefore disturbs that of the diplomatic corps. Hence, from the standpoint of the latter, the rational actions of the War Ministry will be deemed functionally irrational. Thus it is clear that functional rationality in itself is never a characteristic attribute of an act, for such rationality can be conceived of and formulated only with respect to a predetermined end and from the standpoint of a sequence of actions directed towards that end.

It was necessary to draw this distinction, for nothing is more common than the confusion of these two funda-

mentally distinct groups of phenomena. When—as so often—it is said that this or that society is on a high level of rationality, this can mean either that the individual members of the society in question possess a wide range of knowledge and are on a high plane of intellectual development, or that the sequences of actions executed in that society are very highly organized.

Having explained these differences, we can now attempt a neat correlation of them. The more thoroughly a society is industrialized, and the further, therefore, the division of labour and organization has proceeded, the more numerous will be the spheres of human activity which become functionally rational and thereby also calculable. Whereas the individual in former societies behaved functionally only on rare occasions he is now constrained to act rationally in the functional sense in more and more spheres of his ordinary life.[1] But this

[1] But besides the differences discussed above, the following relevant phenomenological interrelations also allow of elucidation. Increasing industrialization necessarily encourages only functional rationality; i.e. the organization, in certain spheres, of the behaviour-patterns of the members of society. It does not, however, to nearly the same extent call forth substantial rationality on their part; i.e. the ability, in a given situation and on the basis of their own insight into the interrelated facts of that situation, to act judiciously. Those who expected the rationalization of society to lead to a heightening of the average capacity for forming independent opinions must have been undeceived by the events of the last few years. During those years nothing fundamentally new really occurred; the upheaving effect of the crisis and revolutions merely threw into relief what had been at work as a silently operating force even before, namely, the deadening effect of functional rationalizations on the formation of independent views. Had one kept the distinction between the various forms of rationality in mind already when contemplating the most recent changes, one could clearly have perceived that though industrial rationalization heightens functional rationality it offers increasingly fewer social opportunities for the development of substantial rationality, meaning by substantial rationality here the capacity to form independent opinions and arrive at independent judgements. Had one, moreover, thoroughly considered these

leads us forthwith to the description of yet another kind of rationalization which is closely connected with the

differences between the two kinds of rationality one could not have escaped the conclusion that the essence of functional rationalization is that it releases the average individual from all compulsion to think, form judgements, and shoulder responsibilities, since all these functions have been arrogated by those who plan the functional rationalization of activities.

Insight into this fact, however, at once reveals also other phenomena of modern society. The fact that the planning and co-ordination of activities in a functionally rationalized society proceeds from the intellectual effort of a small number of organizers secures for these a superior social position, a key-position in society. Whereas a small minority acquire an even clearer understanding, and a constantly widening range of vision, the average individual, having left the exercise of mental faculties entirely to the handful of organizers and administrators, finds that his own capacity for forming independent judgements and opinions steadily wanes. In modern society there is not only an increasing tendency for the means of production to become concentrated in the hands of a few, but there is also a tendency towards a similar concentration of intellectual directive power: there is, that is to say, a drift also in the field of the division of intellectual work towards the distantiation of the *élites* from the masses. To this fact is to be attributed the 'cry for a leader', which of late has had such a surprising effect. Every time that he becomes part of a functionally rationalized sequence of actions, the average man surrenders part of his intellectual emancipation and accustoms himself increasingly to being led and to renounce his independent judgement. If in times of crisis this rationalized mechanism breaks down at any point, he does not repair it through his own knowledge and initiative, but is made to feel his inanity and, in this situation of panic, tries to escape from his helplessness and ineptitude. In the social crisis, too, he seeks to be relieved of the need for mental exertion and the obligation to arrive at independent decisions. If in the case of primitive man it was nature that was shrouded in mystery and the incalculability of nature that was the source of his greatest anguish, in the case of man in the modern industrial world it is his own society, with its incomprehensible manner of functioning (one need only think of the inflation and of the recent crisis), which are the sources of his fits of primitive fear.

In this respect the liberal social era offered a much more favourable soil for the rearing of substantial rationality. Since this period of industrialization knew only relatively small economic units and individual property ownership, there was a much wider industrial *élite* which, through the control of its property, had acquired the habit of assuming individual responsibility and of calculating events for short periods

functional rationalization of activities, namely, to the phenomenon of *self-rationalization*.

By *self-rationalization* I mean that systematic control of impulses which is absolutely necessary for the execution of a series of objectively functionally rational actions. My behaviour will, obviously, be wholly different if I belong to a vast and intricate organization in which each single action must meticulously fit in with all the other actions, from what it would be if I were more or less by myself and free to do what I deemed best. If, to keep to the previous example, I am a soldier in the army, I shall have to control my instinctive impulses much more rigorously and shall have to rationalize my entire behaviour to a much greater extent than if I were a huntsman who acts purposively only when shooting game. In modern society the highest level of functional rationalization is, perhaps, reached in bureaucracies. The bureaucrat gets not only the plan and processes of his work prescribed—this form of Taylorism has probably been carried considerably further in the factories and workshops—but has, to a far-reaching extent, even the whole course of his life planned for him by others as a graded career. Constantly to think of this career, to adapt all his thoughts, feelings, and actions to it, is more or less tacitly expected of the bureaucrat.

Thus we see that the different forms of functional

ahead. This period, therefore, was also more enlightened in the sense that it produced more individuals who thought for themselves and it interposed a wide middle-layer of intelligent people between the passive masses and the highly cultured few.

All these analyses, however, characterize but one of the numerous evolutionary tendencies. We shall refer to a series of counteracting factors later in this paper when we come to discuss the tendencies to planning.

rationalization are closely interrelated—the functional rationalization of sequences of objective ends and self-rationalization. In order to see the close interaction of the various types of rationalizing processes more clearly still and to be able adequately to appreciate in the long run spiritual effects of objective rationalization, we must also mention a further form of rationalization, whose value is generally under-estimated, namely self-observation. Self-rationalization is not necessarily self-observation. I indulge in self-rationalization, for instance, if I adapt myself to the habits of consumption peculiar to a rationalized society. Again, it is self-rationalization if I so adjust my spontaneous wishes or sudden impulses as to attain a given end; thus if I adhere to the laws of a technique of thought or keep to the motions prescribed by the technique of a particular type of manual work, I am, by a process of mental training, subordinating my inner motives to an external aim. This is self-rationalization. Self-observation, on the other hand, is more than such a form of mental training. It is the reflection of a ray of observation or action into my inner self, so as to help me to transform myself. During a process of self-transformation the individual reflects on himself and on his actions in order to change them and to reform himself. Normally, the individual's life is orientated on the things he would like to handle, change, or manage, and not on his individual self. His own behaviour thus remains unobserved. I become *visible to myself* in reflection only when some objective plan does not immediately materialize and I am consequently thrown back on myself. At such moments reflection, self-observations, and the analysis of one's situation serve to effect a self-reorganization. It stands to reason that

people who are increasingly brought into situations in which they cannot simply give free play to their impulses but must constantly reshape their behaviour, will have more occasion to observe and study themselves than people who, once their mentality has been adjusted, function without friction. This is the reason why the mobile types in society—*inter alia* the Jews—are generally more abstract and reflective than the so-called autochthonous type. Hence it is clear that self-observation is a very essential aid to self-rationalization and that a society which exhibits progressively longer purposive sequences must, under certain conditions, especially in the leading groups, necessarily produce the reflective type of individual. From all this it should also be clear that it is erroneous to consider self-observation—as many romantic thinkers do—to be invariably life-deadening. We have just seen that self-observation is in most cases an organ of life which helps us to adapt ourselves to new situations and inwardly to transform ourselves even there where the 'naïve', unreflecting individual would be lost in and destroyed by the diversity of situations.

Thus we see that in this case, too, the sociological origin of rationalization in the various spheres of life can be indicated with considerable accuracy and that the urge to the different forms of modern rationality emanates primarily from the industrialization and the systematic organization of society. The question which now suggests itself is this: Is it possible, by a similar method, to point to the sociological source of those wholesale irrationalities[1] which we know to be latent in our

[1] I have given a list of the bibliographical references on the problem of 'Irrationality' and 'Masses' in my paper on 'The Crisis of Culture

society despite the increased rationality of human beings? Our answer will be: Yes, it is possible. The very same industrial society which, through its industrialization, causes more and more individuals and spheres of human life to become functionally rationalized, compresses the large masses into cities, and creates the greatest stimulus to irrationality. For we know, from contemporary psychology, that human beings are much more easily subject to the influence of suggestion, to impulsive fits and to psychic regressions, in short, to outburst of substantial irrationality, when they are massed in a crowd than when they are confined to small organic groups or are entirely isolated. Modern industrial mass-society tends, especially in this respect, to create an absolutely contradictory behaviour both in the life of a community and in that of the individual. *Qua* industrial society our modern society produces patterns of the most rational and calculable behaviour and these imply a whole series of inhibitions; but as a society of the broad masses it also gives rise to devastating outbreaks of those forms of irrationality which verge on mass-psychosis. Again, *qua* industrial society it refines the social mechanism to such a degree that the tiniest functionally irrational disturbance can entail

in the Era of Mass-Democracy and Autarchies', in *The Sociological Review*, vol. xxvi, No. 2, April 1934, p. 125, footnote 1. Besides the works referred to there, I should here like to draw particular attention to: Pareto V., *Les Systèmes Socialistes*, Paris, 1926; Trotter, W., *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, London, 1925; Conway, M., *The Crowd in Peace and War*, London, 1915; Lasswell, H. D., *Psychopathology and Politics*, Chicago, 1930; Glover, E., *War, Sadism and Pacifism*, London, 1933; Ghent, W. J., *Mass and Class. A Survey of Social Division*, N. Y., 1904; Ortega, Y. Gasset, 'The Revolt of the Masses,' London, 1932; Michels, R., 'Psychologie der antikapitalistischen Massenbewegungen' in the *Grundriss der Sozialoekonomik*, ix. 1, Tübingen, 1926, pp. 241–359.

the most serious consequences, but as a mass-society it at the same time produces the largest integrations of just those substantially irrational stimuli which threaten the continued functioning of our elaborate social and economic mechanism.

Of many implications of this antinomy, already Max Weber was aware. He could not, of course, surmise the conflicts and crises to which in our day it gives rise. But what in this connexion we must stress particularly is the fact that this massing together of people need not necessarily entail the catastrophes to which to-day it in effect does lead. For any simplified psychology of the crowd, such as that of Le Bon, for instance, is always open to the fundamental objection that, whilst it is undoubtedly empirically provable that when people are congregated in crowds they are exposed to contagious suggestions and influences, it does not follow that the great size of modern societies must of itself cause their members to act irrationally and ecstatically. So long as the Great Society remains articulated in its old organic ties—as in the case of England or France, for example—it will not show the symptoms of a chaotic integration of impulses. Only when, through processes of social dissolution, the released impulses are massed together in a haphazard, irregular fashion, do the so-called negative symptoms of the 'mass' make their appearance.

Nor should what has been said here be misinterpreted to mean that in our view irrationality is under all circumstances and at all times harmful. On the contrary, if it takes the form of a deliberate impetus to the attainment of a rational objective end, or if, through sublimation, it produces works of culture, irrationality is a most valuable asset in human life.

It is dangerous only when—in a shapeless and haphazard mass—it converges on such points in the social structure where planned control and rational action are needed; for there it must of necessity cause functional disturbances.

But the outstanding characteristic of contemporary society is precisely the fact that it directs these accumulated irrationalities into the political sphere. The ideal of a 'democracy of reason' which a bygone generation cherished is proving in our own day to have been an optimistic illusion, and we are experiencing instead what the German sociologist Max Scheler has called a 'democracy of moods'.

There is a very definite reason why massed irrationalities are being forced to seek an outlet in politics; that reason, it is well to note, is sociological, and not psychological. It is that our society is so constructed as to leave room for such irrationalities as the use of coercion, decisions reached and backed by force, the public integration of sadistic instincts, &c. The fact that such loop-holes exist in our social structure shows that present-day society is very far from being completely rationalized.

Thanks to the investigations carried out by ethnologists and sociologists we know the origin of these loop-holes in the structure of contemporary society. Their conclusions show that all the highly developed cultures in history originated from the forcible conquest of autochthonous communities, mostly peaceful peasantries, by nomadic peoples. This element of coercion penetrated so deeply into the otherwise pacific peasant society that it dominated its whole structure. It is because this contradiction, which underlay the original

social situation, has never, from the earliest times until to-day, been eradicated that contemporary society is still so very antithetical in character. Calculation and compromise are the main forces which regulate the process of production, distribution, and exchange in our society; but in the last analysis, the 'ultima ratio', both in our external political relations and in our final decisions in internal politics, is *force*.

Psychologists who study only the working of the mind of the individual and pay no attention to its relation to the totality of the social process are apt to forget that the decisive fact is not that the sadistic element is latent in the human psyche, but that the organization of society has, from nomadic times till our own day, given this irrationality an objective function.

One of the primary aims of this discussion, therefore, is to show that behind every rational and irrational force in the human psyche a social mechanism operates which the psychologist generally does not see. Thus it follows that the most urgent task in the immediate future will be to establish a closer co-operation between the psychologist, the historian, the political scientist, and the sociologist.

It is this ubiquitous irrationality in the objective structure of our social world which now and again mobilizes the masses; and the very individuals who are so extremely rational in such spheres of their daily life as work, exchange, and organization are liable at any moment to become wholesale slaughterers. All this, I wish to insist, is the result not of some everlasting, immutable thing called 'human nature', but of the antinomical structure of our social organization itself.

We meet the same ambiguous structure that we

find latent in the spheres of rationality and irrationality in the sphere of the evolution of human morality. On the one hand, civic life creates a maximum of responsibility, individualization, sympathetic intuition, and hypersensitive conscientiousness. But this progress is permanently obstructed by the fact that in different situations our society forces the same individual to regression and drives him to recklessness.

We shall now try to discover which social mechanism will enhance the standard of morality and which one must, of sociological necessity, occasion the collapse of morals. Owing to lack of time I can deal only very roughly with the various stages in the development of morality. Any sketch of the history of human morality must contemplate human behaviour in the different stages of its development from two points of view. These may conveniently be subsumed under the following questions: How far did man's *range of vision* and conscious understanding extend into the sphere of his social behaviour in any given age? To what extent was the representative individual of a particular era able to shoulder *responsibilities*? These questions do not, of course, embrace the whole phenomenon of morals; they touch but on that aspect of it which bears directly on our problem.

The concepts 'functional' and 'substantial' can be applied also in the sphere of morals: The functional aspect of morals lies in those norms, which, if they exert an effective influence on conduct, guarantee a frictionless functioning of society. There are numerous such norms; they vary with the character of the social structure.

The 'substantial' side of morals is characterized by certain concrete contents (the qualitative substance of

norms), whose nature may be wholly irrational. According to this distinction there have existed, from the most primitive times up to our own day, two main forms of taboos.[1] There are, first, the taboos which serve as a guarantee for the continued functioning of a given society; secondly, there are those which take account of the moods, traditions, or idiosyncrasies of a group.

The more our modern mass-society becomes functionally rationalized, the more it tends to neutralize substantial morality, or to side-track it into the realm of the 'private', the 'personal'. In all that belongs to the sphere of public events, our society seeks to confine itself to functional norms. The idea of tolerance is simply the philosophical formulation of the habitual tendency to debar from public discussion all subjective or group-beliefs, i.e. all substantial irrationalities, in the interests of preserving intact those behaviour-patterns which are working well. It is only when, through the mechanism of a mass-society which has been described in the first part of this study, substantial irrationalities triumph also in the other spheres of social life and overthrow reason and rationalization, that doctrinal disputes, fights for intrinsic qualitative values, make their appearance in the ethical sphere too.

Range of vision and extent of responsibility seem to us to be the two most essential criteria by which the change in the form of functional morality can most easily be followed.

In this connexion three important historical stages are distinguishable:

1. Morality in the stage of horde-solidarity.

[1] Cf. R. Briffault, 'Taboos on Human Nature', in *The New Generation*, ed. by V. F. Calverton and S. D. Schmalhausen, 1930, p. 680.

2. Morality in the stage of individual competition.
3. Morality in the stage of contemporary group integrations.

1. The early history of human morals may, in spite of all original differences, be called, with Durkheim, the stage of the mechanical solidarity of horde morals. Think, for example, of the Germanic hordes that broke into Europe. They were tied together by an obedient submissiveness. The actions of the group were the results of a relatively *homogeneous* behaviour enforced by tradition and fear. From the standpoint of morals, range of foresight, consciousness, and capacity to shoulder responsibility, this stage is characterized by the fact that the individual had not yet been roused to a consciousness of his existence as a separate being. He was still incapable of looking at life from an independent standpoint and of assuming individual responsibility. The sociological explanation of this kind of social behaviour is that the *entire* group adapts itself to the conditions and circumstances of life collectively; the individual, therefore, can save himself only as part and parcel of this collective process: he must stand or fall with his group.

2. The world of free individual competition, which very slowly evolved from the world of mechanical solidarity, constituted in certain respects a tremendous step forward. This world gradually created an independent being who was less fettered by group-traditions and group-conventions and who was fit to assume responsibility for his actions. He obtained his training in independent, rational judgement from the competitive process itself, a process which forces every one to individual adaptation; to adapt himself, that is, to events

in a manner most consistent with his own particular interests. His master in the art of bearing individual responsibility was, *inter alia* no doubt, the private ownership of small property which forced him, on pain of elimination and ruin, to be the master of his own fate in the competitive struggle. Individual competition, therefore, was the primary agency in creating *subjective reasoning*, that is to say, the ability to foresee and weigh causal sequences. This, of course, does not imply an understanding of the causality of the totality of social processes. For this subjective reasoning was essentially a thinking-against-one-another. In the competitive struggle each individual thought only in terms of his own particular position and advantage without being directly concerned with the interests of society as a whole. The totality of society emerged as the summation of these multitudinous antinomical activities and of these many independent personal responsibilities. This system made the individual sagacious in the pursuit of his own interests and clear-sighted as to the immediate consequences of his acts. But this same individual was wholly devoid of insight into the functioning of society as a whole.

3. Our contemporary world is one of the reintegration of large groups, in which the individuals, who until now had been increasingly separated from one another, are compelled to renounce their private interests and subordinate themselves to the interests of larger social units. Large-scale industrial technique renders completely private and individualistic management of economic affairs difficult. Those who formerly carried on their business privately and on a small scale, now invest their money in expanding their undertakings

and in forming combines and trusts. But though these vast trusts compete with other mammoth industrial units, they are nevertheless the result of a surrender of the preceding atomistic competive struggle in industry and commerce. This industrial integration seems characteristic of our time, though we know well enough that there are counteracting forces at work. Trade Unions, for example, train the workers in solidarity and co-operative action, even though the object of this solidarity is to strengthen the position of labour in its struggle with employers' associations.

In short, independent competitive action for individual interests becomes transformed into joint action by particular groups. But this group-solidarity is no longer a mechanical solidarity, as was that of the horde in an era when the individual had not yet learned to stand on his own feet and to be responsible for his actions. The individual who to-day is learning, however painfully, to subordinate himself is urged to do so by his slowly awakening insight into the nature of social tendences and by his own more or less considered volition. He is gradually realizing that by resigning part of his personal rights he helps to save the social and economic system and thereby also his own interests. The individual whose range of foresight formerly extended only to isolated parts of the social process is now coming to understand the interdependence of events and to gain an insight into the totality of the social mechanism.

In short: the highest level of reason and morality awakens in the members of society, even if only dimly, a consciousness of the need for *planning*. The individual is beginning to realize that he must plan the

whole of his society and not merely certain parts of it. That, further, in this planning process he must strive for the welfare of the totality of that society of which he is a part. At present, it is true, we are only in that stage of development where each of the dominant social groups is intent on capturing for itself the chance of planning and controlling society in order to turn this power against rival groups. Though it may well be that the present generation is destined to experience nothing more than such struggles for a *biased-planning*, these conflicts constitute the final remnant of the period when each person acted in his own interests and against those of his neighbour. To-day, the individual thinks not in terms of the welfare of the community or mankind as a whole, but in terms of that of his own particular group. Yet this whole process tends towards the progressive education of the individual in taking a progressively longer range of foresight; it tends, at the same time, to inculcate in him the faculty of considered judgement and to fit him for sharing responsibility in the planning of the whole course of events in the society in which he moves.

The tremendous progress in the development of mankind from the stage of mechanical group-solidarity to that of free competition, and the complete and fundamental change in social relationships which was implied in the transition from the one stage to the other, provides proof that processes of adaptation may produce the most far-reaching psychic changes in human relationships and that, therefore, such wholesale transformations are not impossible. This, then, is one aspect of the development brought about by industrialization and democratization; and this aspect, despite the difficulties

against which it contends, is a promising one. But here, again, the modern integration of the masses and democratization is the source of a further danger to the slow but continous growth of the moral forces which we have just discussed. Democratization is similar to all the other achievements of modern technique (such as the wireless and the press) in that they are all means whereby the effectiveness of positive and constructive forces no less than of negative and destructive ones can be heightened.

The German historian Meinecke has written an interesting book on *The Idea of Reason of State*,[1] in which he adduces many historical instances to show what a profound and staggering moral tension was caused among scholars and laymen by the fact that the Christian and civil ethic does not apply to the external relations of States. What we commonly call 'Machiavellism' has a long history. In essence, it amounts to this: that all those strata which were in any way connected with government had gradually to persuade themselves that any means, however immoral, can legitimately be resorted to for the seizure and preservation of sovereign authority. Very early in history, therefore, the ruling stratum of the princes and their advisers evolved for themselves a double-standard morality; an ethic for private life and an ethic for State Policy. In their private lives the ruling groups adhered to the code of the slowly developing Christian and civil ethic. But in all their political relations, especially in important State negotiations, they fell back on the ethics of 'reason of State', which has ever been a euphemism for robbery

[1] Meinecke, Fr., *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München; Berlin, 2nd ed., 1925.

and coercion. In the course of history the number of writers who discourse on this antinomy and find that they cannot dispose of it becomes larger and larger. Meinecke describes their various theories in great detail and with scrupulous care. He does not, however, approach the problem from a sociological viewpoint and cannot, therefore, appreciate the reason for this growth in the volume of literature on 'Machiavellism'. The crop of literature on this subject reflects just one fact: that with the spread of the democratizing process and the progressive participation of all social strata in political matters, the extent of the relevance of the problem of a dual morality spreads also.

Formerly there prevailed a specific form of social division of moral conflicts. The small man could preserve his simple ethic of moral decency; only the ruling strata ever got into situations of conflict and antagonism. But now that the democratizing process is enmeshing every one in the intricacies of government, this problem of a double-standard morality is gradually becoming one of acute urgency even for the most insignificant individual in society. It is impossible to foresee the fate that awaits public morality if once the mob gets hold of the secret which formerly overwhelmed the intellectual powers of even small sophisticated leading groups. The results of the slow and delicate educative process which industrialization has brought in its wake are jeopardized as soon as the great masses are made to understand that the foundation of State-creation and the essence of the external relation of States is robbery; that, further, this robbery and these intermittent plundering expeditions, even within the confines of sovereign states, can from one day to the

next divest entire groups of their social functions, the fruits of their labour, and their means of livelihood.

Hitherto the ethic of plunder had been consciously admissible only in marginal cases and had been confined exclusively to the ruling groups. But so far from this element of coercion, and the ethic on which it rests, waning with the democratization of society, it becomes the publicly acknowledged philosophy of the whole society; thereby it also becomes a disintegrative social force conflicting with the ethic of work and the urge to effort and exertion.

The principle of democracy, which is that all social strata shall be politically active, thus acquires a peculiar dual-function. In the conflict between functionally rational behaviour and mass-psychosis—to which we alluded before—the democratizing process acted as a social elevator. Every now and again it brought the pent-up irrationalities and uncontrolled impulses of the crowd up to the more individualized, reserved, and rational *élites* of society, e.g. in the case of war. Now, in the tension between honesty in everyday life and the dual morality of 'reason of state'—the democratizing process acts as a lift which brings down from the upper to the lower social layers the cynicism with which, in marginal cases, the former defended the immorality of war.

To sum up: on the one hand, we have seen that human reason and morality are perfected so far as to make the planned control of the social mechanism feasible. On the other hand, we have seen that the several wills of otherwise rational human beings can, with a violent suddenness, be so integrated as to cause havoc and destruction. Nor is this all. That type of

individual whose various faculties have developed unevenly and disproportionately, and whose instincts and impulses are consequently still primitive in nature can, as we have seen, master the technique of controlling the forces of nature. But he can do more than this. He can also learn to use the press, the wireless, and all the other techniques of propaganda which democratic society has found, in order systematically to integrate the substantial irrationalities of human beings and to provide an outlet for them in certain specific spheres of activity such as, for instance, sport, pageants, parades.

Having mastered the technique of these methods, the ostensibly modern but nevertheless essentially primitive human being turns them to use for his own purposes and with their help succeeds in multiplying his type a million-fold. Thus we see that our deliberate intervention in an increasing number of spheres of social life, which until now we had left to the uninterrupted course of historical development, has brought us into a very difficult situation.

I should like to conclude this lecture by submitting a question for your consideration. In a circle of friends we were recently discussing the tremendous possibilities which man possesses for the purpose of planning his society, when somebody said: 'We have progressed so far as to be able to plan society and to plan man; but who plans those who will plan society?'

The longer I reflect on this question the more clearly I see that it has a twofold meaning: a religious, quietistic, and a realistic, political meaning. It can mean, first: we may act as if we were planning, but in the final analysis we are really being planned by some one else. The rational and irrational forces which in certain

spheres we unquestionably are able to control begin, from a certain point on, to guide us.

In its realistic political sense the question means: nobody plans those who plan society; therefore the planners must be the already existing individuals and groups with their already existing mentality. Every thing will thus depend on which among the groups of present-day society will have the energy, the will, and the ability to capture the mighty social apparatus. Will it be those groups of individuals in whom residual elements of primeval man are still at work? Or will it be those groups whom a slow continuous process of evolution has made rational and moral beings, able to shoulder not a limited but a world-wide range of responsibility? True, the latter groups are to-day still in a small minority. But this struggle, like all the previous ones in history, will have to be waged by small minorities behind the masses, for the masses always take that form which the minorities give them.

Ours is a world of unsolved problems, and I never append a happy ending to an open question. It will therefore be wiser for me to give you as a parting present this disquieting question with its most disquieting implications, and to let you decide whether you prefer its religious quietistic form, 'Who plans the planner?' or its realistic-political form: 'Which of the existing groups of individuals will plan us?'