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Race-Thinking Before Racism

By *Hannah Arendt*

I

Opinion or Ideology.

IF race-thinking were a German invention, as it is now sometimes asserted, then "German thinking" (whatever that may be) was victorious in many parts of the spiritual world long before the Nazis started their illfated attempt at world conquest. Hitlerism exercised its strong international and inter-European appeal during the 'thirties because racism, although a state doctrine only in Germany, had been everywhere a powerful trend in public opinion. The Nazi political war-machine had long been in motion when in 1939 German tanks began their march of destruction, since—in political warfare—racism was calculated to be a more powerful ally than any paid agent or any secret organization of fifth columnists. Strengthened by the experiences of almost two decades in the various capitals, the Nazis were confident that their best "propaganda" would be their racial policy itself, from which, despite many other compromises and broken promises, they had never drifted away for expediency's sake.¹ Racism was neither a new nor a secret weapon, though never before had it been used with this thorough-going consistency.

The historical truth of the matter is that race-thinking, with its roots deep in the 18th century, emerged during the 19th century simultaneously in all Western countries. Racism has been the powerful ideology of imperialistic policies since the turn of our century. It certainly has absorbed and revived all the old patterns of race opinions which, however, by themselves hardly would have been able to create or, for that matter, to degenerate into racism as a "Weltanschauung" or an ideology. For the "idea" of race does not belong in the history of ideas, and not until the end of the last century were dignity and impor-

¹ During the German-Russian pact, Nazi propaganda stopped all attacks on "Bolshevism" but never gave up the race-line.

tance accorded it as though it had been one of the major spiritual contributions of the Western world.²

Up to the fateful days of the "scramble for Africa," race-thinking had been one of the many free opinions which, within the general framework of liberalism, had argued and fought with one another to win the consent of public opinion. And if it is true that the anarchy of competing opinions paved the way for the deformation of ideas and the formation of ideologies, that is so only because the aim of every opinion, since the times of the ancient Sophists, has been to win the consent of the multitude. The ancient Sophists, concerned with persuasion for the moment alone, invented the "universal art of enchanting the mind by arguments."³ Insofar as the human mind is concerned with truth, they had to destroy the dignity of human thought. And though opinions by their very nature are changing and are valid only "at the time of the agreement and as long as the agreement lasts"⁴ the Sophists succeeded, because "from opinion comes persuasion and not from truth."⁵ Therefore the Sophist did not even bother with the problem of truth; he was convinced that truth, in any event, did not promote persuasion and was useless for his purpose.

The most striking difference between the ancient and modern opinion-holders is that the former were satisfied with the passing victory of a single argument at the cost of truth, whereas the latter want a more lasting victory of arbitrary presentations of past or present events at the cost of reality. Just as the Sophist for the sake of argument destroyed the dignity of human thought, so the modern Sophist, the ideologist, destroys the dignity of facts which degenerate for him into examples of his opinion. Facts no longer are held to be part and parcel of the past or present world — interpretation can change anything to

2 The best historical account of race-thinking in the pattern of a "history of ideas" is: Erich Voegelin, *Rasse und Staat* (Tuebingen 1933). Up to the middle of the last century, race-opinions were still judged by the yardstick of political reason. Wrote Tocqueville to Gobineau about the latter's doctrines: "Je les crois bien vraisemblablement fausses et très certainement pernicieuses." *Lettres de Alexis de Tocqueville et de Arthur de Gobineau*. In *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1907), Tome 199, Letter of November 17, 1853.

3 Plato, *Phaidros*, 261.

4 Plato, *Theaetetos*, 172.

5 Plato, *Phaidros*, 260.

suit an opinion, no fact is secure from receiving tomorrow an entirely new and unexpected meaning, if it is expedient. The modern propagandist does not bother with the question of reality, because he is convinced of the utter worthlessness of knowledge — just as the Greek Sophist was convinced of the utter uselessness of truth. In more recent times, especially during and since the First World War, this belief has received a tremendous reinforcement because everybody knows that even scholars, the great conservators of facts, at different times and in different countries have provided party or state propaganda with as many facts and figures as the most divergent political lines demanded.⁶ And while for the Sophists truth itself was nothing but one opinion among opinions, modern scholars seem convinced that knowledge is nothing but one interpretation among interpretations. Just as the ancient rhetors, the masters of logic, were willing to lend their art to defend any case, so modern scholars, the masters of facts, have shown themselves willing enough to give away their knowledge to help any new ideology.

Among the multitude of free opinions which were allowed to enter into free competition during the era of liberalism,⁷ only a few became full-fledged ideologies, that is, systems which were based upon one single opinion that proved strong enough to attract and persuade a majority of people and broad enough to lead them through the various experiences and situations of an average modern life. For an ideology differs from a simple opinion in that it claims to possess either the key of history, or the solution of all the "Riddles of the Universe," or the intimate knowledge of the hidden universal laws which are supposed to rule nature and man. Among ideologies few have won enough prom-

6 Two rather outstanding examples from scholars of good standing may be quoted as characteristic of "scholarship" during World War I. The German historian of art, Josef Strzygowski in his *Altai, Iran und Völkerwanderung* (Leipzig, 1917) discovered the Nordic race to be composed of Germans, Ukrainians, Armenians, Persians, Hungarians, Bulgars and Turks (pp. 306-307). The Society of Medicine of Paris not only published a report about the discovery of "polychesia" (excessive defecation) and "bromidrosis" (body odor) in the German race, but proposed urinalysis for the detection of German spies; German urine was "found" to contain 20% non-uric nitrogen as against 15% for other races. (See: Jacques Barzun, *Race* (New York, 1937), p. 239.)

7 For the host of 19th century conflicting opinions see: Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism* (New York, 1941), pp. 111-122.

inence to survive the hard competitive struggle of persuasion, and only two have come out on top and essentially defeated all others: the ideology which interprets history as an economic struggle of classes, and the other that interprets history as a natural fight of races. The appeal of both to large masses was so strong that they were able to obtain state support and establish themselves as official national doctrines. But far beyond the boundaries in which race-thinking and class-thinking have developed into obligatory patterns of thought, free public opinion has adopted them to such an extent that not only intellectuals but great masses of people will no longer accept any presentation of past or present facts that is not in agreement with these views.

The tremendous power of persuasion inherent in the main ideologies of our times is not accidental. Persuasion is not possible without appeal to either experiences or desires, in other words to immediate political needs. Though it is futile to argue with ideologies — racism has survived libraries of refutations — an explanation may be extremely fruitful which meets the ideologies on their own ground, on the basis from which they have grown. And this basis is formed neither by scientific facts, as the various brands of Darwinists would like to have us believe, nor by historical laws, as the historians pretend, in their efforts to discover the law according to which civilizations rise and fall. Every full-fledged ideology has been created, continued and improved as a political weapon and not as a theoretical doctrine. It is true that sometimes — and such is the case with racism — an ideology has changed its original political sense; but without immediate contact with political life none of them could be imagined. Their scientific aspect is secondary and arises first, from the desire to provide for watertight arguments, and secondly, because their persuasive power got hold also of scientists, who no longer were interested in their research-results but left their laboratories and hurried off to preach to the multitude their new interpretations of life and world.⁸ We owe it to these “scientific” preachers

⁸ “Huxley neglected scientific research of his own from the '70's onward, so busy was he in the role of 'Darwin's bulldog' barking and biting at theologians.” Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 126. Ernst Haeckel's passion for popularizing scientific results which was at least as strong as his passion for science itself, has been stressed recently by an applauding Nazi writer, H. Bruecher, *Ernst Haeckel. Ein Wegbereiter biologischen Staatsdenkens*. In: *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, (1935), Heft 69.

rather than to any scientific results that to-day no single science is left into whose categorical system race-thinking has not deeply penetrated. This again has stimulated historians, some of whom have been tempted to make science responsible for race-thinking, to mistake certain either philological or biological research results for causes instead of consequences of race-thinking.⁹

If it is unjust to make any particular science responsible for pseudo-scientific superstition, it is directly harmful to reconstruct the history of Nazism in such a way as to provide it with an excellent genealogy. From Plato to Nietzsche there is hardly a philosopher left who has not been either praised by Nazi intellectuals — or accused by their foes — of having been a forerunner of their monstrosities. Recently Machiavelli was freed from the dubious honor in one of the very beautiful articles of Jacques Maritain;¹⁰ and some years ago, even Nietzsche was rightly

⁹ This *quid pro quo* partly was the result of the zeal of students who wanted to put down every single instance in which race has been mentioned. Thereby they mistook relatively harmless authors for whom explanation by race was a possible and sometimes fascinating opinion for full-fledged racists. Such opinions, in themselves harmless, were advanced by the early anthropologists as starting-points of their investigations. A typical instance is the naive hypothesis of Paul Broca, noted French anthropologist of the middle of the last century, who assumed that "the brain has something to do with race and the measured shape of the skull is the best way to get at the contents of the brain" (quoted after Jacques Barzun, *op. cit.*, p. 162). It is obvious that this assertion without the support of a conception of the nature of man, is simply ridiculous.

As for the philologists of the early 19th century, whose concept of "Aryanism" has seduced almost every student of racism to count them under the propagandists or even inventors of race-thinking, they are as innocent as innocent can be. When they overstepped the limits of pure research it was because they wanted to include in the same cultural brotherhood as many nations as possible. In the words of Ernest Seillière, *La Philosophie de l'Impérialisme* (4 vols. 1903-1906) "Ce fut alors une sorte d'enivrement: la civilisation moderne crut avoir retrouvé ses titres de famille. . . et l'organisme naquit, unissant dans une même fraternité toutes les nations dont langue présentait quelques affinités sanscrites." (Préface, Tome I, p. xxxv.) In other words, these men still belonged to the humanistic tradition of the 18th century and shared its enthusiasm about strange people and exotic cultures.

On the other side, it has been a rather common error of the few scholars who were immune to racism because of their true humanism, to place a great deal of responsibility for modern bestiality on the naturalistic or biological outlook on life. But the opposite would have come closer to the truth. As a matter of fact, the doctrine that Might is Right needed several centuries (from the 17th to the 19th) until it had conquered natural science and produced the "law" of the survival of the fittest. And if, to take another instance, the theory of De Maistre and Schelling about savage tribes as the decaying residues of former peoples had suited the 19th century political devices as well as the theory of progress, we would probably have never heard much of "primitives" and no scientist would have wasted his time looking for the "missing link" between ape and man. The blame is not to be laid on any science as such, but rather on certain scientists who in no lesser degree than their fellow-citizens became hypnotized by ideologies.

¹⁰ See, *Review of Politics*, January, 1942.

shown not to have been the spiritual father of this "master-race" in a very courageous book of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers.¹¹ But in the meanwhile, the number of victims among spiritual mankind has become legion. Thomas Aquinas is among them because he was a Catholic and authoritarian, Luther because he was a Protestant and a Jew-hater, Kant because he was a Prussian, and Hegel because he idolized the State. To be sure, there are still a few left who have not yet been slandered by either side; they still await their "interpreter."

The fact that racism is the main ideological weapon of imperialistic politics is so obvious that it seems as though many students prefer to avoid the beaten track of a truism. Instead, an old misconception about racism being a kind of exaggerated nationalism is still given currency. Valuable works of students, especially in France, who have proved that racism is not only a quite different phenomenon but tends to destroy the body politic of the nation are generally overlooked. Witnessing the gigantic competition between race-thinking and class-thinking for dominion over the minds of modern man, some have been inclined to see in the former the expression of national and in the latter the expression of international trends, to believe the former to be the mental preparation for national wars and the latter to be the ideology for civil wars. This has been possible because of the last war's curious mixture of old national and new imperialistic conflicts, a mixture in which old national slogans proved still to possess a far greater appeal to the masses of all countries involved than any imperialistic aims. In this war, however, with its Quislings and collaborationists everywhere, it should be clear that racism has stirred up civil conflicts in every country, and that racism has proved to be the most ingenious device for preparing civil war that has ever been invented.

For the truth is that race-thinking entered the scene of active politics at the very moment when the European peoples had prepared, and to a certain extent had realized, the new body politic of the nation. From the very beginning, racism deliberately cut across all national boundaries, whether these were defined by geographical or linguistic or traditional or any other standards, and denied national-political

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, (Berlin, 1938).

existence as such. Race-thinking, rather than class-thinking, has been the ever-present shadow which accompanied the development of the comity of European nations, until it finally grew to be the powerful weapon for the destruction of those nations. Historically speaking, racists have a worse record of patriotism than all representatives of other international ideologies together, and they were the only ones who consistently denied the great principle upon which national organizations of peoples are built, the principle of equality and solidarity of all peoples guaranteed by the idea of mankind.

II

A "race" of aristocrats against a "nation" of citizens.

The birth of the nation and a steadily rising enthusiasm for the most different, strange and even savage peoples had been the characteristics of France during the 18th century. It was the time when Chinese paintings were admired and imitated, when one of the most famous works of the century was named *Lettres Persanes* and when travellers' reports made the favorite reading of society. The honesty and simplicity of the savage and uncivilized peoples were opposed to the sophistication and frivolity of culture. Long before the 19th century with its tremendously enlarged travelling possibilities brought the non-European world into the home of every average citizen, French society of the 18th century had tried to grasp spiritually the content of cultures and countries that lay far beyond European boundaries. A great enthusiasm for "new specimens of mankind" (Herder) filled the hearts of the heroes of the French Revolution who together with the French nation liberated every people of every color wherever the French flag flew. This enthusiasm for strange and foreign countries culminated in the message of fraternity, because it had been inspired by the desire to prove in every new and surprising "specimen of mankind" the old saying of La Bruyère: "*La raison est de tous les climats.*"

It still is the same nation-creating century and the same humanity-loving country to which we have to trace back the first germs of what later proved to become the nation-destroying and humanity-annihilating power of racism.¹² It is a remarkable fact that the first author who

assumed the coexistence of different peoples with different origins in France, was at the same time the first to elaborate definite class-thinking. The Comte de Boulainvilliers, a French nobleman who wrote at the beginning of the 18th century and whose works were published after his death, interpreted the history of France as the history of two different nations of which the one, of Germanic origin, had conquered the older inhabitants, the "Gaules," had imposed upon them its law, had taken their lands, and had settled down as the ruling class, the "peerage" whose supreme rights rested upon the "right of conquest" and the "necessity of obedience always due to the strongest."¹³ Engaged in his arguments against the rising political power of the *Tiers État* and their spokesmen, the "*nouveau corps*" formed by "*gens de lettres et de lois*," Boulainvilliers had to wage war against the monarchy too because the French king no longer wanted to represent the peerage as *primus inter pares* but the nation as a whole; in him, for a while, the new rising class had found its most powerful protector. In order to regain the uncontested primacy of the nobility, Boulainvilliers proposed to his fellow noblemen to deny that they shared a common origin with the French people, to break up the unity of the nation and to claim an original and therefore eternal distinction.¹⁴ Being much bolder than most of the later defenders of nobility, Boulainvilliers denied any predestined connection with the soil; he conceded that the Gaules have been longer in France, that the "Franks" were strangers and barbarians. (*op cit.* p. 38.) He based his doctrine solely on the eternal right of conquest and found no difficulty in asserting that "Friesland . . . has been the true cradle of the French nation" (*ibid.* 17). Centuries before the actual development of imperialistic racism, following only the inherent logic of his concept, he saw in the original inhabitants of France natives in the modern sense, or in his own terms "subjects" — not of

¹² François Hotman, French 16th century author of *Franco-Gallia* sometimes is held to be a forerunner of 18th century racial doctrines, as by Ernest Seillière, *op. cit.* Against this misconception, Théophile Simar has rightly protested: "Hotman se présente non pas comme apologiste des Germains, mais comme défenseur du peuple opprimé par la royauté." (*Etude Critique sur la Formation de la doctrine des Races au 18e et son expansion au 19e siècle* (Bruxelles, 1922) p. 20.

¹³ *Histoire de l'Ancien Gouvernement de la France*, (1727) Tome 1, p. 33.

¹⁴ That the Comte Boulainvilliers' history was meant as a political weapon against the *Tiers État* was stated by Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, XXX, Chap. X.

the King — but of all those who had the advantage to descend from the conquering people, who by right of birth were to be called “Frenchmen.” (*ibid*, 33).

Boulainvilliers was deeply influenced by the 17th century might-right doctrines and he certainly was one of the most consistent disciples of Spinoza in his days, whose *Ethics* he translated and whose *Traité theologico-politique* he analyzed. In his reception and application of Spinoza’s political ideas, might was changed into conquest and conquest was considered as acting as a kind of unique judgment about natural qualities and human privileges of men and nations. In this we may detect the first traces of the later naturalistic transformations which the might-right doctrine was to go through. This view is really corroborated by the fact that Boulainvilliers was one of the outstanding freethinkers of his time, and that his attacks on the Christian Church hardly were motivated by anti-clericalism alone.¹⁵

Boulainvilliers’ theory, however, still deals with peoples and not with races; it bases the right of the superior people on a historical deed, conquest, and not on a physical fact, — although the historical deed has already a certain influence on the natural qualities of the conquered people. It invents the two different peoples within France in order to counteract the new national idea, represented as it was to a certain extent by the absolute monarchy in alliance with the *Tiers État*. Boulainvilliers is anti-national at a time when the idea of nationhood was felt to be a new and revolutionary one, but had not yet shown, as it did in the French Revolution, how closely it was connected with a Republican form of government. Boulainvilliers prepared his country for civil war but without knowing what civil war meant. He is symptomatic of many of the nobility who did not regard themselves as representative of the nation, but as a separated ruling caste which might have much more in common with a foreign people of the “same society and condition” (*ibid*. 30) than with its compatriots. It has been, indeed, these antinational trends that exercised their influence in the

15 From the noted Spinoza scholar Adolph S. Oke I learned that Boulainvilliers was the most competent exponent of Spinoza of his day and that he was an avid collector of unorthodox MSS which were circulated clandestinely.

milieux of the *émigrés* and did not subside until they became absorbed by new and outspoken racial doctrines late in the 19th century.

It was not until the actual outbreak of the Revolution forced great numbers of the French nobility to seek refuge in Germany and England, that Boulainvilliers' ideas showed their utility as a political weapon. In the meanwhile, his influence upon the French aristocracy had been kept alive as can be seen by the works of another Comte, the Comte Dubuat-Nançay,¹⁶ who wanted to tie French nobility even closer to its continental brothers. On the eve of the Revolution, this spokesman of French feudalism felt so insecure that he hoped for "the creation of a kind of *Internationale* of aristocracy of barbarian origin,"¹⁷ and since the German nobility was the only one whose help could eventually be expected, we learn again that the true origin of the French nation is identical with that of the Germans and that the French lower classes, though no longer slaves, are not free by birth but by "affranchissement," by grace of those who are free by birth, of nobility. A few years later and the French exiles actually tried to form an *internationale* of aristocrats in order to get rid of the revolt of those they considered to be a foreign enslaved people. And although the more practical side of these attempts suffered the spectacular disaster of Valmy, "*émigrés*" like Charles François Dominique de Villiers, who about 1800 opposed the "*gallo-Romains*" to the Germanics, or like William Alter who a decade later dreamt of a federation of all Germanic peoples,¹⁸ never admitted defeat. It probably never occurred to them that they actually were traitors, so firmly were they convinced that the French Revolution was a "war between foreign peoples" — as François Guizot much later put it.

While Boulainvilliers in the calm fairness of a less disturbed time had based the rights of nobility solely on the rights of conquest without directly depreciating the very nature of the other conquered nation, the Comte de Montlosier, one of the rather dubious personages among the French exiles openly expressed his contempt for this "new people

¹⁶ *Les Origines de l'Ancien Gouvernement de la France, de l'Allemagne et de l'Italie* (1789).

¹⁷ Seillière, *op. cit.*, p. XXXII.

¹⁸ See: René Maunier, *Sociologie Coloniale* (Paris, 1932), Tome II, p. 115.

risen from slaves . . . (a mixture) of all races and all times.”¹⁹ Times obviously had changed and noblemen who no longer belonged to an unconquered race, also, had to change. They gave up the old idea, so dear to Boulainvilliers and even to Montesquieu, that conquest alone, “*fortune des armes*,” determined the destinies of men. The Valmy of noble ideologies had come when the Abbé Siéyès in his famous pamphlet told the *Tiers État* to “send back into the forests of Franconia all those families who preserve the absurd pretension of being descended from the conquering race and of having succeeded to their rights;” thereafter, according to the standards of these gentlemen, the *Tiers État* would return as *noblesse* — namely, as the true conquerors.²⁰

It is a rather curious fact that from these early times when French noblemen in their class struggle against the bourgeoisie discovered that they belonged to another nation, had another genealogical origin, and were more closely tied up with an international caste than with the soil of France, all French racial theories have supported the Germanism or at least the superiority of the Nordic peoples as against their own countrymen. For if the men of the French Revolution identified themselves mentally with Rome, it was not because they were opposing to the “Germanism” of their nobility a “Latinism” of the bourgeoisie, but because they felt themselves the spiritual heirs of Roman Republicans. This historical claim as contrasted to the tribal identification of the nobility, might have been among the causes which prevented “Latinism” from emerging as a racial doctrine of its own. At any event, paradoxical as it sounds, the fact is that Frenchmen earlier than Germans or Englishmen were to insist on this *idée fixe* of Germanic superiority.²¹ Nor did the birth of German racial consciousness after the Prussian defeat of 1806, directed as it was against the French, change the course of racial ideologies in France. During the forties of the last century, Augustin

19 Montlosier though in exile was closely connected with the French chief of police, Fouché, who helped him improve the sad financial conditions of a refugee. Later, he served as a secret agent for Napoleon in French society. See: Joseph Brugerette, *Le Comte de Montlosier* (1931), and Simar, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

20 *Qu'est-ce-que le Tiers État?* (1789) published shortly before the outbreak of the Revolution. Translation quoted after J. H. Clapham, *The Abbé Siéyès* (London, 1912) p. 62.

21 “L'Aryanisme historique est parti du féodalisme du 18e siècle, s'est appuyé sur le germanisme du 19e siècle” observes Seillière, *op. cit.*, p. II.

Thierry still adhered to the identification of classes and races and distinguished between a "Germanic nobility" and a "celtic bourgeoisie,"²² and also, a nobleman, the Comte de Rémusat, proclaimed the Germanic origin of the European aristocracy. Finally, the Comte de Gobineau developed an opinion already generally accepted within the French nobility into a full-fledged historical doctrine, claiming to have detected the secret law of the fall of civilization and to have exalted history to the dignity of a natural science. With him race-thinking completed its first stage, and began its second stage whose influences were to be felt until the twenties of our century.

III

Race unity as substitute for national emancipation.

Race thinking in Germany did not develop before the defeat of the old Prussian army by Napoleon. It owed its rise to the Prussian patriots and political romanticism, rather than to the nobility and their spokesmen. In sharp contrast to the French brand of race-thinking as a weapon for civil war and for splitting the nation, German race-thinking was invented in an effort to unite the people against foreign domination. Its authors did not look for allies beyond the frontiers but wanted to awake in the people a consciousness of common origin. This actually excluded the nobility with their notoriously cosmopolitan relations — which, however, were less characteristic of the Prussian Junkers than of the rest of the European nobility; at any rate, it excluded the possibility of this race-thinking basing itself on the most exclusive class of the people.

Since German race-thinking accompanied the long frustrated attempts to unite the numerous German states, it remained so closely connected, in its early stages, with more general national feelings, that it is rather difficult to distinguish between mere nationalism, or even chauvinism, and clear-cut racism.²³ This particular condition is changed

²² *Considérations sur l'histoire de France* (1840).

²³ This original confusing situation in which harmless national sentiments expressed themselves in what we know today to be racial terms, has caused a certain confusion among historians who by identifying the German brand of racism with specific German nationalism have strangely and much against their will helped to underestimate the immense international appeal of Hitlerism.

only when, after 1870, the unification of the nation actually had taken place and German racism, together with German imperialism, fully developed. From these early times, however, there survived not a few characteristics which have remained significant for the specifically German brand of race-thinking.

In contrast to France, Prussian noblemen felt their interests to be closely connected with the position of the absolute monarchy and, at least since the time of Frederick II, they sought recognition as the legitimate representatives of the nation as a whole. With the exception of the few years of Prussian reforms (from 1808-1812), the Prussian nobility was not frightened by the rise of a bourgeois class that might have wanted to take over the government, nor did they have to fear an immoral coalition between the middle-classes and the ruling house. The Prussian King, up to 1809 the greatest landlord of the country, remained *primus inter pares* despite all efforts of the reformers. Race-thinking, therefore, developed outside the nobility, as a weapon of certain nationalists who wanted the union of all German-speaking peoples and therefore insisted on a common origin. They were liberals in the sense that they were rather opposed to the exclusive rule of the Prussian Junkers. As long as this common origin was defined by common language, one can hardly speak of race-thinking.²⁴

It is characteristic that only after 1814 is this common origin described frequently in terms of "blood relationship," of family ties, of tribal unity, of unmixed origin. These definitions, which almost simultaneously appear in the writings of the Catholic Josef Goerres and of the nationalistic liberals such as Ernest Moritz Arndt or F. L. Jahn, bear witness to the utter failure of the hopes of rousing true national sentiments in the German people. Out of the failure to raise the people to nationhood, out of the lack of common historical memories and the apparent popular apathy to common future destinies, a naturalistic appeal was born which addressed itself to tribal instincts

²⁴ This is the case for instance in Friedrich Schlegel's *Philosophischen Vorlesungen aus den Jahren 1804-1806*, II, p. 357. The Prussian Junker Ludwig von der Marwitz also held that peoples are distinguished by their language. The same holds true for Ernst Moritz Arndt. See Alfred P. Pundt, *Arndt and the National Awakening in Germany* (New York, 1935), p. 116 f. Even Fichte, the favorite modern scapegoat for German race-thinking, hardly ever went beyond the limits of nationalism.

as a possible substitute for what the whole world had seen to be the glorious power of French nationhood. The organic doctrine of a history for which "every race is a separate, complete whole"²⁵ was invented by men who needed ideological definitions of national unity as a substitute for political nationhood. It was a frustrated nationalism that led to E. M. Arndt's statement that Germans — who apparently were the last to develop an organic unity — had the luck of being of pure, unmixed stock, a "genuine people."²⁶

In these organic naturalistic definitions of peoples are the first germs of later racist theories, and they have, indeed, been an outstanding characteristic of German ideologies and German historicism. They nevertheless are not yet actual racism, for the same men who speak in these "racial" terms still maintain the main pillar of genuine nationhood, the equality of all peoples. Thus, in the same article in which F. L. Jahn compares the laws of peoples to the laws of animal life, he insists on the genuine equal plurality of peoples in whose complete multitude alone mankind can be realized.²⁷ And Arndt who later was to express strong sympathies with the national liberation movements of the Poles and the Italians, exclaimed: "Cursed be anyone who would subjugate and rule foreign peoples."²⁸ Insofar as German national feelings had not been the fruit of a genuine national development but rather the reaction to foreign occupation,²⁹ national doctrines were of

25 Joseph Goerres. In: *Rheinischer Merkur* (1814) No. 25.

26 "Die Deutschen sind nicht durch fremde Voelker verbastardet, sie sind kein Mischling geworden. . . . Die gluecklichen Deutschen sind ein urspruengliches Volk." See: *Phantasien zur Berichtigung der Urteile ueber kuenftige deutsche Verfassungen* (1815).

27 "Mischlinge von Tieren habe keine echte Fortpflanzungskraft und ebensowenig Blendlingsvoelker ein eigenes volkstuemliches Fortleben. . . . Der Menschen Stammvater ist gestorben, das Urgeschlecht ist ausgegangen. Darum ist ein jedes verloeschendes Volkstum ein Ungluecksfall fuer die Menschheit. . . . in einem Volke kann sich der Adel der Menschheit nicht einzig aussprechen." In: *Deutsches Volkstum* (1810).

The same instance is expressed by Goerres who despite his naturalistic definition of people ("alle Glieder umschlingt ein gemeinsames Band der Blutsverwandtschaft") follows a true national principle when he states: "Es hat kein Stamm einen Anspruch auf den Besitz des anderen." (*op. cit.*)

28 *Blick aus der Zeit auf die Zeit* (1814).—Translation quoted after Alfred P. Pundt, *op. cit.*

29 "Not until Austria and Prussia had fallen after a vain struggle did I really begin to love Germany. . . . as Germany succumbed to conquest and subjection it became to me one and indissoluble" writes E. M. Arndt in his *Erinnerungen aus Schweden* (1818) p. 82. Translation quoted after Pundt, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

a peculiar negative character, destined to create a wall around the people, to act as substitutes for frontiers which could not be clearly defined either geographically or historically.

If in the early form of French aristocracy, race-thinking had been invented as an instrument of internal division, and had turned out to be a weapon for civil war, this early form of German race-doctrine had been invented as a weapon of internal national unity and turned out to be a weapon for national wars. As the decline of the French nobility as an important class within the French nation would have made this weapon useless if the foes of the Third Republic had not revived it, so upon the accomplishment of German national unity the organic doctrine of history would have lost its meaning had not modern imperialistic schemes wanted to revive it, in order to appeal to the people and to hide their hideous faces under the respectable cover of nationalism. The same does not hold true for another source of German racism which, though seemingly more remote from the scene of politics, had a far stronger genuine bearing upon present political ideologies.

Political romanticism has been accused of having invented race-thinking, as it has been and could be accused of having invented every other possible irresponsible opinion. Adam Mueller and Friedrich Schlegel are symptomatic in the highest degree of a general confusion of modern thought in which almost any opinion can gain ground temporarily. No real thing, no historical event, no political idea was safe from the all-embracing and all-destroying mania of these first literati to find new and original opportunities for new and fascinating opinions. "The world must be romanticized," as Novalis puts it, who wanted "to bestow a high sense upon the common, a mysterious appearance upon the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown upon the well-known."³⁰ One of these romanticized objects was the people, an object that could be changed on a moment's notice into the state, or the family, or nobility, or anything else that either — in the earlier days — happened to cross the minds of one of these intellectuals or — later when growing older they had learned the reality of daily bread —

³⁰ *Neue Fragmentensammlung* (1798). See: *Schriften* (Leipzig, 1929). Tome II, 335.

happened to be asked for by some paying patron.³¹ Therefore it is almost impossible to study the development of any of the free competing opinions of which the 19th century is so amazingly full, without coming across Romanticism in its German form.

What these first modern intellectuals actually prepared was not so much the development of any single opinion but the general mentality of modern German scholars; these latter have proved more than once that there can be found hardly any ideology to which they would not willingly submit if the only reality — which even a romantic person can hardly afford to overlook — is at stake, the reality of their position. For this peculiar behavior, Romanticism provided the most excellent pretext in its unlimited idolization of the “personality” of the individual, whose very arbitrariness became the very proof of genius. Whatever served the so-called productivity of the individual, namely, the entirely arbitrary game of his “ideas,” could be made the center of a whole outlook of life and world.

This inherent cynicism of Romantic personality-worship has made possible certain modern attitudes of intellectuals who are fairly well represented by Mussolini, one of the last heirs of this movement, when he described himself as at the same time “aristocrat and democrat, revolutionary and reactionary, proletarian and anti-proletarian, pacifist and anti-pacifist.” The ruthless individualism of romanticism, never meant anything more serious than that “everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology.” What was new in Mussolini’s bloody experiment was the “attempt to carry it out with all possible energy.”³²

Because of this inherent “relativism” the direct contribution of romanticism to the development of race-thinking can almost be neglected. In the anarchic game whose rules entitle everybody at any given time to at least one personal and arbitrary opinion, it is almost a matter of course that every conceivable opinion would be formulated and duly printed. Much more characteristic than this chaos was the fundamental belief in personality as an ultimate aim in itself. In Germany, where the conflict between the nobility and the rising middle-class was

³¹ For the romantic attitude in Germany see Carl Schmitt, *Politische Romantik* (München, 1925).

³² Mussolini, *Relativismo e Fascismo*. In: *Diuturna* (Milano, 1924). The translation quoted after F. Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. 462-463.

never fought out on the political scene, personality-worship developed as the only means of gaining at least some kind of social emancipation. The governing class of the country frankly showed its traditional contempt for business and its dislike for association with merchants in spite of the latter's growing wealth and importance, so that it was not easy to find the means of winning some kind of self-respect. The classic German *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meister*, in which the middle-class hero is educated by noblemen and actors because the bourgeois in his own social sphere is without "personality," is evidence enough of the hopelessness of the situation.³³

German intellectuals, though they hardly promoted any political fight of the middle-classes to which they belonged, fought an embittered and, unfortunately, highly successful battle for social equality. Even those who had offered their pen for the defence of nobility still felt their very interests at stake when it came to social ranks. In order to enter competition with rights and qualities of birth, they formulated the new concept of the "innate personality" which was to win general approval within bourgeois society. Like the title of the heir of an old family, the "innate personality" was given by birth and not acquired by merit. Just as the lack of common history for the formation of the nation had been artificially overcome by the naturalistic concept of organic development, so, in the social sphere, nature itself was supposed to supply a title when political reality had refused it. Liberal writers soon boasted of "true nobility" as opposed to the shabby titles of a Baron or others which could be given and taken away, and asserted, by implication, that their natural privileges, like "force or genius," could not be retraced to any human deed.³⁴

The discriminatory point of this new social concept was immediately affirmed. During the long period of mere social anti-Semitism which introduced and prepared the discovery of Jew-hating as a political weapon, it was the lack of "innate personality," the innate lack of tact, the innate lack of productivity, the innate disposition for trading, etc.,

³³ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, Book V, ch. 3. Letter of Meister to his friend Werner.

³⁴ Compare the very interesting pamphlet against the nobility by the liberal Buchholz, *Untersuchungen ueber den Geburtsadel* (1807, Berlin), p. 68; "Der wahre Adel... kann weder gegeben noch genommen werden; denn gleich der Kraft und dem Genie setzt er sich selbst und besteht durch sich selbst."

which separated the attitude of the average businessman from the behavior of his Jewish colleague. In its feverish search to summon up some pride of its own against the caste arrogance of the Junkers, without, however, daring to fight for political leadership, the bourgeoisie from the very beginning wanted to look down not so much on other lower classes of their own, but on other peoples. Most significant for these attempts is the small literary work of Clemens Brentano³⁵ which was written for and read in the ultra-nationalistic club of Napoleon-haters that gathered together in 1808 under the name of "Die Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft." In his highly sophisticated and witty manner, Brentano points out the contrast between the "innate personality," the genial individual, and the "philistine" whom he immediately identifies with Frenchmen and Jews. Thereafter, the German bourgeois would at least try to attribute to other peoples all the qualities which the nobility despised as typically bourgeois — at first to the French, later to the English, and always to the Jews. As to the mysterious qualities which an "innate personality" received at birth, they were exactly the same as those the real Junkers claimed for themselves.

Although in this way standards of nobility contributed to the rise of race-thinking, the Junkers themselves did hardly anything for the shaping of this mentality. It was Adam Mueller who insisted on purity of descent as a test of nobility, and it was Haller who went beyond the obvious fact that the powerful ones rule those deprived of power by stating it as a natural law that the weak should be dominated by the strong. Noblemen, of course, applauded enthusiastically when they learned that their usurpation of power was not only legal but in accordance with natural laws, and it was rather a consequence of bourgeois definitions that during the course of the 19th century they avoided "*mesalliances*" more carefully than ever before.³⁶

³⁵ Clemens Brentano, *Der Philister vor, in und nach der Geschichte* (1809).

³⁶ See Sigmund Neumann, "Die Stufen des preussischen Konservatismus." *Historische Studien*, Heft 190 (Berlin, 1930). Especially pp. 48, 51, 64, 82. For Adam Mueller, see: *Elemente der Staatskunst*, esp. 3 and 7 Vorlesung.

In this respect it is interesting to note that the only Junker of this period to develop a political theory of his own, Ludwig von der Marwitz, never indulged in racial terms. According to him, nations are separated by language—a spiritual and not a physical difference—and although he is violently opposed to the French Revolution, he actually speaks like Robespierre when it comes to the possible aggression of one

This insistence on common tribal origin as an essential of nationhood formulated by German nationalists during and after the war of 1814 and the emphasis laid by the Romantics on the innate personality and natural nobility prepared the way intellectually for race-thinking in Germany. From the former sprang the organic doctrine of history with its natural laws; from the latter arose at the end of the century the grotesque homunculus of the superman whose natural destiny it is to rule the world. As long as these trends ran side by side, they were but temporary means of escape from political realities. Once welded together, they formed the very basis for racism, as a full-fledged ideology. This, however, did not happen first in Germany, but in France, and was not accomplished by middle-class intellectuals but by a highly gifted and frustrated nobleman, the Comte de Gobineau.

IV

The new key to history.

In 1853, Count Arthur de Gobineau published his *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* which, only some fifty years later, at the turn of the century, was to become a kind of standard work for race theories in history. The first sentence of the four-volume work — "The fall of civilization is the most striking and, at the same time, the most obscure of all phenomena of history"³⁷ — indicates clearly the essentially new and modern interest of its author, the new pessimistic mood which pervades his work and which is the ideological force that was capable of uniting all previous factors and conflicting opinions. True, from times immemorial, mankind has wanted to know as much as possible about past cultures, fallen empires, extinct peoples; but nobody, before Gobineau, thought of finding one single reason, one single force according

nation against another: "Wer seine Grenzen zu erweitern trachtet, der soll als ein treuloser und Verräther unter der gesamten europaischen Staaten-republik betrachtet werden." See: "Entwurf eines Friedenspaktes." Printed in: Gerhard Ramlow, "Ludwig von der Marwitz und die Anfaenge konservativer Politik und Staats-auffassung in Preussen." *Historische Studien*, Heft 185, p. 92.

³⁷ Translation quoted after *The Inequality of Races* translated by Adrien Collins (1915).

to which civilization always and everywhere would rise and fall.³⁸ Precisely such a law Gobineau demonstrated. Without Darwinism or any other evolutionist theory to influence him, this historian boasted of having introduced history into the family of natural sciences, detected the natural law of all courses of events, reduced all spiritual utterances or cultural phenomena to something "that by virtue of exact science our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our hands can touch."³⁹

The first surprising aspect of the theory, set forth in the midst of the optimistic 19th century, is certainly the fact that the author is fascinated by the fall and hardly interested in the rise of civilizations. At the time of writing the *Essai* Gobineau gave but little thought to the possible use of his theory as a weapon of actual politics, and therefore had the courage to draw the inherent sinister consequences of his law of decay. In contrast to Spengler who predicts only the fall of Western culture, Gobineau foresees with "scientific" precision nothing less than the definite disappearance of Man — or in his words, of the human race — from the face of the earth. After four volumes of rewriting human history, he concludes: "One might be tempted to assign a total duration of 12 to 14 thousand years to human rule over the earth, which era is divided into two periods: the first has passed away and possessed the youth . . . the second has begun and will witness the declining course down toward decrepitude."

It has rightly been observed that Gobineau, thirty years before Nietzsche, was concerned with the problem of "décadence."⁴⁰ There is, however, this difference, that Nietzsche possessed the basic experience of European decadence, writing as he did during the climax of this movement with Baudelaire in France, Swinburne in England, and Wagner in Germany, whereas Gobineau was hardly aware of the variety of this modern *taedium vitae*, and must be regarded as the last

³⁸ Not even Hegel. For his concept of history with its dialectical law of development was concerned neither with the secret of the rise and fall of cultures nor with the death of nations but solely with truth as revealed in the historical process as a whole.

Decay doctrines, on the other hand, seem to spring always from race-thinking. It certainly is not coincidence that another early "believer in race," Benjamin Disraeli, was as fascinated by the fall of cultures as Gobineau, his contemporary.

³⁹ *Essai*, Tome IV, book VI, p. 340.

⁴⁰ See Robert Dreyfus, *La vie et les prophéties du Comte de Gobineau* (Paris, 1905). In: *Cahiers de la quinzaine*, Ser. 6, Cah. 16, p. 56.

heir of Boulainvilliers and the French exiled nobility who without any psychological complications simply and rightly feared for the fate of aristocracy as a caste.⁴¹ When Gobineau was writing his work, in the days of the Bourgeois-King, Louis-Philippe, and the Emperor Napoleon III this fate appeared sealed. In France, unlike either Germany or England, the nobility needed no longer fear the victory of the *Tiers État*. It had already happened and they could only complain. Their distress, as expressed by Gobineau, sometimes comes very near to the great despair of the poets of decadence who, a few decades later, sang the frailty of all things human — “*la neige d’antan*,” — “the snows of yester-year.”

No matter what sources had nourished the vision of the historian who prophesied the end of mankind in a slow natural catastrophe, called history, it had an obvious affinity with poems which gloried in death as though it were the sole aim of life:

“Then star nor sun shall waken,
 Nor any change of light:
 Nor sound of waters shaken,
 Nor any sound or sight:
 Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
 Nor days nor things diurnal;
 Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night.”

(Swinburne, *The Garden of Proserpine*.)

Nor can it be doubted that this anticipation of death had something to do with the sudden outburst of brutality at the end of the century, when poets were among the first to yearn for a machinery of death, be it in France, again under the sign of civil war, or in England under the cover of imperialistic glory, or in Germany behind the clouds of confused mythicism which preached “*der Germanen Untergang*.”

41 Gobineau accepts almost literally the 18th century doctrines about the French people: the bourgeoisie is called “issue... des esclaves gallo-romains” and the nobility is supposed to be germanic. (See *Essai*, Tome II, book IV, p. 445 and the article “Ce qui est arrivé à la France en 1870,” published in: *Europe*, 1923.) Gobineau—the French origin of his title being rather dubious—had strong personal reasons to prefer an international aristocracy. He claimed for himself a special genealogy which led over a Scandinavian pirate to—Odin; whereupon he exclaimed: “Moi aussi, je suis de la race des Dieux.” (See: J. Duesberg, “Le Comte de Gobineau.” In *Revue Générale*, 1939, t. 142.)

It is to this peculiar pessimistic mood, to the active despair of the last decades of the century that Gobineau owed his belated fame. This, however, does not necessarily mean that he himself belonged to the generation of "the merry dance of death and trade" (Joseph Conrad). He was neither a statesman who believed in business nor a poet who praised death. He was only a curious mixture of frustrated nobleman and modern intellectual who almost by accident invented racism. This happened when he saw that he could not simply accept the old doctrines of the two peoples within France and that, in view of changed circumstances, he had to change the old line of defence that the best men necessarily are on top of society. In sad contrast to his teachers, he had to explain why the best men, noblemen, could not even hope to regain their former position. Step by step, he identified the fall of his caste with the fall of France, then of Western civilization, and then of the whole of mankind. Thereby he made that discovery for which he was so much admired by later writers and biographers, the discovery that the fall of civilizations is due to a degeneration of race and that the decay of race is due to the mixture of blood. This implies that every mixture produces bad races and that the lower race always is victorious. This kind of argumentation, almost commonplace after the turn of the century, did not fit in with all the progress doctrines of Gobineau's contemporaries, who soon became obsessed with another *idée fixe*, the "survival of the fittest." The liberal optimism of the victorious bourgeoisie wanted a new edition of the old might-right theory, and not the key to history or the proof of inevitable decay. In vain Gobineau tried to get a wider audience by taking sides in the American slave dispute and by conveniently building his whole system on the basic conflict between white and black. He had to wait almost 50 years to become a success among the elite, and not until the first world war with its wave of death-philosophies could his works claim wide popularity.⁴²

⁴² Compare the Gobineau memorial issue of the French Review *Europe*, 1923. Especially the article of Clément Serpeille de Gobineau, "Le Gobinisme et la pensée moderne." "Mais... ce n'est que... en pleine guerre, que *L'Essai sur les Races* m'apparut comme dominé par une thèse féconde, et seule capable d'expliquer certains phénomènes qui se déroulaient sous nos yeux... j'ai eu la surprise de constater que mon opinion était presque unanimement partagée. Après la guerre, je remarquais que pour presque tous les hommes des jeunes generation l'oeuvre de Gobineau fut une révélation."

What Gobineau himself actually was looking for in the political field was the definition and the creation of an “*élite*” which was to replace aristocracy. Instead of princes, he proposed a “race of princes,” the Aryans, whom he pictured as in danger of being submerged by the lower non-Aryan classes through that old foe of feudalism: democracy. The concept of race made it possible to organize the “innate personalities” of German romanticism, to define them as members of a natural aristocracy, destined to rule over all others. If race and mixture of races are the all-determining factors for the individual—and Gobineau did not assume the existence of “pure” breeds — it is possible to pretend that physical superiorities might come into existence in every individual no matter what his present social situation is, that every exceptional man belongs to the “true surviving sons of . . . the Meroving,” the “sons of kings.” Thanks to race, an “*élite*” would be formed whose members could lay claim to the old prerogatives of feudal families, and this only by asserting that they felt like noblemen; the acceptance of the race ideology as such could become conclusive proof that an individual was “well-bred,” that through his veins ran “blue blood” and that a superior origin claimed superior rights. From an identical political event, therefore, the decline of the nobility, the Count drew two contradictory consequences — the decay of the human race and the formation of a new natural aristocracy. But he did not live to see the practical application of his teachings which overcame all inherent contradictions, when the new race-aristocracy actually started out to effect the inevitable decay of mankind in a supreme effort to destroy it.

Following the example of his forerunners, the French exiled noblemen, Gobineau saw in his race-“*élite*” not only a bulwark against democracy but also against the “Canaan monstrosity” of patriotism.⁴³ And since France still happened to be the “*patrie*” *par excellence*, for her government — whether kingdom or Empire or Republic — was still based upon the essential equality of all men, and since, worst of all, she was in his time the only country in which even people with a

43 *Essai*, Tome II, Book IV, p. 440. Compare p. 445, note: “Ce mot patrie. . . ne nous est vraiment revenu que lorsque les couches gallo-romaines ont relevé la tête et joué un rôle dans la politique. C’est avec leur triomphe que le patriotisme a recommencé à être une vertu.”

black skin could enjoy civil rights, it was natural for Gobineau to pay allegiance not to the French people, but to the English, and later, after the French defeat of 1871, to the German victors.⁴⁴ Nor should this lack of dignity be judged accidental or this opportunism considered an unhappy coincidence. The old saying that nothing succeeds like success reckons with people who are used to various and arbitrary opinions. Ideologists who pretend to possess the key to reality are forced into changing and twisting their opinions about single instances according to the latest events and never can afford to come into conflict with their ever-changing deity: reality. It would be absurd to ask reliability of people who by their very convictions are bound to justify any given situation.

It must be conceded that up to the time when the Nazis, in establishing themselves as a race-*"élite,"* frankly bestowed their contempt on all people, including the German, French racism was the most consistent, for it never fell into the weakness of patriotism. (This attitude did not change even during the last war; true, the *"essence aryenne"* no longer was a monopoly of the Germans but rather of the Anglo-Saxons, the Swedes and the Normans, but nation, patriotism and law still were considered "prejudices, fictitious and nominal values.")⁴⁵ Even Taine believed firmly in the superior genius of the "Germanic nation"⁴⁶ and Ernest Renan was probably the first to oppose the "Semites" to the "Aryans" as a decisive *"division du genre humain,"* although he held civilization to be the great superior force which destroys local originalities as well as original race differences.⁴⁷ All the loose racial

44 See Seillière, *op. cit.*, Tome I: *Le Comte de Gobineau et l'Aryanisme historique*, p. 32: "Dans l'Essai l'Allemagne est à peine germanique, l'Angleterre l'est en plus haut degré. . . . Gobineau changera d'avis, sans doute, mais sous l'influence du succès." It is interesting to note that for Seillière who during his studies became an ardent adherent of Gobinism—"la sphère intellectuelle ou devront vraisemblablement s'acclimater les pousseurs du XX^e siècle"—success appeared as quite a sufficient reason for Gobineau's suddenly revised opinion.

45 Examples could be multiplied. The quotation is taken from Camille Spiess, *Impérialismes. Gobinisme en France*, (Paris, 1917).

46 For Taine's stand see: John S. White, *Taine on Race and Genius*. In: *Social Research*, February 1943.

47 In Gobineau's opinion, the Semites were a white hybrid race bastardized by a mixture with blacks. For Renan see: *Histoire Générale et Système comparé des Langues*, (1863). Ie partie, pp. 4, 503 and *passim*. The same distinction in his *Langues Sémitiques*, I, p. 15.

talk which is so characteristic of French writers after 1870,⁴⁸ even if they are not racists in any strict sense of the word, follows anti-national, pro-Germanic lines.

If the consistent anti-national trend of Gobinism served to equip the enemies of French democracy and, later, of the Third Republic with real or fictitious allies beyond the frontiers of their country, the specific amalgamation of the race with the "*élite*" concept equipped the international intelligentsia with new and exciting psychological means to play on the great playground of history. Gobineau's "*filles des rois*" were close relatives of all the romantic heroes and saints and geniuses and supermen of the late 19th century, all of whom can hardly hide their German Romantic origin. The inherent irresponsibility of Romantic opinions received a new stimulant from Gobineau's mixture of races, because this mixture indicated a historical event of the past which could be traced within the depths of one's own self. This meant that inner experiences could be interpreted as of historical significance, that one's own self had become the battlefield of history. "Since I read the *Essai*, every time that some conflict stirred up the hidden sources of my being, I have felt that a relentless battle was going on in my soul, the battle between the black, the yellow, the Semite and the Aryans."⁴⁹ Significant as this and similar confessions might be for the state of mind of modern intellectuals, who are the true heirs of Romanticism whatever opinion they happen to hold, they indicate, nevertheless, the essential harmlessness and political innocence of people whom probably each and every ideology would have been able to force into line.

V

The "rights of Englishmen" and the "rights of men."

While the seeds of German race-thinking were planted during the Napoleonic wars, the first indications of the later English development appeared during the French Revolution and may be traced back to the man who violently denounced it as the "most astonishing (crisis)

⁴⁸ This has very well been exposed by Jacques Barzun, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ This surprising gentleman is nobody else than the well-known writer and historian Elie Faure, *Gobineau et le Problème des Races*, in *Europe*, 1923.

that has hitherto happened in the world," — to Edmund Burke.⁵⁰ The tremendous influence his work has exercised not only on England but on the whole Continent, and above all on German political thought, is well-known. The fact, however, must be stressed because of resemblances between German and English race-thinking as contrasted with the French brand. These resemblances stem from the fact that both countries having defeated the Tricolor showed a certain tendency to discriminate against the ideas of *Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité* as foreign inventions. Social inequality being the basis of English society, British Conservatives felt not a little uncomfortable when it came to the matter of the "rights of men." According to opinions widely held by 19th century Tories, inequality belonged to the national English character. Beaconsfield found "something better than the Rights of Men in the rights of Englishmen" and to Sir James Stephen "few things in history (seemed) so beggarly as the degree to which the French allowed themselves to be excited about such things."⁵¹ This is one of the reasons why they could afford to develop race-thinking along national lines until the end of the 19th century, whereas the same opinions in France, from the very beginning showed their true anti-national face.

The main argument of Burke against the "abstract principles" of the French Revolution is contained in the following sentence: "It has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity; as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom, without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right."⁵² This principle of inheritance applied to the very nature of liberty has been the ideological basis from which English nationalism received its curious touch of race-feeling ever since the time of the French Revolution. Formulated by a middle-class writer, it signified the direct acceptance of the feudal concept of liberty as the sum total of privileges inherited together with title and land. Without encroaching upon the rights of the privileged class

⁵⁰ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (1790). (Everyman's Library Edition, New York), p. 8.

⁵¹ *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, (1873), p. 254. See: Benjamin Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck*, p. 184.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

within the English nation, Burke enlarged the very principle of these privileges to include the whole English people, constituting them as a kind of nobility among nations. Hence he drew his contempt for those who claimed their franchise as the rights of men, rights which he saw fit to claim only as "the rights of Englishmen." (p. 30.)

In England nationalism has developed without serious attacks on the old feudal classes. This has been possible because the English gentry, from the 17th century on and in ever increasing numbers, had assimilated the higher ranks of the bourgeoisie so that sometimes actually the common man could attain the position of a lord. By this process much of the ordinary caste arrogance of nobility was taken away and a considerable sense of general responsibility for the nation as a whole was created; but by the same token, feudal concepts and mentality could influence the political ideas of the lower classes easier than it was possible elsewhere. Thus, the concept of inheritance was accepted almost unchanged and applied to the entire British "stock." The consequence of this assimilation of noble standards was that the specific English brand of race-thinking became almost obsessed with inheritance theories and their modern equivalent, eugenics.

Ever since the European peoples had made practical attempts to include in their conception of humanity all the peoples of the earth, they have been irritated by the fact of great bodily differences between themselves and the peoples they found on other continents.⁵³ The 18th century enthusiasm for the diversity in which the all-present identical nature of man and reason could find expression had given a rather thin cover of arguments to the all-important question, whether the Christian teaching of the unity and equality of all men, based upon common descent from a single original couple of parents, would be kept in the hearts of men who were faced with tribes which, as far as we know, never had found by themselves any adequate expression of human reason or human passion in either cultural deeds or popular customs, and

⁵³ A significant if moderate echo of this inner bewilderment can be found in many an 18th century travelling report. Voltaire thought it important enough to make a special note in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*: "Nous avons vu d'ailleurs combien ce globe porte de races d'hommes différentes, et à quel point le premier nègre et le premier blanc qui se rencontrèrent durent être étonnés l'un de l'autre." (Article: Homme.)

which had developed human institutions only to a very low level. This new problem which appeared on the historical scene of Europe and America with the more intimate knowledge of African tribes had already caused, and this especially in America and some British possessions, a relapse into social organizational forms which were thought to have been definitely liquidated by Christianity. But even slavery, though actually erected on a strict racial basis, did not make the slave-holding peoples race-conscious before the 19th century. During the whole 18th century, American slave-holders themselves considered it a temporary institution and wanted to abolish it gradually. Most of them probably would have said with Jefferson: "I tremble when I think that God is just."

In France, where the problem of black tribes had been met with the desire to assimilate and educate,⁵⁴ the great scientist Leclerc de Buffon⁵⁵ had given a first classification of races which based upon the European peoples and classifying all others by their differences, had taught equality by strict juxtaposition.⁵⁶ In Germany, Herder had refused to apply the "ignoble word" race to men and even the first cultural historian of mankind to make use of the classification of different species, Gustav Klemm,⁵⁷ still respected the idea of mankind as general framework for his investigations.

But in America and England, whose people had to solve a problem of co-habitation after the abolition of slavery, things were considerably less easy. With the exception of South Africa, — a country which influenced Western racism only after the "scramble" for Africa in the 'eighties — these nations were the first to deal with the race-problem in practical politics. The abolition of slavery sharpened the inherent conflicts rather than found a solution for existing serious difficulties. This was especially true for England where the "rights of English-

54 To what extent the men of the French Revolution were aware of the terrible danger involved in colonial possessions may be seen by the famous words of Robespierre: "Périssent les colonies s'il doit nous en coûter notre honneur, notre liberté!"

55 *Histoire Naturelle*, (1769-89).

56 Or to put it in the admirably precise words of Tocqueville: "Buffon et après lui Flourens croient à la diversité des races, mais à l'unité de l'espèce humaine." *op. cit.*, Letter of May 15, 1852.

57 *Allgemeine Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit*, (1843-1852). See Tome I, p. 196.

men" were not replaced by a new political orientation which might have declared the rights of men. The abolition of slavery in the British possessions in 1834 and the discussion preceding the American Civil War, therefore, found in England a highly confused public opinion which was a fertile soil for the various naturalistic doctrines which arose during these decades.

The first of these was represented by the polygenists who challenging the Bible as a book of pious lies, denied any relationship between human "races;" their main achievement was the destruction of the idea of the natural law as the uniting link between all men and all peoples. While not stating any predestined racial superiority, polygenism arbitrarily isolated all peoples from one another by the deep abyss of the physical impossibility of human understanding and communication and had a decisive influence on the actual behavior of Englishmen abroad, their typical impartial aloofness by which they seemed to indicate that the world is divided between themselves and all other peoples. Polygenism explains why "East is East and West is West; And never the twain shall meet," (Kipling) and helped much to prevent intermarriage and to promote discrimination against individuals of mixed origin. According to polygenism, these people actually are not true human beings because they belong to no single race, but "every cell is the theater of a civil war."⁵⁸ Lasting as the influence of polygenism on English race-thinking proved to be in the long run, in the 19th century it was soon to be beaten in the field of public opinion by another doctrine. This doctrine also started from the principle of inheritance but added to it the political principle of the 19th century, progress, whence it came to the opposite but far more convincing conclusion that man is not only related to man but to animal life, that the existence of lower races shows clearly that gradual differences alone separate man and beast and that an all-powerful struggle for existence dominates all living things. Darwinism was especially strengthened by the fact that it followed the old path of the might-right doctrine. But while this doctrine when in the exclusive service of aristocrats had spoken the proud language of conquest, it was now translated into

⁵⁸ A. Carhill, *The Lost Dominion*, (1924), p. 158.

the rather bitter language of people who had known the hard struggle for daily bread, and had fought their way to the relative security of upstarts.

Darwinism met with such overwhelming success because it provided, on the basis of inheritance, the ideological weapons for race as well as class rule and could be used for as well as against race-discrimination. Politically speaking, Darwinism, as such, was neutral and has led, indeed, to all kinds of pacifism and cosmopolitanism as well as to the sharpest forms of imperialistic ideologies.⁵⁹ For political discussion, Darwinism offered two important concepts: the struggle for existence with optimistic assertion of the necessary and automatic "survival of the fittest" and the indefinite possibilities, which seemed to lie in the evolution of man out of animal life and which started the new "science" of eugenics.

The doctrine of the necessary survival of the fittest with its implication that those on top of society eventually are the "fittest" died as the old conquest doctrine had died, namely, at the very moment when, either in England herself, the ruling classes or, abroad, the English domination in colonial possessions were no longer absolutely secure, and when it became highly doubtful whether those who are "fittest" today would still be the fittest tomorrow. The other part of Darwinism, the genealogy of man from animal life unfortunately survived. Eugenics pretended to be able to overcome the arbitrariness of the survival-doctrine with which nobody could foretell who would come out as the fittest and to be able to provide for means of development which, when adopted as a nation, would lead it to the immortal fields of everlasting fitness.⁶⁰ The process of selection had only to be changed from a natural necessity which worked behind the backs of men into an "arti-

⁵⁹ During the seventies and 'eighties of the last century, Darwinism still was almost exclusively in the hands of the utilitarian anti-colonial party in England. And the first philosopher of evolutionism, Herbert Spencer, who treated sociology as part of biology, believed natural selection to benefit the evolution of mankind and an everlasting peace. See: Friedrich Brie, *Imperialistische Stroemungen in der englischen Litteratur*, (Halle, 1928). Pp. 144, 145.

⁶⁰ This possible consequence of applied eugenics was stressed in Germany during the 'twenties as a reaction to Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*. See for instance: Otto Bangert, *Gold oder Blut*, (1927). "Eine Kulture kann also . . . von ewiger Dauer sein. . . ." p. 17.

ficial," consciously applied physical tool.⁶¹ Finally the last disciples of Darwinism in Germany decided to leave the field of scientific research altogether, to forget about the search for the missing link between man and ape, and started instead their practical attempts to change man into that something that Darwinists thought an ape is.

But before Nazism in the course of its imperialistic policy attempted to change man into a beast, there were numerous efforts to develop him on a strictly hereditary basis into a God.⁶² Not only Herbert Spencer, but all the early evolutionists and Darwinists "had as strong a faith in humanity's angelic future as in man's simian origin."⁶³ Selected inheritance was believed to result in "hereditary genius,"⁶⁴ and again aristocracy was held to be the natural outcome, not of politics, but of natural selection, of pure breed. To transform the whole nation into a natural aristocracy from which the best selected, the choice exemplars, would develop into the heights of geniuses and supermen, was one of the many "ideas" which frustrated liberal intellectuals produced when they hoped to replace the old governing classes by a new "élite"

61 For the inherent bestiality of eugenics, see the early remarks of Ernst Haeckel, who defends mercy-death because of the "useless expenses for family and state" caused by incurable illness. See: *Lebenswunder*, p. 128 ff.

62 Almost a century before evolutionism had put on the clothes of science, warning voices had already foretold the inherent consequences of a madness that was then merely in the stage of pure imagination. Voltaire more than once, had played with evolutionary opinions—see chiefly "Philosophie Générale: Métaphysique, Morale et Théologie," *Oeuvres Complètes*, (1785), Tome 40, p. 16 ff. He wrote: "L'Imagination se complaint d'abord à voir le passage imperceptible de la matière brute à la matière organisée, des plantes aux zoophytes, de ces zoophytes aux animaux, de ceux-ci à l'homme, de l'homme aux génies, de ces génies revêtus d'un petit corps aérien à des substances immatérielles; et . . . jusqu'à Dieu même. . . mais le plus parfait des génies créés par l'Être suprême peut-il devenir Dieu? n'y a-t-il pas l'infini entre Dieu et lui? . . . n'y a-t-il pas visiblement un vide entre le singe et l'homme?" In: *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. Article: "Chaîne des Êtres Créés."

63 Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Hayes rightly stresses the strong practical morale of all these early materialists. He explains "this curious divorce of morals from beliefs" by "what later sociologists have described as a time lag" (p. 130). This explanation, however appears rather weak if one recalls that, on the other hand, materialists who, like Haeckel in Germany or Vacher de Lapouge in France, had left the calm of studies and research for propaganda activities, did not greatly suffer from such a time-lag; that, on the other hand, their contemporaries who were not tinged by their materialistic doctrines, such as Barrès and Co. in France, were very practical adherents of the perverse brutality which swept France during the Dreyfus Affair. The sudden decay of morals in the Western world seems to be caused less by an autonomous development of certain "ideas" than by a series of new political events and new political and social problems, which confronted a bewildered and confused humanity.

64 Such was the title of the widely read book of Fr. Galton, published in 1869, which caused a flood of literature about the same topic in the following decades.

through non-political means. At the end of the century, writers who treated political topics used the terms of biology and zoology as a matter of course, and zoologists wrote "Biological Views of our Foreign Policy" as though they had detected an infallible guide for statesmen.⁶⁵ All of them forwarded new possibilities with which the "survival of the fittest" could be controlled and regulated in accordance with the national interests of the English people.⁶⁶

The most dangerous aspect of these evolutionist doctrines is that they combined the inheritance concept with the insistence on personal achievements and individual character which had been so important for the self-respect of the 19th century middle-class. This middle-class called for scientists who could prove that not the aristocrats but the great men were the true representatives of the nation, in whom the "genius of the race" was personified. These scientists provided an ideal escape from political responsibility when they "proved" the early statement of Benjamin Disraeli that the great man is "the personification of race, its choice exemplar." The development of this "genius" found its logical end when another disciple of evolutionism simply declared: "The Englishman is the Overman and the history of England is the history of his evolution."⁶⁷

It is significant for English as it was for German race-thinking that it came from middle-class writers and not from the nobility, that it was born of the desire to extend the benefits of noble standards to all classes and that it was nourished by trends of true national feelings. In this respect, Carlyle's concepts of geniuses and heroes were much more

⁶⁵ The most important works of this kind are: Thomas Huxley, *The Struggle for Existence in Human Society*, (1888). His main thesis: The fall of civilizations is necessary only as long as birth-rate is uncontrolled. Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution*, (1894). John B. Crozier, *History of Intellectual Development on the Lines of Modern Evolution*, (1897-1901). Karl Pearson, *National Life* (1901), Professor of Eugenics at London University, was among the first to describe progress as a kind of impersonal monster which devours everything that happens to be in its way. Charles H. Harvey, *The Biology of British Politics* (1904), argues that by strict control of the "struggle for life" within the nation, a nation could become all-powerful for the inevitable fight with other people for existence. "A Biological View of Our Foreign Policy" was published by P. Charles Michel in *Saturday Review*, London, February, 1896.

⁶⁶ See especially K. Pearson, *op. cit.*, But Fr. Galton had already stated: "I wish to emphasize the fact that the improvement of the natural gifts of future generations of the human race is largely under our control." *op. cit.* (ed. 1892), p. xxvi.

⁶⁷ See: *Testament of John Davidson* (1908).

the weapons of a "social reformer" than doctrines of a man who has been very unjustly accused of being the "Father of British Imperialism."⁶⁸ His hero-worship which earned him equally wide audiences in England and in Germany came from the same sources as the personality-worship of German Romanticism. It was the same assertion and glorification of an innate greatness of the individual character, independent of his social environment. Among the men who influenced the colonial movement from the middle of the 19th century until the outbreak of actual imperialism at its end, not one has escaped the influence of Carlyle but not one could be accused of preaching outspoken racism. Carlyle himself, in his essay about the "Nigger Question" is concerned with the means which might help the West Indies to produce "heroes." Charles Dilke, whose *Greater Britain* (1869) sometimes is taken as the beginning of imperialism⁶⁹ was an advanced radical who glorified the English colonists as being part of the same British nation against those who would look down upon them and their lands as mere colonies. J. R. Seeley whose *Expansion of England* (1883) sold 80,000 copies in less than two years, still respects in the Hindus a foreign people and distinguishes them clearly from "barbarians."⁷⁰ Even Froude whose admiration for the Boers, the first white people to be converted clearly to the tribal philosophy of racism, might appear suspect, even Froude opposed too many rights for South Africa because "self-government in South Africa meant the government of the natives by the European colonists and that is not self-government."⁷¹

Very much as in Germany, English nationalism was born and stimulated by a middle-class which never had entirely emancipated itself from the nobility and therefore bore the first germs of race-thinking. But unlike Germany, whose lack of unity provoked an ideological wall as a substitute for historical or geographical facts, the British Isles were completely separated from the surrounding world by natural frontiers

68 See: C. A. Bodelsen, *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (1924), p. 22 ff.

69 See: E. H. Damce, *The Victorian Illusion* (1928). "Imperialism began with a book... Dilke's *Greater Britain*..."

70 "We are not cleverer than the Hindu, our minds are not richer or larger than his. We cannot astonish him as we astonish the barbarian by putting before him ideas that he never dreamt of." (ed. 1914), pp. 255-256.

71 *Two Lectures on South Africa*.

and England as a nation had to devise a theory of unity among people who lived in far-flung colonies beyond the seas, separated from the mother country by thousands of miles. The only link between them was common descent, common origin, common language. The separation of the United States had shown that these links in themselves do not guarantee domination; and not only America, other colonies too, though not with the same violence, showed strong tendencies to develop along other constitutional lines than the mother country. In order to save these former British nationals, Dilke, influenced by Carlyle, spoke of "Saxondom"⁷² a word that seemed capable of winning back even the people of the United States to whom one-third of his book is devoted.⁷³ Being a radical, Dilke could act as though the War of Independence had not been a war between two nations, but the English form of 18th century civil war, in which he belatedly sided with the Republicans. For here lies one of the reasons for the surprising fact that social reformers and radicals were the promoter of nationalism in England: not only did they want to keep the colonists because they held them necessary outlets for the lower classes; but they actually wanted to retain the influence on the mother country which these more radical sons of the British Isles exercised.⁷⁴ Whatever later political writers may have used "Saxondom" for, in Dilke's work it had a genuine political meaning for a nation that no longer was held together by a limited country. "The idea which in all the length of my travels has been at once my fellow and my guide — the key wherewith to unlock the hidden things of strange new lands — is the conception . . . of the grandeur of our race already girdling the earth, which it is destined perhaps, eventually to overspread." (Preface) For Dilke, common origin, inheritance, "grandeur of race" was neither a physical

⁷² "Saxondom is with us, whether you see it or not. . . . historians have concentrated upon constitutional issues only because they are blind to the issues that matter. Half the world is English: What about the rest?" Quoted from Damce, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁷³ See Damce, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁷⁴ This motif is strongest with Froude who "wishes to retain the colonies because he thought it possible to reproduce in them a simpler state of society and a nobler way of life than were possible in industrial England." C. A. Bodelsen *op. cit.*, p. 199. Seeley's *Expansion of England* was planned in the same way: "When we have accustomed ourselves to contemplate the whole Empire together and we call it *all* England we shall see that here too is a United States," p. 184.

fact nor the key to history but a much needed guide in the present world, the only reliable link within a boundless space.

Because English colonists had spread all over the earth, it so happened that the most dangerous concept of nationalism, the idea of "national mission," received in England an especially strong stimulant.⁷⁵ Although national mission as such developed for a long while untinged by racial influences and in all countries where peoples aspired to nationhood, it proved finally to have a peculiarly close affinity to race-thinking. The above-quoted English nationalists may all be considered as cases on the borderline.⁷⁶ For all of them though not giving up the idea of mankind consider England as the supreme guarantee for humanity. They could not but be inclined to overstress this nationalistic concept because of its inherent dissolution of the bond between soil and people which was implied in the mission idea, a dissolution which for English politics was not a propagated ideology but an established fact with which every statesman had to reckon. What separates them definitely from later racists is that none of them was ever seriously concerned with discrimination against other peoples as lower races, if only for the reason that the countries they were talking about, Canada and Australia, were almost empty and did not have any serious population problem.

It is, therefore, not by accident that the first English statesman who repeatedly stressed his belief in races and race-superiority as a determining factor of history and politics, was a man who without any particular interest in the colonies and the English colonists — "the colonial deadweight which we do not govern" — wanted to extend British imperial power to Asia and who, indeed, forcefully strengthened the position of Great Britain in the only colony with a grave population and cultural problem. It was Benjamin Disraeli who made the Queen of England the Empress of India. The reasons which led Disraeli even in the early 'thirties to be such a consistent upholder of race-

⁷⁵ It would lead us too far here to discuss the religious origin, the secularization, and the final perversions of this idea which ended shamefully in the different pan-movements of our century.

⁷⁶ For the same phenomenon in France see Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l'Ensemble du Positivisme* (1848), in which he expressed the hope for a united organized, regenerated humanity under the leadership—"présidence"—of France, p. 384 ff.

thinking that he opposed "this modern newfangled sentimental principle of nationality"⁷⁷ are manifold. There was, probably first of all, the fact that he, being a Jew and considered by his own party as an upstart, was clever enough to make an asset of the fact that he did not belong to average middle-class society but to another "race" with as old a genealogy as any aristocracy could boast of. There was also certainly, the influence which Carlyle's heroic historiography had exercised upon ambitious young men who lacked a natural position in political and social life, and for whom hero-worship was as convenient as personality-worship had been for German intellectuals. But there was also the definite line of his policy which brought him automatically within very close relationship to more recent ideologies.⁷⁸

Disraeli was the first English statesman who regarded India as the cornerstone of an Empire and who wanted to cut the ties which linked the English people to the nations of the Continent.⁷⁹ Thereby he laid the foundations of a fundamental change in British rule in India. This colony had been governed with the usual ruthlessness of conquerors — of men whom Burke had called "the breakers of law in India." It was now to receive a carefully planned administration which aimed at the establishment of a permanent government by administrative measures. This experiment has brought England very near to the danger against which Burke had already warned, namely, that the "breakers of law in India" might become "the makers of law for England."⁸⁰ Fortunately

77 W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (New York, 1929) Vol. I, Book 3.

78 This peculiar tendency of Disraeli's political convictions is stressed by all his biographers. It is most clearly expressed in his study of the life of his friend Lord George Bentinck in which he stated: "The truth is, progress and reaction, are but words to mystify the millions. . . . the vicissitudes of history find their main solution—all is race" and in his novel *Endymion* in which he defines: "It (Race) is the key to history Language and religion do not make race. There is only one thing which makes a race and that is blood."

79 "Power and influence we should exercise in Asia; consequently in Eastern Europe; consequently in Western Europe." (Monypenny-Buckle, *op. cit.*, II, p. 210). But "If ever Europe by her shortsightedness falls into an inferior and exhausted state, for England there will remain an illustrious future." (*Ibid.*, I, Book IV, ch. 2). For "England is no longer a mere European power. . . . she is really more an Asiatic power than a European." (*Ibid.*, II, p. 201).

80 Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43: "The power of the House of Commons. . . is indeed great; and long may it be able to preserve its greatness. . . and it will do so, as long as it can keep the breaker of the law in India from becoming the maker of law for England." About the "backward and inward effect" of empire-making see: Ernest Barker, *Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 33.

enough, up to now this has not happened; despite repeated complaints of the Indian party in England about the interference of the Parliament with their administration,⁸¹ the power of Parliament, the democratic institutions and the soundness of the nation as a whole have proved stronger than all imperialistic aspirations.⁸²

The new policy introduced by Disraeli signified the establishment of an exclusive caste in a foreign country whose only function was rule and not colonization. For the realization of this conception which Disraeli did not live to see accomplished, racism would, indeed, be an indispensable tool. It foreshadowed the menacing transformation of the people from a nation into an "unmixed race of a first-rate organization" that felt itself as "the aristocracy of nature" — to put it in Disraeli's own words.⁸³

What we have followed so far is the story of an opinion in which we only now, after all the terrible experiences of our times, have come to see the first dawn of racism. But although racism has revived elements of race-thinking in every country, it is not the history of an idea endowed by some "immanent logic" with which we were concerned. Race-thinking had been a source of convenient arguments for varying political conflicts, but it never had possessed any kind of monopoly in the political life of the respective nations; it had sharpened and exploited existing conflicting interests or existing political problems, but it never had created any new conflicts or produced new categories of political thinking. Racism sprang from experiences and political constellations which were still unknown and would have been utterly strange even to such devoted defenders of "race" as Gobineau or Disraeli or Nietzsche. There is an abyss between the men of brilliant and facile

⁸¹ The most interesting example of these writings is A. Carhill's *The Lost Dominion* (1924).

⁸² It is very interesting to note that one of the most violent and uncompromising foes of democracy in England, Sir James F. Stephen, for whom equality and liberty were "big names for a small thing" (op. cit. p. 253 and passim), confessed as early as 1883, "that there is no transaction in the history of England of which we have more just cause to be proud. . . . than the establishment of the Indian Empire." See: "Foundations of the Government of India," in *The Nineteenth Century*, No. LXXX October 1883.

⁸³ In his novel *Coningsby*, quoted from *Wit and Wisdom of Benjamin Disraeli* (New York, 1881), p. 289.

conceptions and the men of brutal deeds and active bestiality, an abyss which no intellectual explanation is able to bridge. It is highly probable that the thinking in terms of race would have disappeared in due time together with other irresponsible opinions of the nineteenth century, if the "scramble for Africa" and the new era of imperialism had not exposed Western humanity to new and shocking experiences. Imperialism would have necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible "explanation" and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking ever had existed in the civilized world.

Since, however, race-thinking did exist, it proved to be a powerful help for racism. The very existence of such an opinion which could boast of a certain tradition served to hide the destructive forces of the new doctrine which, without this appearance of national respectability or the seeming sanction of tradition, might have disclosed its utter incompatibility with all Western political or moral standards of the past, even before it was allowed to destroy the comity of the European nations.