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VOLUNTARISTIC SOCIALISM:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE
IMPLICATIONS OF HENDRIK DE MAN'S
IDEOLOGY¹⁾

With the publication in 1926 of *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*² the hitherto obscure Belgian radical Hendrik de Man became a figure of international import in socialist circles. The work, aptly retitled in some later editions as *Beyond Marxism*, was a categorical and comprehensive challenge to the ideological monopoly that Marxism had long maintained on the dominant forms of the Continental labor and socialist movements. The appearance of the book in German, the author explained, was particularly appropriate in view of the role of that language in the historical development of Marxist theory, as well as because of the critical importance of Germany to the socialist movement.³ The treatise rapidly received broader circulation by translation into some ten European languages, and enjoyed 14 editions; it provoked the comment of just about every socialist theoretician on the Continent, excited the attention of academics, and made its author the center of violent controversy. If the declarations of Bernard Lavergne and Hermann Keyserling that it was the most important work in socialist theory since *Das Kapital* could be dismissed as extravagant and interested, Theodor Heuss' more modest judgment that this was "the weightiest analysis of the Marxist thinker [i.e., Marx] and his effects that up to now has been attempted from the

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² (Jena, 1926); in the present study the English translation by Eden and Cedar Paul, *Psychology of Socialism* (London, 1928), will be quoted. Hereinafter referred to as *Psychology*.

³ "Author's Foreword to the English Translation", *Psychology of Socialism* (London, 1928), 7-9.

explicitly socialist side” carried telling conviction.¹ The stature of the author was soon confirmed by the awesomely authoritative *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* through the appearance in its pages of de Man’s reviews of the newest publications concerned with the problems of the worker in industrial society, and there was even an abortive attempt made on the part of fellow-thinkers to launch a periodical with de Man as editor-in-chief.²

The basic explanation for the extraordinary impact of the *Psychology* is undoubtedly to be sought not so much in the inherent cogency of its contents as in the pertinence of its argument to the situation of the post-war socialist. After all, as many reviewers pointed out, it was merely another in the long list of Marx-slayers that had appeared; a new “refutation” of Marx was announced by the bourgeois press every six months. The singular attraction of the book lay in the fact that, while the object of the attack was familiar, the impulsion of the author – to radicalize the socialist movement – corresponded to the need of many a socialist who found himself frustrated and disconcerted by the increasingly conspicuous gap between radical aspiration and conservative practice.

Tension between theory and practice, evident long before the war but covered up by ritual subscription to revolutionary ideology, became an open scandal only upon the *crise de conscience* presented by World War I. If the minuscule Bolshevik party, largely in the control of exiles proscribed by the Russian government, could afford to take the puristic stand of “revolutionary defeatism”, other socialist parties of the Allied countries to a large extent buried their former bitter factionalism regarding budget-voting and “ministerialism” to unite with clear conscience in support of national resistance to “German

¹ Lavergne’s comment was in the introduction of a book he edited: André Philip, Henri de Man et la crise doctrinale du socialisme, Editions de l’Année Politique française et étrangère: Collection des Réformes Politiques et Sociales, sous la direction de Bernard Lavergne (Paris, 1928); Keyserling’s comment was in Weg zur Vollendung, B. XII (12 August 1926), 333–335. De Man, for some years a neighbor and personal friend of the latter, had given a positive analysis of his publications and of his Darmstadt “Schule für Weisheit”: see “Germany’s New Prophets,” Yale Review, v. XIII, n. 4 (July, 1924), 665–683. Heuss’ judgment was expressed in his review of the *Psychology* in the Berliner Börsen-Courier, 23 May 1926. (De Man Archives in the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam).

² Archiv B.LVII-LVIII (1927–1928), passim. Many of the same individuals – Paul Tillich, August Rathmann, Karl Mennicke, among others – were to revive this effort after the meeting in Heppenheim in 1928 (see Sozialismus aus dem Glauben: Verhandlungen der Sozialistischen Tagung in Heppenheim [Zürich-Leipzig, 1929]); the first issue of the Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus, to which de Man contributed a number of articles, mostly book reviews, in his capacity as contributing editor, appeared in January 1930. (De Man Archives).

militarism". The position of the formidable socialist parties of the Central Powers was more troubled; the ideological convolutions and anguished soul-searching accompanying the famous Reichstag vote for war credits of 4 August 1914 seemed to many a radical nurtured on faith in the pre-eminence of *Sozialdemokratie* a travesty of the spirit of international socialism. But with the unfolding of the catastrophic nature of twentieth century warfare and the dimming of hope for an ideologically significant outcome of the struggle, many socialists of both camps began to have second thoughts as to the wisdom of the course their parties had taken, and so arose, supported by socialists of neutral countries and fomented by the Bolsheviks for their own purposes, the Zimmerwald movement for the reconciliation of the combatants. Exactly because of the enormity of the sacrifices required by the war, moral commitment was such as to make rational discussion of the issues impossible, and on both sides while official party policies remained substantially unchanged the unity of conviction that had been proclaimed in the early days of the war was presently undermined by the emergence of fervid oppositional groups that soon were to take on organizational form.¹

When the settlement of Versailles proved a distorted reflection of even the liberal Wilsonian design, the oppositional groups were fortified in their contempt for the compliancy of the old leaders, and those who earlier had not been able to bring themselves to admit that the sacrifices had been in vain had now to confront "*la grande désillusion*".² Adding to radical discontent was the disappointing nature of rewards for socialist participation in the parliamentary process: factory councils and a socialization committee, laws against alcoholism and even an egalitarian suffrage system were poor substitutes for dreams of the revolutionary transformation of society. Vexation was furthermore greatly exacerbated by the intrusion of the Communist parties, which, capitalizing on their strategic symbolic position as that wing of the socialist movement "farthest to the left" and representing an

¹ See James Joll, *The Second International 1889-1914* (London, 1955); and Merle Fainsod, *International Socialism and the World War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935).

² An article of this title by de Man appeared in *Le Peuple*, [Brussels] 26 January 1919. It was signed "Un officier socialiste". – For de Man's own ideological and personal reaction to the trauma of the war, see *K Russkomu Soldatu* [To the Russian Soldier] (Moscow, n.d. [1917]); *The Remaking of a Mind. A Soldier's Thoughts on War and Reconstruction* (New York and London, 1919); and *La Leçon de la guerre* (Brussels, 1920) [a reprinting of articles originally appearing weekly in *Le Peuple* 7 May – 3 June 1919]. Further evidence is provided in his three significantly different writings of his autobiography: *Après Coup* (Mémoires) (Brussels-Paris, 1941); *Cavalier Seul – Quarante-cinq années de socialisme européen* (Geneva, 1948); and *Gegen den Strom – Memoiren eines europäischen Sozialisten* (Stuttgart, 1953). – Unless otherwise specified, all references in this article are to works by de Man.

undeniably revolutionary cause, exercised an almost irresistible attraction for those chagrined by the compromises of politics within the bourgeois system. Socialists not won over to the Bolshevik cause found themselves in the vulnerable position of being identified with a society that was sponsoring counter-revolutionary Interventionism and of being charged with the fateful responsibility for “splitting the working class”. It is understandable that it was in Germany, racked by defeat and dissension, where a Social Democratic Minister of War employed *Freikorps* troops to suppress strikers, that the dilemma of the radicals was most cruelly experienced.¹

Under these circumstances it is easy to see why de Man’s incessantly reiterated calls for a radical regeneration of the socialist movement met with a ready response. The uniqueness of his approach lay in the fact that he diagnosed the opportunism, reformism, bureaucratization, and “embourgeoisification” of the socialist movement as primarily consequent upon the nature of the Marxist theory by which it received theoretical guidance.² An alternative and more adequate theoretical equipment would enable the socialist movement to escape the contamination of its environment. Thus this was no merely academic treatise of a *Kathedersozialist*, despite its bulky and tightly-argued pages; it was rather a call to action, written by a socialist militant on the basis of experience in the movement and in the war.

If the implications of the *Psychology* were of such practical and immediate significance, the analysis itself dealt with more recondite material. Although his empirical observations of the degeneration of the socialist movement were about the only part of the work to receive nearly universal praise, the author’s attention was concentrated upon the more difficult, if ultimately more rewarding, matter of social theory. Here he attempted to distinguish the nature of his critique of Marxism from that of Eduard Bernstein; the revisionist, de Man held, was principally concerned with various modifications of hypotheses within the general Marxist framework, but he advanced little criticism of Marxist method as such; while the *Psychology* was specifically

¹ The situational basis of de Man’s impact was suggested by Frits de Jong, *Aanvaardbare Vernieuwing? Het hedendaags democratisch Socialisme en de Gedachtenwereld van Hendrik de Man*, in: *Socialisme en Democratie*, 9. Jaargang, n. 3 (March 1952), 187-200.

² The argument ran essentially that the corruption of the socialist movement was a consequence of the pursuit of interests – under present circumstances; and Marxism encouraged such action. The argument is most explicitly developed in “Die Begründung des Sozialismus”, *Sozialismus aus dem Glauben*, 27-28, but underlies the theme of the *Psychology*, and indeed all of de Man’s work. Growing recognition of the inconsequence of Marxist theory for this development is evident, however; the despairing climax is indicated below, p. 416.

concerned with the validity and implications of the general methodological and philosophical nature of the Marxist system. Some of the points raised in the revisionist controversy of the first years of the century were to appear in de Man's work, but while their empirical importance had increased, rather than diminished, since Bernstein's time, their position in the argument was now quite different.¹

De Man distinguished a series of philosophical positions – “summarized in the catchwords determinism, causal mechanism, historicism, rationalism, and economic hedonism”² – that he identified as characteristic of the Marxist system. While he was to attack each of these positions separately, it was their coalescence in support of the underlying conviction of Marxist analysis – “the belief that social activities are determined by an awareness of economic interests”³ – that was the focus of his criticism. The interpretation of this phrase is a vexing problem. De Man generally characterized this doctrine as a “theory of motives”, and in more than one place he lays himself open to charges of interpreting Marxism as an instance of what might be called “psychological rationalism”.⁴ The argument would then turn on the question of the relative predominance of rational and irrational factors in the determination of human action, and his criticism of Marxism would fall into the familiar form of calling attention to the extent to which man is swayed by irrational passions.⁵

But the Marxist doctrine is an institutional, not a psychological, analysis of action; it regards as determinative of action in the long run only certain patterns of development of the situation (emphasizing in this connection a particular technological-economic complex as ultimately controlling). Psychological variables, such as the moral nature of the employer, are regarded as not being of strategic significance to the operation of the system as a whole, but serve rather only a neutral, mediating function.

In this light, the Marxist outlook can be regarded in the first place as an instance of a “methodological rationalism” that defines a merely

¹ Cf. Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York, 1952).

² *Psychology*, 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴ He is attacked as holding such a position in an interesting article by Paul Lazarsfeld, *Die Psychologie in Hendrik de Mans Marxkritik*, in: *Der Kampf*, 20. Jahrgang, Nr. 6 (June 1927), 270-274, and in Otto Heinrich Kähler, *Determinismus und Voluntarismus in der "Psychologie des Sozialismus"* Hendrik de Mans. *Zur Kritik des psychologisch begründeten Sozialismus*. Inaugural-Dissertation, Rupprecht-Carola-Universität Heidelberg (Dillingen a. D., 1929), 29-32.

⁵ Cf. Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York, 1947), 92-93.

hypothetical course of action in terms of which the actual course of events can be assessed. Secondly, however, in the absence of any standard of orientation of the actor to the situation other than that of “rationality”, Marxism must be regarded as a species of “positivism”. That is, action is seen as a more or less effective adjustment to the situation, defined in terms of the maximization of interests. Social analysis then becomes a matter of referring the “subjective” genesis of action to the “objective” structure of interests. The Marxists do not say that action always follows interests, but “false consciousness”, used to account for the empirical divergence of behavior from the pattern defined by the pursuit of interests, is allowed to have only a delaying and obfuscating role, and is analyzable only in terms of the rationalistic categories of “ignorance” and “error”. Thus the only structural basis for behavior is the clarity of understanding by actors of their relationship to the conditions and means of production.¹

The weight of de Man’s analysis certainly favors this latter interpretation of Marxism as positivistic. The kernel of his theoretical criticism is that the approach underlying Marxism is inadequate to account for much of human behavior, not on the basis of irrationality, but rather because it does not take into account the determination of behavior by factors other than the structure of “interests”. By and large de Man was inclined to accept the Marxist analysis insofar as behavior could be viewed as a process of the maximization of interests; thus he remained faithful to the general picture that Marx had given of the structural conflicts endemic in capitalism between actors on the basis of their relationship to the means of production.² But he rejected the view that such interest-relations exhausted the structural determination of human action.

The empirical material for his theoretical argument here was drawn largely from the difficulties that the Marxist schema underwent in attempting to explain the anomalous lack of development of class-

¹ This interpretation of de Man’s analysis of Marxism is based on conceptual developments that have been explicitly developed after the publication of de Man’s principal theoretical works, but it is the author’s contention that the full significance of de Man’s contributions can be demonstrated in anachronistic terms without essential distortion of his thought. The theoretical orientation of the present article is to be found in Talcott Parsons’ *Structure of Social Action* (New York and London, 1937).

² “... Au risque de surprendre ceux de mes amis qui n’ont pas aperçu que ma critique du marxisme porte sur autre chose que l’analyse marxienne du capitalisme, j’essaierai de montrer... pourquoi cette analyse me semble être plus près de la vérité que celle de ses antagonistes”. *Le capitalisme libéral*, in: *Bulletin d’Information et de Documentation de la Banque Nationale de Belgique*, VI-ième année, t. I, n. 8 (25 April 1931), 270.

consciousness in America.¹ The Marxist determinants of action – roughly the capitalist economic form – were substantially the same in both the New and Old Worlds, but in other respects conditions were radically disparate. De Man was willing to accord significance to the various factors that the Marxists adduced to explain this phenomenon as merely a temporary disequilibrium, but the *prima facie* case was certainly against the orthodox explanation, and the stubborn and continued resistance of the American “superstructure” to get into alignment with its technological-economic base suggested that, on the contrary, “it was... much less a question of a simple lag of the political behind the economic development as it was of a difference in the direction and type of the political development itself.”²

The critique of Marxism that de Man erected on the basis of the inadequacy of its positivistic methodology was far-reaching. One thesis was that the conceptual restriction of the structural determinants of action to the means and conditions of production necessarily led to a fallacious understanding of social process, while the other basic argument questioned the validity of the Marxist prognosis of capitalism.

There is some suggestion in de Man's writings – at least in the days before the Great Depression – that it might turn out that capitalism was viable;³ that the economic developments foreseen by Marx were not only in part contravened by new developments within that sphere but also were counter-balanced to some extent by the structural significance of such phenomena, outside the economic realm, as the growth of the new middle classes. It may be suggested that the strong ambivalence that de Man showed to America was certainly related to this judgment. He discovered there a “liberal” and open capitalism, resting on the unimpeded exercise of those “pre-capitalistic” virtues by which he was so greatly attracted. Although he used this example to prove the futility of the Marxist effort to exclude non-economic considerations in historical analysis, he was himself theoretically embarrassed by the success of American capitalism. The difficulty was

¹ De Man's personal experience in America undoubtedly made this problem more salient to him. See: *Au Pays du Taylorisme*, Petite Bibliothèque du “Peuple”, no. 5 (Brussels, 1919); and a series of articles under the title of “Lettre d'Amérique” or “... du Canada” appearing irregularly in *Le Peuple* 8 August 1919 – 31 October 1920.

² *Cavalier seul*, 114. The classic discussion was Werner Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?* Durchgesehener Abdruck aus dem XXI. Bande des Archives für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik (Tübingen, 1906). See below, pp. 398–399, for the alternative explanation that de Man developed.

³ “Die Begründung des Sozialismus”, *Sozialismus aus dem Glauben*, 15, indicates, for instance, that there is no question but that capitalism can satisfy the material and social needs of the proletariat.

vanquished by the assertion of the incompatibility of the practice of the “pre-capitalist” values within the institutional pattern that would inevitably be established by the development of such phenomena as monopolization.¹ Even under such circumstances the outcome would not be altogether certain, however, and in the meantime, he argued in a much later work, how would it be possible to attract the workers to socialism if American capitalism was giving the worker three to four times the wages that he would receive under European socialism?² He did not believe that a socialist economy as such would be necessarily inferior in efficiency to the comparable capitalist economy, but it could not be denied that in fact up to the present capitalism had been more successful than socialism in meeting the material demands of the worker.

The pragmatic importance of theoretical inadequacy lay in its implications for the policy of the socialist movement. Thus in one field the Marxist insistence on the unique and compulsive significance of economic structure led to the dogma of the infeasibility of effective reform within capitalist society. Theoretical recognition of the fact of reform was sought in its interpretation as temporary or relative (as in the theory of impoverishment), as based on structurally fortuitous circumstances (as in the theory of imperialism), or as a merely superficial tactical concession in the class struggle (as in the Bismarckian social legislation). The pursuit of reforms was accorded legitimacy only to the extent that such action could be interpreted as contributing to the heightening of class-consciousness.³ But, de Man argued, *the phenomenological effectiveness of reform could not be denied*, and in conjunction with this circumstance Marxist ideology unwittingly gave rise to reformism, the covert substitution of reformist for revolutionary goals. In the first place, theoretical embarrassment led to simple unguided opportunism, but much more important was that the pursuit of interests, which Marxism incited on the assumption that it would bring about the triumph of socialism, would on the contrary *under the conditions of contemporary capitalism* lead to reformist accommodation. At the time of the formulation of “scientific socialism” economic

¹ See *Lettre d'Amérique: L'Handicap Europe-Amérique*, in: *Le Peuple*, 2 October 1920 (letter dated 15 September).

² *Au delà du nationalisme* (Geneva, 1946), 237; this is a greatly expanded version of the brochure *Réflexions sur la paix* (Brussels-Paris, 1942), which had been seized upon publication.

³ De Man recalls the persuasiveness of Wilhelm Liebknecht's *Kein Kompromiss, kein Wahlbündnis* (Berlin, 1899) in this respect. Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917*, Harvard Historical Studies, v. LXV (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), 21-22, analyzes the radical stand of Rosa Luxemburg, who deprecated the legitimacy of the existence of trade unions on this basis.

conditions were such that the proletarian pursuit of "interests" was necessarily revolutionary, but Marx' projection of the impoverishment of the proletariat had proved highly inaccurate, and nowadays much of the revolutionary impetus was dissipated by the gratification that capitalism afforded.

Moreover, the Marxist legitimation of the struggle for interests also had the unintentional consequence of involving the workers in nationalistic conflicts, for the imperialistic rivalries of which nationalism was the political expression were matters of vital interest to the proletariats of the various competing national units. However, de Man was far from accepting the adequacy of this explanation of proletarian nationalism, and was rather inclined to see it as an instance of a more general phenomenon, the assimilation to the capitalist environment that he termed the process of "embourgeoisification".

Marxist ideology was largely involved also in this retrograde development. A corollary of the conviction of the futility of pre-revolutionary reform was that the only task left to the socialist militant within capitalist society was the building up of the organizational strength and revolutionary will of the socialist movement in order that the death-agonies of capitalism might be shortened. But this principled abstention from institutional realization of socialism, in the face of the growth of reformism and the unanticipated longevity of the capitalist era, created a strain that was marked not only in the admission of socialist nationalism but also by changes in the very goals of socialism itself. For not only was the socialist movement becoming just another pressure-group acting on behalf of its members to secure a more favorable distribution of goods, but the proletariat in its untutored defencelessness before the capitalist environment was taking over the scale of values that was typical of the most degraded elements of a degraded system, so that the triumph of the proletariat would result in a "socialism" characterized by the domination of Philistinism.

In de Man's analysis Marxist ideology had equally pernicious consequences for the socialist movement in the more strictly political field. Thus he pointed out that the same corollary of the exclusively political focus of revolutionary activity within capitalist society would contribute significantly in another way to the development of reformism: It would be almost impossible to stem the conservative impact of the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus that political organization would bring into being.¹ More significantly, Marxist

¹ The influence of Robert Michel's classic study of the Social Democratic bureaucracy is undoubtedly to be detected here: *Zur Sociologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie* (Leipzig, 1910); see Carl E. Schorske, *op. cit.*, for the historical foundations for the anti-bureaucratic animus of the German radicals, especially 316-321.

expectation of the coming preponderance and providential role of the proletariat permitted the adoption of only hostile or at the most instrumental relations with other class-elements in the population. But, de Man maintained, there was much evidence that indicated that the proletariat would never achieve a preponderant position in society, and under these circumstances the Marxist policies could lead only to impotence or minoritarian rule. And lastly, the underlying assumption of the exclusive significance of economic considerations as structural determinants of action had as consequence a naive and unrealistic corollary of post-revolutionary identity of interests, that would lead to a state socialism inevitably dominated by the despotism of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic oligarchy.

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From the moment that de Man first made public his dissatisfaction with Marxism he was subject to fierce attack on the part of the orthodox. The vituperative denunciation that appeared in the Communist press could be written off as *de rigueur*, but the bitterness of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and other organs of the SPD Left undoubtedly had its roots in feelings of betrayal. In a warm and conciliatory letter to Kautsky recalling their past comradeship and their common devotion to the socialist cause, the renegade tried to avert the wrath of the Nestor of German Social Democracy – but in vain, and *Die Gesellschaft* gave notice of the official disapproval and excommunication of the new disturber of the socialist peace. The tacit answer to de Man's response "Is Criticism of Marx Harmful to the Party?" appeared to be an unequivocal affirmative, and the heretic was thereafter obliged to resort to other channels in order to distribute a reply to his condemnation. His own mentor, Vandervelde, made the disapproval of the old guard virtually unanimous, and while there was impassioned support among the younger element it was clear that the momentum of the socialist movement was against his ideological innovation.¹

¹ For the *Gesellschaft* broadside, see Karl Schröder, *Marxismus oder Psychologismus?*, in: 3. Jahrgang, H. 3 (March 1926), 241-261; de Man, *Ist Marxkritik parteischädigend? Von der Kritik der Psychologie zur Psychologie der Kritik*, *ibid.*, 3. Jahrg., H. 5 (May 1926), 458-472; Karl Schröder, *Wer ist in der Defensive? Ein Schlusswort*, *ibid.*, 473-476; Gustav Radbruch, *Überwindung des Marxismus? Betrachtungen zu Hendrik de Man*, *ibid.*, 3. Jahrg., H. 10 (October 1926), 368-375; Karl Kautsky, *De Man als Lehrer. Eine Nachlese*, *ibid.*, 4. Jahrg., H. 1 (January 1927), 62-77; and, finally, Paul Lazarsfeld, *loc. cit.* De Man's letter to Kautsky is to be found in the Kautsky Archives, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam; and his vain efforts to get a reply in the official journal are to be seen in the de Man archives; it was finally printed as *Antwort an Kautsky* (Jena, 1927). Capping the opposition came the publication of Emile Vandervelde, *Jenseits des Marxismus*, in: *Die Gesellschaft*, 5. Jahrg., N. 3 (March 1928), 222-230. This article simultaneously appeared as *Au delà du Marxisme*, in: *L'Avenir Social*, t. 1, n. 3 (March 1928), 134-142, and was republished in *Etudes marxistes* of Vandervelde (Brussels, 1930).

The political inspiration of almost all of the criticism surrounding de Man's novel judgment of the significance of Marxist ideology did not contribute to a productive discussion of social theory, but through the welter of controversy it is possible to make out some points that deserve serious consideration. The most banal charge against the author was of course that he had misinterpreted Marxism. De Man had tried to avoid the infinite regression involved in the determination of What Marx Really Meant, on the basis that his critique was addressed not to Marx but to Marxism, i.e., "the elements of Marxist teaching which live on in the labour movement, in the form of emotional valuations, social volitions, methods of actions, principles, and programs..."¹ But he was taken to task for setting up a straw man, and indeed to the extent that he maintained that there was a homology between the abstruse and the vulgarized versions of Marxist theory he was in logic obliged to defend the plausibility of his interpretation of the former.

Most critics contented themselves with indignant protests that Marxism rightly understood did not imply a rationalistic psychology: with this judgment, as we have seen, de Man was in general agreement. But more subtle commentators in discussing the "rationalism" that de Man attributed to Marxism argued that the theory could include recognition of the efficacy of psychic factors while insisting on their situational determination: the content of the psychological variables was ultimately supplied by the conditions and means of production. Thus Kähler, de Man's most formidable opponent intellectually, declared: "But what distinguishes Marx from de Man... is the realistic judgment that no social group can infringe its own vital interests, that the 'motives of man' – as generally all ethical demands – find their real limits in group egoism." Such a characterization of Marxism was, however, fully consistent with de Man's analysis of it as positivistic: action is seen as ultimately a matter of the implementation of the pursuit of interests. Further argument might then turn on the question of the *relative empirical adequacy* of the alternative social doctrines, but in the critical discussion of de Man's ideas the "voluntaristic" interpretation of the historical development of the socialist movement that he presented in lieu of the Marxist interpretation received little attention.² Instead, the battle raged around his thesis of the contribution of Marxism to that degeneration of the socialist movement to which he had drawn attention. In general, his somber picture of the moral condition of the proletariat was received as a welcome relief from leftist cant, though there were some who maintained that for

¹ Preface to the First Edition of the German Original, *Psychology*, 16.

² See below, pp. 397-399.

purposes of argument he had exaggerated the indications of decadence, attributing to the whole proletariat characteristics that were at most distinctive of a small and unrepresentative minority – doomed to disappear with the inevitable evolution of class relations.¹ But the crux of the argument for most critics lay in the explanation of the flagging of the revolutionary will, and here the standard objection to the analysis that the *Psychology* presented was that the pursuit of interests need not be conducted in the reformist spirit that the author had indicated. Marxist materialism did not legitimize personal egoism but insisted merely on the acknowledgment of the thesis that the action of groups was ultimately circumscribed by their relations to the means of production. Marxism was a sociology, not a psychology, and the moral responsibility of the individual was by no means controverted by the judgment of the limited (but real) efficacy of moral conviction.² A true understanding of historical materialism led not to quietistic indulgence but to the realization that man can make his own history; not to reformist submission to capitalism but to the conviction that only by ceaseless and uncompromising struggle could the old order be overthrown. The real threat to the integrity of the socialist cause, these critics maintained, was the weakening of the class struggle, as propounded by sentimentalists whose petty-bourgeois moralistic illusions were an echo of the excrescent growth of bureaucratic elements within the labor movement. To these strictures de Man's reply was twofold: his incessantly repeated contention that under conditions of contemporary capitalism the class struggle by no means necessarily led to socialism; and the argument that while *logically* it was true enough that Marxism need not entail anomic self-seeking, *psychologically* its legitimation of the pursuit of interests had led to exactly that result under current conditions.³

In his sustained and earnest efforts to counter the damaging charge that his approach involved a softening of the struggle for socialism, de Man was obliged to explore the pragmatic implications of a social methodology alternative to positivism. One accusation was that his renunciation of the Marxist schema necessarily led back to an idealistic minimization of the significance of the situation of action, and that hence such a socialism was "utopian", not in the old sense that it lacked a social basis but rather in the sense that it had an unrealistically

¹ Heinrich Ströbel, Ein Kritiker des Marxismus, in: Der Aufbau (Sozialistische Wochenzeitung), 17. Jahrg., Nr. 8 (19 February 1926), 29-30.

² E.g., Kautsky, loc. cit., 73.

³ See below, p. 416, fn. 2, for recognition that the degeneration of the socialist movement had roots other than Marxist adherence.

optimistic picture of the political problems faced by the socialist movement.¹ Indeed there is evidence to show that de Man was more sanguine than most Marxists about the possibility for the avoidance of violence at the time of the triumph of the socialist forces, but this was an empirical judgement that was not directly given by the methodological frameworks.² Certainly de Man's rejection of the adequacy of the positivistic analysis did not logically entail a denial of the significance of the situational factors with which that analysis was concerned. In other words, idealism is not the only logical alternative to positivism; and the whole tenor of de Man's writings was in the direction of employing a "voluntaristic" methodology in which both situation and idea are elements of action.

In *Die sozialistische Idee*, published in 1933, de Man laid down the theoretical foundations for his positive formulation of the origin, nature, and tasks of the socialist movement. In the course of a lengthy historical analysis attempting to define the quintessence of socialism, he devoted particular attention to the institutional and cultural synthesis which was reached in the pre-capitalist bourgeois civilization of the High Middle Ages. The essential values of the Western tradition, exemplified in such creations as Thomistic philosophy, Gothic architecture, and guild democracy, reached at this moment a fullness of expression which has never since been duplicated, for technology and economic organization, politics and art, religion and science were here united in a coherent, mutually consistent system, of which the essence was exemplified by the Benedictine motto: *Qui laborat orat*.³

With the waning of the Middle Ages and the gradual emergence of the capitalist economy, and above all with the explosive development of industrial and finance capitalism, the earlier synthesis was destroyed and the contemporary scene was marked not only by the familiar contradictions of the Marxist analysis but also by a more profound tension:

"As in social reality production and consumption, work and property are gradually becoming separated, so also in cognizance what should be and what is, normative and empirical apprehension,

¹ Kähler, *op. cit.*, 41.

² De Man, *Sozialismus und Gewalt*, in: *Neue Wege: Blätter für religiöse Arbeit*, 22. Jahrg. H. 3 (March 1928), 100-107; the same article appears in: *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit: Handbuch des aktiven Pazifismus* (Zürich und Leipzig, 1928), 160-168, ed. by Franz Kobler.

³ De Man even went so far as to say that: "Die Devise des revolutionären Bürgertums von 1789 'Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit' ist niemals in der Geschichte des Abendlandes ihrer Verwirklichung näher gewesen als in den städtischen Republiken des Hochmittelalters." *Die Sozialistische Idee*, 41.

religion and science, philosophical speculation and positive knowledge, morality of mankind and social mores, theoretical ideal and the standard of actual behavior are also becoming distinct.”¹

The “*Arbeitsbürgertum*” had been replaced by a “*Besitzbürgertum*”, the illegitimacy of whose position was exemplified in a perversion of the values of Western society – evident in the [Veblenesque] preference of outward appearance to inner worthiness, of luxury to comfort, of material acquisition to spiritual treasure.²

In the dialectic of de Man’s analysis socialism was the historical instrument for the resolution of these contradictions. For it represented the means for the transcendence of that sterile play of interests, concerned only with questions of Who Gets What, to which capitalism had largely reduced mankind. “For socialism means not [only] a different distribution of existing values, but a different ranking, an overthrow of society on the basis of fundamentally different codes of life, a transvaluation of current values.”³ The socialist movement was not, then, simply a product of capitalism, but

“We must look upon it as the product of a reaction which occurs when capitalism (a new social state) comes into contact with a human disposition which may be termed pre-capitalist. This disposition is characterized by a certain fixation of the sense of moral values, a fixation which can only be understood with reference to the social experiences of the days of feudalism and the craft guilds, to Christian ethics, and to the ethical principles of democracy.”⁴

Such an interpretation, built on the inclusion of voluntaristic elements as structural determinants of action, would allow for the explanation, in terms of the same variables, of the disparate European and American sociopolitical developments. The economic order of capitalism could not *per se* be held responsible for the development of socialism, since the economic system was substantially the same on both sides of the Atlantic. And the basic content of the “collective

¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

² See also de Man, *Vermassung und Kulturverfall: eine Diagnose unserer Zeit* (Bern, 1951).

³ *Socialisme constructif*, 123. In lectures in 1895-1896 but not published until after de Man’s *Psychology*, Emile Durkheim drew essentially the same distinction between two concepts of communal organization of society, the utilitarian (e.g., oriented to the one goal of the maximization of wealth, as in Marxism), and what might be called the “imperative” (e.g., oriented to a complex of goals, as in de Man’s socialism): *Socialisme* (Paris, 1928). See Talcott Parsons, *op. cit.*, 338-342.

⁴ *Psychology*, 39.

unconscious" or "established disposition" of Western man, a precipitate of history, was common also to Europeans and Americans. The essential differentia lay in the social conditions in which the economic form was imbedded; it was the European class structure that was primarily responsible for the generation of a class-conscious socialist movement. In the "pure capitalism" of America, unimpeded by the survival of pre-industrial social structures, there was only an interest-movement on the part of the workers, while in Europe the injured *amour-propre* of the proletariat added an ethical-political dimension to the conflict of interests, to such a point that European socialism could be seen as being "a question of dignity quite as much as a question of interest".¹ The genesis of the socialist movement then defined its goal: the realization within an economic order characterized by industrial means of production of the essential values of the Western tradition, the institutional realization of a "socialist culture".²

The pragmatic implications of such a conception of the socialist movement were momentous. *To the extent* that those enlisted in the socialist cause were in actual fact motivated by considerations other than the pursuit of interests, it became possible to avoid those noxious developments that de Man had analyzed in his attack on Marxism.

The critical question was of course the validity of his depiction of the movement. Here two different points must be distinguished. The theoretical one concerns the admissibility of disinterested elements in the determination of action (*not* a denial of the efficacy of interested elements, please note!). The empirical point concerns the determination of the actual role played by such disinterested elements in the case under examination: the socialist movement.

If it were objected that the voluntaristic approach involved a return to pre-Marxist reliance on impalpable, vague, and unstable matters of subjective valuation, in contrast to the concrete, identifiable, and stubborn interests of the orthodox school, de Man's reply brought out several themes. In the first place, he argued, a voluntaristic socialist movement was no less based on hard Marxist interests: socialism was not a renunciation but a sublimation of the class struggle. Secondly, the socialist movement was of course in favor of the attainment of many such interests: the recognition that there were other goals did not debar the struggle for, e.g., higher wages. Thirdly, while he rejected Marxist "mechanical determinism", he was not less aware of the indispensability of situational factors for the formation of that

¹ Psychology, 57.

² See *Der Sozialismus als Kulturbewegung* (Berlin, 1926).

socialist consciousness by which the movement was to be informed. Lastly, the intangibility of such a consciousness did not make it the less real or effective. On the contrary, the greater the play between interest and idea, the more it would be possible to add to the momentum of the socialist movement by the attraction to it of those whose own interests would not be directly benefited by the realization of the socialist program. A realistic outlook must recognize the efficacy of *both* idea and interest. Socialism was distinct from the interest-movement of the proletariat, but it did support the proletariat in its conflict with the capitalist opponents “not, that is, because the class victory of the proletariat would be identical with socialism, but simply because and to the degree that the proletariat, through its class position, is induced (not uniquely, but earlier, more generally, and more decisively than the other members of the working community [*die anderen arbeitenden Schichten*]), to make the demands of socialism its own.”¹

The essential task of the socialist movement was accordingly to infuse the class conflicts of capitalist society with a socialist consciousness. If Marx had given a providential role to the proletariat based upon its interest-position inside the capitalist order, de Man assigned a similar role to the proletariat based on its cultural position outside that order. Or at least such was his original conception, which made sense in terms of the “heroic age” of socialism when the fight for interests was necessarily revolutionary;² but, as we have seen, the very success of the class struggle had led to a profound accommodation of the proletariat to capitalism. Confronted with this deception, de Man persevered in his search for a means of escape from capitalist contamination. He placed his hopes notably on two putative developments: the eventual satiation of the “finite” capitalistic demands of the working class, and the admission of the non-interested, notably the intellectuals, to the socialist cause. The first “solution” rested upon a conception of class organization that suggests that of an “estate” society; the proletarian class, while participating in the symbiotic processes of production, was to preserve a separate culture from the other elements of society. In the light of experience it seems extremely unlikely that the degree

¹ Die sozialistische Idee, 231.

² “C’est en vertu de cette fièvre religieuse, de cette croyance à l’inéluctable nécessité d’un bouleversement de l’ordre social, que le mouvement avait son allure héroïque d’alors. Car, il fallait, de ce temps-là, être un héros, un apôtre pour être socialiste. Tous les dirigeants aussi bien que ceux qui les suivaient, étaient imbus de ce sentiment religieux, de cet esprit de sacrifice.” Réalités et illusions du progrès socialiste, compte-rendu sténographique de la conférence donnée par Henri de Man à Liège le 13 mars 1926, Education-Récréation, t. 8, n. 5 (May 1926), 67.

of distinction of culture that de Man had in mind could have been realized, and hence his hope for a distinctively "socialist" employment of material wealth on the part of the proletariat was naive. For industrialization of a society, whether under socialist or capitalist auspices, requires a universalistic status system incompatible with rigid divisions of social strata. Furthermore, the insatiability of acquisitiveness that de Man branded as the stigma of rank capitalism is *also* the symbolic expression of that differentiation of reward by which the valuation of labor, which he saw as the essence of the Western and socialist value system, has in actual fact been realized. As the example of America suggests, it is not so much the fact of economic differentiation as the adequacy of its legitimation in terms of the accepted value system, that has furnished the impulse to the socialist movement.

With the gradual decline in his faith in the proletariat as the standard-bearers of a cultural socialism, de Man placed greater and greater hope on the attraction to the movement of the non-interested idealists, the "*Gesinnungssozialisten*". It is at this point that there seems to be some justice to the charge of many of his critics that he favored an elitist socialism, notably that dominated by intellectuals. There are at least three different elements to be separated here: first, de Man's conviction of the infeasibility of the direction or formulation of policy by the masses (a doctrine inspired by Le Bon, Michels, and Pareto);¹ secondly, the multiplication of the difficulties of mass democracy under conditions of party bureaucratization, interested control of media of mass communications, etc.;² and thirdly, the particular role that he was inclined to give the intellectuals in the socialist movement.³ He himself protested against the charge of elitism, saying that he was by no means convinced that virtue was an appurtenance of any one class, nor had he said that the worker could not be an idealist.⁴ In his argument he was undoubtedly sincere; but the conviction of the particular importance of the intellectuals to the socialist movement – if that were to exist as a movement dedicated to the establishment of a society governed by socialist values – could not be denied. His judgment here undoubtedly rested in part on the fact that since the material interests of the workers lay, as the Marxists insisted, in the direction of the establishment of socialist institutions,

¹ See *Massen und Führer* (Potsdam, 1932).

² This conviction was illustrated especially by his interpretation and generalization of his experience in Belgium: *Cavalier seul*, 172-190; *Oude en Nieuwe Democratie*, in: *Leiding*, 1. Jaarg., N. 5 (May 1939), 290-301; and in a series of articles written for *Le Travail* (successor to *Le Peuple* under the Occupation) September-October 1941; and in a post-war MS entitled "*Propos sur la démocratie*".

³ See *Die Intellektuellen und der Sozialismus* (Jena, 1926).

⁴ See *Réponse à Vandervelde*, in: *L'Avenir Social*, 5e an., n. 5 (May 1928), 259-268.

it was most difficult for them to act out of “disinterested” motivation; while the intellectual was almost by definition acting against his material gain in supporting the socialist movement. Thus in actual fact the contribution of the disinterested would come in large part from non-proletarians. Moreover, operating on the basis of a sociological rather than an economic frame of reference, de Man saw the intellectual as peculiarly attracted to the socialist movement because of the nature of his social role in society; he was attracted by the ideology of service to the community rather than that of the legitimacy of profit-making.¹ Additionally, the intellectuals would be able to find within the socialist movement the optimum possibility for the exercise of unfettered creativity. The basis for this conviction was that this movement, in contrast to capitalist enterprise, was not obliged to dissimulate its anti-social practice by hypocritical rationalization, but on the contrary, having no vested interests, could afford the frank confrontation of reality.

It should be noted that there were other implications of the acceptance of the essential contribution to the socialist movement that would arise from the participation of those not primarily actuated by the pursuit of interests. For instance, the spurious *ouvriérisme* that had coarsened the tone and obscured the social reality of the Marxist movement would become no longer obligatory. Another, democratic consequence would be that, although the proletariat retained its position of paramountcy in de Man’s analysis of the strategy of socialism, there would now be ideological justification for the development of relations with certain other class-elements on the basis of constitutionalism, that is, with the recognition of the legitimacy of their own autonomy. This circumstance made it possible to anticipate the formation of a decisive socialist majority, despite the fact that analysis of the socio-economic trends of the capitalist economy indicated that Marx’ anticipations of the creation of a numerically overwhelming proletariat were incorrect.

Both interested and disinterested elements were essential to the triumph of socialism, but de Man did not visualize merely a mixing but a fusion of these elements to make a compound, a socialism that would form its own configuration through the creation of “socialist interests”. There were three theoretical assertions of special signifi-

¹ “La catégorie sociale, dont le type est l’ingénieur ou d’une façon plus générale le technicien, se distingue de la plupart des autres couches sociales participant à la vie industrielle, en ce que le mobile de son activité économique n’est pas en premier lieu un intérêt acquisitif.” Du plan technique au plan économique, in: Bulletin d’Information et de Documentation de la Banque Nationale de Belgique, VIIIe année, t. I, n. 10 (25 May 1933), 473; see also *Les techniciens et la crise* (Brussels, 1934), 7-9.

cance in this regard. *Thesis one*: he argued that if values as well as interests were efficacious elements in the determination of action, there was no inherent reason that socialization should await the consolidation of the political hegemony of the proletariat (as the Marxists maintained); the institutional development of a socialized society could be and would in fact have to be a process of the gradual permeation of the old capitalist society. *Thesis two*: the inclusion of values in the definition of socialism meant that there was no inherent reason for the restriction of socialization to the area of property relationships; social institutions of every kind were subject to socialist evaluation. Socialist values need not be of only economic relevance. *Thesis three*: an understanding of the crucial role of values in action led to the recognition that the establishment of socialism required an *institutionalization* of the values in question. That is, the desired "socialist" behavior was to be instigated not only through the structuring of the situation in such a way that the pursuit of interests would favor the action in question but also by the *internalization* of "socialist" values, so that interested and disinterested elements would serve to reinforce the same behavior.

The strategy of the socialist movement would be radically transformed by the acceptance of the validity of these three arguments. The first, sanctioning immediate socialization, would make possible the conquest of counter-revolutionary reformism, since no longer would the pursuit of interests lead in an anti-socialist direction. By the same token, the establishment of socialist institutions would free the movement from dependence upon the contributions of the *Gesinnungssozialisten*, who could not be expected to dominate a mass movement. As de Man put it,

"Experience has proved that no preaching of more exacting religious tenets, however successful it may be in individual cases, can effectively counteract the influence of the material environment on the behavior of the overwhelming majority of men, and thus change the trend of historical evolution.... Of course institutional changes presuppose changed or renewed ideological motives; but these motives, in their turn, can prove their creative power only by actual creation, by efficient action upon institutional reality."¹

The two other propositions immensely broadened the scope and significance of socialization. The thesis of institutionalization gave theoretical justification for de Man's chosen field of activity, the build-

¹ "The Age of Fear", MS in possession of author, the original out of which *Vermassung und Kulturverfall* was constructed, 191.

ding of “socialist culture” by means of workers’ education. Defining culture as “the founding of a way of life on the basis of a common belief in a hierarchy of values”,¹ he regarded the inculcation of the new culture as an indispensable and pressing task of the socialist movement, for the greatest threat to that movement lay not so much in the unexpected tenaciousness of capitalism as in what underlay this phenomenon: the almost universal acceptance of “capitalist” values by the workers, the process of “embourgeoisification”. The anguish of de Man’s position is revealed by the fact that he was therefore aghast equally at the reformism and the revolutionism of the labor movement, for if the former lent support to the existence of capitalism, the latter would with power lead to a “socialism” in which “capitalist” values would predominate. And indeed that was exactly his view of what had happened in the case of the triumph of the Communist movement in Russia. As early as 1926 he put it: “In Marxist doctrine, the ‘ideal workman’ is, at any rate in respect of his position in the industrial enterprise, remarkably and suspiciously like the ‘ideal workman’ of the ultra-capitalist Taylor system.”²

Comprehension of the significance of institutionalization for behavior also cast light on other aspects of the socialist movement. The accommodation to the capitalist environment evident in such developments as the commercial investment of workers’ funds³, the restriction of trade union policy to bread-and-butter unionism⁴, the parties’ tacit legitimation of the bourgeois political order, etc., etc. could no longer be regarded simply as tactical concessions necessary for the acquisition of the requisite power, but were a corruption of the heart of the socialist movement. True socialism could come about only as the result of the direct institutionalization of socialist patterns of behavior, that is, by the building up of institutional complexes of the labor

¹ Sozialismus als Kulturbewegung, 16.

² Psychology, 69.

³ De Man’s brash critique on this basis of the famous Belgian socialist complex of Vooruit, in: Die Eigenart der belgischen Arbeiterbewegung, Ergänzungshefte zur Neuen Zeit, Nr. 9 (Stuttgart, 1911), 1-28, so roused the wrath of the veteran socialist leader Eduard Anseele that it took all the conciliatory power of Emile Vandervelde to keep the young critic in the party.

⁴ Cf. Lenin: “The *spontaneous* development of the labor movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideologyfor the spontaneous labor movement is pure and simple trade unionismand trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to *combat spontaneity*, to *divert* the labor movement from its spontaneous, trade unionist striving to go under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy.” What Is to Be Done? in: Selected Works (London, 1936), v. 2, 62-63.

movement in such a way that the individual would increasingly have the opportunity to pattern his life in accordance with the values of socialist culture.

De Man's insistence upon the inclusion of the psychological dimension within socialism¹ gave to hostile critics the opportunity of attributing to him a presumably superficial and ineffective preaching of a merely "spiritual revolution". The fact that the focus of his attention, unlike that of most socialists, was not upon economic reorganization certainly lent plausibility to the accusation. In his defence he pointed out that not only did he accept, by and large, the orthodox tradition that emphasized the inevitable development within capitalism of internal economic contradictions, monopolization, the dominance of finance capitalism, and imperialism², but also he emphatically agreed with the orthodox solution, namely, the socialization of the means of production.³ In terms of political tactics de Man was completely aware of the necessity of fully exploiting a revolutionary opportunity by the realization of concrete institutional reorganization⁴, and the theoretical finding was that "...although the principles of socialism originate, in the last analysis, in ethical and religious motives, it differs from pure ethics and pure religion in that it is a mass movement for the realization of specific institutional changes".⁵

The third thesis, of the necessity for supra-economic reform, likewise

¹ "Le socialisme n'est pas un état futur, c'est un effort présent, une création perpétuelle. Le seul critérium valable des actes socialistes, ce n'est pas un idéal éloigné, c'est le mobile actuel." *La crise doctrinale du socialisme*, in: *Le Monde*, 2e année, n. 76 (16 November 1929), 23.

² See *Warum Ueberwindung des Marxismus?*, in: *Neue Wege: Blätter für religiöse Arbeit*, 22. Jahrg., H. 7/8 (July-August 1928), 336-346.

³ See *Verbürgerlichung des Proletariats?*, in: *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus*, 1. Jahrg., H. 3 (March 1930), 106-118; the *Foreword to the Sozialistische Idee*; and a later comment: "J'eus bientôt l'occasion de m'en apercevoir en constatant que mon livre [Psychology] avait beaucoup trop de succès, à mon goût, dans certains milieux qui ne demandaient qu'à se contenter d'une 'révolution des âmes' à la portée de tous les amis du genre humain, soucieux de ne pas trop déranger leurs habitudes ni de compromettre leurs intérêts matériels." *Cavalier seul*, 149.

⁴ "Le grand problème technique et psychologique des révolutions victorieuses est donc, dès que la tête de l'ancien régime est tombée, de le frapper au coeur et à l'estomac, en dirigeant l'action vers les institutions économiques, les administrations locales, le développement de la puissance sociale autonome des classes travailleuses." *Le Socialisme espagnol: Lettre à un jeune socialiste*, in: *L'Avenir Social*, 8e année, n. 8-9 (August-September 1931), 519. Moreover, this follows a discussion of the unfortunate consequences of not pursuing such a policy, as evidenced by the case of the Germany of the Weimar Republic.

⁵ *Sozialismus und Gewalt*, in: *Neue Wege: Blätter für religiöse Arbeit*, 22. Jahrg., H. 3 (March 1928), 102.

had to be defended from the misunderstanding that it would imply the neglect of the economic dimension. The basic insight here, which de Man developed in one of the pioneer studies of industrial sociology, *Der Kampf um die Arbeitsfreude*¹, was that the utilitarian approach entirely ignored some of the most important problems of an industrial society. As he forcefully but extravagantly put the matter: "All the social problems of history are no more than variants of the eternal, the supreme, the unique social problem – how can man find happiness, not only through work, but in work."² Analysis then was directed to the exploration of the possibilities for the satisfaction of the values of Western man within the work-role and the situation characteristic of the modern industrial order. Clearly distinguishing in principle the effect of capitalist economic organization from the technical demands of industrialization, he emphasized, in contrast to the prevailing climate of opinion, the positive advantages for the exercise of skill and responsibility that industrialism tended, by and large, to give the worker. Even more significantly he laid great stress on the importance for the worker's satisfaction of the social organization of the local enterprise, emphasizing in particular the significance of responsibility for the ego-satisfaction of the individual worker. In another context his analysis brought out the role for work satisfaction that the conviction of the contribution of his labor to the welfare of the community had for the worker.

A socialist organization of society would be aimed at the maximization of work satisfaction. Because of the nature of the components of such satisfaction, it would be impossible adequately to take care of the problem by applying *only* such measures as formal nationalization. The necessity for the conversion of nationalization into socialization is a recurrent theme in de Man's writings, and it was an insight that made him distrust the simplistic formulas of the orthodox school. It might well be true that the removal of the key means of production from private control was indispensable for the realization of a rational economic order, but such a step by no means led necessarily to socialism, since the position of the individual workers might not thereby be bettered at all. Socialization involved the application of the fundamental democratic ethos of the West to the occupational field³, and periodical electoral approval of governmental policy did not exhaust the significance of this democratic movement.

¹ (Jena, 1927).

² Psychology, 65.

³ See, e.g., *Die sozialistische Idee*, 328-329. The general thesis is expressed: "The relationships between the worker and his work become more and more satisfactory, in proportion as the internal organization of enterprise gives the worker more say in the social and technical conditions of his work." Psychology, 79.

Democratic organization of the productive unit within the conditions of modern industrial technology presented, to be sure, extremely difficult problems, to which de Man had no definitive answer. If he left the development of concrete techniques for the resolution of these problems to History, he also emphasized some leading ideas that were to serve as a guide for the establishment of democratic control. In the first place, he stressed the development of the greatest possible degree of local autonomy. In his specific recommendations for the operation of nationalized enterprises¹ he was insistent on the necessity for the removal of administration from the control of central political agencies, and the idea of local functional autonomy almost takes on the appearance of a panacea in a later recommendation of supranational *ad hoc* agencies for the resolution of international tensions.² Secondly, he suggested that the political problems arising from the necessities for the coordination of such semi-autonomous enterprises could be best resolved through some sort of corporatist arrangement, whereby the various interested bodies would receive legitimate representation.³ Lastly, his sober assessment of the condition of the European proletariat led him to place the greatest emphasis upon the necessity for the development of the technical and moral capacities of the workers. Quoting Proudhon to the effect that the question of capacity preceded that of power, he pointed out that the existing legal facilities for the exercise of democratic responsibilities within the local productive unit – such as in the Belgian *conseils d'entreprises* and the German *Betriebsräte* – hardly received effective employment, not so much because of the bad faith of the employers as because of the lack of understanding, will, training, and, in general, capacity, of the workers.⁴

Realization of the supra-economic dimensions of socialization was of significance not only in the field of economic institutions, but meant indeed that the whole of life might be impregnated with the values of socialism. That is, the socialist style of life would extend to architecture and to the family; aesthetic and moral values were at the heart of socialist culture. One of the most striking by-products of the

¹ As, for instance, the envisaged nationalization of the Banque Nationale de Belgique; see, e.g., the chapter in the study prepared under de Man's direction: Bureau d'Etudes Sociales, L'Exécution du Plan du Travail (Antwerp, 1935), 39–82.

² Au delà du Nationalisme, *passim*.

³ See Corporatisme et socialisme (Brussels, 1935) [reprinting articles originally appearing in *Le Peuple* 25 July to 3 October 1934]; and Hervorming van het Parlement, in: *Leiding* 1. Jaarg., N. 4 (April 1939), 195–205.

⁴ See, e.g., *Psychology*, 453–455. De Man created a characteristic uproar by insisting on this point at the first postwar Congress of the Belgian Workers' Party: *Le Peuple*, 20 April 1919.

underlying insight into the structural nature of non-economic institutions was that it furnished a politically adequate critique of Communism, before the enticement of which the democratic socialist parties had been in the embarrassing and impotent moral position of altogether repudiating the means but having no solid basis for rejecting the results. But if political and civil liberties were as indispensable to socialism as the socialization of the means of production, then the sacrifice of the one for the sake of the other would not be rational, the more so since the same considerations indicated that the Marxist assumption of the post-revolutionary substantial identity of interests was simply a fantasy.¹

* * *

If the logic of de Man's voluntaristic analysis of the socialist movement indeed led to the implications indicated above, it would seem that he had successfully met the critical accusation that the adoption of his ideology would bring about the weakening of the struggle for socialism. But as de Man had argued that it was psychological rather than logical implications of Marxism that were leading the socialist movement astray, so now some critics argued that the positive evidence for judging the import of his doctrine lay in empirical developments that were associated with the adoption of his ideas.² There were two instances in this respect: the *planiste* movement evoked by the *Plan du Travail* that the Belgian Workers' Party adopted under de Man's inspiration in the 'thirties'; and the indications of the ultimate implications of "de Manian" socialism that were given by the ambiguous role that its originator played in Belgium during the Nazi occupation.

¹ "L'expérience soviétique en Russie a montré l'erreur d'une interprétation vulgaire et automatique de l'idée marxiste... de la lutte des classes comme trame de l'histoire. En supposant que les seuls antagonismes sociaux sont les antagonismes de classe, et que le seul motif des antagonismes de classe est l'existence d'intérêts économiques opposés, on arrive à cette conclusion qu'un état où le pouvoir est entièrement aux mains de la classe ouvrière ne connaîtra plus d'antagonismes sociaux. La réalité démontre le contraire. Ainsi, cet état peut développer au sein de la classe dominante une bureaucratie, une caste dirigeante, un groupe d'hommes, détenteurs du pouvoir politique, dont l'attitude différera de la classe des autres, et entrera en conflit avec eux, mais parce que leurs fonctions, leur jouissance d'un pouvoir, leur responsabilité, leur prestige, leur désir de maintenir certains avantages, leur 'déformation professionnelle' leur donne des habitudes et des 'complexes' différents." *Éléments de Psychologie appliqués à la vie sociale*, mimeographed syllabus prepared for the Ecole Ouvrière Supérieure, Session de langue française du 3 octobre 1921 au 1er avril 1922, 12.

² See, e.g. Maria Sokolova, *L'Internationale socialiste entre les deux guerres mondiales* (Paris, 1954), 160; but also, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *De Karl Marx à Léon Blum* (Geneva, 1954), 137.

The concept of *planisme* as developed by de Man had a generality of application despite the fact that it was designed for limited purposes in a specific situation. It was a projected remedy for the desperate situation of the democratic socialist parties before the double menace of the Great Depression and the rise of Fascism, but at the same time its fundamental inspiration was in consonance with and an expression of the more general ideology which the author had developed. Hence the *planiste* movement can be taken with due caution as indicative of the pragmatic consequences of that ideology.¹

The political basis of the *Plan* rested on de Man's unorthodox interpretation of the origins of fascism, novel at that time but since become commonplace. For the first time in history, he declared, "anti-capitalistic resentment is being turned against the socialist movement"², and the explanation of this paradox was to be found in an examination of the social consequences of the depression. The *Mittelstand* – both "old" (the independent artisans, retailers, etc.) and "new" (the dependent white collar workers, service workers, etc.) –, pushed to the wall by the forces of heavy industry and finance capitalism, were reacting to the threat of proletarianization by an effort to maintain their superior non-proletarian status, which was all the more desperate the more they faced economic destitution. It was folly not to recognize the ineluctability of this political reaction, argued de Man; fascism could be effectively fought only by granting full recognition of the legitimacy of non-proletarian status in a program designed to assuage the fears and rally the support of potential fascists. A policy designed to reinvigorate the (capitalist) economy would remove the threat of social disgrace and allow the formation of a "*Front du Travail*" on the part of that overwhelming sector of the population suffering from the economic crisis.

Accordingly, the economic program characteristic of *planisme* demanded a profound modification of the traditional socialist call for integral nationalization of the means of production. In place of an ineffective oscillation between visionary demands and peripheral reforms, de Man called for a program of immediate "structural" modifications of the economy such that the "levers of command", notably the credit system, the electrical system, and monopolized heavy industry generally, by which the economy was essentially controlled, would come under the regulation of the community. By such means, he argued, it would be possible to invigorate a "mixed economy", whereby the appalling and senseless waste of unemploy-

¹ See *Gegen den Strom*, 209.

² *Nationalsozialismus?*, in: *Europäische Revue*, 7. Jahrg., H. 1 (January 1931), 19.

ment could be essentially eliminated and the interests of the national community could be greatly furthered. The economic and political aspects of *planisme* are perhaps best summed up in the formula: the minimal program required for the recovery of the economy, the maximal program defined by the political make-up of the *Front du Travail* by which the *Plan* would be brought into existence.¹

The *Plan* was designed not to introduce socialism but to make capitalism viable.² Nevertheless, in contrast to the limitation of most socialist reform hitherto to matters of distribution, the *planiste* reforms were to reorganize the means and conditions of production. Even if, as Léon Blum and others argued, capitalist control of the economy would be left untouched because the socialized industries would have to cover the indemnification of the former owners, in terms of actual practice it could not be denied that a profound transformation would have taken place in the operation of the economy.³ Moreover, the argument that a *planiste* bird in the hand was worth any number of maximalist birds in the bush has a certain cogency – though this was countered by the assertion that the whole effort was like trying to sprinkle salt on a bird's tail. Granted that de Man's general approach did not preclude provision for economic reform, the question then involved an evaluation of the *political* possibilities for such action, the detractors arguing that if the reform were really to be of an efficacious nature, capitalist opposition would necessarily prohibit its enactment⁴, or, if the forces of the Left were strong enough to impose *planisme*, they were strong enough to impose socialism. From this viewpoint *planisme* became a subterfuge by which the bourgeoisie hoped to

¹ The most concise treatments of the reasoning involved are in de Man, *Pour un Plan d'action* (Brussels, 1934) [a reprint of weekly articles originally appearing in *Le Peuple*, 24 September–6 December 1933]; and Max Buset, *L'Action pour le Plan* (Brussels, 1934). The comparatively detailed projection of the specific reforms envisaged is to be found in *L'Exécution du Plan du Travail*, officially authored by the Bureau d'Etudes Sociales.

² Ideological embarrassment on this point is revealed by the following casuistry to which de Man resorted: "En réalité, le Plan du Travail est une planche de sauvetage tendue aux classes non ouvrières. *Ce n'est pas un plan pour la réalisation du socialisme; c'est un plan pour sortir de la crise par des moyens socialistes. Ce n'est pas davantage une planche de salut pour sauver le capitalisme, c'est un effort pour sauver ce que l'on peut sauver de l'économie nationale.*" Publications de l'Institut Supérieur Ouvrier: VI. Les problèmes d'ensemble du Fascisme. Semaine d'Etudes d'Uccle-Bruxelles (10-15 juillet 1934) (Paris, n.d. [1934]), 23. (Italics in original).

³ Blum's conclusion is found in the last of a series of articles on the Plan du Travail that he wrote under the title *Au delà du réformisme*, appearing in: *Le Populaire*, 4 January–26 January 1934.

⁴ See, e.g., letters by Joseph Trillet and E. Marchand under *Notre Enquête sur le Plan du Travail*, in the 16 December and 23 December, 1933, respectively, issues of the [Left] *Action Socialiste*.

divert the strength of the workers' movement.¹ The counter-argument was, of course, to deny the political assumption underlying this attack: *planisme* explicitly rested on the political basis of the "*Front du Travail*", which could marshal sufficient strength to overcome the resistance of High Capitalism but whose cohesion was bounded by the limited, if potent, reforms envisaged in the *Plan du Travail*. Unless one were to argue by definition, the plausibility of the realization of substantial reforms on such a basis was a matter of the assessment of the political situation; and experience suggests that the general foundations of the *planiste* movement were not completely chimerical.²

Since *planisme* as such was never actually put into effect, it is impossible to reach a definitive assessment on the basis of experience; nevertheless some conclusions are suggested by the history of the *planiste* movement. That the *mystique* of the *Plan* at least temporarily revived the morale of the Left in the fight against Fascism cannot be denied, although one shrewd observer noted an inherent fallacy in attempting to combat the chiliastic appeal of totalitarianism by a program that made moderation the foundation of its political program.³ It is generally conceded that the movement had a significant effect upon the volume of unemployment in Belgium.⁴

While experience does not allow conclusive inference as to the political and economic significance of *planisme*, it has been argued⁵ that the ultimate, pernicious import of de Man's socialist ideology can be detected in his dubious comportment during World War II. The weight of this argument is increased by the suspicious parallelism between de Man and those French "*néo-socialistes*" such as Marcel Déat

¹ This view is most clearly expressed in the ideological controversy with the Communists. Eugène Varga: *Le "Plan"* (Brussels, 1934); de Man, *Le Plan du Travail et les communistes* (Paris-Brussels, n.d. [1935]); Lucien Laurat, *Le Plan du Travail vu de Moscou* (Paris-Brussels, n.d. [1935]); Eugène Varga, *Le "Plan" trahi: réponse à Henri de Man, ministre de la bourgeoisie belge* (Brussels, 1936). The very opposition to *planisme* in Belgium could perhaps be taken as indicative of the radical import of the reforms projected.

² Recent experience has suggested the efficacy of active and astute manipulation of the economy by government.

³ Thierry Maulnier, *Mythes socialistes* (Paris, 1936), 169-170. See also Alfred Sturmthal, *Tragedy of European Labor* (New York, 1943), 224-230, and Henry W. Ehrmann, *French Labor From Popular Front to Liberation* [Studies of the Institute of World Affairs] (New York, 1947), 59-66. The specific political background in Belgium is presented in Carl-Henrik Höjer, *Le Régime parlementaire belge de 1918 à 1940*. Thèse pour le Doctorat... d'Uppsala (Stockholm, 1946).

⁴ See Louis R. Franck, *Démocraties en crise: Roosevelt, Van Zeeland, Léon Blum* (Paris, 1937), 24-43; and *** [Marcel van Zeeland], *The Van Zeeland Experiment* (New York, 1943).

⁵ In interviews with the author, notably on the part of those Belgian socialists who had not been won over to the *planiste* movement during the 'thirties.

who ended up as full-scale Vichyites and collaborationists. In the case of the Belgian it is impossible to establish the exact nature of the activities for which he was condemned for treason, in a post-war trial *in absentia*, since the protocols of the proceedings have not been released. The historian is forced to rely upon the unsatisfactory evidence represented by newspapers and de Man's own self-defence.¹ That he adopted a conciliatory policy of accommodation to the fact of Nazi domination during the first year of the Occupation is not under dispute. The most significant argument concerns not the determination of fact but questions of the motivation, and the moral and political significance, of de Man's actions. Fortunately, for our purposes only a limited exploration of these controversial matters is necessary, since it is possible to examine the political implications of his ideological position on the basis of the *purely heuristic* assumption of the most sympathetic interpretation of de Man's actions, that presented in his autobiographies. With him there was no question of clandestine villainy, but on the contrary he gave the most urgent publicity to those convictions by which he justified the "neutralist" role that he professed during the Occupation.²

In a series of important articles in the Flemish theoretical organ of the Belgian party de Man had made clear before the outbreak of the war his disgust with the practices of the parliamentary state. He argued that only by drastic reorganization, limiting the role of the legislature and greatly increasing the authority of the executive, would it be possible to have a government of sufficient stability to put through the long-range program of structural reforms that was so urgently needed. Bourgeois democracy had worked tolerably well in the nineteenth century, when the electorate consisted of an elite of the educated well-to-do, but under twentieth century conditions of mass participation in politics the irresponsible machinations of pressure groups, the unavoidable resort to inflammatory oversimplifications, and the distorting role of the political machine made the exercise of responsible government futile. By their participation in the game of parliamentary politics the socialist parties had allowed an identification to develop that bogged the movement down in the old order, while at the same time their ideological doctrine professed the illegitimacy

¹ The charges of his indictment and the sentence are to be found in: De Nicuwe Standaard, 13 September 1946. A 52 p. mimeographed "Mémoire justificatif" dated 30 September 1947 summarizes de Man's defence; an earlier presentation is in the 29 p. mimeographed "De la Capitulation à l'exil", 20 January 1945.

² It should be emphasized that the author is making no attempt at this point to determine the validity of this interpretation, nor to assess the moral and political consequences of his actions. Discussion of the ideological filiation of his conduct can be profitably carried on without commitment here – only plausibility of interpretation is required.

of the bourgeois state. A way out of this debilitating dilemma was furnished only through an unhackneyed approach to political analysis, which would not confuse "democracy" with formal procedures, but also would not have a purely doctrinaire designation of the state. Such analysis indicated that the state was not merely or principally an "executive committee of the bourgeoisie" but that it provided a means for the realization of the common welfare of the mass of the population, whatever the class composition. A critical but realistic recognition of the existence of common bonds among the members of the national community was indispensable for the formation of a rational policy.¹

It was in terms of such ideas that de Man justified the role he assumed during the Occupation.² In the intensity of his reaction to what he diagnosed as the failure of the parliamentary state he came to espouse an "authoritarian socialism", and even went so far as to say that Naziism was the "German form of socialism", not for export but at least in part for emulation.³ In protesting against the charge that he was betraying the cause with which he had been identified his entire life, he argued that his present position was implicit in the earlier ideology, and that the proper socialist criterion of democracy in the field of politics was substantive consent and coercion rather than juridical distinctions of empty forms.⁴ And indeed years before he had indicated his belief in the infeasibility of the practice of direct democracy in the modern state, and it was in the heyday of *planisme* that he had indicated that the corporatist movement offered possibilities for the reconciliation of the classes of the modern socio-economic order.⁵

There can be no doubt that there was no formal contradiction between the terms of the general ideology that de Man had developed and the justification that he gave of his action during the Occupation. Indeed, there seem to be certain features of that ideology that lent themselves to the rationalization of the role he adopted: the changed significance

¹ See articles in *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 1. Jaarg., N. 1-8 (January-August 1939), *passim*.

² There were of course many other elements in his motivation, above all the racking disillusionment and guilt he had experienced with regard to his participation in World War I, which made him a leading spokesman for the policy of appeasement. See the officially anonymous article *Genoeg Sabotage van de Onzijdigheid*, in: *Leiding*, 1. Jaarg., N. 10 (October 1939), 605-612; and the brochure reprinting articles from *L'Oeuvre* (of Paris), *Une offensive pour la paix* (Paris-Brussels, n.d. [1938]).

³ "Discours à Charleroi", *compte-rendu sténographique*, *Le Travail*, 6 and 7 May 1941.

⁴ *Vers la Démocratie autoritaire*, and *Echec à la peur*, in: *Le Travail*, 13 September and 11 October, 1941.

⁵ See above, pp. 401 and 407.

of class permitted an appreciation of the ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that was denied to more orthodox socialists, and the emphasis on the vital contribution of an elite to the *élan* of the movement likewise furnished a basis for admiration of the “heroic” verve and warrior discipline of the Nazis. But if it is argued that such views *impelled* those who came under the influence of the new ideology to take a softened stand toward Fascism, both empirical and theoretical evidence suggest that the logic of the situation was far more complicated than this interpretation allows.

To counter the evidence of a Déat one can adduce the record of stalwart Resistance figures deeply influenced by de Man such as André Philip and outstanding members of the Belgian *équipe planiste*. But more significantly, the new insights into the origin, nature, and goals of socialism that de Man had won by his methodological criticism of the orthodox school had little logical connection with his judgment that parliamentary democracy was no longer effective. To be sure all his judgments were products of the same impulses, those that had brought him to devote his life to the cause of socialism. In a certain sense his entire life-career can be seen as a supreme effort to combat what he experienced as the intolerable degradation of the (capitalist) world, and the meaning of the socialist movement for him lay in its promise of surmounting this decadence. Accordingly, he was extraordinarily sensitive to indications that the movement itself might succumb to its environment, and the basic consideration of all his activity was: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” It was in this spirit that he castigated the complacent political liberalism that he found that many of his fellow-socialists had absorbed, for he identified this outlook as a disastrous accommodation to the *status quo*.¹

De Man himself followed the “historicist” tradition with its insistence upon the impossibility of the blueprinting of socialism in advance, but he also insisted that under all circumstances socialism represented an attempt for the institutional realization of certain values, never definitively specified but summed up in the concept of the honor of labor. In the intensity of his own conviction not only did he completely ignore the problems of selectivity among competing ethics when he essayed an historicist treatment of socialism but in his

¹ This attitude is to be found in such an early work as *Het Tijdvak der Democratie* (Ghent, 1907) and underlies the analysis of English politics in the *Sozialistische Reisebriefe* that appeared in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* irregularly from 18 January to 13 August 1910. Even at the height of his enthusiasm for what he termed “political democracy” he warned against the identification of this concept with parliamentary government: see *Remaking of a Mind*, 275-276. With the frustration of the *Plan* his anti-liberalism, as we have noted, sharply increased.

most ambitious formulation he went so far as to maintain that a universal basis for socialist values existed in a common ethical substructure of all religions.¹ The lack of institutional reference that is an implication of such a declaration gives justice to the suspicion of some critics that de Man's socialism entailed an "idealization" of the movement, for it corroborated indications that the locus of socialism for him was to be found in the subjective genesis rather than in the objective resultant of human action.² This was a reappearance of the eternal argument of faith and works, and de Man, ever the radical, took the extremist standpoint. The gravamen of his charge against capitalism, it must be remembered, was not injustice of the distributive system nor irrationality of the productive system. It was the success rather than the failure of capitalism that appalled him. The essence of his accusation was directed against the falsification of probity, the corruption of taste, and the betrayal of virtue that he felt was a necessary consequence of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist world-order.³ In a long and difficult essay in which he attempted to bolster his basic doctrine with the authority of Marx, he argued that the essence of the master's case was a *humanistic* protest against capitalism's "alienation of mankind" from itself and from Nature. Under the new socialist institutions the commercial market would not rule human action, and man could once again express himself freely and rationally in his relations to his fellow men, his conscience, his art, and Nature.⁴

In the meantime, however, the socialist movement existed in the world of capitalist decadence, by which it was increasingly affected.

¹ Cahiers de ma montagne (Brussels-Paris, 1944), 188-189; see also Die Begründung des Sozialismus, in: Sozialismus aus dem Glauben. The assumption as to the identity of religious ethics has been criticized in A. A. J. Pfaff, Hendrik de Man: Zijn Wijsgerige Fundering van het Moderne Socialisme (Antwerp-Amsterdam, 1956).

² To be sure, this premise was implicit in de Man's argument – but it is an insistent note that reappears in protean form throughout his writings, as in the assumption that a commercial economic foundation vitiates the production of art: "Und das Vorhandensein dieser Motive [der Anpassung an den herrschenden Geschmack] entscheidet über die Qualität der Leistung, mit anderen Worten über ihren kulturschöpferischen Wert". Theaterkrise als Kulturkrise (Berlin, n.d. [1931?], 14); that social climbing was necessarily involved in social ascent: "Verbürgerlichung liegt vor, wenn das Motiv des angestrebten der Wunsch zur Verwirklichung eines bürgerlichen Lebensstils ist," Verbürgerlichung des Proletariats?, in Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus, 1. Jahrg., H. 3 (March, 1930), 114; etc., etc. Confirmation of this interpretation is found in Max Drechsel, De Man, comme je le comprends, in: L'Étudiant Socialiste, 4e année, n. 3 (December 1928), 1: "Ou je me trompe fort, ou la doctrine de De Man, en gros, signifie ceci: On ne vaut que par sa qualité d'âme!" And Pieter Frantzen, Enige Vooraanstaande Denkers uit het Belgische Socialisme (Ghent, 1952), 71: "Reformism and radicalism are thus not so much different systems of thinking as different ways of feeling."

³ Die sozialistische Idee, 133-206 (chs. 7-11); Vermassung und Kulturverfall, throughout.

⁴ Der neu entdeckte Marx, in: Der Kampf, 25. Jahrg., N. 6 (June 1932). See also Le Socialisme et la culture, in: Le Socialisme constructif, 101-153.

In the face of this situation de Man was forced to envisage the only satisfactory resolution of the historical crisis as being a “transcendence” of the historical order by the introjection of socialist values into the class struggle.¹ As he came to recognize in reflecting upon his life-experience in later years, perhaps both he and his critics were correct; he, in that the “immanence” of the historical order offered no hope for the construction of a world built upon the values he defined as socialist; and the critics, in that “transcendence” of the historical order was an unrealistic concept.² In the end, de Man resigned himself to a stoic activism before the prospect of an unavoidable doom, and defined the duty of the responsible individual as the preservation of as much as possible of the patrimony of the ages despite the upheavals of the historical “zone of catastrophe”.³

But it is hardly necessary to accept de Man’s own values in order to acknowledge the importance of the underlying insight, the structural significance of values in the determination of action. Rather paradoxically, the same ascetic intensity of moral conviction that had brought de Man to the personal and ideological dilemmas we have indicated also brought him to the formulation of an ideological system whose most general import can perhaps be best suggested by saying that it explores the implications of the collapse of *chiliastic* expectations on the part of the Left that a socialist society would come about through the political triumph of the proletariat.⁴ Under these conditions the voluntaristic analysis of socialism then overthrew the

¹ The Age of Fear, 206.

² „Dans Au delà du Marxisme [Psychology], j’étais sollicité par deux tendances contradictoires, et je n’ai trouvé qu’une solution très imparfaite du dilemme. D’une part, l’évolution régressive du mouvement socialiste me paraissait l’effet inéluctable de ses prémisses; d’autre part, je désirais échapper à cette conséquence décevante. En conclusion, je ne trouvai que du préchi-prêcha: le renouvellement des mobiles. Ça pouvait intéresser et reconforter une poignée de gens, mais non changer l’orientation générale du mouvement.... Aujourd’hui, je vois mieux pourquoi ces efforts étaient condamnés à rester stériles. En se laissant ‘réabsorber’ par le milieu, le mouvement se trouve embayé dans l’évolution régressive de l’économie capitaliste, de l’Etat national, du régime parlementaire, de la civilisation mécanisée, de l’Europe balkanisée. Il participe à une décadence générale.” Lettre du 26 janvier 1949, in: *Ecrits de Paris*, n. 117, (July-August 1954), 94.

³ Anglerfreuden: Erlebnisse eines Sportfischers in Europa und Amerika (Rüschlikon-Zürich, 1952), 44-45.

⁴ Cf. de Man’s own statement: “Bref, il y a un fléchissement, non point de la foi dans la justice de la cause socialiste, mais dans la croyance à l’imminence de son triomphe, à l’applicabilité présente de beaucoup de revendications jadis immédiates; en un mot, il y a un recul de la croyance chiliaste ou messianique que nous avions l’habitude de considérer comme le critérium de la conviction socialiste”. *La crise du socialisme: conférence faite au Groupement Universitaire d’Etudes Sociales à la Maison du Peuple de Bruxelles le 21 juin 1927* (Brussels, 1927), 5.

classical Left view of policy within capitalism, giving a basis for possible legitimization of the democratic welfare state, and at the same time furnished a politically adequate critique of Communism, throwing out the means-ends argument on the basis that economic ends have no inherent superiority. Moreover, the limited efficacy of the erstwhile panacea of nationalization, brought out by this analysis, presented problems with which socialists have just begun to struggle. In another direction it may be suggested that, rather ironically, the greatest applicability of de Man's ideology may well lie exactly in the justification of a moderate, tolerant, and "liberal" approach to social change. Post-war experience has suggested that there may be no necessary irreconcilability among various sections of the economic community, provided that the policy of the welfare state and full employment receives successful application. The type of approach for which de Man may be longest remembered is that of *planisme* – but carried to a further extent than he had anticipated. For the very success of the mixed economy suggests the aptness of de Man's insight that the major problems with which socialism was properly concerned were those of the adjustment to industrialization, rather than to capitalism. It may well be that the operation of an industrial society, whether capitalist or socialist, requires the institutionalization of certain of those values to whose realization Hendrik de Man devoted his entire life.