

8 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

— these are concepts that the economist is now endeavoring to re-define in terms of their societal meanings. Industrial procedures are being subjected to the test of human welfare standards. Likewise, educational systems are being held up to the light of societal evaluation. Political regimes are so fearful of democratic standards of thinking that some governments have denied freedom of speech to their subjects.

Social thought results in part from the nature of social conditions. To understand it, the student must know the times which furnish the setting for it. A thorough-going knowledge of the culture and of the social, economic, political, and religious standards of a people is a minimum essential for studying social thought. In the chapters that follow some hints will be given in each regarding the social situations which have served as bases for the ensuing social thought. The history of social thought rises out of the beginnings of human struggle on earth and with jagged edges extends along the full sweep of the changing historical horizon. It finds expression through some of the world's best minds. Our quest will bring us in contact with the most vital moments of the world's most valuable thinkers.

Social thought usually finds its initial expression during social crises. When "prosperity" reigns and people are in general satisfied, new social thought is at ebb tide. But when social conditions are marked by gross injustices or when social changes come rapidly due to inventions, wars, or other basic disturbances, then thinking about social life and problems is highly stimulated and new ideas or systems of ideas, that is, ideologies, are originated.

However, the developing and perfecting of new social ideologies are usually the work of scholars somewhat removed from the turmoil of the hour. Social thought thus is the product of social crises and of scholarly analysis and synthesis.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL THOUGHT 9

DISCUSSION GROUP TOPICS

1. The nature of human thought.
2. The main lines or subdivisions of thought.
3. The different types of social thought.
4. The marks of sociological thought.
5. The nature of group thinking.
6. The reasons for the lack of group thinking.
7. The basic requirements for discussion-group thinking.
8. The distinctions between practical thinking and abstract thinking.
9. The dangers of doing practical thinking regarding social situations.
10. Weaknesses in the thinking of the "self-made man."
11. Extent of and danger in particularistic thinking.
12. The nature and abuses of propagandist thinking.
13. The essential traits of a social situation.
14. The relation of social and economic conditions to social thought.
15. The present need for social thought.

- READINGS

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