ABSTRACT. Too much rationalist social philosophy is polarized into radical and conservative factions, both seeking support for rival claims to intellectual authority. Moreover, each faction can raise what it sees as a valid critique of the other. To the uncommitted, this mutual critique presents a reductio ad absurdum of rationalism and invites violence and despair. The radicalist claim that a rationalist social philosophy is necessarily radical clashes with the conservative critique which sees radicalism demanding the impossible from reason. So the question is whether this radical controversy between opposing rationalisms is amenable to rational resolution.

This question is addressed through an examination of three writers: two radicals, Jean-Paul Sartre, who presents a comprehensive rationalism, and Herbert Marcuse, whose rationalism is irrationally grounded and authoritarian, and a conservative, Karl Popper, whose critique of comprehensive rationalism is effective against Sartre's view, but whose own concession to irrationalism unwittingly supports Marcuse's approach.

Yet, if Popper's approach can be improved by abandoning both polarization and the exclusion of all radicalism, then we may have a rational social philosophy of a new non-authoritarian sort. The prospects for such a new approach are considered
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in the last section.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE POLARIZATION OF RATIONALISM IN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY LEADS TO IRRATIONALISM.

What follows is an examination of the critique of the theory of rationality which lies at the core of radical social philosophy. In a sense, what I offer is a countercritique which is not at the same time a defense of radicalism, but rather a call to go beyond the polarization of the debate concerning the role and limits of reason in social philosophy.

By "radicalism" I understand a theory of politics which locates authority in a rational ideal, or ultimately, in "Reason" itself. The authority of reason overrides all other claims to authority, such as tradition, except to the extent that they are compatible with reason's dictates.

Such authority must be axiomatic. I would say self-evident, yet this would be inconsistent with the fact that the truth of radicalism, or any of its particular expressions, is not so obvious as to eliminate disagreement. Indeed, radicalism must present a theory to explain disagreement and the spell cast by rival claims to authority. Now, it would seem most likely that disagreement would be explained as the expression of some irrational element—perhaps as evidence of the irrationality of the status quo. This may have been a plausible approach at one time—particularly before the 18th century. But, since that time it has become commonplace to cite a rational basis for one's social practice. Thus, the persistence of a radical dialectic, particularly in Western liberal democracies, presents rationalists with a dilemma in the form of a clash between rival and incompatible views of the nature of reason itself. This is so, except, perhaps, in the case of opposition to irrationalist ideologies. Can we rationally resolve such disputes? Yes, but until a comprehensive rationalism can be offered, such an answer is more a hope than a hypothesis.

I think that present day social thought suffers from this inability to resolve a dispute concerning the role of reason in social practice. I will characterize this dispute as a debate between two forms of rationalism. There are those who wish to uphold the radical view of reason's authority which would judge all social practice by the telos of some rational ideal. Label this radical rationalism. Opposing this view is conservative rationalism which claims that we can no longer view any theory as ultimate or beyond rational disagreement and which rejects the view that reason is autonomous in a way which establishes its authority. The authority of reason rests on an irrational commitment, argue the conservatives, and only justifies politically moderate practice. To maintain otherwise is to push beyond the lim-
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What I have termed "the philosophical critique of radicalism" is the argument, employed by conservative rationalists, that reason is not capable of establishing the authority of a rational ideal or particular conception of social order. Likewise, it is argued, reason cannot resolve disputes between rival authorities or conceptions. The cautionary conclusion of this is that to pursue social practice in the light of a contested ideal leads to violence. So an antipathy to violence supports a more-or-less conservative political position. Although I share this antipathy to violence, I think that the critique which precedes it must be overcome. I say this not only to salvage the possibility of a rational radicalism, but more importantly, for the defense of rationalism, and hopefully nonviolence, in politics of any form.

The debate between radical and conservative rationalists can be arranged in such a way that it constitutes a reductio ad absurdum of rationalism in social philosophy. To wit: (i) Rationalism demands radicalism (Radicalism). But, (ii) radicalism defeats rationality (Conservatism). Therefore, (iii) rationalism is self-defeating (Irrationalism).

Below, I illustrate this reductio by considering alternative answers to the question: Can the choice of a side, in a social dialectic, e.g., a revolution, be rational?

I must say at the outset that I am profoundly unhappy with the available answers: all the well-traveled roads lead to the reductio and to the current degeneration of our social, political and intellectual life. Is this too severe? Can we retain the optimism, humanism, and progressivism of the Age of Reason without bad faith or naiveté? How can we avoid succumbing to the nihilism and despair that is so much a part of the current mood? I submit, as a start, the view attributed to Husserl, via Gurwitsch via Agassi: "the most rational thing to do in the absence of a theory of rationality is to search for one (rather than to sink into irrationalist despair)."[1]

II. RADICAL RATIONALISM AND ITS FAILURE

A. Radical Controversies and Theories of Radical Controversy.

Radicalism proposes the relentless application of reason to society, usually in opposition to both the established pattern of social order and the theory which supports it. However, the latter may claim a rationality of its own (conservative) sort and, hence, contests between rival con-
ceptions of social order may be accompanied by clashes of alternative conceptions of rationality. Let us call such contests "radical controversies" and ask whether such controversies are rational. The attempt to answer this question is a test of the radical view of the omnicompetence of reason in social theory, although, as we shall see, the matter is not quite that simple.

To begin, I suggest a closer look at the details of an idealized radical controversy. Radicals invoke an omnicompetent rationality to expose the irrationality of established conceptions of social order. Conservatives who claim rationality for the established conception will dispute their rival's pretensions to rationality. Holding a doctrine of the limitations of rationality, conservatives charge that radical conceptions of rationality are self-deeating. So the radical/conservative controversy may be seen, on a philosophical level, as a dispute between rival conceptions of rationality. The absence of a common conception leads us to the view that such a controversy is beyond rational resolution. Yet, radicalism is committed to the view that the choice between alternative conceptions of social order can be rational. Therefore, if the conservative claim that radical controversies cannot be rational is correct, then radical challenges to existing social arrangements--and the theories which support them--will be characterized as irrational.

There are two responses which may be made to this charge of irrationality: (1) the radical may reject the conservative doctrine of the limitation of rationality and maintain that his own position is the expression of reason itself. Moreover, the application of reason to society will expose the absolute irrationality of the established order. Or, (2) he may present his position as the expression of an alternative conception of rationality which exposes the relative irrationality of the established order. He may hold that rationality of the radical is superior to that of the conservative, yet he would add that such a judgment itself cannot be considered rational in any absolute sense.

The absolutist response (1), would seem the more forceful of the two positions. The radicalist here claims an absolute justification of his own conception of social order and rules out the possibility of rational disagreement. Also, radicalism is provided with a complete justification grounded in the ultimate demand of reason itself and, thus, the irrationality of all competitors is established in advance of any possible controversy. In other words, all competing views would be declared irrational, since there would be no room for rational disagreement with a position which had reason's full and ultimate support.

What this strategy (1) does is to turn a seeming problem for radicalism--the irrationality of radical controver-
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The irrationality of radical controversies is attributed to the intransigent irrationalism of the conservatives. The resistance of the latter to the insurgent rationalism of the radicals' challenge is sufficient evidence of this, and the very existence of a controversy attests to the need for the victory of radicalism, which is interpreted as a victory of reason over unreason. It may even be claimed that the presence of such an irrational party as the conservative one can be attributed to the irrational structure of the society. Thus, the radicalist who chooses this conception of radical controversies must be able to demonstrate the absolute rationality of his position and the absolute irrationality of his conservative rival. Such a demonstration would entail a justification of the radicalist point of view. It appears now that the forcefulness of this view is a form of what Popper calls "reinforced dogmatism," where criticism is turned to positive support.[2]

Again, this absolutist strategy would entail that radical controversies are necessarily irrational but would portray this as a problem for the opponents of radicalism, since controversy of any sort is unnecessary. That is, if there is to be controversy, it would be irrational necessarily, but there is no need for controversy. Since the position of the radical is absolutely rational, if the conservative would embrace rationality, he would be led to see the truth of the radical position. That is to say, that if a controversy should emerge, its rational resolution would be at the same time a justification of radicalism. The controversy is rational if, and only if, it ceases with the victory of the radicalist. If the controversy is rational, then it will be quickly resolved in favor of the radicalist. Thus, a victory of the radical view is the hallmark of rationally resolved radical controversy.

A modified version of this view is to be found in Sartre, as will be seen in the next section.

Suppose, on the other hand, that a radicalist were to choose (2), the relativistic response? A radicalist who entertains this option would view a radical controversy as irrational. In this he would agree with the conservative that rationality requires an irrational faith in some point of view. Such a radicalist would present an account of his own point of view as superior to the one being opposed; that is, he would present it as capable of criticizing rivals, yet only within the framework of a common commitment to a shared point of view. The question, why prefer the radicalist point of view, cannot be answered with a rational justification. This relativistic theory of radical controversies seems inconsistent with the basic radical premise of a universal and absolute rationalism. Yet it is most important to note that antiradicalists can take small comfort from this conclusion. For even though this view of radical con-
troversies is inconsistent with radicalism itself, it is consistent with the conservative view. Moreover, as we shall see, the admissibility of this form of radicalism may be viewed as a reductio ad absurdum of conservative rationalism, or at least of its critique of radicalism. Once again, this relativistic rationalism agrees with conservative rationalism in seeing rationality as being internal to a point of view which is, in turn, supported by an irrational commitment. This is the view of Herbert Marcuse, whose radicalism I view as more threatening to rationalism than Sartre's. The weakness of the conservative critique of radicalism is illustrated by the fact that it limits its force to the more rational radicalism of Sartre and actually lends support to Marcuse's irrational radicalism.

B. Choosing a Side in a Radical Controversy: (1) Marx, Lenin, (2) Marcuse, (3) Sartre.

1. Let us consider two representatives of radical rationalism: Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse who both see their social philosophies to be supported by correct superior conceptions of rationality and protest, in the name of that conception, against the rationality of established forms of social order. With respect to the theories of radical controversy considered in the previous section, Sartre seems to take the first response, (1). He sees radical controversies as rational: a universal conception of rationality, one which is accessible to both radicals and conservatives, can be employed in the resolution of the controversy. Marcuse exemplifies the second response (2). He sees radical and conservative positions as incommensurable. Resolution of the controversy entails not a rational choice between alternatives but is, rather, a matter of esthetic sensibility. Marcuse calls for a "new sensibility" to do the job for which rationality is not competent, that is, to justify the radical perspective.[3]

Now, both Marcuse and Sartre trace their conceptions of radical controversies to Marx, who had argued that intellectual activity is a mere reflection of economic activity.[4] Thus, intellectual conflict is a reflection of economic conflict or, in Marx's terms, class conflict. Each class is represented in intellectual life by an ideology, and so ideological conflicts reflect the relative situation of these classes as well as the status of their conflict. Class conflict, not rational argument, sets the real terms of ideological controversy. However, for Marx, this fact has remained concealed. Therefore, during the period of social development characterized by class division, a universal rationality is unobtainable. Yet, this condition is neither perpetual nor completely inescapable. If the aim of the radical philosopher is to get beyond the ideological distortion of consciousness, he will put philosophy aside. Since his goal can only be pursued by opposing the class division
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of society, he must take up revolutionary activity. His aim is the elimination of classes in society because only a classless society allows escape from ideological thinking. Rationality is achieved for Marx by the negation of irrationality, and this negation is accomplished by a particular socio-economic class, the proletariat, which is, at the same time, not merely a particular class in Marx's view, but is the class to end all classes.[5]

Therefore, the philosopher's commitment to rationality is only served by an alliance with the proletariat and an adherence to its point of view. Here Marx presents his intellectual heirs with a certain ambiguity between rationality as ideological and rationality as universal. We see this in Sartre's complaint that Marxism presents itself both as a class ideology and an absolute truth without any attempt to account for the contradiction.[6]

It might be argued that Marxism entails an elitist theory of rationality as the possession of a particular class. The elitism of this conception is realized and expanded in the philosophy of Lenin who rejects Marx's optimistic view of the development of proletariat thinking and the ability of the proletariat to understand its own interests. For Lenin a privileged intellectual position is appropriated by a self-appointed vanguard of professional revolutionists who claim to align themselves with the true interests of the proletariat.[7] Sartre complains of this as well, and below I will examine his efforts to avoid these consequences. Yet, Sartre wants to retain the Marxian notion of the privileged position of the proletariat with respect to rationality, because he accepts Marx's picture of the proletariat as a class excluded, by its historical destiny, from established, ideologically distorted rationality.[8]

By contrast, Marcuse's starting point is the view that capitalism, in its advanced state, presents an established social reality which hides its underlying conflicts and merges all classes in a comfortable, but false, rationality.[9] Marcuse shares Marx's theory of ideology without sharing his view of the privileged position of the proletariat. His position is thus closer to Lenin's, yet he is not a Bolshevik.

2. In the work of Marcuse[10] the radical controversy is portrayed as a conflict between the "one-dimensional" ideology of advanced industrial nations and the "negative thinking" of radical intellectuals, like himself. One-dimensional ideology reflects a society of "total administration," where the efforts at negation and transcendence are absorbed by the appearance of rationality which it presents. One-dimensional society presents itself in such a way that affirmation appears to be the only rational response. Therefore, Marcuse concludes, we must attempt to recapture the possibility of negating established reality. That is, we must
reassert this suppressed dimension of thought. But, since the prevailing one-dimensional rationality integrates all possibly dissident elements into itself, the formulation of an alternative rationality will be almost impossible.[11]

It is only by the adoption of a correct rationality that this one-dimensionality can be surmounted. Thus, Marcuse will grant that the commitment to rationality—true rationality—will involve the adoption of a radical perspective. Yet, since the adoption of this perspective requires the adoption of a new rationality, radicalism cannot be seen as rational from a one-dimensional perspective. In fact, radical rationality is the missing second dimension. Now, if we see this radical rationality as the rationality of negation, then its adoption will also be the negation of existing social reality.[12] But, unless this rationality has already been achieved, this negation cannot itself be rational. That is, attainment of a correct rationality can only be accomplished within the framework of the radical negation on one-dimensional social order; but this negation cannot be considered rational since it necessarily precedes the attainment of rationality. So we can interpret Marcuse's negative rationality as the rationalization of an antecedently irrational negation of society.

Here we can see the connection between the negative rationality and the new sensibility. The new sensibility is an esthetic rejection of established social order, which demands a rational expression in a negative rationality. So negative rationality rests upon an irrational foundation—an esthetic rejection of established society. Thus, the move between rival conceptions of rationality is irrational. Yet, Marcuse also contends that radicalism can be given a transcendent justification while making the point that revolutions require the creating of new values.[13] On one hand, Marcuse upholds the conception of rationality as a transcendent enterprise, while on the other hand, it is internal to a partisan viewpoint. If this inconsistency can be resolved, such a resolution would involve seeing radicalism as the expression of reason, and the status quo as the expression of unreason.

This seems to be Marcuse's view, and the fact that it cannot be rationally supported leads to a number of problems concerning the rationality of radical controversies. What this view entails is an irrational rejection of established conceptions of social order and an equally irrational commitment to radicalism. This view, in turn, entails both the rejection of any seemingly rational features of established social order as self-defeating and the justification of any seemingly irrational features of radicalism as a service to reason. (Perhaps this is too strong, although it should be recalled that "rational" and "irrational" are defined relative to one's point of view.)
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To be fair, Marcuse does disown this latter conclusion. There are certain things which are not justified for the sake of revolution, and Marcuse specifies two principles of restraint: (1) we cannot justify violating the values for which the revolution is fought, nor (2) may we commit acts which would undermine the revolution.[14] However, since the revolution supplies its own set of values and such a practice is open-ended, these can hardly be seen as specifying limitations on revolutionary conduct. Thus, the first limitation can hardly be called a principle of restraint. Likewise, for the second limitation, for this can be seen to cut both ways: if the success of the revolution is our guiding principle, then it may require certain ruthless proceedings in some circumstances, even though it would require moderation in other circumstances. The consequences of the above views are seen most clearly in Marcuse's well known critique of tolerance.[15] There, he disqualifies the seemingly rational practice of liberal tolerance as a part of an irrational social structure within which its rationality is perverted. At the same time, Marcuse calls for a withdrawal of tolerance from advocates of the established social order: "... intolerance toward prevailing policies, attitudes, opinions ..."[16] Having rejected the possibility of the rationality of radical controversies, Marcuse promotes its authoritarian conduct.

In the light of this it is not clear that we can consider Marcuse a radical rationalist. That position sees radicalism as the extension of a consistent rationalism. Radicalism, in this view, can be supported by reason. Thus, radical rationalism ought to be able to portray radical controversies as rational. But for Marcuse, radicalism is the articulation of a sensibility rather than of rationality, and this view follows from his rejection of the rationality of radical controversies. However, his case is not so clearcut. For Marcuse's radicalism is in the service of reason—and that service entails the negation of unreason. The controversy is irrational because one-dimensional society "rigs the rules of the game," and the necessary conditions for a rational contest are suppressed by the opponents of radicalism.[17] The minimal condition for such a controversy would be the existence of rational citizens, but for Marcuse this is missing in one-dimensional society.[18] Moreover, it is those who administer the one-dimensional society who are at fault if such apparently irrational methods need to be employed.

So we may outline Marcuse's position in two ways: Either (1) rationality demands radicalism; radicalism demands irrationality. That is, the rational demand for a just society entails the employment of irrational means in practice. Or (2) an irrational commitment demands radicalism; radicalism demands rationalism. That is, the new sensibility demands radicalism in the sense of total opposition to established society and that opposition demands a ration-
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al expression. This ambiguity reflects the inconsistency of the claims that revolution—the practical extension of radicalism—is justified by a transcendent reason and that revolutions create their own values and are self-justifying.

Radical rationalism, we recall, asserts that rationality demands radicalism and rejects the claim that radicalism defeats rationality. But if either or both of the positions outlined above correctly represent Marcuse's position, then he cannot hold simultaneously the two propositions of radical rationalism without some difficulty.

Conservative rationalists may take this to be evidence for the charge that radicalism defeats rationality. As I have said, they can take little comfort from this conclusion, for the defeat of rationality results not so much from Marcuse's radicalism as from assumptions which he shares with his conservative counterparts: the belief in the irrationality of radical controversies. If such controversies are in fact irrational, then the choice of competing positions cannot be rational. There may be no reason, granting the above conclusion, why we should not attain a new sensibility which will entitle us to censor the opinions of rivals. I will return to this argument in the next section. For now we can test that claim by considering Sartre's attempt to portray such controversies as rational and see if, in fact, it is successful.

3. For Sartre a radical controversy engages the "analytical reason" (la raison analytique) of the bourgeoisie and the "dialectical reason" (la raison dialectique) of the proletariat.[19] The names are different, but the conceptions are fairly identical to the corresponding parties of Marcuse's controversy. But, Sartre's description of radical controversies is not as problematic as the latter's. For one thing, Sartre does not place this controversy within the context of a one-dimensional society. Bourgeois ideology is one-dimensional, to be sure; it attempts to mask the existence of social conflict and it presents us with a conception of reason which will forestall transcendence of established society. However, this ideology afflicts the bourgeoisie particularly and does not permeate the consciousness of the proletariat. The latter retain, in Sartre's view, more or less the position granted by Marx: they are the historical agents of radical rationality.

What most clearly distinguishes Sartre from Marcuse is his insistence that the radical controversy is rational.[20] And indeed, he maintains that the radical rationality of the proletariat is rationally accessible to bourgeois intellectuals even within the framework of the bourgeois rationality. For Sartre, resolution of the controversy involves a movement of thought wherein analytical rationality turns in on itself and perceives its own limitations. In so doing, the rational intellectual is able to formulate a critique of
bourgeois ideology, seeing it as nothing more than part of a conservative effort to preserve an irrational social order. This will lead to an awareness of the particularism of this ideology, and since the intellectual's commitment to rationality involves a search for the universal, he will reject it.[21] Thus, analytical reason opens itself to dialectical reason, but not vice versa.

Dialectical reason is attained by analytical reason come into consciousness of itself—acknowledging both its limitations and its particularist application. Reason takes itself as an object and, in so doing, is transformed into dialectical reason. Of course, this realization requires the historical presence of a proletariat whose work presents an example of the dialectical relationship between man and the world, and whose situation is one of exclusion in a society itself supported by analytical reason. The bourgeois intellectual who is true to rationality will push his analytical reason to its limits, demanding its comprehensive application, and this relentless application of rationality will propel the intellectual to radicalism. As a radical, he will seek a radical rationality and will support the class which represents this rationality; he finds the former in dialectical reason and the latter in the proletariat.[22] The bourgeois intellectual then can come to radicalism and the radical conception of rationality through the application of his own conservative rationality. In this way, we can see the radical conception of rationality as a universal rationality, which is itself rationally supported. Radical rationality, for Sartre, is rationality itself and it is universal; it is thus accessible to both parties in a radical controversy.[23] This sharply contrasts with Marcuse's conception, where rationality is restricted to an aesthetic elite. However, Sartre's position is not without its own set of difficulties.

Sartre maintains that the controversy between two rival conceptions of social order and their concomitant conceptions of rationality can be resolved rationally, and that if it is so resolved, it is resolved in favor of radicalism. This, in brief, is Sartre's argument that rationality demands radicalism. That argument that the controversy can be rationally resolved already is circular, since it assumes the same. For what is essential to the argument is the assumption that rationality can take itself as its own object. In other words, Sartre is assuming that rationality is comprehensive—self-justifying and self-critical—in a way that the conservative theory of a limited rationality would deny from the outset. But, that is a point of contention in the controversy and, of course, it is the position already upheld by the radical party. As we have seen, conservative rationalism argues that the controversy cannot be rationally resolved because rationality cannot take itself as an object, that is, that it cannot support itself. Again, conservatives argue that the only feasible rationalism is one
which admits to irrational foundations.

So the problem of the rationality of radical controversies comes back to the problem of rationality or the problem of the limits of reason. Here the question is whether rationalism can and ought to meet its own criteria of rationality. That is, the question we must address is whether rationality is reflexive. This contested claim of reflexivity is necessary to support the radicalist claim to an autonomous reason as an ultimate source of authority. And, as we shall see, the formulation of this problem is in itself part of the philosophical critique of radical rationalism. If the solution to the problem of rationality involves a rationalism with irrational foundations, then radicalism cannot justify itself as the expression of an autonomous and transcendent reason. This argument itself cannot be taken as a refutation of radicalism per se unless that radicalism claims rationality as its sole justification. The critique of radicalism otherwise will have to proceed from arguments different from those with which we are here concerned.

III. CONSERVATIVE RATIONALISM AND ITS FATAL WEAKNESS

A. Karl Popper’s Critique of Radical Rationalism.

What I call a priori arguments against the rationality of radicalism oppose the notion that rationality is autonomous in social philosophy by arguing that such a conception is self-defeating. Its self-defeat lies within the contradiction involved in trying to formulate a consistent rationalism which does not ultimately rest upon some irrational foundation. This latter claim is upheld by conservative rationalists particularly—although we have found it somewhat in the irrational radicalism of Marcuse. So we find the paradoxical position that the effort to be rational concerning our conceptions of reason is self-defeating and, hence, irrational. Let us take a closer look at the connection between this paradox and the problem of the rationality of radical controversies.

The preceding section summarized Sartre’s claim to have resolved this latter problem. If Sartre is correct he will have escaped the above a priori critique. A necessary condition for the correctness of Sartre’s proposal is the correctness of his assumption that rationality can be rational in its foundations. The a priori critique challenges this assumption by arguing that the effort to be rational about one’s rationalism is impossible, and so a theory which demands such a comprehensive rationalism is a theory which makes rationalism demand the impossible. Radical rationalism thus spells the defeat of rationality.

The argument against the autonomy of reason, simply stated, claims that rationalism cannot justify itself with-
out assuming in advance the view that rationality consists in justification. In other words, how can we rationally justify the view that rational beliefs and actions are justifiable ones without assuming the same? The commitment to rationality (particularly where rationality is seen as justification) cannot be justified without circularity. Rationality thus requires an act of faith in reason as a starting point. This act of faith is irrational in terms of the very conception of reason being upheld (justification). If a rational belief is a justified belief then a belief which is held without such justification is ipso facto irrational. Reason is thus limited with respect to its foundations.

F. A. Hayek argues that the belief in the autonomy of reason is a presupposition of the radical philosophy of total rationality in society and in social philosophy. Likewise, Karl Popper criticizes radicalism by arguing the self-contradictoriness of an autonomous rationalism. Such a refutation of the autonomy of reason strikes at the foundations of radical rationalism and supports its conservative rival. Both Popper and Hayek advocate a modest rationalism in its stead, and both argue that the abandonment of radical rationalism is advisable for the sake of preserving a rationalism more modest in its pretensions. As Hayek states it, "What we have attempted is a defense of reason against its abuse by those who do not understand the conditions of its effective functioning and continuous growth."[24] With respect to social philosophy, Hayek sees in radicalism the application of Descartes' rationalist prohibition against accepting any opinion concerning which there is room for doubt.[25] Thus, the radicalist is one who will only accept the authority of a system in which, to use Burke's words, "the practice of all moral duties, and the foundations of society, rested upon having their reasons made clear and demonstrative to every individual."[26] Hayek is perceptive in pointing out some of the more dangerous consequences of these "flattering assumptions about the unlimited powers of human reason."[27] But, it is Popper to whom we turn for a philosophical refutation of this view, and thus for a paradigmatic example of conservative rationalism.

Popper describes the assumption of the unlimited power of reason as "uncritical or comprehensive rationalism" and argues that it is inconsistent and thus logically untenable. His argument is as follows: If we propose the view that any opinion which cannot be supported by either argument or experience is to be rejected (comprehensive rationalism), then we can see that because this principle cannot be supported either by experience or argument it ought to be rejected. Alternatively, "since all arguments must proceed from assumptions, it is plainly impossible to demand that all assumptions be based on argument."[28] For Popper, then, the only form of rationalism which is logically tenable is "one which frankly admits its origin in an irrational
For Popper the decision to adopt the rationalist point of view carries with it both moral and political commitments: attitudes of anti-authoritarianism and tolerance in politics, respect for others and disdain for violence in ethics, and a sort of egalitarianism in both spheres.[30]

Moreover, the admission that reason is not self-contained and all powerful leads Popper to a respect for what Hayek calls the "indispensable matrix of the uncontrolled and nonrational which is the only environment wherein reason can grow and operate effectively."[31]

B. Some Unforeseen Consequences: The Critique Disarms the Critics.

If it is assumed that the a priori critique of radicalism recounted in the preceding section is sound, then the only way that radicalism could escape self-defeat would be to detach itself from the radical conception of rationality. There are two distinct assertions which may allow us such a separation: (1) radicalism asserts the omnicompetence of reason in social philosophy; (2) radicalism asserts that the omnicompetence of reason in social philosophy is supported by reason.

Now, must we argue that (1) implies (2)? This is most likely the case, because if reason is omnicompetent in social philosophy then it must be competent to demonstrate this. That is to say, if rationalism requires us to submit all our opinions to the test of reason, then the radicalist must submit his belief in reason's omnicompetence to such a test. If such a test is not possible then reason's competence will be seen to be limited in its basic posture. If we argue in this way, then Sartre's position is more thoroughly rationalist than Marcuse's. For it is (2) that asserts the rationality of a priori arguments against both Sartre and Marcuse. Such an argument against Sartre would involve a demonstration of the contradictory nature of (2); against Marcuse the argument would demonstrate both the contradictoriness of (2) and the necessary connection between (1) and (2). In other words, if radicalism declares the omnicompetence of rationality in social philosophy, then the question of the limits of reason should be open to rational resolution—at least in accord with its own standards of rationality, articulated or implicit. Otherwise, claims for reason's comprehensive scope would prove themselves false, and radicalism would stand refuted in its foundations. Of course, this is not to say that the failure of any such critical argument establishes the truth or even the rationality of radicalism. For there would certainly remain what might be called a posteriori objections to radicalism. Although it is not my intention to consider such arguments, it may be mentioned that it is possible that a posteriori

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arguments can only be successful if a priori ones are not.[32]

If a particular radicalist theory subscribed only to (1) and it could be shown that (1) implied (2) then only a posteriori arguments would suffice. Yet, a difficulty would remain: If conservative rationalism, in its a priori critique of radicalism, is correct, then the conditions for a rational a posteriori critique are weakened. For the position of the radical and the conservative will be equivalent with respect to the rationality of their foundations. Both will be based on some arbitrary commitment to a position. Moreover, claims for the incommensurability of radically opposed theories will negate the effort to criticize such theories from rival points of view. This is already found in Marx and Engels' refusal to take seriously a number of arguments against their proposals by dismissing them as "bourgeois" objections.[33] So even the critical approach to rationality in social philosophy may yet prove to be self-defeating if we totally reject the radicalist conception.

Here we have a serious problem: the a priori critique of radicalism leaves conservative rationalists defenseless against irrational conceptions of radicalism such as Marcuse's. In effect, the a priori critique elevates irrational radicalism to a position of intellectual respectability beyond the intentions of conservative rationalism. This is, again, the self-defeat of rationality which is entailed by both conservative and radical conceptions of rationality. What is called for is a nonself-defeating conception of rationality and we shall see that neither party so far considered can offer this. To repeat, the effort to formulate a feasible conception of rationality--one which surmounts the mutual charges of self-defeat lodged by both conservative and radical rationalists--is the problem of rationality in social philosophy.

Let us take a closer look at the critique of radicalism. Popper's claim is that if rationalism is to be feasible--that is, not self-defeating or contradictory--then a certain concession to irrationalism must be granted. This concession is the admission that rationalism cannot be expected to adhere to the very requirements which it in turn imposes upon beliefs embraced subsequent to one's commitment to rationalism. The doctrine of rationalism cannot be supported in the way that it expects all other doctrines to be supported. Thus, strictly speaking, rationalism is embraced irrationally. This view of the irrationality of rationalism is supported, Popper claims, by the observation that a rationally justified rationalism is logically impossible. Moreover, to demand a comprehensively rational rationalism is to demand the impossible. Therefore, such demands, and the unsatisfiable expectations which they arouse, weaken the appeal and authority of rationalism. Popper hopes to check
the erosion of reason's authority, offering his own irrationally-based rationalism as a logically possible alternative to the logically impossible comprehensive conception of rationalism. Moreover, Popper claims there are some moral considerations which can support the choice of rationalism. However, Popper's benign rationalism is not the only contender for our allegiance. What we have before us is a possibly infinite array of contending norms of belief and conduct, some rationalist and others irrationalist. What guidance is offered to the undecided by Popper's view of the irrational nature of initial commitment? Now, at first glance it appears that we cannot rationally establish the superiority of any of the contenders, so our initial commitments might seem arbitrary. Against this, Popper might invoke the moral considerations which are brought to bear on the choice of his conception of rationalism, but this merely reiterates the problem. Why accept the moral considerations in the first place? At this point Popper might respond that we are imposing expectations on reason which he has already shown to be unreasonable. This may be true, but the problem remains despite his critique of comprehensive rationalism. The fact is that rejection of the impossible demands of comprehensive rationalism need not by itself salvage a more modest rationalism. There remains the difficulty of choosing among the remaining alternatives, such as the positions of Sartre and Marcuse.

Popper's arguments against the possibility of reason's self-justification serve as a refutation of Sartre's attempts to demonstrate the self-justifying character of dialectical rationalism. However, Popper's critical view of the grounds of reason may actually be employed to support Marcuse's less modest views concerning reason's authority. Recall that Popper was concerned with refuting a view of reason which he saw as unreasonably ambitious and sought to replace it with a view which was more modest, and hence, less likely to serve as a pretext for a turn to irrationalism. Popper's goal is two-fold: (1) He seeks to modify the expectations of rationalists in order to forestall an irrationalistic reaction to their inevitable disappointment. We see here a restatement of the Socratic warning against the overconfidence in reason's power which, when disappointed, can lead to misology, and worse, to misanthropy. (2) His other, and related, goal is to prevent the rational sanctioning of political authoritarianism by refuting an intellectually authoritarian view of rationality. Indirectly, Popper hopes to counter the appeal of irrationalist political authoritarianism as well, by offering his modest rationalism as a viable alternative.

In terms of the first goal, Popper's critique is, at best, a partial success. I think the critical alternative which he offers against authoritarian forms of rationalism promises greater success if some modifications can be made as we shall discuss in the next section. Yet he seems not
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to notice the strength of his own position and unnecessarily fails to satisfy the second goal. His flawed efforts to reach the first goal expose a weakness which is fatal to his efforts toward the second goal. To see this more clearly, compare the impact of his views on those of Sartre and Marcuse.

In the preceding section we contrasted Sartre's view that radical controversies can be rationally resolved with Marcuse's rejection of that view. Moreover, Sartre based his claim on his view of the autonomy and comprehensiveness of reason, while Marcuse based his rejection on the view that rationality requires as foundation an esthetic sensibility. Now it is the latter view of Marcuse's which is inadvertently sanctioned by Popper's critique. To wit, the latter claims that rationalism will eschew authoritarianism, being aware of its irrational foundations and hence, its own limitations. However, all that Popper has really succeeded in demonstrating is that reason cannot support its own authority: the authority of reason cannot rest on reason itself. However, it would also seem that the effort to restrict the authority of reason cannot rest on reason either. To this Marcuse can quite comfortably agree while maintaining the view, to which Popper assents, that the authority of reason rests upon an irrational foundation, and for Marcuse this foundation is the "new sensibility" discussed previously. Moreover, although Marcuse advocates an authoritarianism wholly repulsive to the liberal outlook characteristic of Popper's critical rationalism, the very restrictions which the latter imposes upon reason and the concession he grants to irrationalism coincide to disarm him. It seems that the door opened by Popper's concession to irrationalism may admit such unwelcome guests as Marcuse's intolerance. Where Popper admits the need for an irrational faith in reason, we find Marcuse asks us to place our faith in the benevolence of a revolutionary dictatorship of intellectuals.[37] But, certainly, one may respond, such a comparison is unfair, and it is true that Popper's faith is prerequisite to a modest and tolerant attitude of give and take, whereas Marcuse's is prerequisite to a scheme of political indoctrination and intolerance.[38] Yet certain parallels remain: each sees his own faith as a necessary condition for the feasibility of rationalism. Moreover, each admits to certain moral considerations which can serve to restrict the legitimate objects of such faith.[39]

In short, what distinguishes these two are the objects to which their faith attaches: their differing conceptions of reason and its authority. What seems to unite them is the logic of their commitments: each sees his faith as being an irrational belief in the necessary conditions of rationality. Moreover, such conditions are necessary only insofar as they are attached to one or the other of the distinct conceptions of reason and its authority. In order to fully distinguish the two and reassert the force of Popper's
anti-authoritarian philosophy, we shall require a rational check on the legitimate objects of a rational rationalism. In other words, if Popper is to avoid the defeat of his liberal aims he must be able to specify reasons for putting one's faith in a particular conception of reason and not another.

IV. PROSPECTS: REFUSING TO DESPAIR MEANS SEARCHING FOR A NEW RATIONALITY IN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

What is to be the outcome of our investigation? Perhaps it is substantiation of the reductio and the default of rationalism as a standpoint. Is this then a justification of irrationalist despair? I would urge that the very notion of justified despair be rejected out of hand. What remains is the unjustified but undoubtedly rational resolve to begin the search for a new theory of rationality as suggested by the advice cited on page 2 above. The first step is to re-examine the earlier efforts hoping to learn from our mistakes. This last thought is drawn from Popper's own philosophy and in this section I will focus on the failures of his philosophy especially. I will argue here that despite the weakness alleged in the preceding section Popper's views can be improved in ways which may vindicate our resolve. But, I will only indicate the shape of such a new view. Our attention goes first and primarily to locating the source of our difficulties with the established versions of rationalism.

There are two doctrines which are at the heart of the debate concerning rationalism in social philosophy and the reductio into which it evolves:

(1) The desire to use reason as a source of intellectual and ipso facto social authority.

(2) The attitude which seeks to polarize intellectual and social life into exclusive and exhaustive alternatives.

I believe (1) to be a feature of both radical and conservative theories although it is, as I stipulated at the outset, the central claim of radicalism. The polarization of views (2) is also a feature of both views but central to conservative rationalism which is articulated primarily as a critique of radicalism. I think it is possible to reformulate the Popperian view of rationality in a way which avoids (1) and (2) and thus the reductio. I think Popper's mistakes are more serious and, therefore, the one's from which we have the most to learn.

As we have seen, Popper's critique of radicalism and the restrictions which he places on the scope of rationality—particularly his insistence on the irrational founda-
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tions of rationalism--lend legitimacy to authoritarian views such as Marcuse's. Of course, this is quite contrary to the former's intentions, and if my criticisms stand, Popper's efforts will be seen as ultimately self-defeating. His efforts include the search for a new, open-textured conception of rationality, and if the arguments considered in the last section are inseparable from that aim, then the search leads to a blind alley.

Is the Popperian project hopeless? To clear the ground for our answer we ought to distinguish two questions: (i) Why accept rationalism rather than irrationalism? (ii) Why accept one conception of rationality rather than another? Popper is quite correct in maintaining that if we are faced with a choice between rationalism and irrationalism, we are placed in a dilemma for which no strictly rationalistic approach is available. Obviously, we cannot claim to embrace rationalism on rational grounds without begging the question. For the question holds open the acceptance of rational criteria for our beliefs. With respect to this dispute Popper is correct: If our choice is between a consistent irrationalism and a self-defeating (or question-begging) rationalism, the former would appear more attractive on rational grounds.[40] And, Popper would appear to be correct if his proposals were merely the honest admission of a rationalist that ultimately we cannot answer the question "why be rational?" to the satisfaction of the most unrelenting questioner conceivable. What Popper is rightly warning is that we hand a certain victory to the enemies of reason if we uphold expectations for reason which cannot be satisfied. So he proposes that we grant a strategic concession to irrationalism and thereby preserve the right to persist in our commitment to rationalism.

But, another question arises: How much ground must rationalism concede to irrationalism? My criticism of Popper is simply that he is willing to concede too much, and that a modification of his own conception of rationality makes possible a stronger, more rational, defense. This can be seen by looking at question (ii) above. Once the question of choosing between rationalism and irrationalism is settled, then we can turn to the task of clarifying our commitment. Moreover, since we have embraced rationality, we can and ought to approach this second question rationally.

Popper's contribution is the proposal of a new conception of rationalism, nonjustificationism or critical rationalism, which replaces the traditional search for the establishing of truth by justification with the effort to eliminate errors through the criticism of our views.[41] Nonjustificationism should be seen not simply as a new answer to old questions, but rather as a proposal for a new understanding of those questions. As such, it is a critique of traditional formulations of the problem of rationality and thereby a call for reformulating the problem.
Briefly, the old question is: why be rational? The new question is: how can we improve our standards of rationality? Or, how can we (i.e., our science, politics, etc.) become more rational? Of course, we are assuming here that we are at least partly rational, and this is already established by our resolve. I do not know whether this is question-begging or common sense. Need it be justified? Only within the justificatory tradition is this demanded, and that tradition stands criticized by the reductio. Already, Popper stands against this tradition in his presentation of critical rationalism. Yet, the social philosophy which he develops is limited by its negative deployment as a critique of radicalism, and is itself made vulnerable to the reductio by the assumption of the polarization of rationalisms. To return to the question of the necessity for justification, we are now outside of the framework, so to speak, in which that demand has authority, and perhaps all that can be required is self-consistency. This is, to be sure, no justification.[42] To continue to uphold the demand for justification now appears question-begging. So Popper's concession to an irrational faith, his fideistic justification of reason, is unnecessary by his own standards which only expects us to seek improvement of our conception of rationality through criticism. This is how I understand Bartley's "comprehensively critical rationalism" which is a modification of Popper's "critical rationalism": if rationalism can be criticized and improved thereby, then this is enough for us to judge rationalism to be comprehensively rational without the need for justification through irrational faith or otherwise.[43]

We should let go of even the semblance of justification which Popper unnecessarily includes in his concession. This will remove the "fatal weakness" discussed in the previous section, and will allow our search to advance. Now we can better see that there is an important difference, despite their comparable views on the justification of rationalism, between Marcuse, who calls for silencing or ignoring the opposition, and Popper, who says he welcomes criticism from all sides.

However, we must go further yet, again by Popper's own standards, and ensure that his welcoming is not qualified, and hence jeopardized, by the polarization of rationalism. We must ask, to quote Sheldon Richmond, "How open is Popper's open society?"[44]

As we have seen the dispute between conservative and radical rationalism presents polarized responses to a problem which cannot admit of rational resolution, but this dilemma is unnecessary once we refuse the role of referee in a clash of opposing claims for authority. We need now to reformulate the problem.
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The question to be taken up is not, what form of social order does reason demand, but rather, how can we increase the rationality—and decrease the irrationality—of our social practices.[45] This is one side of Popper's philosophy, his dream we might say, but this is not universal enough. It belongs, it is sad to say, only within those societies capable of improvement through free discussion and social experiment, and which have a degree of civil order and a progressive tradition. (To be fair, Popper acknowledges this limitation, and the fear that even in that context his views may be, in his words, a bit naive and too optimistic.)[46] I would add that even here we need standards of progress and of what constitutes a social problem.[47] Here is where radicalism plays an indispensable role and where its rejection lowers our degree of rationality, yet the movement is clearly evolutionary.

At other times, with different historical conditions, the rational question may be how can we check the growth of irrationalism, or the erosion of rationality? It is here, rather than on the brighter side considered above, that Popper's Open Society and Its Enemies is primarily focused as the title indicates. Indeed, Popper himself tells us that he decided to write that book upon learning that the Nazis had invaded Austria, and this, I think, accounts for its conservatism.[48]

Finally and unfortunately, our question may be how can we create the initial conditions for the movement towards a more rational social order? Popper admits his debt to a revolutionary tradition—although he acknowledges only (but certainly not merely) a "moral and spiritual" revolution.[49] Undoubtedly there may be historical conditions in which Marx's observation, "The weapon of criticism obviously cannot replace the criticism of weapons," would be grim but honest advice even to those in pursuit of less than utopian ends (and not only from those who Popper claims "love and venerate violence.")[50]

What we always need is a clear and flexible view of our situation and its requirements. More importantly, we need a range of alternatives to suit the changing situation. I have not attempted to answer these needs but merely to press them. As a start we should seek a rational social philosophy which does not waste our attention on, or restrict our imagination to, the rival claims of competing authorities.


12. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, xiii.


43. Bartley, Retreat to Commitment, 146-56.


45. Popper, Open Society, vol. I, 121; and Bartley, Retreat to Commitment, 136-7.


