

# DEDUCTIVE THINKING AND POLITICAL PRACTICE

## An Essay on Teutonic Intellectual Style \*

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### 1. Introduction.

Permit me to start with a little warning, particularly to German readers, against taking this essay too seriously. True, it is inspired by years of contact with German thinking, in written and oral forms, particularly in the social sciences. But what is here referred to as "teutonic thinking" or "teutonic intellectual style" is by no means limited to intellectual life between the Rhein and the Oder-Neisse, nor is it the only style of intellectual pursuit found within those particular confines. On the contrary, it is a widespread phenomenon which should once be studied as seriously by cultural anthropologists as, say, pottery.

For there are styles of thinking, and adding to that: there are styles of presentation of thinking, adding up to comprehensive intellectual styles. More importantly, these styles vary in space and time and like everything else are conditioned (not determined) by something. What this something is the present author certainly does not claim to know. But this type of thinking, which I shall try to portray, is more widespread in Latin and Continental Europe than in Northern Europe, and more widespread in Latin America than in Anglo-America. The present author feels there is more of it in India than in China and Japan, and that the thinking of African elites is highly colored by their colonial masters where this factor is concerned: much of it in former French colonies, little ~~where~~ Britain left her mark. In short, there is some kind of pattern to the phenomenon, but hardly a pattern that can be captured in a simple formula.

In this essay, however, an intellectual style will be described and to some extent analyzed. It will be referred to as "teutonic thinking" (not "German"), not so much because of its form as because of the seriousness, the relentless energy, the zeal with which this type of activity is pursued in German intellectual circles. By that we mainly think of universities and

research institutes. But this particular type of intellectual style is also found outside the strongholds of intellectual life, for instance in other educational establishments. One does not find it, at least not in our limited experience, among people in general in Germany. In daily life and ordinary conversation a completely different style can be found, much more similar to what we in some places of the article see as the negation of "teutonic intellectual style". This is important for it has something to do with the difference, the distance between intellectuals and other humans in Germany: it is much more than a difference in power and prestige, in knowledge and income - it is a basic difference in ways of thinking and presentation of thought.

However, at one rather important point in daily life does this particular intellectual style show up, and very much so: in connection with political thinking. Thus, if there is a thesis in this paper then it is the following: the intellectual style described here as teutonic is a matrix in which extremist political ideologies can easily be embedded. By "extremist", then, we mean political ideologies arguing, and actioning, in favor of total and quick social changes. We shall not refer to them as "revolutionary" since we prefer to reserve that word for ideologies aiming at changes in the direction of classless societies - there is a rather important difference between a revolution and a revolte. Another word for "extremist", then would be "apocalyptic": a thinking in terms of very dramatic discontinuities and polar opposites. There are two clear cases of such thinking in recent German history: nazism and some forms of German neo-marxism (which we refuse to refer to as "maoism"; rather, it is very similar to what in China is denounced as "ultra-leftism"). What we are saying, hence, is that extremist political ideologies have something to draw upon in Germany that is not so well developed in many other parts of the world, and that this "something" should be spelt out.

2. A first guide to teutonic intellectual style.

One point of departure might be to give a short reference list of, say twelve observations that may or may not strike other observers of the German intellectual scene as valid and pertinent. The twelve items are given below. Singly, or combined into small groups these items can be found anywhere; it is their totality that would constitute a teutonic style.

A preliminary list of indicators

- (1) In presentation of thinking there is much emphasis on how results can be deduced (Ableitung) from a small set of basic principles, and the question put to any new propositions is whether they can be traced back (Rückführbarkeit) to these principles.
- (2) There is relatively little emphasis on whether the propositions correspond well with empirical observations except for sporadic illustrations. The emphasis is on the theory, and on high level propositions rather than low level propositions.
- (3) The world is seen as capable of basic change if essential factors are changed. Changes in essential factors during a short time-span, can bring about changes in less essential factors, lasting a very long time-span.

These essential changes will come about relatively soon; we live in a dramatic period.
- (4) One selected thought-system is seen not only as consistent with basic conclusions, but as the only valid system capable of producing the same conclusions. All other systems stand in an antagonistic relation to the selected one.

- (5) Much work goes into issuing certificates classifying other systems, articles, books, authors, groups, schools etc. A certificate, once issued, is rarely withdrawn. Denials of their validity, as well as acceptance, are seen as irrelevant; the out-group cannot be a judge in such matters.
- (6) There is also some emphasis on certificates of belongingness, positive or negative, issued to oneself to the effect that "I am an X-ist" or "I am not an X-ist". Declarations of faith matter.
- (7) Adherents of a system tend to develop a special, esoteric language not only with special terms, but also with its own syntax. The language is considerably better for in-group than out-group communication. There is much attention to the use of correct words.
- (8) There is isomorphism between systems and people in the sense that systems tend to have masters and disciples with masters working more on basic principles and disciples more on lower level deductions. To become a new master work has to be done at the level of basic principles, not at the level of deductions, and certainly not at the level of data.
- (9) There is also isomorphism between systems and people in the sense that if systems exclude each other, so do adherents of the system - in the usual sense of conflict polarization.
- (10) Discussions across system borders are usually negative and destructive, rarely positive and constructive. In general there is an assumption of undeclared war between speaker and audience. The speaker is negated; if there is support or agreement it is not voiced.
- (11) Discussions do not take the form of dialogue (or multilogue), but rather the form of parallel monologues, like tests of strength serving self-confirmation rather than a common search for something new.
- (12) The general style of discourse is serious and humourless; jokes are considered frivolous and indicative of lack of faith in what one says.

It should now be pointed out that this style of thinking and presentation does not seem to be the monopoly of any particular political wing; only that, as mentioned, it seems to be thriving better on the wings, right or left, than in the more pragmatic center. It is in fact the style of political extremism, defined its legitimate intellectual form. In the concrete reality of Germany today this would mean that the closer one comes to the centers of political power in a country where all kinds of party coalitions are not only potentially but also empirically possible, the less one find of this type of thinking. Since right now not much thinking is going on on the political right wing, the list just given is to some extent descriptive of phenomena found in some parts of the contemporary German left. But this, it is assumed, is a situation-conditioned empirical contingency, subject to change at any moment given the volatility of the present political situation. Thus, only forty years ago it was certainly more the other way round.

To bring out more clearly what the list stands for, let us try to negate it. Some negations of this type of thinking would be found under the general heading of "pragmatism", and could, perhaps, be referred to as an Anglo-saxon intellectual style. In general, that style would be more inductive, with more emphasis on meticulous reflection of data than on grand theory. There might be some small theory pyramids erected on the basis of what passes for well confirmed hypotheses linked to well validated data, but considerable scepticism with regard to efforts to unify such pyramids under some kind of super-pyramid. The world is seen as less strongly coupled and less capable of an asymmetric division into "prime movers" and other factors; into essential and accidental elements. The world is seen as a looser coupling among more equal factors. To comprehend the world, insights have to be picked from a lot of seemingly contradictory systems and brought together in a flexible way, highly capable of adaptation to new data. With this eclecticism, which may border on opportunism, the classification of everything, and the issue of certificates, becomes less meaningful. Declarations of belongingness are seen as temporary and taken less seriously. Language itself becomes eclectic, and it makes little sense to engage in polarization relative to adherents of this or that school. Discussions would be a search for new syntheses, an expression

of curiosity, a search for strong points rather than for weak ones. The atmosphere would be more relaxed and friendly, jokes may ease the interaction and symbolize the basic communality.

In short, a style rather different from what is here seen as the archetypical teutonic thought-style. To explore this, let us try to go more deeply into the points given in the list above.

### 3. On deductive thinking.

The fundamental and basic point in this thought-style is, indeed, its axiomatic, deductive form, referred to in the first two (three) points on the list. Formulated provocatively one might say that it is almost pure deductionism. Intellectual work consists basically in constructing a pyramid with very few fundamental and mutually consistent elements (concepts, propositions) on top, capable of catching the essence of reality, and with relatively strict rules of deduction. There are fewer constraints on the size of the pyramid, particularly on the extension of the bottom level. Basic are just these two points: the limited number of consistent principles, and the neatness of the deduction. Intellectual work consists in perfecting this construction, not in elaborate procedures for checking the points of contact with empirical reality. The verbal emphasis would be on words like "deducible", "inferable" (ableitbar, zurückführbar), not words like "validation", "testing", "confirmation".

Those who work within this style of thinking would strongly deny, however, any allegiance to total apriorism. It is more a question of emphasis; empirical reality is not neglected, it is deemphasized. Certain aspects of contemporary social, empirical reality are taken for granted; they constitute a common frame of reference in need of little additional empirical testing. Any thought-system would have to reproduce these aspects in its implications, if not it is out. In other words, the system touches on empirical reality - but it touches on a selected reality, the reality as defined as essential by the system, and it touches on them lightly. And this is where the circularity comes in, only more sharply pronounced in the teutonic style than elsewhere: theory is about reality, but reality is that which is conceived of (fassbar) in the theory.

One contrast to this thought-style would not be "barefoot empiricism", i.e. some kind of sociography with (almost) no explicit effort in the direction of theory-formation - for this would be the opposite of pure deductionism as found in a mathematical system. The contrast would be, as mentioned above, a large set of small thought-pyramids, each constructed (deductively or inductively) on top of some aspects of reality, reproducing it, but with little or no emphasis on trying to bring all those small pyramids together under the roof of one super-pyramid. One rationale for this type of approach would be the idea that reality is too complex to be grasped by one, however consistent, thought-system.

It may now be objected that what has been said so far would make mathematicians teutonic thinkers and also most physicists, particularly those working in mathematized branches of physics (and othersciences). But the deductive form of reasoning described here as "teutonic" is not a deductive game. It is closely related to the type of thinking that sees reality revolving around certain essences, or rather around the essence. There is one fundamental element somewhere that contains the key to the universe for instance "the contradiction between higher and lower races", "the contradiction between work and capital". From such essences a number of consequences may be, and are in fact, deduced; to such essences they may be traced back, reduced. In other words, the essential elements put on top of the thought pyramid are not only elements found useful in order to systematize thinking. They are also the essential points of attack for basic transformation of reality, the idea being that a theory is more than a reflection of existing reality; it is a guide to all action for a potential - and better - reality.

This leads to difficulties that are well known and can be formulated as the contradiction between the singularism of deductive theory and the pluralism of human experience. This pluralism, in turn, has at least two roots: the complexity of empirical reality, and the variety of human beings. Any theory will be met by the perennial "yes, but -" and a presentation of a slice of reality in the past, present, even future that seems to fall outside, even contradict, the theory. And even with

reference to the "same" reality different persons may report extremely different perceptions; some may feel the theory speaks to their condition others may report the opposite. And this becomes even more true when in addition the theories are not only instruments of thought-economy, but guides to action that may affect very many people.

There are two ways of getting around this difficulty, both of them well developed in teutonic thinking.

First, there is the systematic use of the classical distinction referred to above between essentiae and accidentiae, between that which refers to the essential core of reality and that which is seen as referring to highly ephemeral accidental elements. In other words, it is crucial to perceive of reality as having two layers; a center, or nucleus, and an outer periphery so to speak, that are asymmetrically related. Insight in the periphery may be permitted to be shallow, insight in the center or core, or essence, by definition has to be deep. It is only through the deep understanding of the latter that reality is comprehended. If this understanding is difficult to arrive at, not only because of the level of abstraction but also because the conclusions look counterintuitive, so much the better. The difficulty may serve the age-old purpose of driving a wedge between common-sense thinking and scientific thinking, and hence between ordinary people and scientists. The idea would simply be to deny the significance of thinking about accidentiae by referring it to the trivia of science, to the dust-bin. The scientific mind should be trained on seeing the essence only. A freely falling body falls according to  $s = \frac{1}{2}gt^2$ , however obvious it is that it does not, due to "dissipation"! That which cannot be grasped and formulated by means of the system is left by the way-side. In a stronger version it may even be denied a certificate as belonging to reality - it may be defined as unreal.

Second, there is the equally important distinction between people: they can also be divided in center and periphery, in first class and second class people. This, however, is not one more reference to the distinction between scientists and people, but to a distinction between people for whom subjective reality coincides with objective reality as defined by the theory, and

those for whom it does not; it is the distinction between an inner and outer circle. Christian truth is true for Christians in a way it is not for pagans; liberalism is true for business people in a way it is not for workers; marxism is true for workers in a way it is not for capitalists; nazism for certain Volksgenossen. That is the type of distinction we have in mind: the Truth contains a promise for the inner circle.

On the other hand, there is only one Truth, that is basic to the whole system, and it is embodied in the axioms. Like there is one God who bestows power on a rex gratia dei, who in turn delegates power to those lower down, there is one fundamental Truth from which minor insights receive their validity through correct deduction. The Truth is one, for there is only one valid system; and the Truth is consistent because the world is consistent, and thus is reflected in the axioms that have to be mutually consistent.

But if there is only one Truth and people are divided with regard to it, then the asymmetric view of people mentioned above is almost inescapable: between those who have been enlightened by the Truth and those who have not. Any other view, to the effect that there might be several truths, equally valid for different (and for the same!) people in different (and in the same!) situations and differing even up to the very top of a pointed pyramid, would lead to a relativism totally alien to the teutonic style of thinking. To the inner circle the world is clear, for the eyes of the inner circle are trained on the essence of every aspect of reality. The system functions like an X-ray machine, penetrating all external phenomena, deep into the bones of the matter - and those who have reached that deep, after much work and toil and tears, also feel they have reached the insight that can move mountains.

Behind all this there is also the search for perfection. One experience in discussing with German intellectuals is the dissatisfaction with suggestions for change that fall short of promising perfect solutions. Some centuries ago adherents of this thought-style might have found a medical science incapable of curing cancer hardly worth considering at all. Ideas that do not promise perfection will be denounced as "revisionism", "cosmetics" and "Verschleierung". But these should not be interpreted as moral judgements, Rather, they are cognitive judgments, derived from this cognitive style, even seen as a

necessary consequence of it. For if reality is like a loom, woven around a solid kernel, the essence, then change can only be obtained through the change of the essence itself. Any other type of change will be piece-meal, at best, retarding the basic change; and even wilfully so, at worst.

The basic point here would be that this particular style of thinking promises that such basic changes are possible, for their essence is already embodied in the top of the axiomatic pyramid. The world is seen as divided into core and surface, center and periphery, as mentioned. But this division is not only asymmetric in the sense of deep vs. shallow. It is also asymmetric in a fundamental causal sense: the center core contains the prime movers, the basic sources of universal causation - the periphery contains the rest.

In other words, there is a fundamental isomorphism between deduction and causation; prime variables or factors are also prime movers, and so on. Deductive thinking is seen as the adequate way of presenting a political program; the arrows of inference become arrows of causation. For this to work out social reality has to be as strongly coupled empirically as a deductive system is logically. Thus, quick and complete changes will result from transcendence of fundamental contradictions (e.g. between work and capital, between higher and lower races) because of (our thesis) the fundamental position of these thought elements in the thought systems.

There are two consequences of this asymmetric view of world cosmology that can be found in teutonic intellectual life, both of them also relating to the theme of perfection.

First, there is the distribution of the factors in time. Just as the prime concepts/movers are few relative to the total number of factors considered and are their logical antecedents, they also precede the others temporally. Their change in time precedes (and causes) the change of the others, and also takes much less time. In other words, the idea is that there is a short time period for few movers to change, but the effects of those changes will be widespread and long lasting - like after a conversion, a liberation and a revolution. Very much is promised on the basis of relatively little: eternal salvation on the basis of a minutes conversion; the fall of capitalist society on the basis of one day's terrorism at the correct point; mass liberation on the basis

of one week's revolution; purification of society after a Kristallnacht. Of course, this is once more the mirror image of the deductive system whereby very much is explained on the basis of relatively little.

There is no negative feedback in the sense that the basic changes are undone by the subsequent changes - just as a deductive system is a logical one-way street. Once started the process is irreversible: once converted, liberated and transcended there can be no return to the prior states. There can be, for sure, the need for new processes of conversion, liberation and revolution - but then from a new point of departure.

Second, and closely related to this: if the prime movers carry such an overwhelming causal, political, historical burden, then their formulation becomes more than merely some kind of intellectual game. Conventionalism will be strongly rejected. The idea is not to find just any set of axioms from which some favorite propositions about empirical reality can be deduced, but to arrive at knowledge about the correct basic factors. To do this requires more than formal talent in theory-construction. It also requires an element of basic intuition, of oneness with reality. To achieve that oneness is to become enlightened (to see the light), and when that stage is attained one can proceed deductively rather than inductively. Thus, the stage of enlightenment embodies two kinds of perfection that coalesce into one: oneness with reality, and the conquest of an intellectual platform that can serve like an Archimedean point. Thus, a bridge is built, in a certain sense, between mysticism and scientism - a combination that was particularly pronounced in that particularly unfortunate manifestation of teutonic style - nazism.

From this point on there are still some phenomena that it is tempting to refer to. Thus, it is obvious that if anything like this type of thinking is really internalized, then reality takes on a special color, defined by the thought-style. The essence, the core, becomes the reality. If that image of reality does not tally well with ordinary observations of empirical reality, so much the worse for "empirical reality". For instance, if the promised changes do not come as a result of changes in the prime movers, then this is only (1), because observations are made at the shallow, periphery level disregarding the essential changes that constitute real change (i.e. if means of production have been collectivized one way or the other so that surplus is no longer disposed of privately, reality has been changed even though authority re-

lations on other fields do not change), or (2), because the observations and interpretations have been made by the wrong people, those for whom objective and subjective truth do not coincide.

Clearly, to the extent that such thought-processes are also incorporated in the intellectual style one may start talking about "idealism", at least in the sense of conceiving of reality as something very much abstracted from the shallow reality in which the outer circle lives. But this is only one more consequence of adopting deductive thinking as a basic mode of thought: it can only reflect a reality from which sufficiently many confusing elements have been abstracted away. It not only reflects, but is mathematics because mathematics is perfect abstraction. It reflects more or less artificial physical reality. Transferred to the complexity of social reality one single thought pyramid, however elegant and complex, catches even less. But it is in this kind of abstraction that perfection can be defined, even with ease.

This can be carried further. If insight is that important, why should not insight also, in and by itself, carry some causal weight"? The extreme extrapolation from this could be something like the following. There is a lock in the universe, but there is also somewhere a key, a lever, a switch. This key is deeply hidden and one can only get at it through elaborate preparations, sometimes of an almost mystical nature, sometimes scientific. You have to stand on the shoulders of giants, themselves standing on the shoulders of giants, to come anything like near to this universe key. But if you are able to comprehend the key perfectly, to pronounce the correct words in the correct manner, then the rewards are unlimited. Not only have you yourself attained perfection in being able to utter the abakadabra formula provided the formula is complex enough; what is more, however: your very possession of this insight may in and by itself move the universe in general, and the society in particular. The revolution may come once the perfect insight into what makes for a revolution has been attained. It is like a Norwegian troll who can be exploded if you know the key word. After all, God started the universe with logos, so why should it not also be changed in the same way? The only basic difference would be that for the last generations, roughly since Hegel, the universe has to be spoken to in German

in order to be unlocked ---. A Weltgeist will hardly respond to any formula pronounced in a lesse tongue.

Again, this is closely related to the fundamental role played by deductive thinking. Deductive systems are verbal. On the other hand, they also harbor thruth of high empirical relevance. Why, then, should not fundamental and well verbalised insight also have high empirical relevance?

Needless to say, there are less idealistic versions of the significance of insight. There is the highly pragmatic idea that insight can be translated into practice, that there is nothing so practical as a good theory, and that any valid theory has to be practice-indicative. There is the additional, more democratic, idea that insight becomes a force capable of mobilizing masses once it is disseminated to others, validated and shared. The notions of core insight and inner circle people can still be kept - but it is no longer insight as such that moves the world, not even the joint insight-pressure exercised on the universe lock by enlightened millions. In order to change observables, observable changes have to be engaged in - which would be one way (out of many) of formulating an anti-idealistic position.

Incidentally, the thesis in this essay is certainly not that teutonic intellectual style is necessarily idealistic, only that idealism in various guises easily creep up at various points regardless of how materialistic the pretensions. There is a solid element of idealism in any asymmetric world conception of the type described because of the high level of abstraction involved, but that does not make it identical with idealism as such.

So much for the basic aspects of what is here referred to as "teutonic", the first four on the list. Let us proceed to the others.

#### 4. Some correlates of deductionism.

If the extent to which a person has seen the true light is important, then much work has to go into establishing where people stand relative to the light: as a source of light themselves; facing it and approaching; standing still; with their back to it; or even moving away from it. The way in which this is done is through the issue of certificates: "I- - - hereby declare that - - - is an X-ist/is not an X-ist" (signature, date and place). The addressee can be a person, or a group, or a school; or any of their intellec-

tual products such as articles and books. The addressee may also be oneself. Tagging, etiquetting is then used as a tool in order to structure the intellectual world, as clearly as the system structures the rest of the world. It is usually issued to people with some profile since they are considered incapable of being enlightened anyhow; the uncommitted are considered potential proselytes. The committed get their certificates of belongingness to the outer circle; tertium non datur.

It is almost inescapable that these people who refuse to see reality the correct way are not also quickly seen as inferior, intellectually, morally or both. The result is classical conflict polarization. Christians, liberals and marxists, nazis have dealt with the outer circle in different ways: the Christians by persuading or forcing them into conversion; the liberals through "repressive tolerance", absorption by permitting variety within one overriding, shared liberal faith; the marxists by defining them as class enemies and by seeing their lack of insight as false consciousness produced in a false society; the nazis with no further ado through eradication (which the others also have made use of).

The more perfect the system appears to be, the more important the asymmetry between the inner and the outer circle. It may take any form from benign neglect to fight, even suppression and extermination, if one has the power and the inclination to do so. But inside, in the inner circle itself, it takes the form of a constant need for reaffirmation of the faith. The faith can be expressed as repetition of the axioms or other favorite propositions of the system, as exercises in deducing new propositions or deducing old propositions in slightly new ways. But it can also be expressed by drawing clear lines between that which belongs and that which does not. There are several ways of doing this.

One way is to guard against efforts to arrive at the same conclusions from different premisses. If this were feasible then the key to truth would be threatened by no longer being indispensable. There would be several keys operating the same lock. The Christian would resist efforts to derive Christian moral principles from some kind of fundamental humanism, the marxist would resist efforts to arrive at "his" criticism of capitalist society from, say, value premisses rather than basic tenets of historical materialism. There would be heavy insistence that the conclusions are not the same, only look the same superficially. This may be ~~ana~~lytically correct, and may also show up in the concrete actions taken by people differing on premisses rather than conclusions. But the

logical and empirical validation of that hypothesis is less significant than the protection of the uniqueness of the Truth.

There would be much less worry about the opposite, about efforts to arrive at different conclusions from the same premisses, for in that case the core of the system, its most important part, is accepted. After all, changes in thought-systems do take place - and one mechanism of change is precisely that new propositions are arrived at, more or less deductively, and then the premisses are adjusted accordingly, in silence, in an effort to present the whole change as a minor operation within a smooth, unwrinkled thought pyramid.

One variation, not likely to be accepted by true believers, is the idea of accepting some conclusions, not others. Again this creates less of a difficulty as long as the reason is located in the deduction rather than in the premisses. But sooner or later the question is going to be asked: why don't you join us fully, why do you only sample some of the fruits of the tree of Truth - -?! Since deductions are seen as transideological, the conclusion will be that the person is a heretic, that what he really does is to reject one or more of the premisses.

Still another form would be more semantic: a protection of the correct terminology. Again, there would be an insistence that conclusions and/or premisses formulated in other terminologies are not, cannot be, the same. The wording has to be correct. For this reason each system will tend to develop an esoteric language, particularly suited exactly for the expression of knowledge of the essential, by the inner circle. Science is public, mystery is not - and in developing an esoteric language both purposes are served simultaneously. It is an in-group language, yet inviting penetration by outsiders, on the assumption that those who engage willingly in the work needed will be so influenced by the process that the chances of becoming an insider rather than a critical outsider increase considerably.

One particularly important aspect of the semantics is the use of apocalyptic language. If basic change is near then this important circumstance should be adequately reflected in the choice of words. "Late capitalism", "transition society", "the last days" are useful reminders of how crucial is the present

period, and how important is deep insight, how strongly coupled is society. Similarly, there will be reference to the Promised Land, to the thousand years to come. To be sandwiched in between two periods of history, just before the major transition, is a dramatic state of affairs, and drama requires its own intellectual style. Teutonic thinking is tailor-customed to that purpose; it both causes and is caused by an acute sense of drama.

What forms do discussions take in an environment characterized by this kind of thinking" It seems fruitful to distinguish between two cases: there are several systems debating each other, and there is only one system; the inter-system and the intra-system debates.

In either case we assume that everyone is speaking to the environment from his own thought-pyramid, the one he belongs to, and that he has developed ability to report insights from the levels in the pyramid that correspond to his levels of schooling. When he speaks to other believers in the same system he receives echoes back, incantations, from the same or from other levels. Some may fill in with their favorite Ableitungen, some with their favorite Zurückführungen. Some may have fresh "evidence", i.e. illustrations from past or recent events compatible with high or low deductions. Others may simply repeat axioms at even or uneven intervals. To the outsider it will all sound liturgical, somewhat like a Sunday mass in a church to which one does not belong. One cannot help observing a certain regularity, there are some phases that appear and reappear, and the outsider will tend to attribute to them a significance roughly proportionate to their frequency. In fact, what else should he go by, not being initiated?

With believers in other systems the dialogue takes on a very different form.

First of all, as a dialogue it will take the form of a fight, it will be conflict rather than cooperation. There will be little curiosity of other than a negative kind in other systems. The focus will be on the weak rather than the strong points in the other systems; on "what can I refute," not on "what can I learn". Efforts will be directed at showing that the others will never be able to derive certain key propositions held to be crucial, even self-evident, and that what they are able to derive is untenable. Considerable

imagination is mobilized for the empirical disconfirmation of one's neighbor's theory, considerably more than is mobilized for the confirmation of one's own - according to a well-known biblical adage.

Second, this will take the form of a series of parallel monologues rather than a real dialogue or multilogue. It is as if each participant is seated on the top of his system, clinging to his little (or big) alp, declaring with a loud voice that his alp is the only one. The voice is unusually high-pitched and loud, for the target audience is not so much those on top of other alps as the people down there in the valleys, the uncommitted who can still be attracted to the real Truth. Possibly one is also addressing the Weltgeist, which may explain a peculiarly priestly facial expression. Those sitting on the other alps, however, are less important - being second class. The effort to criticize them is carried out ritualistically and less for their benefit than for the benefit of those for whom there is still some hope, and for the records of History. In short, "dialogue" is a less than appropriate term for this cultural phenomenon.

Discussions serve the function, however, of being some kind of test of strength. One alp is measured against the other to see where cracks appear. In really teutonic intellectual life one would not take notes, visibly and in writing, of what outsiders say since that might be indicative of inappropriate interest in alternative thought systems. One should be able to deduce what the other person says having classified him correctly, and there should be nothing to learn from the wrong system if systems are mutually exclusive. Moreover, only some few words are necessary to classify the other person correctly, and basic criticism is sufficient to refute his system - details are of no interest. For instance, if he or she does not immediately refer to the primary principles, then it may be safely assumed that they are rejected together with all their implications. And if instead some reference is made to some other kind of thinking, then the conclusion is clear. Eclecticism is a sin, one is 100% this system or 100% that system, not some of this and some of that. In short: polarization at both the intra-personal and inter-personal levels.

Finally, there is the seriousness with which all of this is done. There is little of fundamental methodology and philosophy in non-humorous cold eyes and non-smiling faces, but it somehow belongs in any account of the psychology and anthropology

of the teutonic intellectual style, as seen by an outsider. In a sense, however, it also follows from what has been said. To be enlightened is to think and feel deep. The key to truth is nothing to joke about, especially not in dramatic periods of human history. For those to whom the search for truth is an intellectual game, joking behavior may be appropriate. Not so for those who stand on the threshold of the final revelation and on the brink of the big transition; in their own mind, in the fights with their intellectual neighbor, in the history of the universe.

##### 5. Some conclusions

The reader will probably have thought so already: the present essay is not only on teutonic thinking; it is also in itself an example of teutonic thinking. For what has been done in this essay? A thesis about the "essence" of a style of thinking has been presented; it is held to be axiomatic and deductive, with more emphasis on the formal aspects of the theory than on correspondence with reality. From this assumption a lot of consequences are drawn and spelt out. No empirical evidence is offered - only some indications of illustrations, here and there. But is that not exactly what one has been accusing "teutonic thinking" of doing?

It is and it is not, so let us try to spell out some of the differences in an effort to make it more clear. But in doing so it might also be admitted that we half-teutons living on the peripheral fringes of the teutonic region adopt <sup>an</sup> anti-teutonic pose not so much because we are against, as out of frustration because we never really succeed in teutonic thinking - as done by the natives.

First, there is no assumption here to the effect that what has been described is identical with a given piece of empirical reality, it is offered as one perspective, one kind of aspect of a much more complicated reality with no claim that this is the essence. In other words, it is admitted that "teutonic" intellectual style is an abstraction. What is claimed, however, is that in understanding any empirically existing intellectual style it may be fruitful to use this as a checking list to see how much of it can be grasped in these terms.

Second, there is no assumption that there is a kernel in the web of elements constituting the teutonic style so that a quick

change in that nucleus will have long-lasting repercussion in the total system. On the contrary, the elements are probably more on an equal footing, and in turn depends on a highly complex web of socio-cultural factors of which we have little or nothing to say. In general, the negation of the teutonic style would certainly include the idea that society is not that strongly coupled, at least not in general;^ and consequently that the stage is not that often set for more apocalyptic events than those one is able to launch oneself.

For this reason teutonic thinkers will easily be disappointed because the Götterdämmerungen are so few and far between. And for that reason, or rather because they may have a sneaking suspicion that this is the case, there will be a tendency to withdraw, to focus on the deductive thinking rather than on the political practice. To think becomes more important than to act, to perfect the thought pyramid more meaningful than an entry into the world of facts with all its noise and complexities, with all its failure to live up to the beauty and clarity of the abstractions. Actually, at this point, it is often marxists rather than liberals who have been too obsessed with science models taken over uncritically from the physical sciences - only that they have picked up the grotesque abstractionism rather than the canonization of empirical reality.

In doing so there is no doubt one strong point: it is easy to jump from one little pile of propositions, from one little deductive pyramid or mini-theory to another; it is considerably more difficult to construct a super-pyramid. Being programmed that way teutonic thinkers are forced to go on, relentlessly, with their deductions and reductions, and in so doing may come across very basic insights. But when this translates into political practice with the promise that some basic changes will be as casually consequential in real life as the axioms are logically consequential in the life of thought, then it is dangerous for people might start believing that it is true. Since this passes for good intellectual style politicians who express themselves in the same fashion will be accorded a certain credibility in countries where intellectuals in general, and professors in particular, are held in very high esteem. And this even applies to Hitler; it was also as an intellectual, as a super-deductionist and - reductionist that he gained his power - we feel.

In conclusion some reflections on one very important question: imagine that one accepts this type of analysis, at least in its grosser outlines - then, where does it come from? The problem is that an answer has to be in such terms that a variation is introduced that can be used to account for, at least to some extent, some of the variation in the global and temporal distribution of this type of intellectual style - and this distribution is hardly well known since research has not been too much focussed in that direction.

But explanation in terms on in-born deductive pyramids somehow built into us all as mental programs, in the deep structure of our brain will not do - simply because that type of explanation taken alone would not account for the variation. Explanations would have to be based on some type of process whereby the pyramid could, conceivably, be imprinted on the minds of some people rather than others. And at this point there are two important social pyramids that do exhibit variation in time and space: the family structure and the general social structure. Pattern of family organization, particularly as tied to authoritarian ways of bringing up children, and feudal ways of organizing society (long after feudalism as historical phenomenon is declared dead and buried) may have something to do with it. Something -- that is as far as we would like to go --

for otherwise this would indeed be teutonic thinking.

\* I am indebted to many in Germany and particularly to Rajan Malaviya for inspiring discussions of this topic - but would also like to add that no particular place in Germany or elsewhere has served as example of the pattern here described. The essay deals with a widespread phenomenon, and if anybody feels encouraged to try his or her hand at an essay on Viking styles of thought - please do so! (whatever they did they did not leave many thought-pyramids behind, that is for certain).