

I can perhaps illustrate this theory best by giving you Popper's anecdote on how he was led to it. He was a student in Vienna in 1919, right after the war. There were three very exciting intellectual currents in Vienna at this period. One was Einstein's "General Theory of Relativity"; another was "Freudian Psychoanalysis"; and the third was "Revised Marxism." All three were "scientific." All three claimed to be sciences. And, Popper, obviously, in cafe conversations, investigated all three. He said he felt very uneasy because, although they seemed to be scientific, he did not really feel they were; he did not feel they were on an equal footing. But he could not tell why.

In 1919 an astronomical expedition went out to check the theory of general relativity in which Einstein had predicted that light would be bent from a straight path as it passed through an intense gravitational field. There was an eclipse of the sun; there was a star behind the sun; the star was perfectly well known. The expedition went out, therefore, to see if, as the light passed by the star, the star's image did seem to shift thus indicating that the bending had taken place, and to the exact amount that Einstein had suggested that it would, and it did. The expedition--led by Eddington--triumphantly pronounced the fact.

Popper said, "Aha! There is the difference." Einstein's neck was out this far. Eddington and the boys had the axes; had that starlight not been bent, it would have been back to the Patent Office for Einstein. The theory simply would have been blown up and shown to be false. Popper now adds, "How do you refute a psychoanalyst?" He has all the answers. You love your mother; he can tell you why. You hated your mother; he can tell you why. Any question that you want to raise, psychoanalysis can answer.

So can Marxism. Any question that you want to raise, Marxism has the answer for. You can, in fact, never refute it. You can never say, "All right, here it is; if it goes that way you are wrong." the Marxist may say, "You are right," until it goes that way, and then he will say, "Oh yes, but you are wrong. What I neglected was that this factor is now explained."

Notice that this is the Cartesian tradition. It is a rational explanation, but what it does not contain within it is the capability