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THE MORAL ASPECTS OF SOCIALISM.

By SIDNEY BALL, M.A.
St. John's College, Oxford.

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The Moral Aspects of Socialism.*

Socialism and Character.

Modern Socialism, or Collectivism, is often regarded as a typical expression of the neglect, or even the denial, of the principle that in social reform character is "the condition of conditions." At first sight, it seems true that character has not been put in the foreground of Socialist discussion: its emphasis appears to be laid almost exclusively on machinery, on a reconstruction of the material conditions and organization of life. But machinery is a means to an end, as much to a Socialist as to anyone else; and the end, at any rate as conceived by the Socialist, is the development of human power and capacity of life. The quarrel with Socialists cannot be, then, that they mistake the means for the end, but either that they take a low or narrow view of human nature, or that the means they suggest will lower rather than raise the scale of human life.

The Evolution in Modern Socialism.

It is important that we should realize the nature of the development which has been at work in the conception of Socialism. If Socialism repeats itself, it repeats itself with a difference. If we fairly compare the Socialism of the earlier with that of the latter part of the century, we shall find that, however much they have in common, there is a sense in which the conception of Socialism is entirely modern. Socialism would not be the vital thing it is, if it remained unaffected by the development of social and industrial experience, and the general progress of scientific thought. The context is different, and even when the language is the same, the meaning is changed.† The claim of modern Socialism to be "scientific" may be just or not, but it means by "scientific" such an economy as shall be on a line with the modern scientific treatment and conception of life. Its dominating idea is that of conscious selection in social life, or of the expression of practical economics in terms of quality of life. From the point of view of its alleged indifference to character, the aims of modern Socialism may be described as an endeavor to readjust the machinery of industry in such a way that it can at once depend upon and issue in a higher

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† To give one example. State Socialism means one thing to a German, another to an Englishman; and one thing to an Englishman of Adam Smith's time, and another to an Englishman of our own time: the State, in the latter context, means the community democratically organized for collective purposes, whether parochially, locally, or nationally.

kind of character and social type than is encouraged by the conditions of ordinary competitive enterprise. If it does, in a sense, want to make things easier, it is only for the worker, and not for the idler; and the problem with which it is concerned is not primarily a more or less of enjoyment, but a more or less of opportunity for development of character and individuality. Its criterion of economic machinery is simply—does it or does it not make for a greater amount and quality of life and character?

The older Socialism rested upon such ideas as "the right to live," "the right to work," "payment according to needs," the denial of "the rent of ability," "expropriation without compensation," "minimizing" or "materializing" of wants—all ideas of retrogressive rather than of progressive "selection." But it would not be too much to say that all these ideas are either silently ignored or expressly repudiated by modern Socialism. The "ideology" of the older Socialists has given way to a deliberately, and in some ways rigidly, scientific treatment of life. Modern Socialism recognizes the laws of social growth and development in setting itself against catastrophic impossibilism and the manufacture of mechanical Utopias; it recognizes the moral continuity of society in its consideration for vested interests; it does not base industrial organization on "the right to work" so much as on the right of the worker, not on "payment according to needs" so much as "payment according to services"; it recognizes the remuneration of ability, provided that the ability does not merely represent a monopoly of privileged and non-competitive advantage; it is aware of the utility of capital, without making the individualist's confusion between the employment of capital and the ownership of it, between the productive and proprietary classes; it is not concerned about the inequality of property, except so far as it conflicts with sound national economy; it does not desire so much to minimize as to rationalize wants, and attaches the utmost importance to the qualitative development of consumption; and, finally, not to enumerate more distinctly economic developments, it recognizes "the abiding necessity for contest, competition, and selection," as means of development, when it presses for such an organization of industry as shall make selection according to ability and character the determining factor in the remuneration of labor.

Socialism and Competition.

So far from attempting to eliminate "competition" from life, it endeavors to raise its plane, to make it a competition of character and positive social quality. The competition which takes the form not of doing one's own work as well as possible, but of preventing any one else from doing the same work—the form of competition, that is, in which the gain of one man is the loss of another—is of no social value. The only competition that can advance individual or social life is simply a corollary of co-operation; it implies the recognition of a common good and a common interest which gives to our "individual" work its meaning, its quality, and its value; and the

further recognition that a competitor is also a co-operator. If a seeker after truth regards another seeker merely as a competitor, it is a sure sign that it is not truth he cares for: and we are only too familiar with the consequences of a system of industry which does not provide for the disinterestedness of all genuine production. The competition to get as much as possible for one's self is incompatible with the competition to get a thing done as well as possible. It is this kind of socially selective rivalry that Socialism is concerned to maintain; and the two kinds of competition* belong, as Plato might have said, to two distinct "arts."

Socialism Affirms a Standard.

This is the meaning, for instance, of a "standard" as opposed to a "market" wage. The Collectivist policy of the "Union" wage for skilled, and a minimum wage for unskilled labor, is a deliberate preference of a form of competition which promotes efficiency over a form of competition which aims at (apparent) cheapness. Which is the most productive method of selection? The Individualist policy results in the degradation of labor and the increase of burdens upon the State; the Socialist policy, so far from favoring the weak, favors the strong, if weakness and strength are interpreted as relevant to social value; it is a process of conscious social selection by which the industrial residuum is naturally sifted and made manageable for some kind of restorative, disciplinary, or, it may be, "surgical" treatment. The organization of dock laborers and the extension of factory inspection to sweated industries follow the same lines. Any such form of collective interference as the freeing of education, or the weakening of protected and non-competitive privilege, is in favor of the competition which is not simply a struggle for (unqualified) individual existence, but for existence in a society which rests upon the distribution of "rights" according to character and capacity. In this way it not only favors the growth of the fittest within the group, but also of the fittest group in the world-competition of societies. The whole point of Collectivism is the recognition by society of its interest as a society in a certain type of character and quality of existence. "Can there be anything better for the interests of a State," as Plato puts it, "than that its men and women should be as good as possible?" It is just this social reference that explains the demand which Socialists make upon the organization of industry. Their whole quarrel with private competitive enterprise is that it does not give a qualitative form to the struggle for existence, and does not—or rather cannot—concern itself with the maintenance of a standard of life.

Individualism Denies a Standard.

To speak, therefore, of "the principle of Collectivism" as "lying at the root of a compulsory poor rate" (*Charity Organ. Rev.*), reveals an astonishing incapacity for grasping the distinction between the organization of industry (upon selective lines) and the distribution

* *Cf.* Plato's "Republic," Bk. I., 347-8; also, Morris and Ruskin, *passim.*

of relief—a *rôle* which Socialists would contend the individualistic system and method of industry has forced upon "the State." The Poor Law system, so far from being a concession to Socialism, is a device of Individualism, which, indeed, could not "work," unless its logical consequences were intercepted by the workhouse and the infirmary. The Poor Law ministers to a system which, in the judgment of Socialists, makes for deterioration—a system which lends itself with fatal facility to partial and discontinuous employment, starvation wages, cheap and nasty production, wasteful, useless, and characterless competition. Collectivism is nothing if not constructive, and constructive on lines of social selection; the Poor Law as it now exists serves the purpose of a waste-receiver of "private enterprise." Collectivism would not, indeed, dispense with the necessity of a poor law; so far, however, as it provided for the able-bodied idler, the workhouse would be simply a branch of the criminal department of the State.* It is no doubt true that this kind of selection is forcing itself upon the system of private commercial enterprise in the interests of economic production, and Professor Loria has based upon this fact his forecast of the gradual evolution of capitalistic industry into some form of associated labor. But "the economy" of high wages, of regular and organized labor, and of genuine production, is discounted by the "active competition" of low wages, casual labor, cheap and adulterated product. And we find, in fact, that the competition of "quality" is only made possible by the cessation of "the competition of the market."

Monopoly versus Competition.

This is the significance of modern Combinations, conceived not as a temporary speculation, but as a permanent organization of a particular industry, based upon the extinction of wasteful rivalry between competitive firms. Whatever may be the abuse of the Combination, it is clearly a higher type of industrial organization, and its abuse is the occasion of Collectivism. It certainly makes a standard of work and a standard of industrial conditions possible; and also it renders the particular industry much more amenable to public opinion and, if need be, public control. And the interest of the modern Combination is that it is not an artificial creation, but a normal development of modern business: it represents a monopoly not of privilege, but of efficiency. It has become, in fact, no longer a question between Competition and Collectivism, but between private and public monopoly, between monopolies controlled by private capitalists and monopolies controlled by the community.†

* Collectivism would provide for the "deserving" and incapable, partly by providing against them, partly by public and humane institutions, partly by the more effective use to which weakness can be put under a better organization of industry; while pensions in old age would be the logical complement of honorable public service.

† This is, doubtless, a disputable generalization, but it accords with the judgment of American economists. *Cf.* also Baker's "Monopoly and the People," or Von Halle's "Trusts in the United States."

Monopolies of local service, again, are still higher in the industrial scale, so far as they represent the organization of production by the consumers (that is, on the basis of rational and persistent wants), and are under direct public control. And the policy of "practical Collectivism" lies in exacting from such monopolies the full measure of their capacity, and making them object-lessons in co-operative industry.

Monopoly as a Result of Selection.

It is, after all, only by selection that the collective organization of industry can itself prevail, and this is an argument, if any were needed, against any catastrophic closure of the present system. Hence the significance of the demand that government and public bodies should proceed upon a more scientific method than private competitive enterprise "can well afford"—in the direction of better organization of employment, standard wages for standard work, shorter hours, and other model conditions of industry. In Glasgow, at the present moment, there is actually a competition between municipal tramways and private means of transit; and the whole (if short) history of the municipalization of tramways is full of interest and instruction. Municipal management is a higher type of industry, and represents a competition of quality. It might be objected that this argument points to a mixed system of public and private industry, and does not meet the difficulty that a monopoly once established is liable to deterioration. It does point to the means by which public will supersede private administration of certain industries: that is, by competition and proved superiority of type. But it also assumes that the inferior type must give way. Still, the standard remains; it has been to a certain extent set, and to a greater extent recognized and approved, by the community. It could only fall back with a falling back in the community itself, that is, in its standard of satisfaction, material and moral. The higher type at once makes and depends upon its "environment." It may, indeed, have become an object of local pride and civic self-consciousness; a competition may be set up between one municipality and another, and that again would be a competition of quality. Readers of "Unto This Last" will remember a suggestion of the same kind—not the least fruitful idea of the economist who has best understood the real significance of the pre-established harmony between ethics and economics. In the same way it may be said that the real evil of the "drink traffic" is that it is a private, instead of a public, enterprise.

Collectivism will, in fact, proceed by selective experiments of the kind I have indicated, granting the moral and intellectual conditions required by a higher type of administration; and where it does not take the form of social ownership, the principle may be just as effective in the form of social control—control, that is, in the direction of a higher type of industrial character. Mining, railway, and factory legislation is, from this point of view, simply the application of "standard" ideas to competitive industry.

Socialism and its Critics.

If, then, this general account of the drift of Collectivism and of its real inwardness be at all true, what becomes of the polemic against Collectivist ideals that underlies the criticism of eminent social philosophers, and of the false antithesis that is so often set up between "moral" and "economic" Socialism. All the tendencies they attack, Collectivists attack; but while "moral" Socialists are content with ascribing them generally to (abstract) moral and intellectual causes, Collectivists, rightly or wrongly, find that they are moral and intellectual causes which are logically connected with the whole principle and practice of individualistic or private competitive industry, and refuse to believe that some undefined miracle of moral agency is better than any intelligible causation. I propose to deal in detail with this kind of objection to Collectivism, mainly with a view to exhibiting in a clearer light the logical idea and consequences of that position. For I will readily admit that this task is necessary, in view of the language that has been, and to a certain extent still is, used by responsible Socialists. I admit that there is some excuse for the perversion, or rather the construction, of Collectivist philosophy on which the "moral" case against Socialism is supposed to rest. For in some cases the teaching is ambiguous, in others it is evasive, and in certain cases it is demonstrably illogical. The philosophy of Collectivism is still in the making, and reasonable Collectivists themselves are perfectly aware of the extent to which their social doctrine has still to be thought out. But if we can once disengage the root idea, we can, at any rate, say what are logical consequences and what are not; and I hope to show that neither "free meals," nor "relief works," nor "pensions without services," nor "the abolition of private property" are logical deductions from the Collectivist principle; they are, in fact, the denial of it, and could not be part of a strictly Socialist economy.

The Idea of Collectivism.

What, then, is the idea of Modern Socialism, or Collectivism? I take it, Socialism implies, first and foremost, the improvement of society by society. We may be told that this is going on every day; yes, but not with any clear consciousness of what it is about, or of an ideal. Moreover, empirical social reform does not go beyond improvements within the existing system, or consider the effects of that system as a whole. As a rule, it means the modification of the system by an idea which does not belong to it, with the result that it is either ineffective or that it hampers the working of the system itself. When a prominent statesman can say that "We are all socialists now," he has reduced the idea of socializing individualistic commerce to its logical absurdity; it only means that we are endeavoring to rearrange the handicap between laborer, capitalist, employer, and landlord, according as either becomes the predominating partner in legislation. It is impossible to get out of the

confused aims of social reformers anything like a point of view, or an idea of social progress ; it is a question of *evils* rather than *ideals*. Collectivism, as I have said, implies the consciousness by society of a social ideal, of a better form of itself, and its distinction lies in its clearer consciousness of the end to be attained and its conception of the means of attaining it. The means, as we know, are the collective control or collective administration of certain industries* by the community as a whole—"by the people for the people." (The ordinary formula of the "nationalization of the means of production" is unnecessarily prophetic, and is rather a hindrance than a help to the understanding of the ideal ; by itself, it does not give the point of Socialism, and belongs to the picture-book method of social philosophy, which presents us rather with a ready-made system than a principle of action to be progressively applied.) But, clearly, "control," "organization," "administration," are merely forms, the body without the soul ; we want to know—organization in what direction, control to what end? And the answer in quite general and formal terms is (as already suggested) a certain kind of existence and a certain standard of life to be maintained in and through the industrial organization of social needs. Mere nationalization, or mere municipalization, of any industry is not Socialism or Collectivism ; it may be only the substitution of corporate for private administration ; the social idea and purpose with which Collectivism is concerned may be completely absent. The presence of the idea is recognized by the extent to which the public machinery is made the conscious and visible embodiment of an ideal type of industry, taking form in certain standard conditions of production as also certain standard requirements of consumption. It is agreed that there are certain things which society is so concerned in getting done in a certain way and after a certain type, that it cannot leave them to private enterprise. We may recall Aristotle's arguments in favor of public as against private education ; the important consideration being that education involves principles affecting the kind of social type and character which a particular society is interested in maintaining. The modern industrial state is beginning to realize that it is as deeply concerned in the conditions of industry that determine for better or worse the type and character of its citizens and the standard of its social life. This recognition implies the action of the general or collective will and purpose (which is, of course, also the will and purpose of individuals), represented by the social regulation of industry in the interest of a standard of industrial character and production—a standard of life—which society as society is concerned to maintain. The Collectivist calls upon society to face the logical requirements of the situation ; rightly or wrongly, he conceives that

* I am not now concerned with any further specification of these expressions, as this belongs to a more strictly economic inquiry. Mr. Hobson's "Evolution of Modern Capitalism" deals with some of the aspects. *Cf.* also Fabian Tracts generally. "The community" means parish, district, municipality, or nation, as democratically organized. I assume throughout that modern Socialism means emphatically industrial democracy, that is, the realization in the industrial sphere of the principle already realized in the sphere of politics and religion.

a requirement of this kind is incompatible with the existence and the *raison d'être* of "private competitive enterprise." He is trying to familiarize the community with the incompatibility by "example and practice," and at the same time to show that it is not with business, but with modern competitive business that the requirement is incompatible. What is good in ethics cannot be bad in economics, and *vice versâ*, is an axiom of Socialism. A standard wage, for instance, is from the point of view of modern commerce a non-competitive wage, for it is not regulated by the supply and demand of the market; but from the point of view of good business and also good ethics, it is competitive; men are selected for their efficiency, and not for their cheapness. The attempt to enforce this method of remuneration upon government and public bodies, as also to abolish the contractor,* is described and resented by the ratepayer as "Collectivist;" he is right in his description, not in his resentment. The School Board, again, adapts its scale of salaries not to the supply of the market, but to the service required. It is only an individualist who can talk of "high" wages and "high" salaries in this connection; a high wage is simply a wage that is adequate to a certain kind of work done at its best; the wage is high according as the conception of the conditions required for the highest performance of the work is high. The Socialism of the School Board is, in the last resort, nothing else than a high standard of education, and therefore of the educator and his conditions of life. It is well to put it in this way, because it is often supposed that Collectivism or Socialism is simply a policy of securing better conditions of life for the worker, which gives the impression that it is a class and not a social point of view. The starting-point of social economics is, after all, consumption, and again its qualitative, not merely its quantitive development, rather than the conditions of work and worker as such; they are, of course, really aspects of the same thing, as readers of Ruskin are in no danger of forgetting. Accordingly, we find that the economic problem is not approached by the modern Socialist primarily from the side of "distribution," except so far as it affects the character of "production" or "consumption." Anyhow, the great thing is that the point of view is qualitative; or, the regulative idea of Socialism is the maintenance of a certain standard of life, whether it is looked at from the point of view of the condition of the producer or his product. The whole point of factory legislation, again, lies in its attempt to exercise such social control over the conditions of industry as will prevent them from lowering the standard of life which society as society is interested in maintaining; it is becoming less sentimental, and more scientific in its scope; and, again, it is now called "Collectivist."

Socialism and Humanism.

From the standpoint of such an interpretation of the "idea" and the "phenomena" of Collectivism (which is, after all, sufficiently

* *Cf.* Mr. Sidney Webb's admirable vindication of the "Economic Heresies" of the London County Council.—*Contemporary Review.*

justified by the language of its opponents), the suggestion that it is theoretically careless of the type, indifferent to any standard of life, or to the claims of character, is somewhat wide of the mark. So long as Socialism remains true to its scientific conception and treatment of life, it is not likely to commit itself to means of improvement at the cost of the type. Its animating idea is neither * pity nor benevolence—at least, not as usually understood—but the freest and fullest development of human quality and power. It is characteristic of modern Socialism or Collectivism that its typical representatives are men who have been profoundly influenced by the positive and scientific conception of social life; while its popular propagandists have derived their inspiration from Ruskin, who is, in economics at least, a profound humanist. What is common to the indictment of modern industrialism, set out in "good round terms" by Ruskin, Morris, Wagner, Mr. Karl Pearson (not to mention others) on the one hand, and "Merrie England" on the other, is their sense of the frightful and quite incalculable waste and loss of quality (in producer and product) that it seems to involve. Whether this finding is just or not, Socialism is a principle which stands or falls by a qualitative conception of progress. It is bound up with ideas of qualitative selection and competition, and with the endeavour to raise in the scale the whole machinery, the whole conception and purpose, of industrial activity, so as to give the fullest scope to the needs and means of human development. Increase of human power over circumstance, increase of humanizing wants, increase of powers of social enjoyment—these are the ends of state or municipal activity, whether it take the form of model conditions of employment, and model standards of consumption, or the provision of parks and libraries and all such things as are means, not of mere, but of high existence.† And, in all these directions, it would be true to say that the State or municipality operates through character and through ideas, and that, as the organized power of community, it helps the individual not to be less but more of an individual, and because more of an individual, therefore more of a definite social person.

The Meaning of State Activity—National and International.

State activity, as thus conceived, is not the substitution of machinery for the mainspring of character, but a process of training and adaptation, or it may be of restriction and elimination—the human analogues of "natural selection" in the physical world. In this way the State, while it endeavors to give the personal struggle for existence a distinctively human and qualitative form, gains a

* Socialism without pity is empty, but a Socialism of mere pity is blind; and as I am concerned with the idea and method rather than the sentiment or psychological stimulus of Socialism, what may appear as an ultra-scientific view should not be misunderstood.

† On the "Socializing of Consumption" *cf.* Smart's "Studies in Economics"; also the writings of Mr. P. Geddes and Mr. Hobson, among others. There is certainly a sense in which "Consumption" is the beginning and end of Economics.

clearer consciousness of the meaning of its own struggle for existence in the social world as a whole. And, just as it raises the plane of competition within its own social group, so it raises it in relation to other groups in the wider social organism. The study of great social experiments in Germany, the comparison of "experiences" at International Congresses, and other movements, suggest that there may be a more valuable kind of rivalry between nations than that of mere power, mere trade, or mere territory—a rivalry of social type and efficiency, within the limits of the specific part each is most fitted to discharge in the whole. The law of national self-preservation, upon such a view, passes from a non-moral to a moral stage, for it is not a mere and exclusive, but a specific and inclusive "self." Anyhow, one effect of Collectivism would be to increase the self-consciousness of a State as organized for the attainment of a common good and a certain kind of social existence; and this consciousness is, from the Socialist's point of view, an increasingly determinate factor in social evolution, just as it is the worst effect of competitive industry that the idea of the State and the conception of a social ideal either disappears or becomes vulgarized and materialized.

The Distinction Between "State" and "Society."

It is worth while to dwell for a moment upon a distinction which is often placed to the credit of modern, as distinguished from Greek, political philosophy—the distinction between "Society" and "the State." When the political community is regarded as "Society" it is looked at as a number of individuals or classes, or professions—as an aggregate of units. When we speak of the "State," we understand a single personality, as it were, representing all these interests and endowed with force which it can exercise against any one of them. In other words, "the State" cannot be reduced to "Society" or to "Government," which is only one of its functions, but is Society organized and having force. This distinction in one way implies an advance: we can and do leave more than the Greeks to social influence, as distinguished from the action of the State, because the foundation of social morality is stronger and deeper, and because we lay more stress on individual freedom and the value of the individual. But, in another way, it implies a loss, and is apt to degenerate into the idea that the State has no moral function, and that the individual possesses separate rights which only belong to him as a member of a community. To vulgar political Economy, for instance, as to the Liberty and Property Defence League, "the State" simply means Society; and there has been a tendency on the part of Economists who start with the commercial point of view to push to the extreme the view that the best result will come from the free interaction of conflicting interests, to take this view as final and make it a "law." Modern thought and modern practice are reverting to the position of Aristotle, that the State ought to put before itself "the good of the whole," by interfering with the "natural" course of economic events in favor of collective ends. And it is Democracy that has made Collectivism

possible: the State is not some mysterious entity outside individuals, but simply represents the individuals organized for a common purpose, whether in parochial or national assembly. When, therefore, German Social-Democracy avows its aim to be the substitution of "Society" for the "State," this is simply a sign of arrested political and social development: the State is not co-extensive with the self-governing community, but represents oligarchic and centralized bureaucracy. To depreciate the stress which Collectivists lay upon "organization" is really to depreciate the value of the moral atmosphere any particular manifestation of Collectivism may generate in familiarizing the members of the community with the idea of the social reference and destiny of industry, and of the State as the expression of the nation's will and conscience.

General View of Socialism and its Justification.

Whatever else, then, Socialism may be, it certainly implies organized action for a social purpose, and this purpose may always be reduced to the conception of a certain standard of life other than mere animal existence.

I am aware that this representation of Socialism, as concerned with the maintenance of natural selection under rational human conditions, does not cover all the visible phenomena of Socialism. But the philosophic student is justified in limiting his view to the conception of Socialism as a reasoned idea of social progress; and it is its shortcomings in this respect that the "moral reformer" selects for condemnation. His criticism may, perhaps, be roughly indicated as follows: Socialism, it is suggested, aims at the substitution of machinery for character, in the sense that it fails to recognize that the individual is above all things a character and a will, and that society, as a whole, is a structure in which will and character "are the blocks with which we build"; it attaches, therefore, undue, if not exclusive, importance to material conditions and organization; and, further, it is fatal to the conditions of the formation of character, these conditions being private property competition (of character). In all these points we may discover a confusion between the "Appearance" and the "Reality" of Socialism.

Socialism and Machinery.

No doubt, at first sight, it seems to be the common idea of all Socialists that, by reconstructing the machinery of the actual material organization of life, certain evils incidental to human life, of which that organization is regarded as the stronghold, can be greatly mitigated, if not wholly removed. The theory of modern Socialism gives no countenance to this conception of the matter. It suggests neither utopias nor revolutions in human nature or modern business: it does suggest a method of business which makes rather larger demands upon human nature, but which, at the same time, and for the same reason, is "better" business. Even if that were not so, it is clear that Collectivism is, as I have said, not machinery, but machinery with a purpose; what it is concerned with is the

machinery appropriate to a certain spirit and conception of industry. It implies therefore emphatically ideas, and can only operate through "will and character." If, for instance, the machinery of public industry is not directed to keeping this idea before its employees from the highest to the lowest, then they stand in just as much a material and mechanical relation to their work as the employee of a private person or company; and, on the other hand, in proportion as the employee, through want of will or character or intelligence, fails to enter into that social purpose, his work would be as inferior in itself and in its relation to his character as it might be under any individualistic administration. As a practical corollary, the machinery of public industry must be organized in such a way that the workman can feel its interest and purpose as his interest and purpose.* The mere substitution of public for private administration is the shadow and not the substance. The forces required to work Collectivist machinery are nothing if not moral; and so we also hear the complaint that Socialists are too ideal, that they make too great a demand upon human nature and upon the social will and imagination. Of the two complaints, this is certainly the more pertinent. A conception, however, which is liable to be dismissed, now as mere mechanism, now as mere morality, may possibly be working towards a higher synthesis. May it not be the truth that Socialism is emphatically a moral idea which must have the machinery fitted to maintain and exercise such an idea—for a moral idea which is not a working idea is not moral at all—and this machinery is, formally speaking, the public control and administration of industry. Every advance in ethics must be secured by a step taken in politics or economics. Socialism implies both a superior moral idea and a superior method of business, and neither could work without the other. The superiority of the moral idea can only show itself by its works, by its business capacity, so to speak; and the superiority of a method of business lies in what it can do with and for human nature. It follows, therefore, that, just as Democracy is the most difficult form of government, Socialism is the most difficult form of industry, because, like Democracy, it requires the operation of ideas; and the test of the perfection of Socialist machinery is just its capacity to give to the routine industries of the community that spirit and temper which are the note of the freest and highest work. Apart from this atmosphere of interest and purpose, the State and municipality are distinctly inferior as employers of labor, and the history of the co-operative movement itself provides a series of object lessons in the divorce of machinery from ideas. In its complete form as the organization of production by the consumers, Socialism presupposes a responsiveness in producer and consumer, and Trades-Unions of producers would be as much a part of Socialist as of individualistic organization, as witness the National Union of

* This is the proper significance of the principle of the Co-partnership of Labor, which is apt to be too exclusively envisaged in "the self-governing workshop" or (private) profit-sharing, and is for that reason hardly given the recognition or prominence by Socialists it deserves.

Elementary Teachers. On the other hand, if it has sufficient ground-work in moral and intellectual conditions, then the material organization itself helps to create the character it presupposes, and will be educative, in proportion as the employee of the community feels his social recognition in a raised standard of life all round—shorter hours, dignity and continuity of status, direct responsibility. It cannot be said that Socialists are insensible to the amount of education—in ideas and character—that is required before any sensible advance can be made in the direction of co-operative industry. On the other hand they do not believe that grapes can grow upon thorns: they believe that things make their own morality. The idea of industry is what habit and institutions make it: it is impossible to put the social idea into institutions * which make for the artificial preservation and encouragement of an antagonistic idea—the plutocratic ideal; and it is impossible to get it out of them. It is not enough to modify the bias of the individualistic organization of society: that organization itself makes the whole idea of the organization of society on the basis of public service or labor "the baseless fabric of a vision." The moralist demands, and rightly (in theory) demands, that the working-man should realize that he exists only on the terms of recognizing and discharging a definite social function. But what is there in the economic arrangements under which he finds himself, to suggest such an idea—the idea on which Socialism rests—either to the propertied or to the propertyless man? How is a man who depends for his employment upon a mechanism he can in no wise control or count upon, and upon the ability of a particular employer to maintain himself against rivals, enabled to realize a definite position in the social structure? What he does feel, for the most part, is that he is dependent on a system in which the element of chance is incalculable, and it is just this feeling which makes for a materialistic and hand-to-mouth conception of life. Or what is there in the economic structure of society which suggests to the employer or the capitalist, that their *raison d'être* is not so much to make a fortune as to fulfil a function? In what way, in a word, does the individualistic organization† of industry make for the extension of the sense of duty which a man owes to society at large? Moral ideas must have at least a basis in the concrete relations of life. In the same way, we are told, and rightly told, that the value of property lies in its relation to the needs of personality. But how can a man who cannot count on more than ten shillings a week, or at any rate the man who depends upon casual employment or speculative trades, regard property as

* *Cf.* J. S. Mill's "Autobiography," pp. 230-234, *e.g.*, "Interest in the common good is so weak a motive in the generality, not because it can never be otherwise, but because the mind is not accustomed to dwell on it as it dwells, from morning to night, on things which tend only to personal advantage."

† The private organization of industry is often defended on the ground that it provides the morality of "faithful service." But democracy requires the substitution for private or personal services of public service, which admits of just as much personal, and certainly more social, "faithfulness"; and Socialism is bound up with democracy.

"the unity of his material life"? "A man must know what he can count on and judge what to do with,"—this is stated to be a requirement of morality (as it is certainly is of Socialism). But how is this condition realized under a system which not only lends itself to the most violent contrasts between careless ease and careworn want, between lavish indulgence and narrow penury, but makes it the (apparent) interest of the employing classes that the employed shall not have property—a situation which Trades-Unions were meant to meet. Moral ideas are, after all, relevant to a particular working organization of life. The "moral Socialist" seems to require a Socialist ethics of property and employment from an economic system which is worked upon an individualistic conception of property and employment. But the moralist who insists on the fulfilment by society of ideas for which its actual institutions and every-day life give no warrant seems to suggest that ethics are not relative, that moral conceptions are not ideas *of* life, but ideas *about* life. To this abstract moral idealism and transcendentalism, Socialism, at any rate, furnishes a needful corrective. Is there anything, the Socialist asks, in men's ordinary industrial life which suggests the "lofty and ennobling" ideas they are to have about it? And I conceive that the Socialist who criticises the economic arrangements of society from the standpoint of these ideas is the more helpful moralist of the two. He has done well if he has simply called attention to the antinomy; and, in a sense, that is the only remedy, for, unless it is felt and recognized, there is nothing from which anything better can grow up. If institutions depend on character, character depends on institutions: it is upon their necessary interaction that the Socialist insists. The greatness of Ruskin as a moralist lies in his relevance, and in his recognition of the inseparability of the moral and the material, of ethics and economics. But the practical man calls him a moral rhetorician and an insane economist.

"Moral" and "Material" Reform.

Apart from the general value of economic organization or of the consideration of it, the moral Socialist certainly tends (in theory) to minimize, if not to discount, the influence of material conditions on the betterment of life. The great thing, we are told, is to "moralize" the employer, or "moralize" the workman. The only radical cure for the sanitary atrocities of the Factory system lies, it is said, in a wider interpretation of their duty by the employers. Why is it, one may ask, that a system against which it is considered superficial, or indeed immoral, to "agitate," lends itself to this appeal from the employer's sense of interest to the employer's sense of duty? The Socialist suggests a system of industry in which self-interest does not require to be checked. And is it quite reasonable or consistent to complain, on the one hand, that Socialism does not provide the economic motive of private profit, and, on the other hand, to look for the improvement of the conditions of the laborer to the moralization or socialization of the motives of the employer? The evils which the moral Socialist admits are just those for which a radical

cure can only be found in the popular control of industry. Or, are we to say that "the morality of the working classes" depends, not upon "circumstances," but upon some mysterious gift of grace or redemption? The intimate connection between "circumstances" and drinking, the degrading effect of material uncertainty (which the doctrinaire moralist seems to regard as an unmixed moral benefit—for the working classes), are, at any rate, as normal phenomena as the powerlessness of a "degenerate" to cope with such conditions at all. A good deal more investigation is surely needed of the conditions under which "character and ideas" operate before we can so easily assume their spontaneous generation and their indefinite possibilities. Universalize the principle, and it is doubtless good for all persons that they should not be above the possibility of falling into distress by lack of wisdom and exertion; competition is in this sense a sovereign condition of life, and the Socialist regrets that more room is not made for its beneficent operation in the "moral development" of our "splendid paupers." There seems to be just a tendency on the part of the Charity Organization Society to treat the working-classes as if they had peculiar opportunities for independent life, just because their circumstances are so difficult; the eye of the moral disciplinarian should surely also be turned upon the many people who are as much pensioners of society as if they were maintained in an alms-house. The poor man's poverty (it would seem) is his moral opportunity. But this kind of beatitude for the poor would have more point if it were always their own lack of wisdom and exertion which occasions their "falling into distress." It must be admitted that the existence of an unemployed rich is as great a source of danger and deterioration to society as that of an unemployed poor, and to a great extent the one is an aggravating cause of the other. Much of the casual employment of the employed classes directly ministers to the unproductive and exclusive consumption of the rich; and one great difficulty in the way of the organization of production on the basis of rational and persistent wants, and the provision of a true industrial basis to the life of the worker, lies in the irregular, capricious, and characterless expenditure of superfluous incomes.

The Insufficiency of the Charity Organization Society.

All that our "Poor Law Reformers" have to say about the policy of "relief works," "shelters," and relaxation of the Poor Law is undeniable; but the corollary that in "refraining from action" we are helping on a better time seems hardly adequate, however graphically it can be illustrated from the history of unwise philanthropy. So long as the Charity Organization Society contents itself with the demonstration that devices of this kind only drive the evil further in, it is really helpful; but in refusing to look for any source of the evils except foolish benevolence on the one side and reckless improvidence on the other, it seems to be unduly simplifying the conditions of the problem. It is, at any rate, scarcely justified in deprecating the inquiry as to whether the absence of any rational organization of

industry may not be a part of the situation. Thinkers of this school are so much concerned for the moral independence of the worker that his actual economic dependence hardly enters into their consideration. The circumstances beyond the control of great masses of workers engaged in machine industries are much larger than those that their own action goes to make up, and here again Collectivism endeavors to bring these circumstances much more within their control. Lack of employment means, we are told, lack of character; but where, after all, does character come from? The contention of Socialists is that the absence of any permanent organization of industry, by setting a premium upon partial and discontinuous employment, is itself a contributory cause of shiftless character; and where the character is hopeless, the best way of dealing with it is such an organization as would really sift out and eliminate the industrial residuum. All permanent organization means the withdrawal of partial and inadequate employment from a certain class.*

Surely in this case system and character act and react: discourage intermittent employment, and you save the "marginal" cases from social wreckage; while it becomes possible to deal with the industrial residuum in some restorative or restrictive way. But is not this the point of Collectivism? The Fabian Society has repudiated the false economics of "relief works" with quite as much energy as the Charity Organization Society. But the real objection to relief works, as also to "Old Age Pensions," is that they have no logical connection with the system they are designed to palliate. "Continuity of employment" and "superannuation pensions" would be a logical part of a Socialist state; but the idea of "the State" as a relief society to the employees of private industry can only be satisfactory to the employer, whose irresponsibility it would effectually sanction. Under a system of individualistic industry, "State relief" and "State pensions" can only mean an allowance in aid of reckless speculation and low wages; and these devices only serve to distract reform from the true line of deliverance—the best possible organization of industry and the improvement of the conditions of labor. It is not the Socialist who contemplates the "ransom" of the capitalistic system by relief work and old age pensions.† I do not think that even the most impatient Socialist has ever suggested that out-door relief in any shape was Socialism; while the scientific Socialist has never regarded so-called wholesale "Socialistic remedies" of this kind as other than the herring across the track. Socialism means the organization not of charity, nor of relief, but of industry, and in such a way that the problem of finding work which is not apparently wanted, and of devising pensions for no apparent service, would not be "normal."

* The net result of organization at the Docks was, we are told, in the direction of confining to about 6,000 people the work which had previously been partial employment for between 12,000 and 20,000. *Cf.* also the unorganized "cab-tout," etc.

† On the other hand, Pensions—and even carefully guarded and exceptional relief schemes—might be regarded as part of a transitional policy. The Socialist who advocates Old Age Pensions is at the same time advocating a different conception and consequent method of industry, and not simply trying to save the credit of a discredited system.

Socialism and Natural Selection.

The real danger of Collectivism, indeed, is not that it would take the form of the charity that fosters a degraded class, but that it would be as ruthless as Plato in the direction of "social surgery." It may take a hard and narrow view of the "industrial organism" and the conditions of its efficiency. For the progress of civilization gives a social value to other qualities, other kinds of efficiency, than merely industrial or economic capacity. "Invalidism" may be said to develop valuable states of mind, and to strengthen the conception of human sympathy and solidarity. It is possible to apply the conception of an industrial organism in two ways: the State is an organism, and therefore it should get rid of its weak; the State is an organism, and therefore it should carry its weak with it. Perhaps, it might be said that the modern problem is not so much to get the weak out of the way, as to help them to be useful. There is no reason in the process of natural selection, as such, why every member of society, provided he be not criminal, should not be preserved and helped to live as effectively as possible. But this would depend upon the possibility of such a readjustment of the economic system that would enable all members to maintain an efficient existence under it, and, conversely, upon the condition that each person should do the work for which he is best fitted. "Weakness" and "unfitness" are, after all, relative; and in any more systematic organization of society what is now a man's weakness might become his strength. One advantage of the organization of industry would be the increased possibility of "grading" work, as also of estimating desert. The problem is no other than that of finding a distribution of work which would allow the weak to render a service proportioned to their ability in the same ratio as the service is required of the strong. The present system makes too little use of the weak and too much of the strong; instead of helping the growth of all after their kind, it fosters an overgrowth of an exclusive and imperfect kind. And, lastly, if it be said that any form of Socialism would be immoral if it denied the necessity for individual responsibility, it may also be urged that the compulsory elevation by municipal and State activity of the most degraded classes is a necessary preliminary to their further elevation by individual effort and voluntary association. But none of these considerations seem germane to private competitive enterprise, which can hardly afford to "treat life as a whole." From all these points of view, therefore, I venture to think that the question of morality is largely a question of machinery, and that the consideration of morality apart from machinery reduces ethics to the level of a merely "formal" science.

Socialism and Property.

Socialism recognizes the value of property by demanding its wider distribution. The social situation is, upon its showing (rightly or wrongly), largely created by the divorce of the worker from property and the means of production, which means that the arrangement and disposition of his life is outside his control. Private

Property may be said to have an ethical value and significance so far as it is at once a sign and expression of individual worth, and gives to individual life some sort of unity and continuity. It follows that wages and salaries, on which society is largely, and under Collectivism would be wholly based, fulfil the principle of private property so far as they are in some degree permanent and calculable ; otherwise, there is a discontinuity in the life of the individual ; he cannot look before and after, cannot organize his life as a whole. Socialists not only accept the "idea" of individual property, but demand some opportunity for its realization.* One point of the public organization of industry is that it would admit of more permanency, stability, and continuity in the life of the worker than is provided by the precariousness of modern competition. His life, it is contended, is much more exposed than it need be to the worst of material evils—uncertainty. The "Trust" organization of industry, as also the organization of dock labor, are in this point in the line of Socialist advance ; and it is well known that the civil service attracts because it not only secures the livelihood of the employed, but leaves him time for volunteer work in pursuit of his interests and duties, private and public. Or, again, we are told that the social need is to make the possession of property very responsive to the character and capacity of the owner. Could the endeavor of Socialism be better expressed? Socialism does not, like certain forms of Communism, rest upon the idea that no man should have anything of his own ; it is concerned with such an organization of industry as shall enable a man to acquire property in proportion to his character and capacity, but will cease to make the mere accumulation of private property a motive force of industry. Just to the extent that property serves the needs of individuality, Socialism would encourage its acquisition : the idea of hand-to-mouth existence or "dependence," the ideal of the slave or the child, is probably much more encouraged by the fluctuations of competitive industry than by the routine but regular and calculable vocation of the public servant.

It may be further considered that it is the object of Collectivism not merely to give a true industrial and calculable basis to the life of the worker, but to give to the possession of property character and propriety. There is a justifiable pleasure in surrounding one's self with things which really express and respond to one's own character and choice of interest, and in the feeling that they are one's own in a peculiar and intimate sense. But the number of books, pictures, and the like, which one "desires for one's own," is comparatively small, and would be much smaller, if one had within reach a museum, a library, and a picture-gallery. The property that is revolting is that which is expressive, not of character, but of money ; the house, for instance, of "a successful man" made beautiful "by contract." Emerson's exhortation to put our private pictures into public galleries is perhaps extreme, and not altogether

* Throughout this discussion I am thinking of "the enjoyment of individual Property" as distinct from the employment of private Capital and the private possession of Land.

practical or reasonable. But the public provision of libraries and galleries, and of things that can be best enjoyed in common, not only enlarges the background of the citizen's life and adds to his possessions, but suggests a reasonable limit to the accumulation of property; as it would most certainly give a social direction to art, when it could minister to the needs of a nation rather than the ostentation of the few. And the same may be said of public parks, means of transit, and the like—all in the direction of levelling those inequalities of property which serve no social purpose. Whether, then, property be regarded as a "means of self-expression," or as "materials for enjoyment," the Collectivist ideal may be said to lie in the direction, not of denying, but of affirming and satisfying the need; and the Socialists criticise the distribution of property under individualistic institutions just from the point of view of its failure to satisfy a need of human nature. Mr. Bosanquet,* for instance, really expresses the Socialist's position when he says: "The real cause of complaint today, I take it, is not the presence, but the absence of property, together with the suggestion that its presence may be the cause of its absence." He points out, moreover, that the principle of unearned private property and the principle of Communism really meet in the common rejection of the idea of *earning*, of some quasi-competitive relation of salary to value or energy of service—in fact, of the organization of Society upon a basis of labor, which *is* the ideal of Socialism. Similarly he puts himself at the point of view of the Socialist when he says: "The true principles of State interference with acquisition—and alienation—would refer to their tendency, if any, to prevent acquisition of property on the part of other members of society," a principle which omits nothing in Collectivist requirements, and opens up a series of far-reaching considerations.†

Socialism and Competition.

I have already endeavored to show that Socialism is a method of social selection according to social worth (in the widest sense): that it desires to extend the possibilities of usefulness to as many as possible, and would measure reward by the efficiency of socially valuable work. The differences in reward would, however, be of less account in proportion as social consideration and recognition, and the collective privileges and opportunities of civilization, are extended to any kind of worker, and as the motives to personal accumulation are reduced within social limits.‡ Indeed, it is a question whether the conven-

* In "Some Aspects of the Social Problem," which originally suggested this paper.

† *Cf.* The "Land Nationalization" propaganda generally. For the sake of their economic case, as also for purposes of political propaganda, it is regrettable that modern Socialism gives more prominence, in its theory, to "Capital" than to "Land"—but *cf.* the works of Achille Loria and his school.

‡ *Cf.* Mill ("Autobiography") and Marshall ("Principles") on the "Motives to Collective Action"; also Sidney Webb's "Difficulties of Individualism" (Fabian Tract No. 69). "A social system devised to encourage 'the art of establishing the maximum inequality over our neighbors'—as Ruskin puts it—appears destined to be replaced, wherever this is possible, by one based on salaried public service, with the stimulus of duty and esteem, instead of that of fortune-making."

tional idea of reward is relevant to the system of industry contemplated by the Socialist, a system under which the freest industrial motive—the motive of work for work's and enjoyment's sake, the stimulus of self-expression—could be extended from the highest to the humblest industry. The incompatibility of pure industrial motive with our modern industrial system is, indeed, as Ruskin and Morris and Wagner have witnessed, its profoundest condemnation.

The Benefits of Commercial Competition.

It is not to be denied that competitive private enterprise may develop character and discharge social services. But the character and the services are of a partial and inferior type : partial, because a few grow out of proportion to the rest, and therefore in a narrow and anti-social direction ; inferior, because the character of the economically strong is not of the highest type ; if it is of a type fittest to survive in a commercial and non-social world, it is not the fittest to survive in a moral and social order. And what can one say about the quality of products and standard of consumption ? Is it as such directed to evolve and elevate life ? Matthew Arnold's description of an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, and a lower class brutalized, is a fairly accurate description of modern commercial types.

Competition and Population.

Not only is commercial competition inferior in form, but it is directly responsible for an increase in quantity over quality of population. The idea that unchecked competition makes for the natural selection of the fittest population is singularly optimistic. It is just that part of the population which has nothing to lose that is most reckless in propagating itself. The fear of falling below the standard of comfort at one end of the social scale, and the hopelessness of ever reaching it at the other, combine to increase the quantity of population at the cost of its quality. And what is a loss to society is a gain to the sweater ; he is directly interested in the lowering of the standard of life, and in the competition of cheap labor ; and the sweater is a normal product of commercial competition. Collectivism deliberately aims at the maintenance and elevation of the standard of life, and at such an organization of industry as would not enable one class of the community to be interested in the overproduction of another. It treats the "population question" as a problem of quality.

Socialism and Progress.

There are, of course, many other aspects of Socialism than its adequacy to the requirements of a moral and social idea ; that is, of the principle of a progressive social life. It may be thought that Socialism is essentially a movement from below, a class movement ; but it is characteristic of modern Socialism that its protagonists, in this country at any rate, approach the problem from the scientific rather than the popular view ; they are middle class theorists. And the future of the movement will depend upon the extent to

which it will be recognized that Socialism is not simply a workingman's, or an unemployed, or a poor man's question. There are, indeed, signs of a distinct rupture between the Socialism of the street and the Socialism of the chair ; the last can afford to be patient, and to deprecate hasty and unscientific remedies. It may be that the two sides may drift farther and farther apart, and that scientific Socialism may come to enjoy the unpopularity of the Charity Organization Society. All that I am, however, concerned to maintain is that there is a scientific Socialism which does attempt to treat life as a whole, and has no less care for character than the most rigorous idealist ; and I believe I am also right in thinking that this is the characteristic and dominant type of Socialism at the present day. It may not be its dominant idea in the future, but it is the idea that is wanted for the time, the idea that is relevant, and it is with relevant ideas that the social moralist is concerned.

Other Moral Aspects : Socialism and Religion.

There are, again, other moral aspects than those with which I have been concerned. I have said nothing as to the moral sentiment of Socialism, nothing as to the creation of a deeper sense of public duty. I have taken for granted the sentiment, and confined myself to its mode of action, or the more or less completely realized moral idea of Socialism, and tried to see how it works, or whether it is a working idea at all. The question of moral dynamics lies behind this, and the question of faith—as the religious sentiment—still further behind. Perhaps in an anxiety to divorce Socialism from sentimentality, we may appear to be divorcing it from sentiment. But the sentiment of Socialism must rest on a high degree of intellectual force and imagination, if it is not to be altogether vague and void. There is no cheap way, or royal road, to the Religion of Humanity, though there may be many helps to it short of a reflective philosophy. But it would be idle to deny that Socialism involves a change which would be almost a revolution in the moral and religious attitude of the majority of mankind. We may agree with Mill * that it is impossible to define with any sort of precision the coming modification of moral and religious ideas. We may further, however, agree that it will rest (as Comte said) upon the solidarity of mankind (as represented by the Idea of the State), and that "there are two things which are likely to lead men to invest this with the moral authority of a religion ; first, they will become more and more impressed by the awful fact that a piece of conduct to-day may prove a curse to men and women scores and even hundreds of years after the author is dead ; and second, they will more and more feel that they can only satisfy their sentiment of gratitude to seen or unseen benefactors, can only repay the untold benefits they have inherited, by diligently maintaining the traditions of service." This is the true positive spirit, and in something like it we must seek the moral dynamics of Socialism.

* John Morley's "Miscellanies" : "The Death of Mr. Mill." *Cf.* also the passage on Socialistic sentiment in Mill's "Autobiography."

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