

THE MORAL BASIS
OF
SOCIALISM.

BY

KARL PEARSON, M.A.

(Formerly Fellow of King's College, Cambridge).



London:

WILLIAM REEVES, 185, FLEET STREET, E.C.
Printer and Publisher.

1887

THE MORAL BASIS OF SOCIALISM.

Mächtig ist *Eins* nur auf Erden: die waltenden ewigen Mächte,
Welche die Völker bewegen; und was in schöner Verblendung
Diesen entgegen sich stellt und verwegen auf menschliche Macht tresst,
Oder auf göttliche hofft, ein Koloss ist's auf thönernen Füßen!

IT is scarcely ten years since our daily papers, noting the rapid growth of the Socialist party in Germany, congratulated their readers on the impossibility of a like movement in this country. To-day Socialism in England has immeasurably outgrown its German progenitor. While in Germany Socialism has remained the vague protest of the oppressed worker, suffering under the introduction of the factory system of industry, in England it has become already a great social factor tending to leaven our legislation and likely, before long, to revolutionise our social habits. In Germany it has remained an ill-regulated political protest with an impracticable programme. In England, owing partly to the vigorous emotionalism of Carlyle and Ruskin, but principally to our more advanced economic development, it has become a political tendency and a moral force long before it has reached self-consciousness and formulated itself as a recognised movement. As a recognised movement we shall find in the first place that various crude manifestations will be singled out for fierce condemnation, but that, after some contempt and misrepresentation, not a little justified by the Utopian schemes of social reconstruction propounded by the earlier socialistic writers^(a), the doctrines of Socialism will be at least listened to with respect, and finally exert an

(a) It seems to me extremely inadvisable for Socialists to formulate, at the present time, cut and dried socialistic organisations of the State. The future social form is at present quite beyond our ken; it is sufficient for the time to trace the probable effect of the Socialistic movement in modifying existing institutions, and in influencing the legislation of the near future. It is a waste of energy to build in the air co-operative commonwealths, the destruction of which is no hard task for the hostile critic; it is even harmful in that it associates the universal movement with the easily controverted dreams of the individual Utopian.

acknowledged influence on all social and legislative changes.

I have spoken of Socialism as a recognised movement, but it is essentially necessary to mark the characteristics which distinguish it from other political movements of this century. The difference lies in the fact that the new polity is based upon a conception of morality differing *in toto* from the current Christian ideal, which it does not hesitate to call anti-social and immoral. It is however, the very fact that Socialism is a morality in the first place, and a polity only in the second, that has led to the introduction of the absurd misnomer "Christian Socialist" for a section of the party which vaguely recognises the moral aspect of Socialism. As the old religious faith breaks up, a new basis of morals is required more consonant with the reasoning spirit of the age. That view of life, which finds in this world only sorrow and tribulation, a field of preparation for a future existence, is more and more widely acknowledged to be a superstition invented and accepted by the prevailing pessimism of a decadent period of human development. Harmful as the superstition has been, the common sense of mankind has saved it from the logical consequences of full acceptance. At the very best, however, it has justified poverty, misery and asceticism of all kinds. The modern Socialistic theory of morality is based upon the agnostic treatment of the supersensuous. Man, in judging of conduct, is concerned only with the present life; he has to make it as full and as joyous as he is able, and to do this consciously and scientifically with all the knowledge of the present, and all the experience of the past, pressed into his service. Not from fear of hell, not from hope of heaven, from no love of a tortured man-god, but solely for the sake of the society of which I am a member and the welfare of which is my welfare—for the sake of my fellow-men—I act morally, that is, socially. Positivism has recognised in a vague impracticable fashion this, the only possible basis of a rational morality, by placing the progress of mankind in the centre of its creed, by venerating

a personified Humanity. Socialism, as a more practical faith, teaches us that the first duty of man is to no general concept of humanity, but to the group of humans to which he belongs, and that man's veneration is due to the State which personifies that social group. Yet even thus there is sufficient ground for the sympathy which is undoubtedly felt by Positivists for Socialism. Can a greater gulf be imagined than really exists between current Christianity and the Socialistic code? Socialism arises from the recognition (1) that the sole aim of mankind is happiness in this life, and (2), that the course of evolution, and the struggle of group against group, has produced a strong social instinct in mankind, so that, directly and indirectly, the pleasure of the individual lies in forwarding the prosperity of the society, of which he is a member. Corporate Society—the State, not the personified Humanity of Positivism,—becomes the centre of the Socialist's faith. The polity of the Socialist is thus his morality, and his reasoned morality may, in the old sense of the word, be termed his religion. It is this identity which places Socialism on a different footing to the other political and social movements of to-day. Current Christianity is not a vivifying political force; current Christianity is the direct outcome of a pessimistic superstition, and can never be legitimately wedded to a Hellenic rationalism. Can we more strongly emphasise the distinction between the old and the new moral basis? To the thinkers of to-day crucified gods, deified men, heaven and hell have become intolerable nonsense, only of value for the light they have cast on past stages of human development. These theories of the supersensuous, which our forefathers have handed down to us, deserve all the respect due to relics of the past. They are invaluable landmarks of history, signposts to the paths of man's mental growth. They were the banners under which mankind has struggled, the symbols of his march across the arid deserts of the Past, where the sources of knowledge were few, and none ran copiously. Now that those deserts are behind us, and we live in a fertile land, with wide fields of truth only

awaiting cultivation, with innumerable springs of knowledge freely open to the thirsty, we can afford to lay those symbols aside. Let us reverently hang these old colours up in the great temple of human progress. Mankind, following them, has fought and won many an arduous battle; but the best energies of our time can no longer rally round them. They belong to history, and not to the glorious actuality of that century in which we live. We are, it is true, only just at the preface of the great volume of reasoned truth, wherein is endless work for many generations of men, yet we have, at least, found the only legitimate basis of knowledge, the only fruitful guide to conduct. Rejoicing in that discovery, we can lay aside the weird images of the childhood of mankind, for History has taught us their origin, and Science their value. The images are beautiful, but they are lifeless; they are but idols carved by the ignorance of the Past. Still, like the Greeks of old, we may glory in the beauty of our idols, long after the Intellect has ceased to bend her knee in worship, or to sacrifice herself upon the altar erected by the vague aspirations of a dead humanity to a splendid shadow of itself. Yes! sympathy with the Past we must have, but war, ceaseless war, with that Past which seeks with its idols to crush the growth of the Present! The right to re-shape itself is the one birthright of humanity, and the 'vested interests' of priest, or of class, the sanctity of tradition and of law, will be of less avail in checking human progress than the gossamer in the path of the king of the forest.

It is because the old bases of religion and morality have become impossible to the Present, that Socialism, which gives us a rational motive for conduct, which demands of each individual service to Society, and reverence towards Society incorporated in the State, is destined to play such a large part in the re-shaping of human institutions. Socialism, despite Häckel, despite Herbert Spencer, is consonant with the whole teaching of modern Science, and with all the doctrines of modern Rationalism. It lays down no transcendental code of morality, it accepts no

divine revelation as basis of conduct ; it asserts the human origin, the plastic and developable character of morals; it teaches us that, as human knowledge increases, human society will tend to greater stability, because History and Science will show more and more clearly what tends to human welfare. The new morality, while recognising the value of customary modes of action, and of inherited social instinct, still looks upon knowledge and experience as the guides of human conduct. It trusts in the main to human reason, not to human emotion, to dictate the moral code. To give all a like possibility of usefulness, to measure reward by the efficiency and magnitude of socially valuable work, is surely to favour the growth of the fittest within the group, and the survival of the fittest group in the world-contest of societies. Socialism no less earnestly than Professor Huxley demands an open path from the Board School to the highest Council of the nation. It is as anxious to catch talent and to profit by its activity, as the most ardent disciple of Darwin.

It may seem to many of my readers that veneration for personified Society, or the State, and the identification of moral conduct with social action, are very old truths, which the world has long recognised. I venture to doubt this, or at least, to think that if recognised, they have never been given their true value, or pushed to their logical outcome. I doubt whether all Socialists even yet grasp the large consequences, which flow from their full admission. I propose to examine somewhat more closely these two fundamental principles.

At the present time it can hardly be said that there is any veneration whatever for personified Society, the State. The State is brought to our notice, not as the totality of the society in which we live, but as government, and government we are accustomed to look upon as a necessary evil ; we have no faith in its capacity for right ruling. To sacrifice our lives for government appears utterly ridiculous ; but to do so for the welfare of the State ought to be the truest heroism. It is the loss of veneration for the State, which has made our government in all its forms

something nigh despicable. We have been content to allow the State to be served by self-seekers, by men whose all-absorbing object was to fill the pockets of themselves or of their family, whose highest patriotism was to conserve the anti-social monopolies of their class. We have chosen our senators neither for their experience nor their wisdom, but for the glibness of their tongues and the length of their purses. So it has come about that the very name of politician is a term of reproach. Our legislation, our government, has been a scarcely disguised warfare of classes, the crude struggle of individual interests, not the cautious direction of social progress by the selected few. Veneration for the State has been stifled by a not unjustifiable contempt for existing government; it has survived only on the one hand in an irrational feeling of loyalty towards a puppet, degenerating into snobbism, and on the other hand in a chauvinism, a claim to national pre-eminence, chiefly advanced by those who are contributing little to the fame of their country in art, literature or science, still less in hard fighting. To bring again to the fore a feeling of genuine respect for personified Society, the State, to purify executive government, is obviously a hard but primary necessity of socialistic action. We must aristocratise government at the same time as we democratise it; the ultimate appeal to the many is hopeless, unless the many have foresight enough to place power in the hands of the fittest.

Government has become what it is, because our respect for the State has grown so small, and not conversely. We have had fit men, and we could have put them in places of trust; we could have demanded better action from our rulers, had we had real veneration for the State. In early Rome and at Athens such a feeling existed; it was, indeed, a direct outcome of the old group kinship, the gentile organization, of both those states. It is something more than this respect for a widened family which we require to-day. With modern habits of life, with the emancipation of women, the strength of the family tie, one of the last binding links of

the old social structure, will disappear. We must learn to replace it in time by respect for personified Society, by reverence for the State. The spirit of antagonism between the Individual and the State must be destroyed. How low our social spirit has fallen may be well measured by remarking how few recognise the immorality of cheating the State in any of its industrial departments, say the Post Office; how nearly all regard the tax-gatherer with a feeling akin to that which mediæval burghers bore to the city hangman! The man who goes whistling along, and with a heavy stick knocks off the ornamental ironwork in the Embankment Gardens, would think it highly immoral to whittle the arm-chair of his friend; the woman, who encloses a letter inside a book-post packet, would be indignant if you suggested that she was capable of picking her neighbour's pocket. Yet in both cases the offence against the State ought to be looked upon as a far graver matter than the offence against the individual. The clergyman, who some years ago was detected cutting out engravings from the books of a great public library, ought to have been publicly whipped and ejected from society, yet the matter was hushed up, apparently because it was only an offence against the State. Had he stolen his Churchwarden's spoons, a much less heinous matter, he would undoubtedly have found himself in the police court. So long as there is a large group of persons, who find pleasure in ripping up the cushions of public carriages, in defacing public statues, in tearing down the hawthorn bushes in the parks, and in generally destroying what is intended for the convenience, or pleasure, of the whole community, above all so long as the rest of the community treat such offences lightly, so long it is hopeless to think of vastly extending the property of the State. Socialists have to inculcate that spirit which would give offenders against the State short shrift and the nearest lamp-post. Every citizen must learn to say with Louis XIV., *L'état c'est moi!* The misfortune is that wealth (*b*) has become so individualised

b It has become so entirely 'property.' When 'wealth' and 'goods' were first used to describe that state of material prosperity which is *well* and *good* for men, individual ownership, property, had not yet been evolved.

since the Reformation, that the spirit of communal ownership is nigh dead. This spirit, the joint responsibility for the safeguard of common wealth, is one of the most valuable factors of social stability, and the sooner we re-learn it the better for our social welfare. To preach afresh this old conception of the State, so fruitful in the cities of ancient Greece and the towns of mediæval Germany, ought to be the primary educative mission of modern Socialism. If the welfare of society be the touchstone of moral action, then respect for the State—the State as *res publica*, as commonweal—ought to be the most sacred principle of the new movement.

Let us turn to the other fundamental of socialistic morality—the definition of moral conduct as socialised action—and enquire whether, commonplace as the definition may seem, it has, any more than respect for the State, a currently accepted guide to conduct. I fear we can only answer in the negative. Whether we turn to practice, or to theory, we shall find that the notion of morality current has reference to some absolute, and, I venture to think, unintelligible code. It is rarely, if ever, based upon social wants as ascertained by past experience or upon an accurate study of the tendencies of present social growth. We are very far indeed from recognising the momentous consequences, which logically flow from the abandonment of the Christian morality, and the Christian conception of life. Darwin has destroyed the old Ptolemaic system of the spiritual universe. We can no longer regard all creation as revolving about man as its central sun. We can no longer believe that the conduct of man is influencing the birth, or destruction of worlds, or that his 'salvation' has any relation to the great physical laws, which regulate cosmical evolution. Man's morality has no bearing on the 'infinite' and the 'eternal,' but solely on his own temporal welfare. Surely this Copernican view of human morality is one of the most obvious, the most unassailable, and yet the most revolutionary truths of our age. Yet how far we are from accepting it fully and loyally! The whole paraphernalia of Christian worship,

with its complete perversion of the fundamental principles of human conduct, and its deadening effect upon human morals, is still spread far and wide over the land. Nay, what is even still more suggestive of our bondage to the past is the fact that a thinker, whose writings have perhaps done as much to enlighten—as they certainly have to obscure,—the ideas of our century, finds the purport of the universe in the absolute necessity that man should be provided with a field for moral action! Thus it is that Kant, and the neo-Hegelian reconcilers, have given a new lease of life to a fallacious moral system by a process which is superficially rational. The influence of this neo-scholasticism not only on the church, but on many of our popular teachers, is a factor which it is hardly wise to disregard. That it should have taken considerable root in a rational age proves how far the Socialistic basis of morality is from universal acceptance.

At first sight the identification of morality and sociality may seem a principle that even our most conservative friends can accept. "If this is all Socialism means, we also are Socialists," they say. "We too are desirous of improving the condition of the poor." Follow the doctrine into its consequences, however, and the cloven hoof will rapidly show itself. They have not yet grasped that this view of life replaces that select body they term 'Society' (does not that abuse of terms alone fully condemned them?) by the whole mass of the folk. It does not leave the welfare of large sections of the community to the caprice of the few; it takes as right what they would tithe for charity; it will inevitably touch not only their emotions, but the more sacred pocket; it sweeps away an anti-social class-monopoly and with it class-power. "You must either be working for the community or leave it," is the ultimatum of the Socialistic moral code to each and to all. No amount of conscience-money spent on the most 'philanthropic object,' can atone for individual idleness. The progress and welfare of society demand for common use not only the stored labour of the past, but the labour-power of each existing individual. Without sharing in the social

work of the present there shall be no part for you in the goods of the present, or in the wealth garnered by our forefathers. The Socialistic toe tingles with scarce restrainable impulse to eject in precipitate fashion from the human hive the many endowed idlers who, with ineffable effrontery term themselves 'Society.' The membership of Society, the moral right to enjoy the fruits of social labour, can be based solely on the claim of contributing to the welfare of Society in the present—to be still working, or to have worked while the strength was there, physically or intellectually, for the maintenance, progress, or pleasure of our fellow citizens. It is this fundamental conception of modern Socialism, with its ennobling of all forms of labour, which will revolutionise modern life, and, once accepted as morality, will cause all political measures to be examined from a new standpoint. From morality Socialism will become a polity. It is a common accusation against Socialists that they are only capable of destructive criticism, but it is surely of primary importance to cut away the old superstitions, the old mistaken notions of human conduct, to create a wide felt want for a new basis of action, before a wooden and inflexible system of social reconstruction is propounded. The time for constitution-mongers has not come, if, indeed, they are not always a bar to progress. We want at present to inculcate general principles, to teach new views of life. Society will reconstruct itself *pari passu* with the spread of these new ideas; the rate at which they will become current, while depending to some extent on the energy and enthusiasm of their propagators, will be far more influenced by the failure of the old economic system, owing to the gigantic industrial and commercial changes which are in progress, and by the failure of the old Christian morality, owing to the rapid growth of rational methods of thought.

"Educate your workpeople!" cry some of our leading Scientists, "if you wish to maintain a position among competing nations in the world-markets." A falser reason for education it is hard to conceive, unless our Scientists are prepared to prove that social welfare at home is impos-

sible without successful huckstering abroad. It is worthy rather of the Lancashire cotton printer who measures national prosperity by the import of china-clay, than of the genuine Scientist. Let us educate our workpeople to face the difficulties which our society at home has to encounter; let us train them to value intelligent labour as a means, not an end, to grasp that the general progress of society here, the raising of the common standard of comfort and intelligence is of the first importance. After all, restriction, or removal, of population may be a more efficient aid to social progress than an endless rivalry with other nations in the monotonous labour of breeching the less civilised races of earth.

If I interpret socialistic principles at all correctly, they primarily insist on the moral need that each individual should work for the community according to his powers. The man or woman who does not labour, but, owing to a traditional monopoly, is able to live on the labour of others, or the stored labour of the community—which indeed requires, as a rule, present labour to utilise it—will be treated as a moral leper. The moment the majority have adopted this code of morality—and the economic development, taken in conjunction with the fact that the majority even at present do labour, will render its adoption rapid—then the legislation, or measures of police, to be taken against the immoral and anti-social minority will form the political realisation of Socialism. This political realisation of Socialism has already, although blindly and unconsciously, to some extent begun. Socialistic measures,—the limitation of the privileges of those who live on the labour-power of others, or on the stored labour of the past,—have become, by no means, an inconspicuous feature of current legislation, and a feature which will yearly gain greater prominence.

There may be differences of opinion as to how the elimination of idlers from the community may best take place, but the majority of Socialists are convinced that to destroy the private ownership of the physical resources of the country and of the stored labour of the past—to

socialise the land and to socialise the means of production—are the only efficient and permanent means of restraining idleness, and the resulting misdirection of the labour-power of the community. We believe that, by destroying the pecuniary privileges of birth, and the class exclusiveness of education, we shall in reality be removing a great bar to the survival, or at least to the pre-eminence, of the fittest. It is to the welfare of society that it should obtain from all ranks the best heads and the best hands, as its directors and organisers. This can only be secured by giving equal educational chances to all, by allowing no pecuniary handicapping of the feeble in mind or body. Here Socialism is at one with modern Radicalism, and is certainly not opposed to the teachings of Evolution.

At the same time Socialists are fully aware of the difficulties which lie in the realisation of their ideal, and the more reasonable are fully prepared to face, and duly weigh, the arguments which may be brought against them. I propose to devote the remainder of this paper to a brief consideration of some of the more important of these arguments, which I may state as follows:—

(1.) Socialism would destroy the rewards of successful competition, and so weaken the incentive to individual energy, which is of primary social value.

(2.) No Government can be trusted to fitly conduct the vast task of organisation, which Socialism would thrust upon it.

(3.) The proposed socialisation of land, and of stored labour, would destroy confidence, and check enterprise, to an extent which might have disastrous effects on the community, long before the socialised State could be got into working order.

(4.) The increase of population would very soon render nugatory any benefit to be derived from the socialisation of surplus-labour.

(5.) There is no means of measuring the value of an individual's contribution to the labour-stock of the community.

Let us take in order these objections, all of which deserve very careful consideration.

(1). *Socialism would destroy the rewards of successful competition, and so weaken the incentive to individual energy, which is of primary social value.*

If the result of socialistic reconstruction were to be the deadening of individual energy, it would undoubtedly not tend to the welfare of Society. But I believe that the importance of real incentive is fully recognised by all thinking Socialists, and that they would be the last to deny the social value of especially rewarding transcendent talent, or remarkable social energy. It is because the rewards at present given to such talent and energy are far more than sufficient to achieve their end, are utterly unsuitable in character, and most frequently go to anti-social cunning rather than to real worth, that I am compelled to look upon the present rewards of the competitive system as little short of disastrous to the community. I hold that social distinction, public gratitude, and State recognition, are the only suitable rewards, and at the same time are quite sufficient incentive to individual energy. There is no necessity for endowing for an indefinite period the posterity of a valuable member of society with a possibility of complete idleness. Such rewards as large grants of public money or land, perpetual pensions, or the accumulation by successful industrial organisers of stored-labour or any other monopoly of the means of utilising existing labour-power, are neither necessary, nor are they conducive to the general welfare of society. Such rewards did not call an Albrecht Dürer, a Newton, a Shakespeare, or a Watt into being, nor induce them to do work of first-class social value. The opportunity of a free education, given by a sizarship at Trinity College, had more to do with the production of a Newton, than all the rewards of the competitive system. It is the opportunity for self-development, the provision of a field for its activity, and some amount of social recognition, which are really needed to produce, and utilise, the talent of the community.

The German trader will display as much energy, fertility of resource, and downright hard work in making £500 a year as an English manufacturer in clearing £50,000. I do not think any real danger to the incentive to energy is involved in the socialisation of industry, while literature, science and art have invariably been found to thrive best with a minimum of pecuniary honour, and a maximum of social recognition. The schools of Athens, and the Churches of the Middle Ages, offer evidence enough on this point, while Galilei, at the height of his reputation, had to *pay* for the printing of the *De Systemate Mundi*.

Socialists assert that under a State-control of industry, the recognition of a new inventor by the State would be as great an inducement to enterprise as the idea of twenty per cent profit is held to be at present; more especially will such honour have weight in the educated community of the future. No practical Socialist advocates in the present stage of human development an equal distribution of the profits of labour as advantageous to society. He even recognises the importance, if necessary, of distinguishing by physical rewards such energy and talent as are of real value to the community. He is willing to admit that any one who labours longer and better than another should reap a greater return: but that this return shall be in its nature consumable, not reproductive. It must not take the form of a permanent tax (rent, interest, etc.,) on the labour-power, and labour-store, of the community. The socialisation of all means of production would render this impossible. It is to the advantage of Society as a whole, when it has given equal educational chances to its members, that the better work should be encouraged by the better pay. The acceptance of Socialism, in short, does not involve approval of the communistic principle of equalised distribution. It still leaves room for the socially healthy rivalry of individual workers, when that rivalry does not result, as in the present competitive form of industry, in the standard of life permanently remaining for the great mass of toilers very close to the point of bare subsistence.

(2). *No government can be trusted to fitly conduct the vast task of organization, which Socialism would thrust upon it.*

This objection has very real weight, as there cannot be a doubt about the current distrust of all Government undertakings. I have already referred to the disrepute into which the State-executive has fallen, and endeavoured to point out how serious a difficulty in the way of Socialism as polity, is this want of confidence in the State. Owing to the need of education in our present democratic Electorate, to the intellectually and morally inferior class of men, who serve as politicians, and to the resulting bad measures and wide-spread corruption—owing to the monopoly of wealth, which, placing time and opportunity for political action in the hands of a class, fosters class-legislation—owing to these and other concomitant causes the State at present is discredited. It is the mission of Socialists to reintroduce the true conception of the State, to revivify respect for personified Society; to teach that the misappropriation of public property is the first of crimes, and that the mismanagement of public affairs is a disgrace, which, like the sin against the Holy Ghost, can never be condoned. We must bring home to each citizen the feeling of the Athenian sausage-maker, or the craftsman of the mediæval town. Such an educational change can only be gradual; but on the other hand Socialists neither strive for, nor expect, any but a gradual assumption by the State of the means of production and the stored labour of the Past. I may point to the efficiency of the German post-office and to the scientific perfection of the military organisation of the same country, especially the readiness of both to discover and adopt real advances, as evidence that the State can successfully undertake and direct great enterprises. Even in our own country, where faith in the State is much lower, it is difficult to believe that a large railway company would be less efficiently conducted, if its managers were State officials, liable to instant dismissal if failing in their duties, than if they were private capitalists struggling to fill their own pockets. How often is a false

economy, or an anti-social line of action, adopted with a view to immediate profit? (c) Education is another of the vast enterprises which the State has often undertaken with the result of increased efficiency. It may be quite true that in England there is a tendency in the State code to crystallise education, but even in this country I firmly believe our Board Schools are on the average more efficient than the private schools of the voluntary system. (d) What is wanted in matters educational, as in other State affairs in this country, is their complete divorce from party politics. We must educate the Electorate to such a degree that it will not return stump-orators. This goal I believe will be more and more nearly reached as the children who have been educated in the State-schools form a larger and larger part of the Electorate. There is not, I contend, any inherent impossibility in the management by the State of large undertakings; the examples I have cited suffice to prove its possibility. The only partial success of many others can, I think, be accounted for by evils peculiar to our existing form of government, and its singular anomalies. Socialists, I cannot too often repeat, are not called upon to draw up any constitution for an ideal socialised State. They are quite justified, as any other party, in proposing a programme of immediately possible legislative changes. They believe that the realisation of their ideal will be very gradual, and that, to be really efficient, it must be to a large extent tentative; the possibility of central organisation, of organisation by counties, towns, or communes are certainly matters for discussion, but the comparative efficiency of each can only be tested

(c) It is worth while noting that it is through the enterprise of private companies that the lives of Londoners are endangered by a network of over-head telegraphs; in London the State already carries its wires underground.

(d) The Girls' Public School Company has recently testified to the value of our State system by the announcement that the majority of their scholarships are annually gained by girls, whose primary education is the work of Board Schools. This Company has in fact opened a path for the girl from State-school to the University. How long will it be before boys have a like advantage?

by experience. As yet we have not even the results of a comprehensive system of local government to guide us, and any attempt to picture a fully-developed socialised Commonwealth, I hold, unnecessary and ill-advised. To demand it of Socialists is about as reasonable as it would have been to have asked Jesus, the Christ, when propounding his new morality, to have waited before he did so, and drawn up a constitution for that World-church, which was to include the Gentiles. There is little doubt that he would not have hit upon the historical development his teaching took in the Holy Catholic Church. He rightly left the matter to after ages, when councils and constitutions first became necessary. Socialism may well do likewise it can content itself by showing that the State is not inherently incapable of organising industry, and strong in its conviction of the moral truth of the new movement, it can well leave the exact form of the socialised State to be worked out in the future.

(3). *The proposed Socialisation of land, and of stored labour, will destroy confidence, and check enterprise, to an extent which may have disastrous effects on the community long before the socialised State can be got into working order.*

It is suggested that these disastrous effects will result from the existence of a strong political Socialist party, and the adoption of Socialistic legislation. There might very possibly, at first, be a partial feeling of insecurity, followed by some evil effects. At the same time any over-hasty phase of Socialistic legislation would produce sufficient industrial disturbance to re-act quickly upon the labour Electorate, and so upon the over-hasty legislator. It would tend to counteract itself. Socialists recognise the fact that socialisation, for the sake of the worker himself, can only be comparatively slow, and will have as far as possible to use and absorb all existing industrial enterprises. Revolutionary measures, which would paralyse the industry of the country, are simply impossible, because six millions of people would never submit to the starvation which a few weeks of idleness would inevitably produce; indeed the stored labour of the community would hardly last *weeks*.

We look forward then to a gradual change, which will be accompanied by an education, not only of the artizan, but of the capitalistic class. The Socialist has to teach that social approbation and public honour are worth more than pecuniary reward. The alteration of the standard of enjoyment from purely physical luxury to more intellectual forms of pleasure will do much to form a new goal for ambition, and so very materially lessen the evil effects which, it is asserted, must result from limiting the profits of private enterprise, and discouraging all monopoly of surplus-labour.

(4). *The increase of population will very soon render nugatory any benefit to be derived from the socialisation of surplus-labour.*

Hitherto I have assumed that the increased welfare of society, which Socialists hold would result from the socialisation of the means of production and of stored labour, would be a *permanent* increase. Let us examine this question of permanency a little more closely. At each epoch in any given community there is a certain amount of labour-power and a certain amount of stored labour. Socialists assert that it is for the general good of the community that this labour-power and this stored labour, after providing the necessaries of existence for the entire community, should then be utilised in raising the standard of comfort of the whole body, and not that of individual members. This application of what I term 'surplus-labour' is prevented by the traditional, or legal, monopoly of individuals, which enables them to enforce upon the labourer a different application, namely, that after a low standard of comfort is provided for the masses, the surplus-labour shall be applied to indefinitely raising the standard of life of the monopolists themselves. The surplus energies of society are expended on the luxuries of the few. This condition of affairs would be to a large extent destroyed by the State ownership of capital and the State direction of labour-power. The present monopolists would be driven to provide themselves, by labour of social value, with such pleasures as they could obtain as its equivalent.

But, although I hold that the surplus-labour, thus

socialised, would go at the present time a long way towards increasing the general comfort and pleasure of Society, I do not think this gain would be permanent, if the change were accompanied by an ever increasing population. Up to a certain limit each increase of labour-power may raise, if socialistically organised, the general standard of comfort of a definite group of persons; by which I understand a group living on a definite area, having definite internal resources, definite means of communication with the outside world, and a definite series of products to exchange with neighbouring groups. When this limit, which is essentially temporal and local, is once reached, each accession of fresh labour-power tends to lower the general standard of comfort, and ultimately to force it down to that bare level of subsistence, at which the starvation check abruptly brings it up. It is this "limit to efficient population," which it is the duty of the statesman to discover, and to maintain, as far as possible, at each period of social growth. Removal of population, prohibition of immigration, and, if necessary, limitation of the number of births, are the means whereby the limit to efficient population may be approximately conserved. Does the existing organisation of Society regard this limit? If not, would it be possible for a socialised Society to do so? These are the questions which form the population problem, and demand our consideration. The Socialist of the market-place, who ignores them, places himself outside the field of useful discussion. We *must* recognise the problem; and, when carefully investigated, it will be found to offer one of the strongest arguments in favour of Socialism with which I am acquainted. We may even say that Socialism is the logical outcome of the law of Malthus.

Let us consider how the present economic structure of society bears on the problem of population. To begin with, we find that there exists a small body of thinkers, who believe that much of the social misery of the present would be relieved, were we, instead of attempting to transform the present economic relation of capital and labour,

to devote our energies to inducing the working-classes to limit their numbers. Such limitation, they hold, would, by increasing wages, raise the standard of comfort, and so, to a great extent, effect what Socialists desire. The standard of comfort once raised would be permanently maintained. To this I reply, that, without an extremely large and scarcely probable reduction in population, the standard thus raised would be far below what would be reached by the socialisation of surplus labour, and that it would still leave untouched other anomalies of class-monopoly. Further that there is absolutely no security that even such standard, if reached, could be maintained. Indeed it would be directly prejudicial to the capitalistic classes that it should be; the export price of a commodity, depending largely on the cost of labour, would have to be lowered to the price fixed by that manufacturing country where the standard of life is lowest. The English trader would not only be unable to compete with his foreign rival, but, without protection, the home-markets would be flooded by the cheaper foreign ware. It cannot be to the interest of the monopolist class that labour should be dear, and there is not the slightest possibility that, under our present system of production for profit, not for use, any attempt on the part of the workers for limitation of population will be effectual in raising the standard of life. The moment the standard of living here is sensibly higher than abroad, we have an invasion of foreign labour accustomed to a lower standard of life, or a reduction in the home demand for labour due to the impossibility of exporting at the higher prices. Further, it is only natural that our capitalistic rulers should show no signs of hindering any foreign labour invasion, nay, they are often directly concerned in importing labour. We are periodically sickened with false sentiment as to a free country, as to free trade in labour and the like; sentiment, which in the mouths of the speakers is not the outcome of a well-thought-out social theory, but consciously or unconsciously takes its origin directly in the feelings of their pocket. Under a capitalistic form of Society, the

practical plutocracy which results, will never hinder the importation of foreign labour with a lower standard of life; it cannot for the sake of its own existence take any real steps to preserve the limit of efficient population.

It is one thing to limit population in order to *maintain*, another, to limit population in order to *raise*, an existing standard. The former is difficult enough, the latter nigh impossible, yet this latter is practically what the non-socialistic Malthusians propose. The standard of life of a great proportion of the working classes is so near the bare level subsistence, beneath which even the workhouse system does not allow it to fall, that there remains little to be maintained by restraint; the attempt to raise the standard requires, if it is to be effectual, united action on the part of so many, and is, under our present social regime, so extremely unlikely to be successful that restraint is not calculated to evoke much sympathy.

There is, indeed, little to induce the great mass of unskilled labourers to limit their numbers, more especially if that limitation imply an abstinence from one of the few pleasures which lie within their reach; a pleasure, too, which does not, like drinking, appear *immediately and directly* to reduce the weekly pittance. But the line between skilled and unskilled labour is not so rigid that the amount of the latter does not sensibly effect the wage-standard of the former; if skilled labour is for a time highly paid, a new machine will too often make it feel at once the whole weight of proletariat competition. The restraint of the skilled working class avails little, if there is no limitation of the proletariat, and if the capitalist is always seeking to lower wages, and so the standard of life, by the introduction of machinery. I think it is sufficiently clear that the limitation of population in the capitalistic organisation of Society will hardly be attempted, and if attempted, would not be successful.

Let us now investigate the possibility of maintaining the limit of efficient population in the socialistic organisation of the State. In the first place, by socialising surplus-labour, the standard of comfort would be raised

without having recourse to restraint as a means. Other than the merest physical pleasures would thus be placed within the reach of the worker; this in itself would give him a standard worth maintaining, and tend to limit population. Moral restraint by men with rational pleasures is far more likely to be effectual than even a positive check in the present state of affairs. But while I believe that the moral check will never in our present social organization become usual, except in those classes whose standard of comfort is far above the level of bare subsistence, I am inclined to doubt whether, under any form of Society, it will be adopted by the great mass of mankind. We are dealing with one of the most imperious of the animal instincts of man, and it may well be questioned, not only whether such restraint is possible, but whether, having due regard to the sanitary and social value of the instinct, it is advisable to endeavour to restrain it. With the approaching emancipation of women, and the decay of our foreign trade, the problems of sex, and of population, will come more and more into the foreground. It is becoming of really urgent importance to discuss earnestly, scientifically, and from every possible standpoint, the difficulties which present themselves; to calmly weigh all the theories which may be honestly propounded, and not to dismiss every discussion as both unpleasant and unfitting. The truly unpleasant and unfitting conduct is to be brought daily face to face with these great race-problems, and yet daily to ignore their existence, and to condemn all, however earnest, consideration of them as obscene and unprofitable. Yet this has been essentially the spirit of our modern social and political leaders. These problems which are uppermost in fact and thought have been denied to have any existence, and those who would meet the difficulties of the labouring classes have been professionally reprov'd, socially ostracised, or legally silenced. There was a time when any discussion of the population problem was repressed; time was when even mention of the moral restraint of the disciples of Malthus was taboo'd; the time is still when Neo-Malthusianism is treated as outside

the field of legitimate discussion. Far be it from me to assert that Neo-Malthusianism can solve the problem; but of this one thing I feel certain that this problem will grow more and more urgent, and that society will have to face and to solve it in one way or another. No amount of hypocrisy will suffice to hide its existence, and, if we are wise, we shall consider, while there is time, any solution which may be propounded in all its bearings, physiological and social. We cannot afford to reject any possible solution, till we are scientifically convinced that it must be anti-social in its results. The apparent horror, with which any discussion of this matter has been met, is, I fear, to no little extent due to our present economical conditions. The same ultimate feeling of pocket, which, to some extent perhaps unconsciously, demands free-trade in labour, demands also the repression of all free discussion of this great race difficulty. For the same reason that it is not to the interest of our modern plutocracy that the wages of labour should be high, for such reason we cannot hope, under the existing state of affairs, for any solution of the complex problem of population. It is because with a socialisation of surplus-labour there would cease to be a class interested in the lowness of wages that we trust to Socialism for a thorough and earnest investigation of the problems of sex. We are Socialists, because we believe that Socialism alone will have the courage to find a satisfactory solution. It alone can raise the standard of comfort to such a height that the worker will be able to procure other than the basest physical pleasures; so long as he is tied down to the bare means of subsistence, it is idle, unreasonable, and even impertinent, to suggest that he should renounce his one unpaid-for excitement. Under Socialism alone shall we be able to confine the importation of foreign labour to those few skilled artizans who have really something to teach our own workers. Under Socialism alone will it be possible to reap the advantages of any limit of population, because one class will not be interested in the over-production of another. Then only will it be possible to consider dispassionately, and without

the suspicion of class bias, all the difficulties of the problem. With the Socialisation of surplus labour it will be to the interest of the whole community to maintain its labour-power at that amount which gives the greatest surplus-value, to discover and maintain the limit of efficient population. Indeed the Socialistic seems the only form of community which can morally demand, and, if necessary, legally enforce, restraint of some kind upon its members.

Thus the possibility of meeting and solving the population problem is seen to be closely connected with the socialisation of surplus-labour. But the possibility of the continued existence of Socialism depends, as was long ago remarked by John Stuart Mill, on the solution of this very population problem. (e)

(5) *There is no means of measuring an individual's contribution to the labour stock of the community.*

We have seen that it is a fundamental principle of the new moral code that each individual shall undertake labour of *social value*, that is, not merely labour, but labour which is really useful to the community. The reward of any individual is to depend on the quality and quantity of the labour which he has contributed to the common stock. It is needful, therefore, that there should be some general equality, some practical coincidence, between this reward and the service rendered to the community. Putting aside the labour of educating and amusing, which requires special valuation, the reward of productive labour has in some manner to be made proportionate to the amount of production. By the consumption of certain quantities of stored labour and of labour-power a commodity is produced, and placed at the disposal of the community. The utility of this commodity to the community is to be in some manner equated to the sacrifice of the individual, to the labour-power which he has usefully expended. The measurement of value by useful labour is the idea which naturally suggests itself. Protest, as the orthodox economists may,

(e) *Political Economy* (People's Edition) p. 226.

it is useful labour, which, I firmly believe, can be the only moral, that is, socially advantageous, basis of exchange. Without attempting, in the brief space I have still at my disposal, any analysis of Karl Marx's theory of value, still less entering upon its defence, it yet may be profitable to enquire briefly whether even the admissions of its critics do not lead us to the same conclusions as the great economist draws from his theory; whether these admissions, indeed, are not sufficient to justify us in assuming that useful labour can be made a reasonable basis of exchange. A criticism of Marx which has met with the approval of some of our orthodox economists, and which is certainly lucid, if it be not unanswerable, is that published by Mr. P. H. Wicksteed in *To-Day* (October, 1884). I propose to refer to it in the following remarks. The really important features of Marx's theory are:

(1.) That the cost of labour-power (say for one day) to the capitalist, when measured in labour-power, is less than the amount of labour put into the commodities produced by that labour-power in the same time (one day).

(2.) That the exchange-value of a commodity is determined by the average labour required for its production.

(3.) That the difference between the cost of labour-power in labour-power, and the exchange value of the commodity produced, the surplus-value in Marx's theory, (or, what it is perhaps better to term, the out-put of surplus-labour) goes into the pocket of the capitalist.

The first point will probably be admitted, as well as the third, if for a moment we use the word surplus-labour, and do not complicate matters by identifying it at present with surplus-value. These conclusions are, indeed, forced upon us if we take the total result of the labour of the industrial classes. This labour is not only sufficient to procure, or prepare, the bare necessities of life for those classes, and such measure of comfort as they enjoy (*i.e.*, the cost of labour-power in terms of labour-power), but at the same time it provides the monopolist-class

with every imaginable luxury and convenience which their fancy demands, or their control of labour-power will extend to (*i.e.*, the surplus-labour is monopolised). It is obvious that there is a vast amount of such surplus-labour, the results of which are either stored for future use, or at once consumed as luxuries by the monopolists themselves. The monopoly, as opposed to the socialisation, of this surplus-labour is the great economic fact of our present social organisation. It does not stand or fall with Marx's theory that the essence of exchange-value is labour, but Marx's discussion of that theory has first placed the fact clearly before us in all its full hideousness. Now I contend that the all important outcome of Marx's theory is really accepted, if on other grounds, by his critic. Mr. Wicksteed admits "the fact that a man can purchase as much labour-force (*f*) as he likes at the price of bare subsistence" (*To-Day*, p. 409), and further tells us that there is "a *coincidence* in the case of ordinary manufactured articles between 'exchange-value' and 'amount of labour contained'" (p. 399). Thus we see that, if the labourer can produce more than his bare subsistence in a day of labour—a fact scarcely disputable—Mr. Wicksteed himself really allows that the results of this surplus-labour go, owing to the above *coincidence*, to the capitalist. But this is precisely Marx's "inherent law of capitalistic production."

Now our critic, by means of the laws first laid down by Stanley Jevons (those "of indifference" and "of the variation of utility") logically (*g*) deduces that the coinci-

f Rather labour-power; we cannot purchase *force*, but only the *capacity* for changing various motions, *i.e.*, power. Force is not an entity at all, but a mode of changing motion. The confusion has arisen from the double sense of the German word 'Kraft.'

g We are certainly not called upon to question this logic, if it lead; our opponents to a truth we were already on other grounds convinced of.

dence between exchange-value and amount of labour contained, by which is meant socially useful labour, does really exist for all ordinary articles of manufacture. Now these are the very articles with which the socialised State would in the first place have to deal, and this fortunate "coincidence" whether it be deduced from a jelly theory of labour, or a jelly theory of utility, is just the practical fact which we require in order to measure, with some degree of approximation, the services of each member of the community, the magnitude of his contribution to the common labour-stock. Since in all ordinary manufactured articles the value *coincides* with the amount of labour contained, we are at liberty to take for such articles labour as the standard of value. This standard will be in those cases as convenient, and as legitimate, a medium of exchange as gold. If we now turn to other articles, the supply and quality of which is uninfluenced by labour—the "natural and artificial monopolies" of which Mr. Wicksteed speaks—it is perfectly true that the labour theory of value is inapplicable. But we do not think they would introduce confusion into the exchange system of the socialised State. When we analyse these natural and artificial monopolies we find:

(1) That the exchange-value of many is fictitious, being due to the survival of a barbaric taste, which would almost certainly disappear with the spread of education, *e.g.*, precious stones, gold and silver utensils, and ornaments.

(2) That others, which, owing to special artistic merit, stand above competition from modern production, ought on any sound Socialistic theory to be removed from the field of barter, and placed in local and national museums, or, at any rate, used to adorn public buildings.

(3) That some few natural monopolies, as, for example, a limited local supply of water, or output of salt, would require to have their distribution regulated by the State; this is a not infrequent occurrence even under our present organisation.

(4) That there is nothing to hinder, under a Socialistic system, disproportionate amounts of labour being given by those who are inclined to do so for the majority of the remaining artificial monopolies. An enthusiastic china-maniac may, in a Socialistic community, devote the whole results of a year's labour to purchase an artistically valueless, but absolutely unique pot—if he is so uneducated as to take pleasure in that form of self-sacrifice. His doing so would doubtless be a source of gratification to the supporters of the orthodox utility theory of exchange; it is not obvious how it would shake the foundations of a Socialistic community, except as evidence of that want of common sense, which is a primary condition for the stability of any form of society.

It seems to me unnecessary for the Socialist to assert that the *common something* in all commodities is the useful labour consumed in their production. It is sufficient if such labour can, in all ordinary cases, and with the approximation really sufficient in practical life, be taken as a measure of their value. Socialism insists that in the relation of the individual to the community the amount and quality of his contribution to the labour-stock can fairly be taken as a measure of his reward, since this contribution has practically a definite exchange-value in terms of all ordinary manufactured articles. It is this *coincidence* between the labour, or social value, of an individual and the exchange-value of wares, which is destined to introduce the moral element into the industrial system of the future. It suggests how Society can be as safely, and as reasonably, based upon labour, upon the social energy of its members, as upon the individual ownership of wealth, the monopoly by a few of the surplus-labour of the whole community.

I have endeavoured to give in this paper a brief sketch of the arguments with which, as it seems to me, a rational Socialist may meet some of the principal objections raised to the gradual reconstruction of Society on socialistic lines. But such arguments will undoubtedly have far less weight in the minds of our

opponents than the stubborn logic of fact, than those inexorable economic changes which the most obstinately conservative temperament must at last recognise to be steadily taking place, ever in the direction of socialisation. No appeal to human or divine power, no custom or tradition, will check the forces which are remoulding the wants and ideas of human societies. They stand outside us; we can investigate, understand and follow, but we cannot control. There are some who interpret these changes as a national decadence, and accordingly paint the future in the blackest colours. They find the old religious notions toppling down like the old mediæval churches; they do not see that both alike are worn out, and they would restore where, they ought to rebuild. Finding the old conceptions of morality, social and sexual, in which they have been reared, are unworkable in the present, they cry that there is no light, when, if they were couched for the cataract of prejudice, they could scarce face the gleams of the sun. On the other hand the Socialist finds in the moral and economic changes in progress the development of mankind to a fuller enjoyment of life, the substitution for superstition of a faith in knowledge, the replacement of a worship of the unknowable by a veneration and reverence for concrete Society as embodied in the State. The Socialist teaches that the aim of industry is not supremacy in the world-markets, but the general welfare of the community, as evidenced by the raising of the general standard of physical comfort and intellectual development. Viewed from this standpoint the changes, which we see in progress, bring a feeling of almost unmixed satisfaction, and throw open a field of healthy social work, and fruitful thought, to all who would partake of that activity which is the joy of life.

So far from our age being an age of stagnation, or of decadence, it is an age of greater economic and intellectual movements than have been witnessed since the sixteenth century, and it is in our own country that two at least of these movements will more immediately bear fruit, and more powerfully influence the development of the rest

of mankind. To work out the emancipation of women will be one of the gravest tasks, replete with the most far-reaching consequences, that England has ever taken upon herself. Socialism received from France and Germany as the ideal of Utopian dreamers, we shall return to them as a social possibility, not a blind protest of suffering toilers, but a workable, moral and political, code.

