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# KARL PEARSON: SOCIALIST AND DARWINIST

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IN THE MID-'SEVENTIES of the last century, evolution was a principal subject of debate in Imperial Germany, as indeed it had been in most of the civilized nations of Europe since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. The leader of the German opposition to Darwinism was Rudolf Virchow, the formulator of the cellular theory. Virchow employed a wide variety of arguments in his attack upon the evolutionists. In one of his addresses, in September 1877, he made use of what was regarded by his friends as well as his opponents as an *argumentum ad hominem*. Virchow asked his audience, in a Germany where socialism was about to be outlawed, to 'picture to yourself the theory of descent as it already exists in the brain of a socialist'. 'Ay, gentlemen,' he continued, 'it may seem laughable to many, but it is in truth very serious, and I only hope that the theory of descent may not entail on us all the horrors which similar theories have actually brought upon neighbouring countries.' 'At all times,' Virchow concluded, 'this theory, if it is logically carried out to the end, has an uncommonly suspicious aspect.' [1]

The leading German Darwinist, Ernst Haeckel, defended the theory of evolution against Virchow's charge. He suggested that it was impossible to imagine 'this English hypothesis' in the brain of a socialist, since it was 'aristocratic, certainly not democratic, and least of all socialist' in concept.[2] Darwin himself commented on the subject in a letter, written in December 1879: 'What a foolish idea', he exclaimed, 'seems to prevail in Germany on the connection between Socialism and Evolution through Natural Selection.' [3] Some years later, Huxley pointed to the haziness of Virchow's suggestion. Huxley wrote that he had tried 'to comply' but that he had 'utterly failed to call up the dread image', adding that he supposed that this was so 'because I do not sufficiently sympathise with the Socialists'.[4]

Studying in Germany during the period when echoes of the Virchow-Haeckel debate could still be heard in academic circles was a young Englishman who was to realize in his subsequent writings and activities Virchow's nightmare of Darwinism in the brain of a socialist. Karl

Pearson—who was to make an international reputation as the author of *The Grammar of Science*—had studied at the University College School and had been Third Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos of 1879 at Cambridge and was now completing his education at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin. At Berlin, Pearson attended lectures on Darwinism by the celebrated Du Bois Reymond and was greatly impressed. He appears also to have come into contact with the ideas of the two leaders of German socialism—Marx and Lassalle—and to have been similarly persuaded of their truth. When he returned to England to become a barrister like his father before him, he was, to judge from his writings of the period, both a convinced evolutionist and a fervent socialist. More than this, he had already begun to merge his two faiths into a rather special variety of Social-Darwinism.

## I

Young Pearson, once more in England, proceeded with his study and practice of the law. But the law seemed rather narrow to a young man with wide interests and through the efforts of his friends, and with his success in the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos sustaining him, he was offered and persuaded to accept the Goldsmid Professorship of Applied Mathematics and Mechanics at University College, London, in 1884. In his new post, Pearson determined to employ his mathematics to 'prove' Darwinian theory correct. In the course of these efforts, he played a leading role in creating the subject of biometrics—statistical biology—and helped to establish, in 1901, the journal devoted to the subject, *Biometrika*. During the 'eighties, Pearson also lectured at London working-men and socialist clubs on the ideas of Marx and Lassalle.[5]

Pearson's socialism—as revealed in his early lectures—was not easily classifiable. He appears to have been an adherent of Marxist economics. In an address to London working-men during the 'eighties, he spoke of Marx as 'the great economist' [6] and defended the labour theory of value, which had already been brought under considerable attack. Pearson even accepted Marx's view of surplus value—although he preferred to call the concept 'surplus labour'—which was at the heart of the Marxist argument concerning the exploitation of labour.[7] He was full of Marxist-sounding phrases and modes of thought. For example, he asserted that he looked toward 'the failure of the old economic system, owing to the sweeping industrial and commercial changes which are in progress'; [8] and he believed that 'our legislation, our government, has been a scarcely disguised warfare of classes'.[9] Yet, if he agreed with much of Marxian economic analysis, he departed from the Marxists upon the matter of goals and programme of action.

Pearson denounced certain socialists for teachings which he regarded as 'not only very foolish, but extremely harmful'. 'So far from aiding

true Socialism' the teaching of these socialists 'stirs up class-hatred, and instead of bringing classes together, it raises a barrier of bitterness and hostility between them'.[10] This denunciation of class struggle and eulogy of class unity was at the opposite pole of Marxism. Pearson also displayed a most un-Marxist opposition to revolution. 'You may accept it as a primary law of history,' he said, '*that no great change ever occurs with a leap*, no great social reconstruction, which will permanently benefit any class of the community, is ever brought about by a revolution.'[11] What ought a socialist to do then? A 'true Socialist must be superior to class interests. He must look beyond his own class to the wants and habits of society at large.'[12] What method can he employ? He must educate the governing class toward a 'higher social morality'.[13] Pearson also rejected working-class internationalism in favour of patriotism. He was very much a national socialist.[14]

Karl Pearson's use of Marxist analysis directed toward such a non-Marxist goal as class harmony and his opposition to revolutionary change and internationalism bring to mind the views of the German school of *Katheder-Sozialisten*, the Socialists of the Chair, who, under the leadership of Gustav Schmoller, helped to construct Bismarck's social programme.[15] It is entirely possible that Pearson had come into contact with the thinking of this group while he studied in Germany. The moderate character of Pearson's 'socialist' programme was also similar to theirs. Pearson urged the nationalization of land and capital by the conversion of all freeholds into leaseholds of up to 100 years, a method he believed would lead to little real injury to the present owners.[16] Pearson may also have picked up in Germany the outlook of the group toward the state, a view which was quite alien to the dominant English liberalism of Pearson's day—and even to the thinking of contemporary English socialism.

Pearson urged 'veneration for the State', a veneration which he asserted 'has been stifled by a not unjustifiable contempt for existing government'.[17] He posited as the 'moral basis' of his new socialist society, not religion, but a 'rational motive for conduct'—'service to Society'. Whatever was social was moral; the anti-social was immoral.[18] In effect, Pearson was making the state the focus of his morality, of his religion, of his conception of 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.'[19] This was a doctrine which he regarded as of decisive importance. Pearson insisted that an 'offence against the State ought to be looked upon as a far graver matter than the offence against the individual'.[20] 'The legislation or measures of police, to be taken against the immoral and anti-social minority,' he continued, 'will form the political realization of Socialism.'[21] Most shocking to individualist-minded Englishmen was Pearson's view that 'Socialists have to inculcate that

spirit which would give offenders against the State short shrift and the nearest lamp-post'. 'Every citizen', he concluded, 'must learn to say with Louis XIV, *L'état c'est moi!*' [22]

II

Karl Pearson's socialism was the keystone of his Social-Darwinism, a very different doctrine in his hands than that of the first of the English Social-Darwinists, Herbert Spencer. Spencer, a social-evolutionist before Darwin's *Origin*, had originally based his views entirely on Lamarckian evolution.[23] After 1859, he added Darwin's 'natural selection' to his armoury of ideas—and even bestowed upon it the description which it was to bear most frequently, 'the survival of the fittest'.[24] Spencer was a Liberal—a Radical and an individualist. He employed the Darwinian theory to supplement the Malthusian argument of the classical economists, to prove that the individualistic competitive society of Victorian England had been ordained by nature and was the sole guarantor of progress.[25] This application of Darwinism to society which saw the struggle for existence as the economic competition between individuals within a society soon found a rival in another view of social evolution. Was it not as reasonable to view progress as the result of an evolutionary struggle between groups of men, between tribes or nations or races, the fittest group predominating in the ceaseless warfare which constituted the evolutionary process? Darwin himself had anticipated this view, as had Walter Bagehot, but individualistic England had preferred the Social-Darwinism of economic competition outlined by Herbert Spencer.[26] By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the non-Spencerian view was finding more and more favour as a justification of British imperialism.[27]

As early as the 'eighties, Karl Pearson was finding his way to this non-Spencerian Social-Darwinism. In later years he described his goal to have been a proof that 'Socialism, despite Häckel, despite Herbert Spencer, *is* consonant with the whole teaching of modern Science', by which he meant the science of evolution.[28] In 1887, he told an assemblage of working-men of 'the course of evolution and the struggle of group against group'[29] and linked his view of the struggle for existence with socialism: 'To give all a like possibility of usefulness,' he asserted, '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.' [30]

But this was rather tame offspring from the awesome union of socialism and Darwinism concerning which Virchow had darkly prophesied. The maturing of Pearson's thought was to prove less unworthy of Virchow's fears. In 1894, Pearson wrote an article for the *Fortnightly Review* in which he defended socialism against the attacks of certain Darwinists. These Darwinists—in particular, Spencer and Benjamin

Kidd, to whose *Social-Evolution*, published some weeks before, this article was a response—had suggested that, in trying to limit the struggle between members of a group, socialism would endanger the forward march of progress. This was nonsense, Pearson proclaimed. It was not the intra-group struggle but pure 'physical selection'—disease, climate, strain—which weeded out the unfit within a society. Under socialism, physical selection would operate even more strongly since all would be obliged to work for their livings and weaklings would no longer be protected by inheritances. The most important biological mechanism to insure progress was the 'extra-group' struggle between nations. If competition within the group were not severely limited, 'social stability' would be endangered, and, in case of war, 'we should be crushed' because 'we have proceeded on the assumption that it is better to have a few prize cattle among innumerable lean kine than a decently-bred and properly-fed herd'.[31]

In November 1900, Karl Pearson delivered a lecture in which he presented the first full-blooded exposition of his Social-Darwinism. England was then in the midst of the Boer War and Pearson was filled with patriotic feeling and enthusiasm for combat. He began his talk with a paean of praise for the struggle for existence, a struggle which meant 'suffering, intense suffering', but which was the mechanism of all progress. 'This dependence of progress on the survival of the fitter race, terribly black as it may seem to some of you,' he continued, 'gives the struggle for existence its redeeming features; it is the fiery crucible out of which comes the finer metal.' When wars cease, 'mankind will no longer progress' for 'there will be nothing to check the fertility of inferior stock; the relentless law of heredity will not be controlled and guided by natural selection'.[32]

Pearson accused the early Darwinists, like Spencer and Haeckel and Huxley, of having 'obscured' the issue when they 'painted evolution as the survival of the fittest *individual* and spoke of his struggle against his fellows'. Man was a 'gregarious animal' whose safety depended upon his 'social instinct'.[33] The truly elevating struggle was not that between individuals but 'the struggle of tribe against tribe, of race against race'. Spencer and Huxley had forgotten 'that the herd exists owing to its social instincts, and that human sympathy and racial and national feelings are strong natural forces controlling individual conduct', stronger, indeed, than economic forces emerging from the laws of supply and demand.[34] Pearson upheld 'the scientific view of a nation', a 'natural history view of mankind'. A nation, he said, was 'an organized whole', which was 'kept up to a high pitch of external efficiency by contest, chiefly by way of war with inferior races, and with equal races by the struggle for trade-routes and for the sources of raw material and of food supply'.[35]

Pearson's socialism found its full place in the compound. The nation,

in order for it to be properly organized for struggle, had to be a '*homogeneous* whole', not 'a mixture of superior and inferior races', he said writing as a good nationalist, and equally important, 'we must not have class differences and wealth differences so great within the community that we lose the sense of common interest'. 'No tribe of men can work together,' Pearson maintained, 'unless the tribal interest dominates the personal and individual interest at all points where they come into conflict.'[36] Class oppression could be disastrous in case of war since 'the oppressed' may feel that they 'will hardly get worse terms from a new master'.[37]

The struggle, furthermore, was of decisive importance, most especially for the working-classes. Those who would give up the fight, were reminded that 'the daily bread of our millions of workers depends on their having somebody to work for', that 'our strength depends . . . upon our colonies' which were only maintained 'by respect for the present power of our empire', that if 'war or competition' diminished British trade, 'it is the Lancashire operative who feels the pinch'. 'The day when we cease to hold our own among the nations,' Pearson proclaimed, 'will be the day of catastrophe for our workers at home.'[38] As early as the 'eighties, when he addressed the London working-men, Pearson's message had been the same. 'Some of you may be indifferent to the great empire of England,' he told the working-men, 'but let me assure you that, small as in some cases is the comfort of the English working-classes, it is on the average large compared with that of an inferior race. . . .'[39] In 1894, he wrote in a fortnightly journal: 'No thoughtful socialist, so far as I am aware, would object to cultivate Uganda *at the expense of its present occupiers* if Lancashire were starving. Only he would have this done directly and consciously, and not by way of missionaries and exploiting companies.'[40]

In a conclusion and summation of his position, Pearson repeated his Darwinist assertion that 'science realizes that the nation is an organized whole, in continual struggle with its competitors'. 'You cannot get a strong and effective nation,' admonished the socialist Pearson, 'if many of its stomachs are half fed and many of its brains untrained.'[41] It was the duty of 'the true statesmen' to 'treat class needs and group cries from the standpoint of the efficiency of the herd at large'. The duty of a nation's leaders was 'to lessen, if not to suspend, the internal struggle, that the nation may be strong externally'.[42] 'This tendency to social organization, always prominent in progressive communities, may be termed, in the best and widest sense of the word, *Socialism*.'[43] It would be best, Pearson came to feel, to have his socialist state under the control of a dictator, free from the 'bias of class interest'; for the great danger in a democracy was that the leaders might attempt to secure 'the intra-racial dominance of a caste'. But however desirable a dictatorship might be in the guidance of the race, the selection of a dictator

might prove too difficult and therefore democracy, although 'terribly cumbersome', might be the 'best practical solution', Pearson reluctantly concluded.[44]

Pearson's union of socialism and Darwinism was a sword of two edges. Not only was the struggle—or at any rate the fruits of successful struggle—necessary for the welfare of the working-classes, as Pearson told the working-men, but the nation's leaders, he asserted, ought to recognize that unless class differences were substantially eliminated, unless the working-classes were strong, healthy, and well-trained, Britain could not succeed in this struggle for existence. This double warning appeared to call for the revival of a people's imperialism, under the leadership of a warrior-chieftain, and grounded upon a more equal sharing of the plunder.

As heady a drink as Karl Pearson's Social-Darwinism was, thus far most of its elements differ more in degree (though this cannot be underestimated) than in essential character from the view of other Social-Darwinists on the Continent or even in England. For example, in 1894, Benjamin Kidd, a minor civil servant, had made a considerable reputation with the work on *Social Evolution*, which, we have seen, Pearson had condemned. Kidd, too, an imperialist, a nationalist and a racist, though of milder degree, was disturbed about the class-divisive tactics of 'certain' socialists and concerned about readying the nation for conflict with other nations. Kidd, too, although much opposed to socialism, had spoken of the need for social-efficiency, for the improvement of the condition of the lower classes, for the subordination of individual goals to those of the entire society. In all fairness, it should be noted that Kidd's brew was heavily watered compared with Pearson's. Furthermore, Kidd was a traditionalist, a religious Christian. Pearson had damned all forms of irrationalism, especially Christian 'mythology', and had virtually deified the state, making it the source of all morality. While Kidd had urged a return to the traditional, conservative idea of the state and had condemned the *laissez-faire* state of Spencer, it would have been impossible for him to have accepted Pearson's state where offenders were hung at the nearest lamp-post, or the principle of dictatorship. Nor, not being a 'socialist', would he have suggested the virtually complete elimination of the intra-group struggle in favour of the extra-group struggle. In these matters, Pearson's 'socialism' might have been a differentiating factor.[45] There was yet a further step to be taken by Pearson, a step which was to sharply separate him from Kidd and other Social-Darwinists.

## III

While Pearson had adapted his socialism to what might be called external Social-Darwinism, that which concerned itself with the struggle

between races and nations, was this not a comparatively simple task? Other Social-Darwinists who were not socialists, we have seen, had also proclaimed the necessity of improving the condition of the lower classes in order to make them more efficient soldiers in time of war. Pearson was to spend the greater part of his mature life in the adaptation of his socialism to Spencerian or internal Social-Darwinism. Pearson, we recall, had berated the older evolutionists for emphasizing this internal struggle at the expense of the external struggle. He had never suggested that the internal struggle was not valid from a scientific point of view, was not in its way essential to progress. The problem was how to limit intra-group competition and still insure the progress which resulted from such competition. Pearson was to adapt Spencer's competitive and highly individualistic economic struggle of the free market to the needs and methods of his socialist state.

In the accomplishment of this task, Pearson was associated with the famous Victorian biologist—and a cousin of Charles Darwin—Francis Galton. Galton had become convinced that heredity was of greater significance than environment in determining individual characteristics and that action could be taken to regulate heredity.[46] His views did not receive much attention until the late 'eighties when the German biologist, August Weismann, published a series of papers which seriously questioned the widely held Lamarckian view that characteristics acquired by an individual during his lifetime could be transmitted to his progeny and which espoused the doctrine of the immutability of germ plasm. Weismann's papers attracted widespread attention and provoked Herbert Spencer, who had based much of his sociology upon the inheritance of acquired characteristics, to earnest debate. Lamarckianism was at the root of Spencer's belief in an inevitable progress as a result of constant improvement of the species, generation by generation.[47] The adherents of Weismann and Galton insisted, on the other hand, that no man could be inherently more intelligent than his progenitors, that each generation had to be re-educated. Whereas liberals had urged the importance of environment, and hence of social reforms to improve the environment, conservatives who had opposed these reforms were delighted by the new doctrine's emphasis of the limited efficacy of environmental improvement when seen against the limitations imposed by inborn characteristics.[48]

Galton was convinced that the only way of assuring continued progress was by the science of 'eugenics'—a word he himself had coined. By the application of eugenic methods, Galton suggested, it would be possible to assure the England of the future of a population healthy and strong and intelligent, rather than sickly, weak, and incompetent. What was involved was 'the national efficiency of future generations', and to secure this end Galton urged the formation of local associations to encourage pride in worthy stock and to promote eugenic principles.[49]

Galton, in fact, proclaimed that eugenics had to be 'introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion'. Eugenics had, indeed, Galton insisted, 'strong claims to become an orthodox religious tenet of the future, for Eugenics co-operates with the workings of Nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races'.[50] Galton, like Pearson, was, in positivist fashion, proclaiming the religion of science. Once sufficient information had been obtained, 'a "Jehad", or Holy War' would be declared 'against customs and prejudices that impair the physical and moral qualities of our race',[51] Galton asserted. Then it would be possible to take action to encourage in every way possible procreation on the part of fitter stocks and discourage the procreation of the unfit. Galton wrote of the compilation of a 'golden-book' of the eugenically fit, the issuance of eugenic certificates, the financial support of the poor but eugenically favoured by the wealthy, and every kind of discouragement to child-bearing by the unfit. Galton, no socialist, confined by his practical programme largely to the gathering and publicizing of eugenic data.[52]

How was the information to be gathered? More and more, Francis Galton looked towards Karl Pearson to perform this task. During the last decade of his life, Galton worked closely with Pearson. Pearson had been in the chair when Galton delivered, in 1904, his important address on eugenics to leading men in all fields of British intellectual life under the auspices of the Sociological Society.[53] Already it was bruited about that the old man thought of Pearson as his successor. In October 1904, Galton offered the University of London £1,500 for a three-year study of 'National Eugenics', which was defined by the grant as 'the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally'.[54] At Galton's death in 1911, his will created a Galton Professorship of Eugenics at the University of London and designated Karl Pearson as the first occupant of that chair, a chair he held until 1933.

There was certainly sufficient evidence in Pearson's earlier writings of his interests in the field of eugenics, a subject with which the last part of his life was entirely occupied: these early writings yield anticipations of views about matters of eugenic concern which already went far beyond Galton, and of methods, too, which appeared more extreme than those of the founder of eugenics. In a lecture on 'The Woman's Question' in 1885, he asserted that 'those nations which have been most reproductive have, on the whole, been the ruling nations in the world's history', adding that a 'strongly developed sexual instinct may accordingly be a condition for race permanence'. On the issue of elevating the position of women: 'If child bearing women must be intellectually handicapped, then the penalty to be paid for race-predominance is the subjection of women.'[55] This last was a most unusual attitude for a socialist—this elevation of 'race-predominance'

as the ultimate criterion, which must banish women to the kitchen and nursery. In a lecture on 'Socialism and Sex' delivered in 1886, he expanded on these views, in a more conventionally socialist fashion. In Marxist manner, he suggested that under socialism, a 'different mode of ownership',[56] there would be a corresponding new kind of sex-relationship which would grant women 'economic independence'.[57] Women under socialism would have the 'duty to labour' [58] outside the home—until the coming of children—would be able to contract 'free sexual union',[59] as sex-relationships would be separated from child-bearing, with the state taking an interest in child-bearing to prevent economic dependence on the part of the mother and regulating both 'quantity and quality' of children since this had such an important bearing upon 'the happiness of society as a whole'.[60] This suggestion that the state take upon itself the obligation of encouraging, regulating and supporting this most vital kind of production constituted a far more ambitious objective than those of the non-socialist, Galton. In 1894, Pearson wrote 'that the superior and not the inferior members of the group should be the parents of the future, is far more likely to be realized in a socialistic than in an individualistic state'.[61]

After his acceptance of his role as Galton's ally in the propagation of the new eugenic religion after the turn of the century, Pearson once again addressed himself to the eugenic problem. As a result of improved conditions—as a result, for example, of medical progress—there had been a reduction of the death-rate. This was nothing short of calamitous: the 'death-rate is selective, and if we check Nature's effective but roughshod methods of race betterment, we must take her task into our own hands and see to it that the mentally and physically inferior have not a dominant fertility'.[62] Galton had emphasized the encouragement of the fit to reproduce; Pearson added certain prescriptions to discourage the reproduction of the unfit: the closing of casual wards, the barring of the 'undesirable alien', the expatriation of 'confirmed criminals', and the exclusion from the workhouses and asylums of the 'congenital pauper and the insane'.[63] 'Darwinism and medical progress', Pearson told a meeting of doctors in 1912, 'are opposed forces.'[64] Even so-called 'reforms' were frequently harmful. The factory acts, for example, by depriving parents of the economic value of the child made them less concerned about bearing and rearing of offspring.[65] Neither medical progress nor legislative reform made for progress: 'No degenerate and feeble stock will ever be converted into healthy and sound stock by the accumulated effects of education, good laws, and sanitary surroundings.' [66] 'We have placed our money on Environment,' argued Pearson, 'when Heredity wins in a canter.' [67] The influence of environment was not 'one-fifth that of heredity, and quite possibly not one-tenth of it'.[68]

More and more, race became the crucial question for Pearson. He

continued to call himself a socialist—despite his opposition to the factory acts and his support of child labour!—but the term had acquired a new meaning for him: 'Those who believe that our increasing knowledge of what tends to improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations . . . will enable us to foresee and in part control social evolution are justified in calling themselves "Socialists", whether from the standpoint of politics, morality or religion.' [69] The problems of 'true socialism—the socialism of the future' were to answer such questions as 'What are the racial forces at work?—how can we modify or direct them toward furthering human evolution?' [70] The work of the true socialist had been transformed from the improvement of environment to the improvement of race. Pearson looked forward to the time 'when conscious race culture will cope with the ills which arise when we suspend the full purifying force of natural selection'.[71] 'The higher patriotism and the pride in race must come to our aid in stemming deterioration.' [72]

Nor was there any doubt of the ultimate purpose of this 'conscious race culture': To make the nation or race better able to survive in the struggle for existence. If 'we leave the fertile, but unfit, one-sixth to reproduce one-half the next generation,' Pearson warned, 'our nation will soon cease to be a world power.' [73] There was the real danger: as a result of the lowered death-rate and the voluntary reduction of offspring among the able, the coming generations of Britons would be—unless something were done—unfit for imperial responsibilities. As early as 1886, Pearson had urged the seizure of territories where white men could live, territories which would provide room for 'a high birth-rate' which would be 'levied on the physically and mentally fitter classes of the community', 'the efficient classes', as a means of increasing for many generations 'the vigour and power of the empire'.[74] In his *Grammar of Science* he had proclaimed it 'a false view of human solidarity, a weak humanitarianism' which regretted that 'a capable and stalwart race of white men should replace a dark-skinned tribe'.[75] As the international tensions within Europe increased, Pearson's racism was applied to the intra-European situation: 'if the German people dominate to-day the French; . . . if Spain and Holland disappear from the fore-rank of nations, can we throw light even for an instant on these momentous facts of history by such studies of mankind as are summed up in Philosophy, Anthropology, or Political Economy?' Such studies revealed nothing concerning the causes of victory or defeat in the struggle of nations for existence: the answer for 'Socialist' and Darwinist Pearson had become Race.[76]

IV

Was this the vision which had passed before Virchow's mind when he suggested the nameless horrors which would come from the theory of evolution in the brain of a socialist? Horrible it must be to persons of the present generation who have had direct experience with a species of national socialism which also regarded democracy as 'cumbersome', and was as concerned as Pearson with conscious race culture, with encouragement to child-bearing, with the elevation of the lower classes in the common interest of the tribe, with the necessity for imperialism, with the beneficial character of war. Pearson's contemporaries, that is, the leading statesmen and intellectuals of *ante-bellum* Great Britain, the men to whom Pearson was primarily addressing himself, on the whole ignored the warnings of the eugenicists with the exception, curiously enough, of certain of Pearson's fellow socialists, especially the leaders of British 'national' socialism, the Fabians—perhaps one more confirmation of Virchow's fears.

H. G. Wells, for example, then a Fabian socialist, had been present at Galton's exposition of the eugenic religion before the Sociological Society. Wells was sufficiently impressed with what he heard to advocate 'the sterilization of failures'.[77] Bernard Shaw agreed fully with Galton and Pearson that 'nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization from the fate that has overtaken all previous civilizations'.[78] Sidney Webb, in a Fabian tract, gave fulsome approval to Pearson. Webb shared the eugenicist's concern about the decline in the birth-rate, especially among the 'abler' classes, which had been accompanied by a corresponding increase among the 'thriftless and irresponsible'. He wrote, in 1907: 'Twenty-five per cent of our parents, as Professor Karl Pearson keeps warning us, is producing 50 per cent of the next generation. This can hardly result in anything but national deterioration; or, as an alternative, in this country gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews.' Webb further agreed with Pearson's Darwinist contention that the lower death-rate had intensified the effect of this 'adverse selection'.[79] Webb's solution, like Pearson's, was the 'endowment of motherhood': 'once the production of healthy, moral and intelligent citizens is revered as a social service and made the subject of deliberate praise and encouragement on the part of the government, it will, we may be sure, attract the best and most patriotic of the citizens'. This was the only way to avoid 'degeneration of type', that is 'race deterioration, if not race suicide'.[80] Less virile, perhaps, than Pearson's statements, but certainly supporting his views.

English liberalism, on the other hand, had no stomach for Pearson's doctrines. L. T. Hobhouse, a prominent exponent of the dominant 'new' Liberalism, a professor of sociology at the University of London, asserted that 'progress is not racial, but social', and was extremely

critical of eugenic methods and purposes.[81] English conservatism, traditionalism, felt similarly. One such tradionalist appears to have grasped the full implications of Pearson's 'eugenic religion', the culmination of his socialism and Darwinism. That was Benjamin Kidd, the first of the English sociologists to alter the direction of Social-Darwinism from its Spencerian path, who lived to regret his association with this 'science of power'. In a volume written after the beginning of the European war of 1914 (a war which saw the conversion of even Ernst Haeckel to a glorifier of war and the state),[82] and published posthumously after his death in 1916, Kidd denounced all Social-Darwinism which, he wrote, appealed to 'the half-informed pagan mind of our civilization'.[83] In particular, he denounced Karl Pearson, 'one of the ablest of the group of contemporary evolutionists' who was essentially a 'pagan' and spoke with 'the voice of Nietzsche's superman'. He condemned Pearson's lack of interest in the traditional liberties of Englishmen, making references to his 'nearest lamp-post' statement, and Pearson's lack of sympathy with Christian feeling.[84] In a view of brilliant anticipation of things to come, Kidd set his curse upon 'those who have imagined that the greatest revolution in the history of humanity' lay implicit in Pearson's eugenic religion 'could it only be applied to the world by the methods of the German General Staff!'[85]

## NOTES

[1] Quoted in Ernst Haeckel, *Freedom in Science and Teaching* (London, 1892), pp. 89–90; see also G. C. Stabling, *Sozialismus und Darwinismus* (New York, 1879), p. 3 and *passim*.

[2] Haeckel, op. cit., p. 92.

[3] Quoted in Francis Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York, 1887), II, p. 413.

[4] T. H. Huxley in Preface to Haeckel, op. cit., p. xix.

[5] Details of Pearson's life have been obtained through several sources: E. S. Pearson, *Karl Pearson, An Appreciation of Some Aspects of His Life and Work* (Cambridge, 1938); G. Udney Yule and L. N. G. Filon, 'Karl Pearson, 1857–1936', in *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* (London, 1936), II, No. 5, pp. 73–110; *D.N.B., 1931–1940*, pp. 681–4.

[6] Karl Pearson, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism' (1887), in *The Ethic of Free Thought* (London, 1901), p. 325.

[7] Ibid., pp. 325–8, 318.

[8] Ibid., p. 310.

[9] Ibid., p. 306.

[10] Karl Pearson, 'Socialism in Theory and Practice' (1884), in op. cit., p. 345.

[11] Ibid., p. 347.

[12] Ibid., p. 350.

[13] Ibid., p. 346; see also Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science* (London, 1900), p. 368.

[14] For Pearson on patriotism, see Karl Pearson, *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (London, 1905), p. 53. Lecture delivered November 1900.

[15] For the *Katheder-Sozialisten*, see J. A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York, 1954), pp. 800–24.

[16] Pearson, 'Socialism in Theory and Practice', pp. 351–2.

[17] Pearson, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism', p. 306.

[18] Ibid., pp. 304–5.

[19] Ibid., p. 308.

[20] Ibid., p. 307.

[21] Ibid., p. 311.

[22] Ibid., pp. 307–8.

[23] See Herbert Spencer, *The Man Versus the State* (London, 1892), pp. 67–8.

[24] See excerpt from letter of A. R. Wallace to Charles Darwin, July 2, 1866, and Darwin's reply, in Francis Darwin, op. cit., II, pp. 229–31.

[25] Spencer, op. cit., pp. 65–72; F. W. Headley, a prominent zoologist,

maintained the view that scientific Darwinism made socialism impossible in his *Darwinism and Modern Socialism* (London, 1909); (see especially pp. 300, 308–9, for references to Pearson's socialism).

[26] See David G. Ritchie, *Darwinism and Politics* (New York, 1889), pp. 7–8, 45, *passim*; Robert Mackintosh, *From Comte to Benjamin Kidd; The Appeal to Biology or Evolution for Human Guidance* (New York, 1899), *passim*.

[27] See Friedrich Brie, *Der Einfluss der Lehren Darwins auf den britischen Imperialismus* (Freiburg in Baden, 1927); Pearson is discussed on pp. 14–15; Victor Bérard, *British Imperialism and Commercial Supremacy* (London, 1906), p. 279.

[28] Pearson, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism', p. 305.

[29] Ibid., p. 303; also see Pearson, *Grammar of Science*, p. 364.

[30] Pearson, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism', p. 305.

[31] Karl Pearson, 'Socialism and Natural Selection', in *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in Evolution* (London, 1897), I, p. 113; see also pp. 107–30, *passim*.

[32] Karl Pearson, *National Life*, pp. 26–7.

[33] Ibid., p. 49.

[34] Ibid., p. 55.

[35] Ibid., p. 46; see also Karl Pearson, *The Function of Science in the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1919), pp. 2–8, 14. Originally published in 1902.

[36] Pearson, *National Life*, pp. 50–1.

[37] Ibid., pp. 49–50.

[38] Ibid., pp. 47–8.

[39] Pearson, 'Socialism in Theory and Practice', pp. 337–8.

[40] Pearson, 'Socialism and Natural Selection', p. 111.

[41] Pearson, *National Life*, p. 54.

[42] Ibid., p. 56.

[43] Pearson, *Grammar of Science*, p. 365.

[44] Pearson, *Function of Science*, pp. 14–15.

[45] See Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (London, 1894), pp. 18, 45–6, 67, 69–70, 164–5, 233, 327, and *passim*; also Kidd, *Individualism and After* (Oxford, 1908), pp. 20, 24–5, 29, and *passim*; and *The Control of the Tropics* (New York, 1898), pp. 17, 58, 59–60, and *passim*. Pearson levelled an attack on Kidd's belief that religion was a necessary basis for ethics in Karl Pearson, *Reaction! A Criticism of Mr. Balfour's Attack on Rationalism* (London, 1895), p. 6.

[46] His first book on eugenics was published in 1883. Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London, 1883).

[47] See August Weismann, *Essays on Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems* (Oxford, 1889), Vol. I, pp. 165–248, and *passim*; Herbert Spencer, *A Rejoinder to Professor Weismann* (New York, 1894), pp. 27, 29, and *passim*.

[48] See the work of an early adherent of these views, John Berry Haycraft, *Darwinism and Race Progress* (London, 1895), pp. 19–43, 54–7, 170, and *passim*.

[49] Sir Francis Galton, *Essays in Eugenics* (London, 1909), pp. 108–9.

[50] Ibid., p. 42; see also pp. 68–70.

[51] Ibid., p. 99.

[52] See C. P. Blacker, *Eugenics, Galton and After* (London, 1952), pp. 103–19. Galton, a product of mid-Victorian liberalism, appears to have had little contact with socialism although he was not antipathetic to the doctrine. See ibid., pp. 94–6, 138–9, 295.

[53] See the Sociological Society, *Sociological Papers* (London, 1905), Vol. I (1904), pp. 45–50.

[54] Quoted in Yule and Filon, op. cit., p. 77.

[55] Pearson, 'The Woman's Question' (1885), in *Ethic*, pp. 373–4.

[56] Pearson, 'Socialism and Sex' (1886), in *Ethic*, p. 415.

[57] Ibid., p. 418.

[58] Ibid., p. 421.

[59] Ibid., p. 427.

[60] Ibid., p. 424; Pearson also wrote on this subject in his 'Women and Labour' (1894) in *Chances of Death*, I, p. 251.

[61] Pearson, 'Socialism and Natural Selection', p. 138.

[62] Karl Pearson, *Darwinism, Medical Progress and Eugenics* (London, 1912), p. 29.

[63] Pearson, *National Life*, pp. 104–5.

[64] Pearson, *Medical Progress*, p. 27.

[65] Karl Pearson, *The Problem of Practical Eugenics* (London, 1912), pp. 24, 36.

[66] Pearson, *Grammar of Science*, pp. 26–7.

[67] Pearson, *Practical Eugenics*, p. 36.

[68] Karl Pearson, *Nature and Nurture: The Problem of the Future* (London, 1910), p. 27; see also Karl Pearson, *The Groundwork of Eugenics* (London, 1909), and Karl Pearson, *The Academic Aspect of the Science of National Eugenics* (London, 1911).

[69] Karl Pearson, *Social Problems: Their*

*Treatment, Past, Present and Future* (London, 1912), p. 4.

[70] Ibid., p. 5.

[71] Karl Pearson, *The Scope and Importance to the State of the Science of National Eugenics* (London, 1911), p. 12.

[72] Ibid., p. 25.

[73] Pearson, *National Life*, p. 106.

[74] Pearson, *Ethic*, p. 428 fn.

[75] Pearson, *Grammar of Science*, p. 369.

[76] Pearson, *Scope and Importance*, p. 6.

[77] *Sociological Papers*, pp. 58–60.

[78] Ibid., p. 74; Pearson suggested that Shaw 'went further than Galton certainly approved', and warned Shaw to be a 'fabian' in his eugenics, cautioning that 'he who would practically reform mankind must not begin by alarming it'. See Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters, and Labours of Francis Galton* (Cambridge, 1930), Vol. IIIa, pp. 260–1. Shaw was at one time a lecturer of the Eugenics Education Society, ibid., p. 427.

[79] Sidney Webb, *The Decline in the Birth Rate* (London, 1907), Fabian Tract No. 131, pp. 16–17.

[80] Ibid., p. 19; another Fabian expression of agreement with Pearson's endowment of mothers was H. D. Harben, *The Endowment of Motherhood* (London, 1910), Fabian Tract No. 149.

[81] Leonard T. Hobhouse, *Social Evolution and Political Theory* (New York, 1911), pp. 39, 40–79.

[82] Ernst Haeckel, *Eternity; World-War Thoughts on Life and Death, Religion, and the Theory of Evolution* (New York, 1916), pp. 129, 141, 152, 156–65.

[83] Benjamin Kidd, *The Science of Power* (London, 1918), pp. 9–10.

[84] Ibid., pp. 79–82.

[85] Ibid., p. 74.