

CHAPTER VII

THE ETHICAL OUTCOME OF SOCIALISM

HUMAN beings are modifiable physically and mentally. Hereditarily derived qualities, by small changes, are brought into harmony with external conditions. Every theory of physical and mental training; every proposal to encourage virtue and to discourage vice; every attempt to develop moral sentiments and æsthetic perceptions, is based on the recognition of the fact, that the use or disuse of faculties is followed by an adaptive change in them, resulting in increase or loss of power.

Moreover, such modifications are inheritable. By the accumulation of small changes from generation to generation, constitutions are adapted to outward conditions. A climate, fatal to other races, is innocuous to the adapted race. Races have become immune to diseases previously fatal to them, and still fatal to other races. Powers of smell and sight have diminished among civilised races, while the strength of reason and the breadth of emotions have increased. Similarly, races sprung from the same stock have acquired different aptitudes and tendencies under the influence of different historical and geographical surroundings. This process of differentiation is going on at the present day in a manner easily recognisable. The people of the United States and of the Australian colonies, even those of purely British stock, are developing national characters and physical types, differing from those of each other and from those of the parent stock, under the influence of the new conditions in which they are placed. This process of adaptation is proceeding always and every-

where. It follows, therefore, that like adaptive modifications of character must follow every change in the social environment.

It is true that the ideas and sentiments of the individual members of a society tend to mould the character of that society into harmony with themselves. It is, however, no less true that the control exercised by any society over its members tends to mould their ideas and sentiments into congruity with its character. Mutual modifications thus becomes cause of transformation in both. Changes in the nature of the individuals composing a social organism sooner or later find expression in corresponding changes in the structure of the organism ; and changes in the structure of the social organism bring about corresponding changes in the nature of the individuals composing the organism. These changes find expression in the average feelings and opinions of individuals. Qualities which are regarded as virtues in one state of society come to be regarded as vices in another, and *vice versa*.

Among savages, living almost exclusively on the produce of the chase, where the consumption of one must necessarily lessen the opportunity of all others to maintain themselves, where, as a consequence, unserviceable members of the horde are almost as great an evil as the encroachment of another horde on the tribal hunting-grounds, cruelty and treachery are regarded with supreme approval. The impossibility of carrying on military operations on a grand scale without strict discipline and obedience causes another set of sentiments to be valued amongst great military nations. Unswerving loyalty and unquestioning obedience are held to be supreme virtues, and disloyalty and disobedience are regarded as the worst of crimes.

Among industrial nations, trained in the *régime* of contract, where service is exchanged for service, still another set of sentiments is valued. Resistance to unauthorised exercise of power, love of freedom and independence, justice and honesty, are regarded as cardinal virtues ; while servile submission to the will of superiors and dishonesty are regarded with contempt, and cruelty with horror.

Innumerable and incongruous minglings of these several sets of sentiments correspond with the multitudinous stages in the transition from one to another of these several social states. They may be observed even among civilised nations. In Russia the preponderance of militarism causes loyalty and unquestioning obedience to authority to be regarded as the supreme virtues, and successful lying to be admired. Nevertheless, the small amount of industrialism which prevails has to some extent created respect for honesty, love of freedom, and justice. In Germany, where industrialism is more highly developed, love of freedom, independence, and honesty are regarded as virtues of similar rank to loyalty and obedience. In Great Britain, and in her self-governing colonies, as well as in the United States, the preponderance of industrialism causes independence, honesty, love of freedom and of justice to be regarded as virtues of the first rank, without as yet entirely removing the respect thought to be due to loyalty and obedience.

Socialism, profoundly modifying the structure of society, must cause a like profound modification of ethical conceptions. The natures resulting from a life carried on under compulsory co-operation and equality of reward must differ widely from those resulting from a life carried on under voluntary co-operation and the conformity of reward to service rendered. While it is not possible to depict in detail the resulting ethical changes, the experience of the past, nevertheless, enables a general forecast to be made.

In a community in which all the affairs of life are regulated by governmental agencies, where men and women, from their earliest childhood, are accustomed to act in obedience to such agencies, they must come to forget that affairs can be otherwise regulated. The members of the regulated classes are not allowed, and from early childhood have not been allowed, to do anything except what some superior prescribes. These superiors themselves are bound by strict regulations which cannot be suspended except by some official of a higher grade, and these, again, are dependent for unusual acts upon the

permission of still higher authorities. Men whose every action has been and is thus controlled and regulated by more or less distant and generally unknown authority, lose the habit of acting upon their own impulses, and the consciousness that independent action is possible. Comparison of the numerous philanthropic, artistic, scientific, educational, and other objects achieved by the voluntary co-operation of private persons in Great Britain and the United States, with the paucity of such instances of individual initiative in Russia, and even in Germany and France, exhibits the tendency towards dependence upon authority which the exercise of authority engenders.

Socialism, with its necessarily minute regulation of every industrial action, and extensive regimentation of the regulative agency, must develop this tendency to an almost inconceivable extent. Personal initiative and enterprise having become impossible, the consciousness of their possibility and the habit of independent action must be superseded by passive reliance upon authority and dumb obedience to its orders.

The recognition of equal rights, and the sense of justice and independence, result from the relation of contract. Under this relation every benefit is consciously purchased by effort, by rendering some benefit in return. Every individual rendering a service is entitled to obtain from others such service in return as the value of the former warrants. The daily and hourly recurrence of such exchanges under agreement, and the consequent balancing of claims, involves the maintenance of self-rights and the sympathetic recognition of other rights. Hence arises habitual recognition of equality of rights, *i.e.* the sense of justice, of independence and love of freedom, leading to resistance to the exercise of unauthorised power and to acts of injustice.

Socialism, substituting status for contract, must also substitute related sentiments for those which originate in the relation of universal contract. The cessation of contracts must terminate the constant recognition of the equal rights of the contracting parties upon which all contracts are based. The constant fostering of the assertion

of self-rights, and of the recognition of others' rights, therefore, is lost, and must ultimately lead to the loss of the correlated sentiments, the sense of justice prompting resistance to infringement of rights. Aggression thus made easy must still further obscure the sense of justice, and must weaken still further resistance to aggression, until slavish submission to every act of the governing authorities becomes the universal sentiment. Resistance to governmental acts of any kind then becomes disloyalty, and slavish obedience the cardinal virtue.

This tendency is strengthened by the substitution of compulsory co-operation for voluntary co-operation; of a universal "you shall" for "I will do as much for you as you will do for me." No longer is it impersonal necessity which compels men to work, but personal authority. Authority determines the hours, nature, and place of occupation of every man and woman, and none, among the regulated classes, can know the reasons which dictate the orders which they must obey. These orders may result from necessity or caprice, from benevolence or malevolence, but they must be obeyed all the same. Slavery, therefore, takes the place of the existing insufficient freedom, and from it must result the sentiments which have accompanied slavery everywhere. Personal initiative is lost; the sense of freedom, the recognition of personal rights, must be lost; while blind obedience to orders is the one sentiment constantly fostered among the regulated masses.

This tendency is still further added to by the loss of all perception of impersonal causation in social affairs. When all such affairs are regulated by authority, the idea of self-regulation in social processes must disappear. Belief in personal causation must supplant the belief in impersonal evolution. Hence must result a still further belief in, and reliance upon, the omnipotence of the State, and a total loss of the perception that social ameliorations are brought about otherwise than through the compulsory action of governmental agencies.

With the loss of the perception of personal rights and of the sense of independence, loss of honesty and truthful-

ness must go hand in hand. To "speak the truth and fear no man" are correlated sentiments. Truthfulness is the direct outcome of self-respect, as self-respect is the outcome of the maintenance of personal rights. Where, as under Socialism, these rights are denied and lost sight of; where the individual from earliest infancy is placed at the command of a power which controls and regulates all his actions; where compulsory labour takes the place of voluntary labour, and fear of punishment is the only incentive to exertion,—honesty and truthfulness must disappear. Deceit and lying are the only weapons of defence under Socialism, as under every other form of slavery; and as, for this reason, they have become the universal trait of subject populations, so must they become the trait of the regulated masses under Socialism.

As shown in the preceding chapter, similarly related sentiments must arise from the destruction of family life. The sense of chastity must be lost; so must be lost the altruistic sentiments which, arising from parental solicitude, bind man to man and generation to generation. Brutal selfishness, wallowing in animalism, must submerge alike the brightest flowers and the unfolding buds of human evolution.

The members of the socialised State, becoming mentally and morally adapted to this State, become unadapted for any other. Instead of honesty, truthfulness, chastity, unselfishness, a high sense of justice and of independence, being regarded as the highest attributes, implicit obedience, faith in and submission to authority, must come to be regarded as supreme virtues; and injustice, unchastity, selfishness, untruthfulness, and dishonesty will provoke no censure and no repulsion. Instead of gradually rising to a higher moral state, mankind would fall back to the low level of ethical perceptions from which it has been rescued by the painful experience, the suffering and martyrdom, of untold ages.