

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_150125

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 304/C68E

Accession No. 33286

Author Cole, G. D. H.

Title Essays in social theory

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

ESSAYS IN SOCIAL THEORY

ESSAYS IN SOCIAL THEORY

BY

G. D. H. COLE

LONDON
MACMILLAN & CO. LTD
1950

PREFACE

THESE essays have been written at various dates over the past nine years — most of them during the past two or three years. About half of them have been printed before, or are based on what has been printed before, but have been revised or re-written. Several were prepared for delivery as public lectures : two are based on broadcast talks. The record of previous publication will be found on page 252 : I have to thank the editors and publishers there mentioned for their permission to make use of the material in this book.

Each essay stands by itself ; and there is no pretence of making a connected book out of them. They have, however, a certain unity of outlook, which will, I hope, be seen by those who read them in the light of the opening essay — my Inaugural Lecture at Oxford — and of the *Credo* at the end of the volume — taken almost word for word, with Mr. Victor Gollancz's permission, from my *Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post-war World*, because I do not know how to express better the articles of my social faith, and feel some account of them to be in place in a book which rests upon them for all its essential ideas.

G. D. H. COLE

OXFORD
March 1950

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I. SCOPE AND METHOD IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY	i
II. SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	17
III. THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES	31
IV. THE AIMS OF EDUCATION	47
V. AN ESSAY ON SOCIAL MORALITY	71
VI. DEMOCRACY FACE TO FACE WITH HUGENESS	90
VII. THE ESSENTIALS OF DEMOCRACY	97
VIII. ROUSSEAU'S POLITICAL THEORY	113
IX. THE RIGHTS OF MAN	132
X. WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL	151
XI. AUGUSTE COMTE	157
XII. THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO OF 1848	170
XIII. IDEALS AND BELIEFS OF THE VICTORIANS	189
XIV. THE CLAIMS OF NATIONALITY	203
XV. REFORM IN THE CIVIL SERVICE	224
XVI. WHAT I TAKE FOR GRANTED	245
NOTE	252

I

*Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory*¹

SOCIAL and Political Theory is a subject (or should I say are two subjects?) upon which centre great, and sometimes acrimonious, disputes. The very word 'theory' is an attempt to steer a middle course, and is apt to displease the votaries both of 'Social and Political Philosophy' and of 'Social and Political Science'. If I were made to choose between calling my subject 'Philosophy' and calling it 'Science' I should unhesitatingly choose 'Philosophy'; but I am very much happier in being allowed to call it simply 'Theory'. It is my business as Professor to contemplate the world of social and political affairs and the concepts which belong to that world. I am left free to choose my own way of contemplation — my own method — and I have no predecessors in my office, which is a new one, to tie me down or compel me to any act of defiant reinterpretation of my field of study or of the right and proper way of studying in that field. For that very reason, I am under something of an obligation to explain, if I can, what I am trying to do. Such is the purpose of this lecture — not dogmatism about what anyone else ought to do or to attempt, but explanation, as clear and simple as I can make it, of my own notions of how I can best try to make myself useful.

First, then, I am concerned not only with Political but also with Social Theory. What is this word 'Social' intended to mean, and what do I mean it to mean, in relation to my own work? It could be taken to mean something *distinct* from 'Political', in the sense of the one excluding

¹ Inaugural Lecture delivered at Oxford on 9 November 1945 and published by the Clarendon Press.

Essays in Social Theory

the other ; or something *wider* than ' Political ', in the sense of including it and much besides ; or something *narrower*, in the sense in which social politics are sometimes spoken of as a branch of politics. Which of these meanings am I to take as my starting-point ?

I shall take the widest, according to which ' Social ' is the adjective of ' society ', and ' society ' signifies the entire complex of human relations wherever they transcend the purely personal and private sphere, so as to become elements in the life of communities and of that greater community in the making, which is mankind. This does not mean that I shall be able to leave out the sphere of personal and private relations, but that I shall concern myself with it directly only in its institutional aspects, in which it becomes part of the life of ' society ' as well as of the lives of the individuals of whom, in their public and private relations, ' society ' is made up. Thus I am not concerned with a mother's love for her child except to the extent to which this love is part of the family, an institution with which I am necessarily very much concerned. The extent to which private and personal relations are incorporated into institutions obviously differs from society to society, and from time to time ; and there are accordingly no fixed boundaries between the relations which come within and those which remain outside the field of social studies. But the degree of ' institutionalization ' — an evil word, but I know not how to avoid it — furnishes a rough-and-ready test.

My subject, then, as ' Social Theory ', covers the whole field of institutions — or so I interpret it. But that is not saying much, unless I can make clear what I mean by ' institutions '. Here again the frontiers are undefined, but the general meaning, I hope, is not. I mean by ' institutions ' anything that forms part of the effective framework of a ' society ', and is recognized as doing so, not necessarily with approval, but in fact. Evidently, as ' societies ' change, growing, developing, or decaying, their institutions change too. Some things that were institutions cease to be so : new institutions arise and force their way to recognition, often

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

in face of keen resistances. At any time, if change is coming about, some things are becoming institutions and others ceasing to be institutions. There is, however, a difference between the two processes. A thing that is becoming an institution of a society usually begins by developing as an institution of some element in that society, rather than of the society as a whole ; whereas a thing that is ceasing to be an institution of the whole society may retain its institutional character in relation to some elements of that society, but may also live on for a long while as an atrophied institution of the whole society, retaining its status because of its history, but losing all its potency in the society's daily life. I shall confine my examples to quite modern times, though they could be drawn from any age. In the nineteenth century in Western Europe Trade Unionism and Co-operation were both becoming institutions of whole societies ; but they did this by becoming first institutions of the working classes and only thereafter forcing their way towards recognition by the whole societies in which they grew up. On the other hand, in a number of societies the institution of hereditary nobility shrank from being a recognized institution of the entire society into being one recognized only within certain limited social groups. This applies most of all in France ; but in a less extreme degree it applies in a good many other countries.

Institutions are of more than one type. Sometimes the institution takes the form of an association with a definite membership and constitutional structure. In this country Parliament, the Church of England and the various Dissenting Churches, the Trade Union and Co-operative Movements, the main political parties, the universities and the leading professional institutes are all institutions of this associative type. But there are other institutions which, though they are of course related to persons, are in essence impersonal — monogamous marriage, freedom of inheritance, freedom of association, freedom of the press, monarchy, Bank Holidays, the rule of the road, the pound sterling, to mention only a few. Usually it takes time for a thing to

Essays in Social Theory

become an institution, of either type. New associations, new ways of acting, become institutions at once only under very exceptional circumstances — for example, on the morrow of a really catastrophic revolution. They become so because a people cannot do without institutions, and if a large proportion of its institutions is swept away, the process of creating new ones has to be speeded up. In the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Soviets became an institution practically at once, though we must not forget that the way had been prepared for them by their appearance in the abortive Revolution of 1905. The *Räte* which appeared in Germany in 1918 did not become an institution : there was no such holocaust of old institutions in Germany as to make the necessary vacuum.

I have said that institutions are of two types. Perhaps I should have said rather that they are all of one kind, but can incorporate themselves in two different ways. Parliament is not only an institution : it is also part of the machinery of government, based on the principle of association. Marriage is not only an institution, but also a legally sanctioned form of relationship between persons. Certain things are institutions, in the sense of possessing an institutional quality ; but that does not prevent them from being what they are in other respects. Indeed, the institutional quality is adjectival rather than substantive. It is a quality attached to certain things which stand significantly for certain elements in the organized habits and values of the society in which they are found.

I take it, then, that, as a ' Social Theorist ', I have to study ' institutions '. But so, evidently, does the Social Anthropologist, whose principal field of study they are. He, like me, is concerned to study institutions in relation to the pattern of community living among peoples, especially primitive peoples, in all parts of the world, and to compare the results of his local studies and derive from them any general conclusions that may emerge — or none, if none do emerge. How, then, am I to mark out my field from his ? In practice, quite easily ; for he is pre-eminently a field

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

research worker and a sort of scientist, which I am not, and he is concerned primarily with studying how men behave, whereas I am concerned much more with their thoughts in relation to their behaviour. Or, to put the matter another way, he is a collector and analyser of social data, chiefly though not exclusively those of the more primitive societies, and his aim is to arrive at scientific judgements about social behaviour without any attempt to consider the value of the values which form part of the data with which he deals; whereas I use his data, and the conclusions, if any, which he draws from them, primarily for the purpose of evaluating the values of the different societies in accordance with conceptions of value which I myself entertain. For the Social Anthropologist, such concepts as justice, liberty, order, aristocracy, democracy, representation, public spirit, toleration, are merely for use as convenient categories for classification, where they are for use at all. He is not concerned to think of any of these things as good or bad, or as having good and bad aspects. 'Good' and 'bad' are words that do not appear in the Social Anthropologist's professional vocabulary, unless they creep in by inadvertence. Coherence, contradiction, unity, confusion — these are concepts which he can apply. He can seek to descry 'patterns of culture' and can find symmetry here and discordance there. But whether the 'patterns' he finds are good or bad it is not for him, he will tell you, to say. For as a scientist he cannot pass judgements of value involving the concepts of 'good' and 'bad'. 'Murder' is, or should be, as neutral a word for him as 'marriage', when he is acting in his professional capacity as a scientist.

Of course, the Social Anthropologist, being a man as well as a scientist, often finds it hard to live up to this austerity of judgement. He has values, just as much as anybody else; and when he meets with some peculiarly revolting savage custom, he condemns it, just as much as anybody else whose values belong to the same moral order. But this is not the point. *Qua* Social Anthropologist, he does not make such judgements.

Essays in Social Theory

Should I make them, in my professional capacity as a Social Theorist? Yes, I should. I have, as I see my task, a dual role to fulfil. First, as an historian and recorder of Social Theories, past and present, I have to disentangle in them the foundation of values on which they rest. This involves me in trying to put myself, again and again, into other men's minds (and into the mental climates of other peoples and of other ages) in order to discover the principles of coherent valuation which underlie their social judgements and aspirations and to present as clear pictures as I can of the structure of their social thought in its relation to their social practice. I have to explain what they thought and, as far as possible, how they came to think such thoughts, to embody them in such institutions, or to derive them from such environments as I find in being among them. I have to attempt these tasks, not statically, but so as to show thoughts, institutions, and environments all in motion and to bring out the causal and mutually determinative elements in their development. In this capacity, as historian and as recorder, I am not concerned to judge other people's values by my own, but, like the Social Anthropologist, to enter into other people's mental skins, and to analyse and compare what I find. If this were all I had to do, I should be different from the Social Anthropologist only in studying primarily the social thought of other times and peoples and using the study of institutions only as a means of elucidating their thought — and of course also in focusing my attention mainly on developed rather than on primitive societies, because only in developed societies is the content of social thought written down, systematized, and consciously evaluated. I too should follow, if that were my only task, a quasi-scientific method, and though I should be much concerned with other men's values, I should as far as possible avoid proclaiming valuations of my own.

That, however, is not my only, or even my primary, task as a Social Theorist. When I study past Social Theories, or for that matter the contemporary Social Theories of different societies or of schools of thought to which I do not belong, I

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

do so, not primarily as historian or recorder or for the purpose of analysis and comparison — important as all these are — but for the practical purpose of suggesting to anyone I can influence, and above all to the society to which I belong, what is the right pattern of social thought to guide social action in the circumstances of here and now. This is what all the great Social Theorists of the past have attempted to do ; and this is what I am attempting to do. It is not my only task ; but it is incomparably my most important, and it directs my approach to all the others.

This means that I have to make, throughout, judgements of value. I have to proclaim certain ends as good, and to denounce others as evil. I have to make for myself a certain picture of man as a social animal, not only as he is but also as he is capable of becoming ; and this capacity of becoming has to be conceived, not as undifferentiated capacity for good and evil, but as capacity for good. Of course, my picture has to be made *for* man as he is, and in the circumstances in which he is placed : not for a different kind of person in a different world of nature. I have to deal with possibilities, both immediate and ultimate, and betwixt and between ; but among possibilities I am concerned to designate some as desirable and others as undesirable, in accordance with my conceptions of what human aims and qualities are good, and what bad.

What are these conceptions of good and bad with which I work ? I will try to state the most elementary, which largely govern the rest. First, on the physical plane, health. Secondly, on the intellectual plane, desire for knowledge, respect for truth, rationality, tolerance. Thirdly, on the aesthetic plane, sensibility, appreciativeness, creative imagination. Fourthly, on the plane of conduct, initiative, organizing capacity, self-control, and, in a man's attitude to others, cheerfulness, comradeship, co-operativeness, consideration, kindness. Fifthly, on the plane of society itself, as goods to be realized for the individuals through social action, democracy, liberty, social security. These goods are of different kinds, and I realize that some of them have their

Essays in Social Theory

excesses and perversions and are not therefore good in all their manifestations. Nor do I suppose that my list exhausts all the goods that I should accept as such if they were named. However, as far as they go, believing them to be the goods of most practical importance in relation to the social pattern, I believe those societies to be best which achieve the amplest practicable combination of them.

The possibilities of achieving and combining them are, of course, always limited by the circumstances of any particular society, including its inheritance of both mental and material possessions as well as its relation to other societies and to developing factors in its environment. The relative importance which it can afford to assign to different goods depends on these possibilities; and one good can be pursued more easily in some circumstances and another in others. I therefore arrive at no Utopian conception of a single best of all possible combinations of my different goods: nor do I believe that it is feasible to measure in exact quantities how much of any of them a society either possesses or should seek to achieve. Nor, again, do I believe that they can all be resolved into, or caught up into, a single kind of good, which includes them all. On the contrary, I am sure they can and do conflict, and that there are many possible combinations of them that may be equally worthy of respect, but no combination that is clearly and demonstrably superior to all others. Every society represents a limited 'pattern' of values, and into no possible society can all the good in all the patterns be squeezed. Nor can any society be made up wholly of 'goods'; for every pattern involves disadvantages and an admixture of evils at the points where its goods come into conflict.

I am also well aware that my choice of goods is not made in the cool clear light of eternity, but under the influence both of my day and generation and of my personal predilections. Other men might choose very different goods: Hitler manifestly did. His goods, by my valuation, were largely evils; but other men might choose different lists of goods, including some which I should admit to be goods,

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

but should not think important enough to include, and perhaps others which I should regard as fictitious, though not positively evil. My list of goods is both personal to me and drawn up under the influence of the scales of value which exist in the society I have been brought up in, or were made to seem important to me by my education and study. My list will not quite coincide with anyone else's list; nor do I expect anyone at all to find it even moderately satisfactory in a hundred years' time — or indeed any Chinaman or Indian to find it so even now. It is *my* list; but it is also a list which I hope and believe may be *broadly* satisfactory to a good number of my contemporaries in my own society and in other societies not too different from it to be capable of thinking together about social affairs.

But how do I know that any of these things on my list are good? Or rather, even if I do know it, how can I set out to persuade anyone else that I am right? I cannot, unless I can get him to agree to at any rate some common valuations. If I say 'I think we ought to give other people as much pleasure and as little pain as possible', and he says 'Why?', I am at a loss. I can only try again, perhaps by saying 'I think every human being has a right to as much well-being and happiness as is consistent with the well-being and happiness of others', and if he again says 'Why?', there is no point in continuing the conversation. I could of course answer 'Because acting on that assumption conduces to biological survival'; but I should be sorry to do so, for if the argument convinced him we should be at worse cross-purposes than ever. I should then have to ask him 'Why do you think it is good to survive?' and that is a question to which I do not myself know any answer.

I know that it is good to be kind, tolerant, co-operative, comradely, creative, and so on because the experience of these things, and of their opposites, in myself and in others, induces in me the sense of goodness and badness; and I am confirmed in these attributions of value by finding that I share them with most of the people I like and respect.

Essays in Social Theory

Beyond that I cannot go. How important I think any particular one of them to be I can see to depend on the social pattern, and I can imagine, or discover in my studies, social patterns in which any of them is held in scant esteem. I draw a distinction, however, between not esteeming a thing and esteeming its opposite. Some of my goods may not be esteemed in a particular society because that society has chosen a pattern which finds no room for these goods but does find large scope for other things which I recognize as good. I do not therefore condemn it, even if it is not my 'cup of tea'. I do condemn a society whose pattern puts into the forefront of esteem things I regard as evil; but I should not hope to be able to convince a devout admirer of such a pattern that his goods are bads. It was of no more use to argue with Hitler than to 'appease' him.

'Social Theory', then, I regard as an essentially normative study, of which the purpose is to tell people how to be socially good, and to aim at social goods and avoid social evils. It is not, however, for that reason a branch of Ethics; for its concern is necessarily with the means to be employed in seeking social goods through social institutions. It has, therefore, a large technical field of its own to explore; for it has to find out what sorts of social institution and what combinations of social institutions will be most helpful towards the pursuit of social goods in the general environment and climate of values appertaining to the broad civilization to which the theorist belongs, and for which he formulates his doctrine. He can theorize effectively only within the limits set by his climate of values: he can try to modify or develop these values here or there, but I know of only one way — a sort of inversion — by which he can construct a radically different pattern. He must build with the bricks his civilization provides for him, though he can turn the bricks any way up he pleases — and though they are not really bricks, but living things, with a capacity for internal change and development as well as for change of relative position. However we describe them, they are the materials he must use, and it is his task to devise the best institutional

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

instruments for moulding them to serve the advancement of practicable goods.

This, it may be said, is to bring Social Theory very close to the realm of Psychology as well as to that of Ethics; for the materials the theorist must use are in men's minds as well as in the external world in which men live. 'This is true; and it is a matter of great contemporary importance to mark out, as far as we can, the respective fields of Psychology, Ethics, and Social Theory. Psychology in general is now generally regarded as a scientific study, using the methods of observation and, where it can, experiment to arrive at conclusions about what men (and animals) mentally are, and are capable of, without passing judgements of moral value, but not without taking note of the judgements of moral value which men (and animals?) do actually make. It has a branch, Social Psychology, of which the field and the objectives are much less clearly determined. Social Psychology is most often understood as meaning the study of mental processes in their social aspects; and, if this is what it is, there is evidently no line to be drawn between it and General Psychology, because most mental processes, if not all, have a social aspect and character. There is, however, a quite distinct field, which Social Psychologists sometimes touch upon but seldom explore — the field of group deliberation and action. In this field, though only individuals can think, the thinking individuals think and exchange thoughts with a view to acting not merely individually but together — and often not at all individually, but only as a group. The phenomena of such associated action and group action afford, I believe, no basis at all for the dangerous notion of a 'group mind'; but they are none the less interesting and important. Social action is largely, though not exclusively, associative action or group action; and the behaviour of men is undoubtedly different when they act in these ways from what it is when they act individually, however much they may then act from social motives and under social influences.

. If we are concerned in Social Theory to consider how the

Essays in Social Theory

institutional forms of society can be so shaped as to further social goods, it is of the greatest importance for us to understand institutional behaviour, not only as the behaviour of individuals acting under institutional influences, but also as the behaviour of individuals acting together through institutions — which I hope I may be allowed, without exposing myself to the charge of believing in a ‘group mind’, to call for short the ‘behaviour’ of the institutions themselves. It is important to know the differences between individual action and the action of committees, boards, cabinets, parliaments, soviets, and other representative or corporate agencies. This ought to be either Social Psychology, or a study on its own, or a part of some other recognized study; but it is still largely an uncharted sea, despite the work of Graham Wallas, Robert Michels, Ostrogorsky, and a few others, and despite many hints about it scattered elsewhere. How far does it fall within the field of Social Theory?

As field work it does not. It is not my job, but, in its political aspects, rather, my colleague’s, now that the former Chair of ‘Theory and Institutions’ has been cut into two. It is, in effect, a vital part of the direct study of institutions, and one which has been hitherto badly neglected. It requires a technique of its own, taking much from Psychology and from Social Psychology in the other sense of the term, but devising its special apparatus of investigation appropriate to the study of group behaviour and especially to that characteristic form of such behaviour in which one man or a few act as the executants of the decisions taken by a number, who are themselves often purporting to decide as the representatives of a still larger number. Study of this kind of ‘filtered’ action, where the ‘filter’ has a will of its own, is of peculiar importance in relation to the real efficacy of the mechanisms employed for advancing social goods; and I, as a Social Theorist, should wish to be provided with data about it as full and as carefully observed and sorted as those which I look to General Psychology to provide me with in the field of individual behaviour. If these data are not forthcoming, I may have to go and look for them myself,

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

as many a student has had to step outside his subject to enter fields essential to yield the data he needs, where no adequate provision has been made for specialist exploration.

There is, of course, some provision. The field worker in Social Anthropology does regard it as very much his business to study institutional behaviour. But he does so mainly in the field of primitive society, whereas what I want, for my normative purpose, is primarily a study of such behaviour in the societies belonging to the pattern of civilization in which I live. I can pick up something from the 'Middle-town' type of study, but not nearly enough; something also from the students of political institutions who have allowed themselves to be influenced by modern developments in Anthropology and Psychology. I should, I suppose, get even more from the Sociologists of the Mannheim school; but they have not in fact done much about this particular problem, except in relation to the single issue of *élites* and leadership. Furthermore, the students of Political Institutions fail me because they are concentrating their attention on a particular type of institution, whereas my concern as a Social Theorist is with social institutions of every kind.

This brings me at last to the other half of my office, as Professor of *Political*, as well as of *Social*, Theory. There are no doubt some in this University who think I ought to regard myself primarily as Professor of Political Theory, and to treat the 'Social' aspect as a mere frill. I think I have made it clear that this is not my view of what I have been appointed to do. I am well aware that it is part of the traditional climate not only of Oxford, but of academic teaching and thinking in Great Britain, to make the State the point of focus for the consideration of men in their social relations. It is sometimes said that we derive this tradition from the Greeks; but that, I think, is quite untrue. *Polis* does not mean 'State'; and in translating it as 'State' we are twisting Greek thought to suit our own patterns of thinking. Our preoccupation with 'the State' as the central conception in the theory of Society has, I think, arisen rather in this way. In the Middle Ages nobody

Essays in Social Theory

thought like that. Nobody could ; for all social thinking had to take account of two main points of focus, of which one was the Church and the other — not ' the State ' or even the Emperor, but the much more complex set of institutions embodying the secular powers. ' The State ' emerged as a point (or rather a series of points) for the concentration of these several powers ; and thereafter great battles were fought, in the realm of theory as well as in that of practical affairs, between Church and State. In the course of these battles the Church was worsted and broken ; and first in Machiavelli and again in Hobbes, Political Theory took shape as pre-eminently the Theory of the State. Social thinking was secularized, except among the Catholics, and Protestant determination to repel the ' Kingdom of Darkness ' led to an exclusive concentration on the secular State as the repository of Sovereignty and, as it took a more democratic turn, of the people's will. The main course of Political Theory in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected this attitude, which fitted in well not only with the theories of nationalism and national independence but also with the economico-social theories of *laissez-faire*. For the *laissez-faire* thinkers believed in an order of nature which would shape all things (except a few) for the best if nobody interfered with it ; and the only great exception they allowed was the preservation of ' order ', which involved the regulation of the rights of property. The State thus stood out, in its police capacity, as an isolated instance of the need for regulation in a world otherwise best left to the ' government ' of natural forces ; and accordingly ' the State ' called for a theory of its own quite apart from any other forms of human association or group action. Indeed, other forms were apt to be looked on with suspicion, as, potentially at least, conspiracies against the ' natural order ', and therefore to be kept down and either prevented or strictly circumscribed by the State as the guardian of that order.

That world of *laissez-faire* is dead, and so is the conception which accompanied it of the all but all-embracing natural order, which it was regarded as man's affair to obey

Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory

and not to mould to the service of his ends. The apartness of the State from all other forms of human grouping and association dies with these notions and historical conditions. Our century requires not a merely Political Theory, with the State as its central concept and the conflict between the Individual and the State as its central problem, but a wider Social Theory within which these concepts and relations can find their appropriate place. We have to start out, not from the contrasted ideas of the atomized individual and of the State, but from man in all his complex groupings and relations, partially embodied in social institutions of many sorts and kinds, never in balanced equilibrium, but always changing, so that the pattern of loyalties and of social behaviour changes with them. This brings us back to a much more real kind of man than the social atom of Hobbes or of Herbert Spencer. It brings us to men who are not isolated individuals, but members one of another in a host of different ways, and behave differently as different loyalties and associations come uppermost. It makes the stuff of society seem much more malleable for good and evil, and emphasizes the diversity of the influences by which society can be moulded, as well as the immense importance of all the mechanisms by means of which the moulding can be done. For this reason, it suggests to some the totalitarian conception — the idea that everything must be captured for the State — because it makes plain that all forms of social organization, and not merely the political forms, are of vital importance in making a society what it is, and as driving forces in settling its future. But it also suggests anti-totalitarianism, which I call 'Pluralism', as a recognition of the positive value of this diversity, and a repudiation of the Idealist notion that all values are ultimately aspects of a single value, which must therefore find embodiment in a universal institution, and not in the individual beings who alone have, in truth, the capacity to think, to feel, and to believe, and singly or in association to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in actions which further or obstruct well-being — their own and others.

Essays in Social Theory

I have no time left to develop this theme now. It will be the central inspiration of everything I have to say as occupant of this Chair, except when I am acting as an expositor of other people's views and of their historical development. It has obviously influenced the notions of scope and method which I have put forward in this lecture. I start with people, who are many, in their social relations, which are manifold ; and so I end — with the many, and not with the ' One '.
'ΕΚ ΔΙΟΣ 'ΑΡΧΩΜΕΣΘΑ ΚΑΙ 'ΕΙΣ ΔΙΑ ΛΗΓΕΤΕ ΜΩΣΑΙ. But my Zeus is men.

II

*Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century*¹

THE subject that I want to discuss in this essay is *academic*—in the sense, not that it has no practical importance, but that it has to do primarily with the nature and content of certain academic studies. It is a plea for an attempt to give a new shape to the study of the theory of society, by linking together, more closely than they are linked at present, the older disciplines of Political Science and Political Philosophy and the developing studies of social and political institutions, of Sociology, and of Social Psychology. This attempt also affects Economics; for it involves a plea for the consideration of economic institutions, not as if they should be regarded in isolation from the rest of the social system, but in close relation to it, and for the development of an institutional type of Social Economics, not as a pendant to an essentially abstract Economic Theory, but as logically prior to the formulation of positive economic doctrines.

In the course of the nineteenth century, both Political and Economic Theory developed academically along lines which it is now easy to see as corresponding to a certain phase in the evolution of the more advanced Western Societies. Economics, replacing the older 'Political' Economy (though the old name was often kept) based itself on the assumption of a self-acting economic world which could be studied quite apart from the world of politics or from the rest of the social complex, the points at which this isolation plainly broke down being treated as examples of arbitrary interference with the free working of purely economic forces.

¹ Written in 1947.

Essays in Social Theory

This method of isolation, founded originally on the conception of an 'order of nature' which was usually identified with a 'law of God', lent itself readily to the formulation of abstract doctrines, held to be of universal application — that is, everywhere to underlie the actual working of economic institutions — though each actual economic system deviated from the 'normal' under the influence of non-economic interferences. This was the *laissez-faire* philosophy, which called upon legislators to reduce interference to the lowest possible point, in order to allow free play to the 'natural order'. This order, it was held with passion, would secure the best possible results for everybody, or at any rate the greatest economic well-being of the greatest number, because either a beneficent God, or a beneficent Nature, had ordained that men's pursuit of individual self-interest in economic affairs should lead to this surprising result. No doubt, this simple faith in the virtues of economic self-interest underwent many modifications in the course of the nineteenth century: nor did even those who held it most strongly usually argue that God, or Nature, had made self-interest an equally beneficent force in non-economic affairs, or even in economic affairs that were regarded as falling outside the range of Economic Theory. No one, I think, argued that if a greedy parent gobbled up his children's meals, either Society or the children would be the better for it. The economic sphere was defined as that of production for exchange, as 'business', and not as covering the simpler 'economy' of home and family. Economic 'Science' was abstract in a double sense: it covered only some parts of the economic world, which was itself a 'world' abstracted from the social situation as a whole.

Modifications there were; and they were important. But they were thought of as involving exceptions to a general rule which was in no way invalidated by making them; and the development of academic Economics has taken place, right up to the present time, within a general plan derived from *laissez-faire* notions.

Political Theory, over the same period, has run a different

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

course, and one affected by many more complex currents. Its background has been the growth of States designed to serve the purposes of modern business, by upholding the property and other economic relations essential to its successful conduct on the principles of *laissez-faire*. This involves a primary contradiction; for the State which is told that its duty is to keep out of the economic field in order to give free scope to natural forces, is commanded in one and the same breath to intervene in that field in order to sustain a certain system of economic relations. The policeman's function is to repress not only the murderer and the wife-beater but also the thief and the flouter of the 'rights of property'; and the legislator is called upon to pass laws for the regulation of property rights (*e.g.* inheritance and taxation), as well as for that of non-economic relations between man and man. It is, of course, really plain enough that no State ever can keep out of the economic field, because no ordered society is possible without regulation of economic relations. What the advocates of *laissez-faire* really meant was that the State should enforce for them the underlying economic relations *which they assumed to be the basis of the natural economic order*, and should, as nearly as possible, stop there.

If these underlying economic relations were in truth part of the 'order of nature', the less that was said about them the better. Accordingly, the Theory of the State (which was the nineteenth century's narrow substitute for an embracing Social Theory) had almost nothing to offer by way of explanation of the State's economic role. It was concerned with Politics, not with Economics; and Politics, thus narrowed, fell into two main sections — Political Philosophy, which was mainly a branch of Ethics concerned with the 'principles of political obligation' and with the 'rights' of men as citizens or subjects, and Political Science, which dealt with the problems of constitution-making, legislation, and public administration, and had to do with the discovery of the means to ends which were assumed to be already well enough known and defined.

Essays in Social Theory

This was one line of development, characteristic particularly of Great Britain, and also of the United States, as far as the Americans developed any characteristic Political Theory of their own. But against it was set the Political Theory of the Germans, which came out of Rousseau, via Kant and Fichte, to Hegel, and supplied the foundations for Marxism as well as for the Idealism of Green, Bradley, and Bosanquet and ultimately for the 'National Socialism' of Hitler and the Fascism of Mussolini and Gentile. This other line of development was developed out of Rousseau's conception of the General Will, and was transmuted for a time into the doctrine of representative national sovereignty which found expression in the French Revolution, only to be restated as revolutionary Caesarism by Napoleon, and re-interpreted by Hegel as an absolutist, or metaphysical, theory of the quasi-divine supremacy and universality of the sovereign National State. In all forms of this theory, the economic order appeared, not as an independent natural order off which the State was to keep its interfering hands, but as a subordinate, ministerial order, to be directed to play its part in the service of the supreme national community, represented by the State. Thus, one group of thinkers — primarily Utilitarian in general theory — told the State to keep its hands off the economic structure, whereas another — primarily Idealistic — though accepting the Utilitarian laws as applicable to the economic order on a lower plane, regarded the State as the final repository of authority, with the mission of bending the economic order to serve the national ends of the sovereign community, to which the individual and his claims were by right to be wholly subordinated.

Marxism stemmed off from this Idealistic philosophy. Marx and Engels and their successors were scornful of Utilitarianism, which they regarded as the characteristic philosophy of Capitalism in its phase of development based on the Industrial Revolution and on the advent of machine-power. As against the 'social atomism' of the Utilitarians, they accepted to the full the 'mass' doctrine of 1789, but

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

sought foundations for it in the mass characteristics of the new wage-earning class. 'Workers of the world, unite' was an alternative version of the doctrine of the General Will, laying the emphasis on class-solidarity and denying the solidarity between classes which was affirmed in the philosophies of Fichte and of Hegel. In Marx, as much as in Hegel, the emphasis was put on solidarity — on the mass; but the mass was differently defined, as a working class lapping over national frontiers to cover the whole world, and not as a nation embracing all classes but set in opposition to other national communities. As against both these 'mass' doctrines, the Utilitarians and 'Liberals' were essentially individualists, whether they rested their individualism on the belief in a natural or a divine law or on an individualistic psychology (associationism), or on a naked devil-take-the-hindmost notion of the 'struggle for existence' and the 'survival of the fittest' — to survive.

Between these rival philosophies of Society there were the widest possible differences; but they had in common a certain intolerant all-or-nothing attitude. For the advocates of *laissez-faire*, the State was an institution to be written about in purely political terms, almost without reference to any economic issue. For the Marxists, it was an essentially economic institution, in the development of which political as distinct from economic forces could play only a secondary role, the broad course of historical evolution being governed, always and everywhere, by the evolution of the 'powers of production'. For the Idealists, from Hegel to the Nazis and Fascists, the soul of the nation was the governing factor, to which both the individual and the economic order were wholly subject. Not one of these philosophies was in a position to look objectively at the whole complex of social forces; for each was trying to interpret the whole social movement in terms of a preconceived idea, whether that idea was confessedly metaphysical or professedly materialistic or psychological.

I do not mean, of course, that these currents of thought were unobstructed —only that, between them, they pretty

Essays in Social Theory

completely dominated both the academic and the political worlds. Idealism and Utilitarianism fought their academic battles: Marxism, kept outside the academic walls, did battle against both: materialism, of the sort associated with the development of natural science, had some foothold among the academics, but was still largely an outsider, its right to have any say in the formulation of political doctrines challenged by the professors of the 'Arts'. Meanwhile, the attempt to theorize in terms of the whole social complex, without either metaphysical or materialistic assumptions, was being made — by Saint-Simon and, on a grander scale, by Auguste Comte — but was still entangled with the attempt to formulate a theory of history corresponding to a process of scientific advance of knowledge from realm to realm of nature, up to the supreme achievement of an all-embracing 'Social Science'. Comtism, if we discount the later extravagances of its master in the *Politique positive* and take account rather of the broad sweep of the *Cours de philosophie positive*, was a grand conception, vitiated by the attempt to make the scientific study of the facts fit into a preconceived pattern of man's mental development. Its virtue lay, not in its patterning, but in its insistence on the relativity of all man's knowledge to man's needs and aspirations, and in its transcendence, not only of theology (into a parody of which indeed its master sadly relapsed), but also of metaphysics and of the selection of data for study according to preconceived notions of value and relevance to traditional disciplines.

What came out of this early Sociology (out of Comte, rather than out of Spencer with his highly formalized conception of the evolutionary process), was the new, universally inquisitive, Sociology of Durkheim and the development of Social Anthropology as a scientific study. There was no ultimate reason why the less advanced, or the simpler, human Societies should come to be studied by this scientific method rather than the more complex Societies to which the sociologists themselves belonged. But there were valid, practical reasons; not only that the former were smaller and

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

therefore easier to study in an all-round way, but also that the sociologist could approach them with many fewer preconceptions — above all, that in studying them he did not and could not become obsessed with the State and Government to the exclusion of other aspects of social organization. This did not and could not happen, because in most of these Societies there simply was not any institution that could be realistically identified with the State as it exists in the advanced Societies of the West, and because in none of them was it even remotely possible to isolate the economic elements from the rest of the social system. The very conception of an 'economic order', either as separate and self-acting, or as paramount, or as subordinate to the political order, simply could not be applied: so integrated were the elements of the social situation and so non-existent any kind of behaviour that could be attributed to the 'economic man'.

Accordingly these sociologists, as soon as they set out to study objectively at all, had to study Societies as wholes, and not as bundles of isolable 'worlds' of activity. At first, the academic exponents of the rival recognized schools merely ignored their doings; and even when they had to be taken some notice of, the attempt was persisted in to keep their methods and discoveries from influencing the shape of the accepted economic studies. Sociology grew up almost as an outlaw — at best, as an inferior branch of study, of which the role was held to be confined to analysis and comparison of the curious, barbaric habits of primitive peoples, and to have no relevance to Politics or Economics as studied in relation to the problems of the more advanced Societies. Gradually, no doubt, this attitude is being discredited; but it still persists, because there now stands behind it both a powerful vested interest in the perpetuation of economic and political studies in the shapes which have become traditional in University examinations and teaching, and a strong doctrinal reluctance to face the need for a form of social analysis which, applied to large and complex Societies, will inevitably be itself highly complex and destructive of

Essays in Social Theory

explanations based on giving primary importance to any single factor in the social situation.

Great Britain, hitherto, has been the most resistant of all the leading countries to the acceptance of Sociology in any form. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The German, Hegelian, conception of the State as a metaphysical entity universalizing the entire life of Society and of its members allows its professors, so to speak, to swallow Sociology whole; for their 'State', being not just the Government, but the representative of the entire community group, is much more like the complex which sociologists find in primitive Societies than it is like the limited State of Liberal or Utilitarian philosophy. Similarly, the Marxist can make a show of swallowing Sociology by interpreting all the social phenomena of primitive, as well as of advanced, Societies as finally explicable in economic terms. No such *tour de force* is possible for the 'liberal' believer in an independent economic order and in a political order which stands — subject to the exceptions tacitly assumed — apart from this economic order, as an autonomous expression of the political spirit in man. Sociology will not fit in with either Politics or Economics, as long as these two are conceived of as essentially separate and independent studies, each with its own laws. Yet so to conceive of them has been, for more than a century, an essential part of the British academic tradition — and indeed of the predominant British habit of thought in a far wider sense.

Why, then, it may well be asked, has Sociology made rapid progress in America, where the doctrine of the 'separation of studies' is surely held quite as fervently as that of the 'separation of powers'? The answer is curious. It is that, whereas in Great Britain the advance of Sociology had to encounter the formidable opposition of a living and developing study of Politics, both theoretical and institutional, centred upon the State and Government, in the United States it encountered only a void. For in America there has been no Political Theory, and but little attempt to theorize even about the institutional basis of Politics, except in the

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

field of Law. There have been great American jurists, but not one American political thinker of eminence since Jefferson and Madison — a singular reflection on the quality of American politics and on their estimation in the American mind.

This void, and the disrespect of politics, left the way clear in the United States for objective studies of social phenomena which did not have to be classified as either 'political' or 'economic'. The structure of American Society threw into prominence the fact that there existed a vast number of social structures and events which fell within the scope neither of Politics nor of Economics as these two were currently conceived; and the sociological approach provided a convenient method for grouping and studying these phenomena with some attempt at system and co-ordination of effort. As soon as the attempt was made at all, it became evident that American conditions were particularly suitable for it; for the Americans, more easily than any other people, could command the large resources needed for the objective study of huge masses of social facts, such as exist in populous and highly differentiated modern Societies. Indeed, the very abundance of resources led, as it was bound to do, to a considerable waste of effort, through the unnecessary elaboration of programmes of sociological investigation. Theory ran the risk of being submerged in a torrent of unanalysed and, for very complexity, unanalysable facts. I remember a well-known sociologist telling me that he thought it would take him, with a sufficient team of helpers, at least thirty years to make a close enough study of one middle-sized town to be in a position to reach any conclusions at all.

That, no doubt, was midsummer madness; and in practice a good many conclusions have been reached without highly elaborate apparatus (Mr. and Mrs. Lynd's *Middletown* studies furnish an obvious example). Gradually, it is coming to be better recognized that, as Durkheim pointed out long ago, not every fact that has a social aspect is a relevant 'social fact', or needs to be studied before any

Essays in Social Theory

conclusions can be arrived at. The selection of the more relevant 'social facts' is an essential part of the sociologist's task; and 'sampling', though it has its dangers, has abundantly proved its usefulness in many fields. The real obstacle to the advance of sociological studies in this country has been, not paucity of resources, but the obstruction of preconceived ideas about the separateness of the social studies and about the pre-eminence of Politics ('Theory of the State' and 'Public Administration') and Economics as specialized studies hardly thought of as falling within a common group.

The sociological method is, of course, largely statistical. It studies social phenomena largely by counting instances, observing correlations, and thus building up a body of knowledge about social behaviour where numbers are involved. It discovers neither how a particular individual behaves — save, incidentally, in the process of collecting its material — nor why men, in a preponderant number of instances, behave in particular ways. It may succeed in predicting how most people, or enough people to determine the main course of events, will behave in a particular situation; but it cannot tell how any single individual will behave. That is not its job. It is, however, the job of the Social Psychologist, if not to predict the behaviour of particular individuals, at all events to try to find out why individuals behave as they do, when they are acting socially — in the sense of acting as members of social groups or communities, or as reacting to what is expected of them in relation to social institutions with which they are associated in one way or another. The fields of Sociology and Social Psychology overlap: they have to study many of the same phenomena, but from different points of view. The sociologist proper stops at the fact, without establishing the motive, even if it can be established: the social psychologist studies the fact in order to throw light upon the motive that lies behind it. The sociologist is concerned with the social consequences which follow from the behaviour of numbers of individuals who are, in some respect, similarly placed:

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

the social psychologist has to do rather with the causes that lead to the observed statistical regularities in social behaviour — or of course to irregularities, where they appear.

The nineteenth century, before its end, had succeeded in laying sound foundations for the development of sociological method, though it had not advanced far in their use. In Social Psychology, it did not lay even the foundations. It could not; for the necessary data did not exist, even in an unanalysed state. It was still at the stage of advancing *a priori* theories — for example, about the 'laws of social imitation' ('Tarde). Psychology as a general study had to find firm foundations in experimentation before Social Psychology could begin to develop along fruitful lines, save to a very limited extent. Social Psychology has, indeed, hardly yet found its feet; for the modern Psychologists, having made the discovery that all behaviour is social behaviour, have been inclined to re-absorb Social into General Psychology, and have so far paid scant attention to a set of problems which their predecessors, with a very defective equipment, had at any rate begun tentatively to explore. This set of problems can be most simply stated in the form of a question: How, and why, do men behave differently when they are acting not solely on their own behalf, but jointly with others, as members or subjects of a group or institution to which they feel some sentiment of loyalty or sense of obligation? The answer to this question involves, among other things, the study of crowds, pioneered by Gustave Le Bon. But it involves even more the study of committees and associations of every sort and kind, of the behaviour of officials acting in their official capacities, of fathers or of housewives acting as representatives of families or of households, of members of Parliaments, Town Councils, Soviets, Churches, Trade Unions, and Co-operative Societies, and of the informal associations which arise among neighbours, among fellow-nationals, or on a still wider scale in international groupings. All these fields, despite some pioneering work (Graham Wallas, Robert Michels, Tönnies, Miss Follett, for example), remain mainly unexplored, and

Essays in Social Theory

constitute the true sphere of Social Psychology as a study closely cognate to Sociology but distinct from it because the centre of attention is in the sources of individual behaviour rather than in the mass results which ensue.

Or rather, the centre of attention is partly in the social behaviour of individuals as influenced by institutional claims and loyalties, and partly in the 'behaviour' of the institutions themselves. Some, no doubt, will regard it as a misuse of language to speak of 'behaviour' in this latter connection; but what other diction is one to use? If, say, the *New Statesman* or *The Times* comes out with a leading article which represents the views, not of any one individual speaking for himself, but of one or more writers trying to set down 'the policy of the paper', the 'behaviour' in question is not that of any single individual only, or even that of all the individuals who contributed to the formulation of the article, but that of the paper. Or again, if a Trade Union decides to strike, or to refer a dispute to arbitration, the decision is not simply that of the individuals who vote upon it, but also, in a real sense, that of the Union as a quasi-corporate body. The same might be said of actions taken by Parliaments, Churches, and countless other bodies.

Manifestly, it is of great social importance to study the ways in which collective, as well as individual, actions and decisions are arrived at; and if this study is not Social Psychology, I do not know what it is. I do, however, know that it is apt to get lost sight of when the attempt is made to merge Social into General Psychology, and also that, when it is left to be handled by non-psychologists (*e.g.* Pareto) the most curious conclusions are apt to be reached. Call it, if you will, a border-line subject between Sociology and Psychology: call it anything you please, but do not omit to mark its importance and to make sure that it does get studied in such a way as to take account of the development of modern Psychology.

It is a commonplace nowadays to say that the social theorizing of the nineteenth century was unduly rationalistic, in the sense that it assumed men to be moved in social

Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century

situations by rational, and rationally analysable, motives, much more than most people in the twentieth century believe them to be. 'This rationalistic approach was indeed made the easier by specialization; for the specialist, abstracting for separate study a particular part of the whole social complex, could easily make it an element in his abstraction to discard such motives as were irrational from the standpoint of his special study. I suppose no one ever believed that men, in their economic activities, acted wholly as 'the economic man' was deemed to act; but the economists felt free to discard from their universe of discourse the effects of motives which they could not treat as economically rational; and the political thinkers, albeit less wholeheartedly, tended to handle the 'citizen' in the same fashion, exclusively as a rationally political animal. 'The practical politician, of course, did not do this, any more than the practical business man did - or what would have become of business advertising and of political propaganda and electioneering rhetoric?' It was, however, in the main left to the twentieth century to construct a theory of social irrationality, and openly, as well as deliberately, to base propaganda upon it, with the powerful aid both of modern Psychology and of the new material techniques of mass-diffusion at the command of advertisers and adventurers in every social field.

All these developments, from Psychology to Anthropology and from the new statistical techniques to the new study of language in its social relations, call for an altered approach to the Social Studies. They require, not less specialization, but less *isolation* of specialized studies from the general study of Society as a whole. What this means in practice is that, in the first place, the specialist himself stands in greater need of a tolerable basic equipment in fields adjoining his own, and also of a broader general foundation for his specialist work, and in the second place that, in teaching Social Studies to students who are not intending to become academic specialists, but perhaps Civil Servants or administrators of some other sort, or business men, we should

Essays in Social Theory

beware of turning out inferior specialists, whose knowledge is limited to a single part of the field, and should pay much more attention than is usually paid to helping them towards a concrete vision of the entire social complex.

That this is no easy thing to achieve I am well aware ; for specialism breeds specialism, not least in the academic world. The teacher can teach only what he has learnt ; and, if his training has been in a narrow field, he will naturally tend to perpetuate his kind and will ' funk ' tackling the broader issues in relation to which he is conscious of being only an amateur at best. Academic studies have a strong self-perpetuating tendency, which may be a source of strength as long as their structure is in harmony with contemporary needs, so that the various specialisms are designed to answer the questions which most need answering. If, however, the conditions change, so as to bring up new questions which are unanswerable within the limitations of the existing structure of academic ' subjects ', strength turns to weakness, and new ' subjects ' have to fight hard for recognition, not only because their importance is not seen, but even more because there is no supply of competent teachers of them. Yet, in the end, the adaptations are bound to be made, if the academic world is to be of any use in the social field ; and it is necessary to take some risks of ill-equipped teaching in order to start the ball rolling in the right direction.

III

*The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities*¹

SOCIAL STUDIES (or Social Sciences, as they are called in a number of British Universities) have been but slowly coming into their own in British higher education during the past quarter of a century, and in most Universities the teaching of them has still a long way to go. There is, moreover, still great uncertainty about the right ways of approaching them, as well as about their definition as a group and their relation to other subjects of study. A good many subjects can be studied in radically different ways, so as to put the emphasis either on their purely technical content or on their interrelation with other subjects; and when interrelations are stressed there are, in many cases, alternative possible emphases and groupings.

It is simplest to begin with the more central subjects, and to come back later to those which involve the greater complications.

ECONOMICS IN RELATION TO OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES

In nearly all British Universities much more attention is given to Economics than to any other branch of the Social Studies — unless History, which I am leaving out of consideration, is brought in. The recognition of Economics as an academic subject goes back to the early nineteenth century, though for a long time very little was done to provide for teaching it. Enough was done to give it a long lead over the other specifically social subjects, except Jurisprudence, which was treated purely as a lawyer's subject, and Political Philosophy, which was treated essentially as a branch of Philosophy and was taught largely from Plato and

¹ Written in 1948.

Essays in Social Theory

in very close relation to Morals. The effect of this was that Economics appeared by itself as a claimant for fuller academic recognition, because it could not be hitched on, except in a very elementary form, to any existing course, or provided for by any existing faculty. Thus the economists were able gradually to achieve recognition in most Universities by securing the institution of separate degree courses in Economics. Some of these courses contained auxiliary non-economic social subjects, compulsory or optional; but in nearly all cases Economics came to be the central point of focus. The exception was at Oxford, where the University began with a combined Diploma in Economics and Political Science (which still exists), and then, after the first world war, set up the Honours School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, known as 'Modern Greats', insisting that all students should work in all three branches, but with freedom to work more intensively in one than in another if they so desired.

I believe strongly in this system, or in something akin to it, as against that of the degree course in Economics only that has come to prevail elsewhere. I take this view because I feel sure there is a great need for men and women able to consider Economics and Politics and other branches of the Social Studies from a wider standpoint than can be achieved by intensive study of one branch alone. Two objections are commonly made. The first is that the combined course is too crowded and confusing for any except for the better students. Up to a point I agree. 'Modern Greats' is not a suitable course for inferior students; but it would not be difficult to design a course less ambitious, but still preserving something of the synoptic quality that I value — for example, a course based on Economics and Politics, without Philosophy as a specific third branch. I believe that such a course would be educationally much more satisfactory than a degree course in Economics alone for almost all students, provided that the two branches were both treated at the same standard, and that opportunity to work more intensively at *either* was effectively provided.

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

SPECIALISTS AND CO-ORDINATION

The second objection commonly advanced is that a course containing more than one major subject does not give the student a chance of acquiring an adequate professional qualification. If what is meant is that the student will not usually emerge able to teach the subject, or to write books about it, or to take up at once a research post in it, I agree. But should this be the purpose of a first degree course? I think not. A man or woman who intends to do any of these things should expect to need at least one post-graduate year of study; and I hold that the proper place for a degree in Economics, or Politics, or in any other specific single subject is at the post-graduate stage, after the foundations for a wider synoptic view have been well and truly laid.

This question is of high practical importance; for it conditions the growth of university organization, as well as of the curriculum. I wish to see the development of departments or faculties of Social Studies, with sub-faculties or sub-departments within them for Economics, Politics, Sociology, and other specialized studies, rather than a development of separate faculties, or the maintenance of a separate Economics faculty, with the other Social Studies dispersed between Philosophy, History, Geography, Psychology, Law, and a number of other faculties. There is, however, a problem to be solved where so-called Social Science faculties or departments have been developed mainly with a view not to regular degree courses, but rather to the training of social workers in diploma and certificate courses, and have accordingly been given a marked 'practical' bent. I do not at all mean that I regard such courses as unimportant; but they are not altogether easy to combine in one and the same organization with ordinary undergraduate courses, and to a substantial extent, because of their wider range of subjects, including practical work, their academic standard is bound in some fields to be lower than that of regular honours degrees. In Oxford we provide for the care of

Essays in Social Theory

students in Social Training courses under a delegacy which is distinct from the faculty of Social Studies, but make the faculty, and not the delegacy, responsible for the conduct of the examinations, except in respect of practical training. This seems to work well: where Social Studies departments have been hitherto concerned mainly with social training, a good deal of reorganization may be necessary in order to constitute the kind of all-round Social Studies department or faculty that I have in mind.

ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS

The teaching of Economics has been changing rapidly in recent years. A somewhat arid fashion for abstract mathematical Economics (*à la* Pareto) has been giving way to much more realistic methods of study, with 'Applied Economics' ousting pure theory from its central position, and with a rapidly increasing use of statistical methods wherever they can be invoked. This change, I am sure, is wholly salutary. It has led, first at Oxford and now at Cambridge, to the development of Institutes of Statistics and Applied Economics which have grown less as centres for the study of statistical method as such than as places for the study of economic and social data with the aid of statistical techniques. The London School of Economics, under Professor Bowley, was, of course, the great pioneer in this field.

It is, however, one of the results of the more advanced state of Economics than of the other Social Studies in the British Universities that the rapid progress of Statistics has been tied much more closely to economic data than to social data of other kinds. There has been very little statistical work, or teaching in Statistics, as related to either Politics or Sociology. Yet Statistics can be fully as useful in these fields, and statistical methods are needed in them in order to combat tendencies towards untested generalization. This defect is, however, irremediable except by the better development of Politics and Sociology as well-recognized subjects of University study. The exception is to be found in Demography, in the few Universities in which it has been

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

seriously taken up ; for in this field statistical methods are of course indispensable, and have been very effectively applied (for example, at Liverpool and at Bristol, as well as at the London School of Economics).

One great advantage at present possessed by the economist over other social students is that he has at command a much greater mass of already digested quantitative data for analysis. In other fields, the data have largely still to be collected and reduced to order, before the subjects can be effectively studied in their quantitative aspects at the undergraduate level. Accordingly, whereas in Economics there is no obstacle to a steady expansion of undergraduate teaching along the right lines, in Politics and Sociology the most urgent need is for more research, in order to put more usable material at the disposal of teachers and students. For example, it is highly desirable that much more should be done by Universities to follow up the methods of Social Survey pioneered by London, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham, and a few other Universities, and to develop such survey work, in the social and political as well as in the economic field, as a regular part of University activity. This, of course, involves close collaboration with the Geography faculty, if it is organized apart from the Social Studies group.

THE TEACHING OF POLITICS

About Economics it does not seem necessary to say a great deal for the purposes of this survey, because for the most part what is needed is the carrying further of realistic tendencies which are rapidly gaining ground. In other branches, on the other hand, essentially new departures need to be made. In most Universities, the teaching of Politics is still in a most unsatisfactory state. In my view, Politics can be a satisfactory subject of study only if a proper balance is preserved between its theoretical and its institutional aspects. The student should emerge from his course with, on the one hand, some real understanding of the great basic issues which have dominated high thinking about Politics

Essays in Social Theory

from Ancient Greece to the present day, and, on the other, some grasp of the ways in which institutions actually work. In other words, he should study both Political Theory (including its relations to Morals and to Economics) and also Government and Public Administration (including Local Government). He should, in addition, study both these groups of subjects against a background of some historical knowledge, at least of a particular period; and he should not confine himself to 'Politics' in the narrower sense, but should take into account forms of social structure standing outside the framework of Government, such as Churches, Trade Unions, forms of business structure, and the various shapes of 'community' in town and country.

This, I am aware, brings Social and Political Theory, as I conceive it, very close to Sociology, to which I shall come presently. For the moment, what I am seeking to insist on is that each University ought to have, parallel to its Economics department, or sub-faculty, a department or sub-faculty of Politics covering the range of subjects I have just attempted to define, and organized as a part of its Social Studies faculty, and not dispersed between its faculties of History and Philosophy, as is all too apt to be at present the case. I am sure that such a dispersal makes against the effective teaching of Politics, because it divorces the study of the theory from that of the institutions and is all too apt to reduce the latter to a mere memorizing of facts, without any real understanding of them, and the former to a merely abstract study of timeless 'principles', wholly out of relation to the objective situation of any particular time or place. It is as absurd to divorce Political Theory from Political Institutions or from Public Administration as it would be to divorce Economic Theory from Applied Economics.

SOCIOLOGY

This brings me to the very difficult question of the teaching of Sociology. About this, the first thing I want to say is that we should once and for all give up the bad habit of calling by the name 'Sociology' all the odds and ends of

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

Social Studies that we cannot conveniently bring under any main head. Sociology is not a residue, after Economics and Politics and Demography and Law and Geography and Social Psychology have been taken away. It is a *general* study of social organization, designed to lay bare and to analyse the interrelations of the various ways in which men become organized in social groups of every sort and kind, from the family to the most embracing social groups that possess the beginnings of an organized existence. It differs from Social Psychology in that its emphasis is on *organization*, on external facts, rather than on what mental concomitants underlie organization. It differs from Politics, in that it is concerned with the broad facts of social organization, rather than with men's theories about them, or with the specifically political aspects of them. It differs from Economics, in that it is concerned with the foundations of social existence, which the economist usually takes for granted. In method it is a fact-collecting, fact-analysing study, arriving at generalizations by the analysis and comparison of social facts, some of which it can take ready-made from other Social Studies, but many of which it must collect and digest for itself. It can learn much from the methods which Cultural Anthropology has applied chiefly to the study of the simpler societies of men : its business is at least equally, and in practice more, with the more complex modern societies.

Some day, Sociology may come to loom as large here as it does in the United States. But that time is not yet. For the present, Universities in Great Britain must advance slowly and tentatively along this line, for the simple reason that there is hardly anyone available, or being trained, to teach it. Except at the London School under Professor Ginsberg, Sociology, in the sense here given to the word, is hardly being taught at all. At Oxford we are just making a few tentative beginnings, but only to the extent of giving some scope for the use of sociological knowledge in our new post-graduate degree in Politics, and to a much smaller extent in 'Modern Greats'. I should like to go faster, but I would sooner go very slow than have the subject

Essays in Social Theory

inefficiently taught. There are, moreover, advantages in linking it closely to Social and Political Theory at the present stage, and thus to the whole group of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. We shall get a better standard thus, than if we started Sociology off here and now on its own quite separate voyage. It still needs a convoy, if it is to have a fair chance of reaching port. And we must work out its relations to Anthropology, particularly in connection with such special problems as the teaching of colonial administration.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social Psychology presents a different problem. We badly need some of it in the Social Studies, at more than one level. We need it as an element in all courses designed for the training of social workers, in the broadest sense of the term — from housing managers and hospital almoners to industrial welfare workers and 'case' workers of every sort and kind, including civil and local government servants as well as workers for voluntary bodies. Teachers need it, of course — but that is another story. We need it too, in rather a different way, for students of Economics, or of Politics, or of Sociology, as primarily academic subjects. A good many psychologists, however, are very unwilling to believe that Social Psychology can usefully be taught except on a foundation laid by a fairly advanced study of General Psychology; and for this, except perhaps as an optional subject in some courses, we simply cannot find room in our already overcrowded curriculum. I can only say that, in my experience, there are psychologists who can very effectively teach Social Psychology to non-specialists, with excellent effects on their approach to the Social Studies as a whole — and admit that probably such teachers are scarce, though not so desperately scarce as good sociologists.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Then there is the question of Moral Philosophy, or Ethics, which is naturally taught mainly as a branch of

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

Philosophy, and has often had Political Philosophy attached to it, often in a somewhat inferior position. Such an arrangement obviously fails to meet the needs of students whose primary interest is in Politics: for such students, as we have seen, Social and Political Theory has to be studied on its own, as a main subject, in close connection with Political Institutions. It is, however, not satisfactory either to leave out Moral Philosophy, or to reverse the traditional arrangement by treating it as a branch of Social and Political Theory. Nor is it desirable to take the teaching of it out of the hands of the philosophers. In most cases, probably the best solution is to arrange for courses in Moral Philosophy for the purposes of Social Studies to be conducted by teachers from the Philosophy faculty; and it may be necessary to do this at two different levels, one for honours degree students and the other, treating the subject rather less theoretically, for those who need it in connection with courses of training in social work.

LAW AS A SOCIAL STUDY

Law presents yet another problem. A student who sets out to understand the working of either Politics or Economics must have some understanding of the legal foundations of society. A part of this, where law touches custom, he can get through Sociology — if he gets Sociology at all; another part he will get through the study of Political Institutions, which must cover the juridical aspect. He needs, however, rather more than he usually gets; and for the most part the lawyers — even the academic lawyers — are quite unable to give it him. They are too exclusively lawyers to meet his needs. Industrial Law he may indeed get, if he wants it, as a specialist subject; and in a few Universities he can get what he is likely to want in the field of International Law. But the study of the interrelations of Law and Politics, say from Bentham to the present day — where, in most Universities, is he to get that? He will get it, I feel sure, only if it is specially provided for within the orbit of the Social Studies.

Essays in Social Theory

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

To Geography I have made one or two incidental references already. It is, of its nature, a marginal subject. Physical Geography is not a Social Study, though it is of course important in many aspects for the Social Studies. Human Geography, on the other hand, is already in close contact with the Social Studies, and is being brought closer by the necessity of training town and country planners, as well as by the development of Social Survey work in other aspects. I want Geography Schools to become increasingly homes of Human Geography; and, for this reason, I do not wish to see Social Studies faculties appointing geographers of their own. As in the case of Anthropology, the need here is for closer working arrangements between the Social Studies and the Geography departments, with the geographical teaching needed by students in the former provided in the Geography department, wherever such a department exists. But it must be effectively provided for — not merely left to be done by someone who is not really interested in it in such time as he can spare.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

I do not propose to range over any further subjects, except for a particular few words about History in relation to the Social Studies. Economic and Social History (it is important to link the two aspects closely together) is among the least provided for of all the older respectable disciplines that fall within the Social Studies range. This is partly because a good many historians still look down on it, either claiming that it ought to be taught as a part of General History (and usually therewith doing very little to teach it), or openly sniffing at it. Indeed the whole subject is very liable to fall between two stools, with the economists fully as neglectful or as sniffy as the historians. It is not within the scope of this survey to discuss its importance as a specialized branch of History; but I am quite sure that the more realistic ways in which Economics is now being taught call

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

imperatively for historical background. As long as the economist was content to move in a realm of abstract and quite unrealistic necessity, it is easy to see why he had no use for Economic History. As soon as he begins to base his study on facts, past facts, as well as present, leap into importance for him — or would, if he only knew them.

Equally Social History is indispensable for the students of Politics and of Sociology — and indeed, Economic History as well. There ought to be much more provision for the teaching of these subjects in Social Studies faculties — for the historians have shown, in most Universities, that they cannot or will not do what is needed. Of course I include World, and not purely British, Economic and Social History : the subject, where it is taught, is often handled to-day with much too insular an approach.

HISTORY AS A SOCIAL STUDY

As for General History teaching in relation to Social Studies, we have found in Oxford to an increasing extent that the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for social students, can be better handled by teachers who combine it with some aspects of Politics (usually the institutional) than by historians mainly engaged in teaching History specialists. The more historical background the student of Politics can get, the better ; but on the whole I think it needs fitting in closely with the study of Political Institutions, rather than teaching as an entirely separate subject.

TYPES OF STUDENTS AND STUDENT-INTERESTS

This survey has of necessity dealt in very broad generalizations. There are so many different groups of students and so many varying university set-ups to be borne in mind that, in a short study covering so enormous a field, nothing else is possible. The students of whom I have most experience fall, broadly, into four groups. I mention this here, because I realize that what I have written may have been influenced unduly by my special interests in these groups, and that there may be other groups, in other Universities,

Essays in Social Theory

of whom I have taken too little account. These four groups are :

1. Ordinary undergraduate students taking Honours degree courses and intending to go thereafter into the Civil Service, or into business, or occasionally into journalism or local government work, or, rather more often, into secondary school teaching.
2. Undergraduate or just graduated students preparing themselves either for academic work in the Social Studies (intra- or extra-mural), or for various kinds of research posts.
3. Students, graduate or undergraduate, or sometimes, when older, technically neither, taking Diploma or Certificate courses, usually with a view to full-time social work, public or private.
4. Students at Ruskin College or the Catholic Workers' College, usually taking the University Diploma in Economics and Political Science, and intending either to return to their previous jobs or to get positions in the working-class movement or in some form of social administration, or in adult education.

Of these four groups, the last of which is peculiar to Oxford, I have had the first and third mainly in mind in this survey. The second, I fully realize, is of primary importance because the maintenance and development of academic standards depend upon it. All the same, it is broadly true that, if we can get the right provision made for the first and third groups, it should not be difficult, in the bigger Universities, to provide adequately for the second. This, however, is not the case where Social Studies departments are small ; and in such cases the student will probably do best to seek his post-graduate preparation at a larger centre.

CURRICULUM

I have said nothing by way of suggesting any definite curriculum because I feel sure that in this respect a wide variety is desirable. Naturally, where a degree course is

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

designed to cover both Economics and Politics and perhaps some grounding in Philosophy as well, the main subjects define themselves without much room for controversy. The student must at any rate take Economic Theory, Economic Organization (or Applied Economics), Social and Political Theory, and Political Institutions, *plus*, if Philosophy is included, Logic or Theory of Knowledge (or General Philosophy from Descartes, or some such course) and Moral Philosophy. This does not leave room for much more ; and personally I favour a wide range of options from which one or two further subjects can be chosen at will. I do not think that, in such a course, either Sociology, or Statistics, or Economic and Social History should necessarily be a compulsory subject, though each has claims and all should of course be included within the range of options. If Philosophy is dropped out, I should favour a compulsory paper on the History of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, with distinct political and economico - social sections, questions to be answered from both. Statistics might also be made compulsory ; but I am doubtful, because it is highly deterrent to a few good students who have wholly failed to learn even elementary Mathematics at school. There is quite as much to be said in favour of a compulsory paper on the Social Relations of Science, historically treated, if only the right persons can be found to teach it. But it may be best to leave both these subjects, with Sociology, as options. In any case, Moral Philosophy, where it is not made a compulsory subject, should be included among the options.

These suggestions rest on the assumption that my preference for a mixed, as against a specialized, first degree course is accepted. Where it is not, and a first degree in Economics alone is made available, I am quite clear that both Statistics and Economic History ought to be compulsory subjects, and that every student ought to take, from a list of options, at least one definitely not economic subject. If a specialized first degree in Politics is offered, it ought to include, besides Political Theory and Political Institutions, papers on Public Administration (including Local Government), Sociology,

Essays in Social Theory

and a period of Modern History, besides a range of options including Law, International Affairs, Social Psychology, Human Geography, and a number of other 'marginal' subjects. A first degree in Sociology (but I hope none will be set up just yet, beyond such as already exist) should clearly include some Economics, with a realistic bias, a broad course of Economic and Social History, Social and Political Theory, and, of course, some Anthropology and Social Psychology.

THE FIRST YEAR

Where specialized first degrees are offered, even more than where the course is mixed, problems arise over the best use of the student's first year. For students of good honours quality nothing can be more disastrous than a first year spent, or largely spent, in doing work at a pass standard, before starting on the honours course.

The situation is not, however, the same for pass-men, or for those whose quality is still unknown. There is, I am sure, a great deal to be said for making the first year at the University, at any rate for 'Arts' students (including those in the Social Studies) a period not of study for any specific, or even mixed, degree course, but rather a general introduction to the problems of the modern world. This, however, will not work unless such a course is both carefully designed, by specialists from a number of fields working together, and taught by really good teachers at a high standard. Without this, it will be 'guff'; and nothing could be worse. Rightly planned and executed, it could be the University's greatest safeguard against the dangers of premature specialization. There should, however, always be provision for students who can prove their capacity to go on at once to honours work to be allowed to do so if they prefer to slip the preliminary general year.

SOCIAL STUDIES AT SCHOOL

This whole question raises, of course, a great many issues, ranging far beyond the Social Studies, which I have

The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities

no space here to discuss. Nor have I space to consider how sixth-form curricula at school need to be fitted into the developing patterns of university education in the Social Studies. On the latter point, however, one or two observations must be briefly made. I am sure it is undesirable to teach elementary Economic Theory at school, unless there is a really competent Economics teacher to do it. Economics, taught badly out of a text-book to schoolboys, is not merely waste of time; it is actively pernicious. Schools should begin rather with Economic and Social History and with current social and economic problems — not with Theory. Politics stand on rather a different footing because they can be related to History teaching, on both the theoretical and the institutional side. But I would much rather teach Politics at the University level to students with a good historical background than to students lacking this, and having instead a nodding acquaintance with text-book Civics and text-book Economics.

THE QUESTION OF BIAS

Finally, there is the question whether such subjects as Economics and Politics can be taught without bias. Of course they cannot, being highly controversial at every point the moment they leave mere facts and invite the student to think. If, however, the question is, not whether bias can be avoided, but whether it can be recognized and counteracted, the answer is different. I have taught students of a wide variety of political and economic opinions over a good many years. I have never made any attempt to conceal my Socialist convictions (and precious little use would it have been for me to try — as little as for Professor Hayek to conceal his very different views). But I should be prepared to stand by the verdict of my students if I appealed to them to say that, whatever their views, I have never sought to convert them or to do anything except help them to go their own way of belief as intelligently as possible. That is a perfectly practicable ideal for the teacher in the Social Studies to pursue; and to pursue it is to give the right

Essays in Social Theory

answer to those who oppose the growth of university teaching in the Social Studies on the ground that impartiality is unattainable. Objectivity, not impartiality, is what the teacher should aim at; and in that there is no valid reason why he should not succeed.

IV

The Aims of Education ¹

THE educational system which we attempt to set up must depend on the kind of society we mean to live in, on the qualities in men and women on which we set the highest value, and on the estimates which we make of the educability both of those who are endowed with the higher intellectual or aesthetic capacities and of ordinary people. If we are planning for a society in which differences of wealth and income will be much smaller than in the past, and movement from one social group to another much easier, we shall evidently have to plan for an educational system which will yield a much higher basic standard of ordinary behaviour and, putting much less emphasis on certain qualities now associated with class-superiority, will aim at equipping the ordinary man or woman to feel much more at home in *any* society than most of them have any chance of feeling at present, except after an awkward period of probation. If we recognize that the underlying conditions of life are bound to be changing very rapidly during the coming generation, and that everyone will have to face the prospect of living in a much less static type of community than in the past, we shall necessarily put more stress on the need for fostering qualities of initiative and adaptability, not only in a few exceptional people marked out for leadership, but in the common run of men and women. If we mean to meet the requirements of such a society, we shall have to consider 'educability' from the widest possible standpoint, so as to include all forms of education that can make people more useful, more appreciative and happier in any walk of life; and we shall have to abandon ideas of 'educability

¹ Originally written in 1942.

Essays in Social Theory

which are really based on considering how far the class-culture of the past is capable, by a process of dilution, of being extended to classes hitherto excluded from it. For this view of educability leads to a vast amount of waste, through attempts to fit square pegs into round holes, and is apt, instead of developing the creative faculties in the people, merely to multiply the quality of appreciation of dying cultures in a mutilated and essentially uncreative way. The problem we have to face now is not merely that of 'diffusing' more widely a culture of which a few are already in possession, but rather that of devising a new mental training appropriate to the needs of the new society in which our children will have to live.

What is wrong with our present civilization in Great Britain and in the Western 'democracies' generally is above all else its uncreativity. It is living on its past; for the creative impulses which are not killed by it find for the most part only a thwarted expression in criticism, often violent, usually pessimistic, and marked as a rule by a failure to feel at home in the world and by a lack of purposiveness. This applies primarily to the class of 'intellectuals'; but the same qualities are present, less obtrusively because they are less articulate, in those who, without being styled 'intellectuals', are the products of a primarily intellectualist training. From University down to primary school, we have no clear conception of the purposes for which education is being carried on. The entire school system, from primary to secondary and 'public' schools, is permeated by a fear of vocationalism which would be laughable if it were not tragic. For the 'culture' which opposes itself to vocational training is in fact in part the survival of a form of preparation for life deemed appropriate for a small leisured class possessed of great power, self-assurance, and certainty of its own superior claims, and in part the outcome of a type of limited vocationalism, directed towards a few of the older professions, which was worked out before the spread of the professional status over a much wider range of callings, and before the advance of science had created a great new range of professions

The Aims of Education

calling for radically different types of training and mental approach.

The effect of the preoccupation of the established educational institutions with the methods of education derived from the needs of a small leisured class and of the older professions was to bring about a dangerous and harmful divorce between scientific and cultural education, and to encourage undue specialization among those who were receiving a scientific training. The concern for the dead languages among those who believed themselves to be the guardians of culture has both stood in the way of good teaching of living languages — which the small upper class used to learn by extensive foreign travel — and made the divorce between scientific and literary education much greater than it need or should have been.

Apart from all this, our system of subsidized education for the many grew up at a time when cheapness was regarded as an outstanding merit, and the keeping down of public expenditure ranked among statesmen as a cardinal virtue. The consequence was seen first in the monitorial system, which involved learning by rote, and then in the pupil-teacher system which gradually replaced it in our elementary schools. We have never grown out of the notion that the teaching of 'inferior' persons is a profession which can suitably be practised by inferior persons, themselves the recipients of an education greatly inferior to that demanded for the successful practice of the higher professions. This in turn has led to a segregation of teachers in training from other groups receiving higher education, and to a persistent attempt to conduct the training of teachers on the 'cheap and nasty' principle, imitated from the earlier efforts at mass-production of textiles under the factory system.

There have, of course, been from the first counter-tendencies (Robert Owen's work at New Lanark may be cited as an early example); but in general the aim of public education remained for a long time that of turning out by mass-production adolescents who would meet the minimum requirements of the developing industrial system and would

Essays in Social Theory

be able, by bare knowledge of the 'Three R's', to 'manage without making themselves nuisances in a community increasingly dependent on elementary calculation and on the written word. There was, at any rate, until 1902, almost no attempt to educate for *citizenship* in any active sense, save where sporadically particular local authorities strained the provisions of the Elementary Education Acts to provide higher types of schooling — and even these attempts were very often so made as to select scholars more on a basis of class-differentiation than on one of personal capacity or potential usefulness. There was an immense gulf between the education provided in the 'public' schools, designed to foster qualities of leadership and initiative, and in their preparatory agencies, and that given to the general run of the citizens wholly or partly at the public expense.

The development of public secondary education after 1902 — and much more after 1918 — did something to break down the sharp separation between upper- and lower-class education. It did this most in the Universities; and the rapid growth of the newer Universities was a clear sign of what was happening. But both public Secondary Schools and the newer Universities were too apt to imitate the traditions and methods of the older 'public' schools and of the older Universities, instead of striking out for themselves on lines more in harmony with the needs of a more democratic age. This was in the main not their fault. It was forced upon them, partly by the examination system, but even more by the class-structure of a society in which getting a secondary or a university education was bound to be regarded by many scholars and by their parents primarily as a means of climbing from a lower to a higher social class.

Thus, in the big extension which has taken place in the range of secondary and university education during the past fifty, and especially during the past thirty, years, the emphasis has been wrong. Stress has been laid on the patterns of culture derived from the narrow class-education of the preceding generation, and there has been too little attempt to work out new patterns appropriate to the wider diffusion

The Aims of Education

of the opportunities for higher education, or to the changes in the distribution of wealth, political power, and personal fitness. Especially, the social content of education has undergone a progressive deterioration, despite such excrescences as the development of classes in 'Civics' and kindred subjects. The followers of Dr. Arnold knew what they wanted, and went for it fearlessly — the training of a class of leaders deeply imbued with Christian principles and conscious of their mission to act as guides and initiators for a society which was not meant to be democratic, but only *bourgeois*. The followers of these followers lost the faith in this limited type of education, and began to profess more democratic ideals. But they did not go in their minds the whole way towards democracy. They continued to predicate a society divided into classes, but with much freer movement of selected individuals from the lower to the higher groups. No longer aiming clearly at the education of a pre-selected ruling class, and not prepared to discard the conception of such a class, they were driven to a deplorably individualist attempt at selection of the right individuals for promotion from class to class, and lost the collective purpose of turning out a body of initiators and leaders possessed of a common driving force based on a community of faith and social purpose. Education under these conditions became more individualistic as society itself became less so ; and a growing divergence developed between the quality of education and the quality of the life for which boys and girls were supposed to be receiving preparation at schools of the higher types.

In the meantime, primary education was held back most of all by two limitations — the shortcomings and inferior training of the teachers to whom it was entrusted, and the excessive burdens thrust upon these teachers in the interests of public 'economy'. Over and above this, it was unavoidable, in view of the selective quality of the provision for higher education, that the primary school should be regarded less as an instrument for the education of *all* up to a certain age or standard than as the means of enabling a minority to qualify for admission to places of higher educa-

Essays in Social Theory

tion, and thus to raise themselves in the social scale. This alone would have been enough to prevent the primary school from fulfilling its proper function of doing the best by *all* its pupils; but the vice was greatly exaggerated by the undue size of classes, which made it impossible for teachers to give much attention to their more forward pupils without ignoring the others. Moreover, the types of training given to the teachers caused them to be much better at 'spotting' those kinds of forwardness which were primarily literary than others which manifested themselves in artistic or manual ability; and the narrowness of the teachers' own life and upbringing thus induced a corresponding narrowness not only in what they were able to impart, but also in the qualities they were able to recognize in their pupils. It was a further calamity that the cheapness of women's labour caused elementary teaching to become mainly a women's occupation — a calamity not because women are inferior to men, but because the education hitherto deemed appropriate to women has included much too little in the way of craftsmanship or manual dexterity to endow most of them with the capacity to recognize or foster these qualities in others.

Closely connected with these vices of the system of elementary education is the sharp cleavage between general and technical education, and therewith the failure to give technical education a prominence or a status at all corresponding to the importance of technique in the world of to-day. In earlier periods, the boy picked up his technical training mainly by way of apprenticeship. But in one trade after another apprenticeship has been dying out; and even where it remains in being, the opportunities for the apprentice to get an all-round craft training are often very greatly restricted by the growth of departmental specialization and mass-production. Moreover, a large part of the essential technique of many modern crafts is not of such a kind that it can be picked up in the workshop. It calls for institutional instruction, not only manual, but also mathematical, scientific, and theoretical. These latter needs are supposed to be met by the provision of Technical Colleges, Technical

The Aims of Education

Schools, and evening classes of various types. But Technical Colleges and Schools are spread very unevenly over the country, are often very badly equipped, and touch in any case only the fringe of the problem; and it is out of the question for any except the most intelligent — and then only if they have great physical endurance — to get what is needed out of spare-time instruction after they have done a full day's work.

Technical education has, in addition, been hampered by a continual conflict between its claims and those of 'general' education. Growing up largely as an excrescence on an educational system conceived mainly in terms of the Three R's, *plus* culture for a selected few, it has been often unduly narrow in its methods; and the right combinations of technical and general education have seldom been provided. The main body of school teachers, backed by most of the lay enthusiasts for education, have insisted that the provision made for general and cultural education for the common run of boys and girls is all too scanty, and that any attempt to impose added burdens of vocational pre-instruction will utterly overweight the curriculum. They have therefore usually fought against attempts to introduce a technical-vocational bias into the general scheme of public instruction, and have thus helped to increase the isolation of technical education, and to give it a more 'uncultural' character than it need have assumed.

It is, indeed, clearly impossible to introduce a technical-vocational element into our common schools (primary or 'modern') as they are without causing the pupils to go even shorter than they do already of the essential cultural basis for successful and happy living in a democratic society. The problem is insoluble within the limits of the existing system, or without the continuance of education *for all* beyond the present leaving age. Only when we envisage the school life as extending much further than it does now for the great majority of pupils, can we hope so to enlarge the content of education as to give the right kinds of vocational preparation for life without diminishing the dose of 'culture'.

Essays in Social Theory

But this quantitative way of regarding the problem, though it embodies an important part of the truth, is misleading if it is considered alone. What is really needed is not to add technical-vocational education on to 'cultural' education, but in doing so to endow technical-vocational education itself with a higher cultural quality. The cultural value of education resides not only in what is taught, but at least equally in the way in which the teaching is done. Technical and vocational 'subjects' can be made quite as creative instruments for the imparting of culture as what are called 'cultural subjects', if only they are taught in the right way, and by teachers who are themselves cultured, and not mere specialists. There is, of course, a very important range of general knowledge, apart from vocational knowledge, that must be acquired by every boy or girl who is to feel at home in the world and is not to become a nuisance to others. But it is a mistake to link up this essential general knowledge exclusively with the literary side of education, and not to relate it as closely as possible to the technical-vocational side as well.

I should like to make as clear as I can what I mean by this insistence on the technical-vocational side of education. It is often argued that, under modern conditions of production, so little skill is required in the general run of industrial and commercial processes that there is much less room than there used to be for vocational training, and that the great majority of those leaving school for industry will not, in fact, need to be trained in any particular types of skill, or have any opportunity of using such skill if they are encouraged to acquire it. I believe this view to be mistaken, or, at any rate, open to misunderstanding. In the first place, it is easy to exaggerate the extent of the disappearance of skill from industry by concentrating undue attention on a limited number of mass-production factories and leaving out of account the much larger numbers of workers who continue to be employed in relatively small establishments. The proportionate need for skill is, no doubt, diminishing, but not nearly so fast as those who think in terms of great

The Aims of Education

mass-production establishments are apt to imagine; and there are, in fact, in the smaller establishments a great many openings for skilled work, especially in quite small-scale employment, for example in garages, on jobbing electrical and building work, and in many other occupations in which it is still possible for a man either to start up for himself in a small way or to work in a small producing unit which calls for a fairly wide range of diversified skill and dexterity. There is also much greater need than ever for the training of a limited number of persons to a very high degree of skill, as mass-production tends to call for higher types of skill from the skilled workers whom it does require than were demanded from the majority of those who were previously classified as skilled workers.

There is, however, a point of much greater substance than this. Even if it is true that the amount of skill required of the great majority of workers is diminishing, and that most jobs in factories can be picked up fairly quickly and with relatively little training, it remains true that it is of great importance to equip the workers who are to operate these jobs with what may be called a general 'machine sense'. This is important both for the avoidance of accidents and for the pace of work that can be secured without over-strain, and also because the possession of this machine sense gives the operative far better opportunities of changing from job to job and avoiding being tied down to a single monotonous routine occupation. I believe it is of great importance to encourage this mobility of labour and that the importance increases as more jobs become monotonous and each job calls for only a narrow range of skill or dexterity.

What I have in mind, then, in advocating a larger technical-vocational element in our general system of education, and in urging that this element should itself be imbued with a more cultural quality, is not so much to advocate training in specific crafts — except for a minority, and at a quite late stage of their education — as to urge the importance of a much more generalized education of our youth in machine sense and manual dexterity, capable of being applied over a

Essays in Social Theory

wide range of different occupations. I believe that this is desirable not only in relation to the occupational future of those entering industry but, even more, from the human point of view, because I believe that in a high proportion of young people education in the creative use of the hands has an important influence on character and tends — in the right combination with book-learning — to foster qualities of initiative and personal self-expression which are in danger of being killed by a lop-sided system of education in conjunction with the growth of monotony in many industrial operations. I stress this point because I find that so often the advocacy of education in the use of the hands is misinterpreted as meaning nothing more than education for a specific trade; whereas what I have in mind is not only giving to the boy or girl a wider opportunity for choice of job when they have reached adult life, but, equally, an education which will minister to happiness through the creative use of leisure. I believe that anyone who knows how to use his or her hands has much more chance of having a happy and pleasant home, and of being well-balanced in his or her own mind, than those who have been trained exclusively on more narrowly 'cultural' lines, in the traditional use of the term.

I am writing on the assumption that this picture of things as they have been will be radically altered in the near future, not only by the effects of raising the school-leaving age to 15, without any exemptions for 'beneficial employment', and also as speedily as possible to 16, but also by the institution of compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18, and by a considerable increase in the amount of full-time education beyond 16. I want the leaving age to go to 16 as soon as possible; but I am inclined to regard the extension of part-time education to 18 as having priority because it seems to me vital that, as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, the educational process shall continue for all through the key years of adolescence, and, from another aspect, through the years during which those who have entered industry are learning their several trades and

The Aims of Education

getting their practical experience of the conditions of work-shop life. Only by this extension of part-time education to 18 can it be made possible either to reinstate apprenticeship (combined with institutional instruction) on a foundation suited to the structure of modern industry, or to make the right links between school education and adult education, which at present suffers terribly from the gap between the age at which school instruction ends and the suitable age for admission to adult classes or groups.

It therefore seems to me that the thinking out in the right way of the implications of a system of compulsory part-time education up to 18 is the correct starting-point for a general survey of possible next steps in educational reform. Our schools, both primary and secondary (in the present sense) will have to be planned to meet the needs not of a body of school-leavers or of a selected few who are to go up higher on account of special qualities, but of a general body of boys and girls who, for the next few years, will be combining part-time school education with industrial or some other form of 'gainful' employment.

What is it, then, that we want these new part-time County Colleges to do for the adolescents between the school-leaving age and 18? In part, we want these new institutions to help them to learn their jobs better -- which means not merely to acquire a higher manual dexterity, but also to understand them, and fit themselves for taking an intelligent interest in the progress of the establishments in which they are employed -- and also, incidentally, to fit themselves for promotion, where they are suitable, to higher types of work. That is one object. But we also want these County Colleges to bring up boys and girls in the arts of good living -- to give them an understanding of the proper care of body and mind, to teach them the facts of adolescence and of manhood or womanhood, and to help them to manage their homes, their incomes, their children, better when the time comes, and to make the best uses of their leisure both at once and later in life. That is a second object; and it is closely connected with a third -- which is to make them

Essays in Social Theory

better citizens, with a higher consciousness of moral obligations to others and a better sense of the powers and responsibilities of citizenship in national and local government, and of social behaviour in Trade Unions, Churches, Clubs, and all the other bodies in which they will have, happily or unhappily, to collaborate with groups of their fellow-men.

The pupils in these part-time 'Colleges', it must always be borne in mind, will be at the same time workers, earning their own livings at least in part, and it will be not only impossible, but also *highly undesirable*, to treat them as school children in any ordinary sense. The ordinary school child, when at school, is isolated from the rest of the community. The school is a place apart, and the child's life is in the main divided between school and home. This isolation of the school is, however, precisely what should be most avoided in the case of part-time continued education. The County College should be treated, not as a place apart, but as one element in the public provision made for the adolescent. It should be linked as closely as possible not only with the institutions designed for the recreation and the pursuit of physical fitness of youth, but also with institutions which will lead the adolescent on to adult activities with the least possible break in continuity. For this purpose, it should be built, wherever possible, close to the Technical College, the Public Library or a branch of it, the Community Centre, and other institutions resorted to by adults as well as adolescents. The voluntary bodies dealing with both adolescents and adults should be given full access to it, and facilities for meeting on its premises. There should be some sort of special Citizens' Advice Bureau for adolescents attached to it, and special care should be taken to provide advice and help about questions of health, mental as well as physical.

In terms of bricks and mortar and open space, what I am envisaging is an area large enough to provide, wherever possible, space for playing-fields covering a wide range of recreations, and studded about this area a group of buildings of which the County College would be one, and the Branch

The Aims of Education

Library another, the rest depending on the possibilities of each particular area — a 'Technical College or School in some cases, a Community Centre or Village Hall in others, sometimes a full-time Grammar or Multilateral School, and so on, according to opportunity. I particularly want this complex of buildings to house a mixture of adolescent and adult activities, and to connect itself as closely as possible with the general life of the community, and not exclusively with education in any formal sense. Moreover, I want these institutions to have links beyond those of mere physical continuity — to engage in joint activities and contests, and to encourage individual mixing up between their several groups of 'consumers'. I want the County College to be in these ways, as well as in its formal instruction, a school of citizenship and democracy.

Consider now how such an institution as has been suggested would fit into a general plan of school education. The general plan of full-time education for all would be based on the triple provision of Nursery Schools, Primary Schools, and Secondary Schools (usually up to at least 16). The combined curriculum of these three institutions would be *preparatory* to the work to be done in the County College, as well as to the entry into gainful employment. Schools would no longer be expected to *complete* the formal education of the ordinary boy or girl; and their freedom of manœuvre in respect of curricula and educational content would be at once greatly increased. But it would remain essential for them to do everything they could to discover before their pupils left at 16 *what occupations they had better enter*.

This is a vitally important point; for it makes dead against the notion that education at least up to 15 should consist mainly of the Three R's *plus* trimmings, and that anything connected with vocational education should be pushed on to later years. It is no doubt desirable to defer as long as possible a binding decision about the precise trade which an adolescent is to enter; but a very important object of full-time schooling should be to discover, by practical experiment, in what type of occupation he or she is likely

Essays in Social Theory

to find the best prospect of happiness and success. Indeed, to tackle this problem effectively is the most important of all the functions of the school which caters for boys and girls between 11 and 15.

The other side of this medal is that it is a great mistake to think of the County College, which will cater for those between 15 or 16 and 18, as concerned mainly with technical education. That is one of its functions, but at least equally important is its civic function of preparing the adolescent for the adult business of living, both private and collective. 'Bias', towards this or that group of occupations, has its rightful place in the Secondary School, as leading up to a definite choice of occupation. 'Culture', as an equipment for the art of living, has its appropriate and essential place in the County College, as regards all those cultural attainments which cannot be acquired before adolescence has been reached.

Naturally, I do not want the Secondary School to become a place of training for a particular occupation. But this must not be taken as excluding in such schools a vocational bias broadly corresponding to the structure of local industries — provided that the education is made of such a character as to keep open the widest practicable choice of employment for the individual. When an area is largely specialized to a particular industry or group of trades, it is natural and desirable that its Secondary Schools should be regarded, from one aspect, as instruments of preparation for entry into these trades. The exclusive dependence of any area on the fortunes of a single industry is no doubt to be avoided, wherever possible; but that is not primarily an educational question, and schools have in practice to adjust themselves to the local openings for employment, whether these offer a wide or a narrow range of choice.

If the Secondary School, modern, technical, or multi-lateral, is to bear the main responsibility for guiding its pupils towards the available employments in which they are likely to be happiest and most productive, it follows that considerable attention must be paid in it to the manual bents

The Aims of Education

of its pupils as well as to their gifts for 'book-learning'. Important conclusions follow about the qualities required in the teaching staffs of such schools, and about the dangers of isolating pupils at an age below 16 in specialized 'Technical or Trade Schools' designed to prepare them for a particular trade or industry. The specialized Trade School for pupils of any age is acceptable only if it forms in effect part of a complex of institutions with a much wider range, and if it is easy at any stage for individual pupils to transfer from it to a school which will prepare them for some other type of employment. Indeed, they must be able not only to transfer when they are clear that the first choice of specialization has been a mistake, but also to experiment in alternative techniques before making a definite decision to transfer. This need reinforces the case for Multilateral Schools or Polytechnics, as against specialized 'Trade Schools', or at the very least for the grouping together of schools preparing for different occupations, in order to make it as easy as possible to experiment in alternative courses of training, and to change the specific forms of training without an upheaval in the social life of the pupil, and without the necessity of breaking old and forming new friendships.

I believe firmly, wherever possible, in the multilateral type of Secondary School, as well as in Polytechnics for evening and part-time instruction. The case for the Multilateral School depends not only on the desirability of making transference easy from one kind of training to another, but also on the undesirability of isolating socially those who are training themselves for a single occupation or group of occupations. An essential part of the process of democratic education is the social mixing of those who intend to follow different walks in life; and this should be a governing consideration in the drafting of *all* educational plans.

If the Secondary School and the part-time County College are to fulfil the *social* purposes which have been suggested for them, they must have teaching staffs capable of carrying on the types of education that are required. Thus, the Secondary School must have on its staff an

Essays in Social Theory

adequate number of persons who are equipped to handle the problems of vocational selection, and indeed the entire full-time staff must be trained to regard the educational process largely from this point of view. This implies a higher degree of manual dexterity and acquaintance with manual crafts among secondary school teachers than are now required. It means that the manual side of education must not be left to specialist craft teachers who have little or nothing to do with the general education of the pupils, or with the moral side of their instruction. There follow very important consequences concerning the right selection and training of the teachers themselves.

Correspondingly, the teachers in part-time County Colleges will need high qualities of intellectual and social comprehension, as it is on them, pre-eminently, that the tasks of training in the arts of citizenship will be bound to fall. They will need also to be well acquainted with the physical and moral problems of the adolescent, in order to be able to give the right guidance during the critical years when the boys and girls are simultaneously finding their feet in industry or other employment, and learning to adapt themselves to the critical life-changes of adolescence.

Throughout the proposed system of schools, the provision of the right types of teachers will be a matter of crucial importance. I believe the present methods of supplying the demand for teachers to be, in many respects, extremely unfortunate and misconceived. It seems to me highly undesirable on social grounds to *isolate* those who are to become teachers, during their period of training, in a specialized institution consisting wholly of teachers in training, instructed wholly by persons wholly engaged in training teachers, and cooped up residentially in a sort of teachers' monkey-house apart from ordinary human beings who propose to follow other occupations. The life of the teacher is in any event so abnormal, and the relation of superiority of teacher to pupil so dangerous to human qualities of poise and social adaptability, that to isolate the teacher during the period of training is highly unfavourable

The Aims of Education

to the broad human basis which is needed in an educational system designed to foster the creative qualities essential to a progressive democratic community. I confess I should like to see teachers' training colleges entirely abolished, or rather converted from institutions designed exclusively for training teachers into institutions in which young men and women would find opportunities for preparation for many different kinds of social and cultural work, including teaching, and would be able to postpone to the latest possible moment a definite choice between the alternatives open to them. This, of course, does not apply to post-graduate institutions for the training of teachers forming really integrated parts of a University, as these do not, in the same way, isolate the teachers from those preparing for other careers, nor need they involve a premature choice of profession.

But, if teachers are not to be trained in separate training colleges, designed exclusively for them, where are they to be trained? It is impracticable to suggest that they should at once all go to a University or higher Technical Institute and take a three years' degree course, to be followed by a period of specialized training in a university education department. I am sure that this is what ought to happen in the long run, although I am not unmindful that it involves very large changes in the practice and attitude of the Universities, and in their entire relation to the general system of education and to society as a whole. But I do not regard these changes as impracticable, and I do place a high value on the standards which the Universities endeavour to maintain, even though these standards are often at present based on obsolete ideas of what education ought to be. What I feel quite sure about is that there should be a complete discontinuance of the system by which, with or without formal compulsion, money grants are given to enable adolescents to proceed to a University or to any other place of non-graduate education on the understanding that they will thereafter become teachers. No one should decide to be a teacher without first experimenting in actual teaching, or until well on in a university degree course or in some other *non-specialized* course of

Essays in Social Theory

higher education. Choice of occupation should be deferred to the latest possible moment ; and it is a form of murder to tie people down at an early stage to occupations for which they may find themselves wholly unsuited even before their training is complete.

It is, however, both impracticable and undesirable at present to insist on a university degree course for all prospective teachers, as this could not yet be done without a disastrous lowering of the standards of university education, or without modifications in the attitude of the Universities towards the educational problem as a whole which most university teachers are at present by no means ready to accept. The Universities, as they are, would be swamped if they were forced to take on so colossal a job. Nor are they at present equipped to undertake it, even apart from the problem of numbers. It seems to me that, for the time being, the only practicable solution is to establish a considerable number of Local Colleges, preferably affiliated to Universities under a regional system, though not forming part of them. These Local Colleges or Federations of Colleges should be, not specialized institutions for the training of teachers, but *general* Colleges, in which prospective teachers would be mingled with students preparing for many other occupations. In some cases they could be based on existing 'Teachers' Training Colleges, and in others on existing 'Technical or Commercial Colleges under trust or municipal auspices. In yet other cases they could be new institutions, perhaps taking over the buildings and endowments of obsolete 'public' schools situated in or near towns. What is essential is that they should be '*universitates*', if in a junior sense, preparing students for many walks in life, and leaving the committal choice between alternative occupations to the latest possible moment.

This proposal includes, but is very much wider than, the proposal that prospective teachers and prospective youth leaders and organizers and social workers of many kinds should be educated together — or rather, that adolescents intended for any of these occupations should begin their

The Aims of Education

college courses in common, any specialized instruction dependent on choice of occupation being given later in the course — except that opportunities would be given early to *sample* the more specialized forms of training as a help towards choice. A common basis of college education for all types of social and administrative work would be a big advance on what happens now ; but it is highly undesirable that social workers, public servants in local or central administration, and teachers, who have many common temptations to abnormality, should be educated apart from persons who are destined for quite different types of occupation.

I am sure that this problem of the education of teachers holds a key position in the working out of future educational plans. For, as long as the teachers are trained apart, it will remain impossible to secure that integration of the processes of education with the general life of the community which is needed for healthy and creative citizenship.

I fully expect that many elementary teachers (and some teachers of such teachers) will resent what I have been saying, under the impression that it is meant as an attack on the teaching profession. It *is* meant as an attack on the practice of training teachers in institutions designed exclusively for that purpose, and still more on the conditions which compel adolescents to decide to be teachers without any opportunity of finding out whether they are likely to be good at the job or happy in it. But it is not meant as an attack on the teachers, in any other sense than that which regards them, unless they possess very high qualities of personal ability to rise above their surroundings, as the victims of a pernicious and soul-destroying system. Many elementary teachers have risen quite wonderfully above the abominable conditions of their preparation for their careers, and have done marvels in recent years towards raising the imaginative standards of teaching in the Elementary Schools. But that does not alter the fact that it is contrary to all sound precept and to ordinary common sense either to require them to destine themselves for teaching at an age when most

Essays in Social Theory

of them cannot possibly tell whether they will like it or be good at it, or to huddle them up with other prospective teachers at a time when they ought to be gaining as much experience as possible of the world, and rubbing shoulders as far as possible with all sorts and conditions of men.

This problem of providing the right sorts of teachers and equipping them humanly as well as educationally with the right outlook must be tackled early because training takes a long time (and should take considerably longer than is usually allowed for it), and because the success or failure of the new Secondary Schools and part-time County Colleges will depend very greatly on the quality and attitude of the teachers who are put to teach in them during the critical years while their standards and traditions are being formed. If the new schools and County Colleges are started with the wrong sorts of teachers, and are allowed to acquire the wrong traditions, they will be a disastrous failure, and, far from serving as nurseries of democracy and creative capacity, will nourish anti-social discontents analogous to those which went in Italy and Germany to the making of Fascist reaction.

I do not believe that the problems of curricula in any type of school can be fruitfully approached except against some background of general educational purpose such as I am attempting to paint in this essay. Until we have made up our minds pretty clearly what we propose to educate our children *for*, at each important stage of life, we cannot possibly get far towards deciding what we ought to educate them *in*. In what I have written I have postulated education for *active and co-operative democracy*, to be shared in by as large a proportion as possible of the whole number of citizens; and the practical conclusions I have drawn are all, in my mind, directly related to this overriding purpose.

Before I finish, I want to come back to this fundamental issue, and to approach it by a somewhat different route. I shall therefore risk exposing myself to derisive criticism, by endeavouring to define the essential content of the active democratic education which I envisage. The definition will necessarily be very rough and provisional, but it will, I hope,

The Aims of Education

relate itself clearly to what I have written about the various types of public educational *institutions* and about their place in a reformed system of education.

I suggest, then, that the outstanding purpose of our system of public education should be to prepare our children for active and co-operative democratic citizenship in an age dominated by the development of new scientific techniques, which are continually threatening to outgrow our collective capacity for controlling their use. I suggest that an education having this purpose should be so designed as to meet the following six groups of needs :

I. COMMON CONVENIENCE, or PREVENTION OF NUISANCE.

It should be designed to put every boy and girl in possession of such knowledge, adaptability, initiative, and presence of mind as will enable them to get through life without being nuisances to themselves or to others, without being embarrassed by their ignorance of essential things and procedures, and without being prevented by sheer incompetence from acting in common with neighbours or workmates in those affairs which call for group action or deliberation.

Forexample, everyone — boy or girl -- should be able to :

Read easily, write intelligibly, do ordinary sums and accounts ;

Take reasonable care of his or her health, understand the elementary rules of diet, and keep his or her person clean and neat ;

Behave with common politeness, keep his or her temper under ordinary provocation, and sing in tune (unless nature has decreed otherwise) ;

Know how to keep quiet, be reasonably tidy in domestic habits, be tolerably punctual and regular ;

Sew on a button, darn a stocking, mend a bicycle puncture ;

Knock in a nail, fix a tap-washer or fuse-wire, turn off the gas or water or electricity at the main ;

Boil an egg, fry a sausage or a herring, lay a table ;

Make a bed, clean a room properly, lay a fire ;

Essays in Social Theory

Use the telephone, look up a train, pack a trunk or a parcel ;

Shop sensibly, do simple gardening, change a baby ;

Know the essential facts of sex ; do first aid ;

Fill up a sensibly drafted form correctly, make a simple speech, behave sensibly at a meeting.

2. **COMMON SERVICE, or FROM EACH ACCORDING TO HIS CAPACITIES.** The educational system should be designed to equip every boy and girl, within the limits of their physical and mental capacities, to earn their own livings and to serve the community as well as themselves according to their several qualifications, with the minimum of misfits and waste of talent.

For example, education should pay special attention to :

Finding out the capacities and bents of each boy and girl as far as they minister to the needs of production and service ;

Giving the best possible help and guidance in the choice of a vocation ;

Providing as much scope as possible for change of vocation, and for re-training, where initial mistakes are made, or where demand alters ;

Allowing for late development by providing for the needs of adults as well as children and adolescents ;

Supplying ' refresher ' courses in order that old knowledge may be kept fresh, and new knowledge be acquired to meet changing needs ;

Imbuing the processes of technical instruction with social as well as merely individual meaning ;

Combining institutional instruction with gainful employment so as to make each help the other, and help towards an understanding of the other.

3. **ENJOYMENT AND APPRECIATION, or TO 'ET ZHN in its private aspect.** The educational system should be designed to equip every boy and girl, according to their several bents and capacities, with the means of making

The Aims of Education

the most satisfying use of leisure, both creatively and by the appreciation of good things that can be put within their reach.

For example, everyone should have a chance of showing whether they can enjoy :

Reading, original writing ;

Study of a literary kind as distinct from mere reading, probably leading on to research at a later stage ;

Drawing, painting ;

Playing a musical instrument ; or singing solo or in a choir ;

Acting ;

Taking part in athletic sports and games ;

Learning a manual craft, not professionally, but as a leisure occupation ;

Tinkering with machines, again not professionally ;

Going abroad ; mixing with foreigners ; and learning foreign languages conversationally ;

Hiking and camping out ;

Organizing things — and people.

4. SOCIAL MORALITY, or SENTIMENT OF COMMUNITY. 'The educational system should be designed to endow every boy and girl with a sufficient basis of common moral sentiment and belief to enable the largest possible proportion of them to live in harmony with the society to which they belong, and to contribute actively to its development. (For without this there is no community, no power to achieve collective greatness, no concerted will to resist attack on the essential social values.)

NOTE. In the modern world religion is unable to supply this common basis of sentiment and belief ; and the decay of religion has left a moral void, which has to be filled by conscious education in social morality. This implies two things : (1) that education must be relative, in this aspect, to the social order in which it is set, and (2) that moral teaching must be social teaching, and must be,

Essays in Social Theory

not a separate 'subject', but a spirit infusing the teaching of all subjects. Its attachment to the teaching of religion as now practised in schools (where it is largely taught by irreligious teachers) drags down moral teaching to the low level of compulsory 'religious' instruction.

5. PERSONAL AND GROUP INITIATIVE, or DEMOCRATIC CREATIVENESS. The educational system should be designed to foster in every boy and girl habits of self-reliance and initiative, and so to develop the critical faculties as not to undermine the basis of common sentiment and belief.

NOTE. Mere intellectualism is apt to foster a critical spirit which, accepting no standards, leads to pessimism, egoism, and practical inefficiency. When this type of intellectualism infects the teachers, it is passed on to the pupils in a diluted form, with disastrous consequences.

6. COMMON STANDARDS, or SOCIAL EQUALITY. The educational system should be designed to assimilate social habits of speech, dress, and common behaviour to the highest attainable standards, without destroying local or national variations, and without imposing conformities which are not necessary for convenience of social intercourse, or narrowing the opportunities for the expression of individual character.

For example,

An educated man should be able to marry his cook, and *vice versa*, without the probability of clashes of social behaviour ;

There should be no difficulty about sending a dock labourer's son to Eton ;

No one should mind how anyone else dresses, subject to the claims of decency ;

Proletarianism, as well as snobbery, should become out of date.

An Essay on Social Morality

THE world is not arranged to suit man's convenience. There is no 'invisible hand' which ensures that each man, in seeking his own good, as he sees it, shall further the good of all: nor is there any assurance that the diverse ends by which men set store shall be fully compatible one with another. Men have to arrange the world: it is not arranged for them, nor is their path plainly marked out for them beyond a peradventure. They can differ about ends, as well as about means, not only because some men will good more than evil and others evil more than good, but also because different men, and different communities, set store by different things, or at all events put varying valuations upon them. There is no certainty that all good men will come to agree if only they argue long enough with open minds. There is, in human affairs, no absolutely demonstrable right course to follow among the many combinations that are possible on the basis of a given situation.

Yet there are some things that can be excluded as wrong, even if no one course can be plainly marked out as right. This wrongness is of two kinds. Some ends and some courses of action are ethically wrong, so that to-day in civilized countries only evil or deluded human beings can pursue them. To this category belong the exaltation of war as a thing good in itself or ennobling to participants in it; the will to exercise domination over other peoples, not as a necessary evil, but as an end in itself; the suppression of free speech and freedom of organization, again not as a necessary evil in a dire emergency, but as a means of ensuring uniformity and ready acquiescence in the ends of the ruling group; the encouragement in men of primitive passions such as hatred or contempt of foreigners in general, or of

¹ Originally written in 1941.

Essays in Social Theory

any particular kind of foreigner; and last, but not least, action based on an attempt to defeat reason rather than to increase its hold on men's minds.

These are all examples of actions or policies which are morally wrong, and can be justified, if at all, only on the plea that a small dose of one of them is necessary in order to prevent a greater evil — itself an exceedingly dangerous plea. Side by side with these morally wrong actions and policies there are others which are wrong, not because they affront morality, but because they fly in the face of inescapable facts. Thus, it is wrong, but not morally wrong, to struggle for the restoration of *laissez-faire* in the economic world, because *laissez-faire* is plainly incompatible with the conditions of mass-production which modern technology has brought into being — so that, instead of *laissez-faire*, those who struggle for it get for master unregulated Monopoly Capitalism. It is wrong, but not morally wrong, to attempt to bring about a return to the complete and independent State Sovereignty of the separate nations of Europe, because these nominally independent States are bound, under the conditions of modern military and economic technique, to be for the most part incapable of self-defence, and so to become the victims of their greater neighbours, and also because such States are incapable of developing economic policies which will enable the growing forces of production to be effectively used for raising the general standards of life among the peoples. It is man's moral duty to be good: it is further his rational duty to be sensible and not to pursue courses of action which do not harmonize with the objective facts he has to deal with.

I stress this dual character of 'wrong' because a great deal of nonsense has been talked by persons who are determined to resolve the one kind into the other, on the plea of being 'scientific' instead of 'metaphysical'. It is not 'metaphysics', but plain common sense, that every man who is not out of his mind has in him the conceptions of moral right and wrong, however difficult he may sometimes find it to apply them in practice. The very growth of human

An Essay on Social Morality

civilization is, in one of its aspects, the growth of this consciousness of right and wrong, and of collective sensibleness in applying it. It is true enough that from generation to generation the designations of particular actions as morally right and wrong change, and that between widely differing societies there are very wide differences in the application of the ideas of good and evil. But why not? Such differences are entirely natural, in a world not made for man ready and complete, but subject to his own influence as a shaper of his material and mental environment. What particular things men deem good and evil depends on the type, and on the degree of advancement, of the society they live in. In effect, their complex notions of good and evil at any time and in any place are an important element in their social heritage. They build their notions of good and evil as they build cities, laws, and constitutions, and ways of living in general. The growth of civilization is this process of building, moral as well as material -- a building of ideas as well as of brick or stone, a building in which ideas are embodied in brick or stone, and brick or stone made into means of expressing and perpetuating men's ideas of the art of life.

The continuity of a civilization depends on its success in accumulating from generation to generation its collective experience in the arts of building, both physically and in the minds of its citizens. It is of vital importance that no successful step once taken in building up the idea of good and evil in men's minds shall be retraced. The precise denotation of the things called good will change as circumstances change: the connotations of the words used to express different aspects of goodness will grow wider and deeper. But the ideas behind the words will never, in a continuing civilization, lose 'weight' or meaning: on the contrary, they will be always 'putting on weight' until each idea has reached the full dimensions of which it is capable. A continuing civilization will never without disaster wholly discard an idea of good or evil, or suffer it to decay; but equally it will not let such ideas become ossified or lose

Essays in Social Theory

their capacity for growth and change. The applications of ideas of good and evil must continually change; but this process must be, in a living civilization, not a series of jumps from one application to another, but a continuous adaptation to changing needs and growing knowledge.

Consider in this light the moral ideas mentioned a page or two ago. The civilization we live in long ago banished private wars, save in its remoter backwoods; and from the conception of a nation-wide civil order it has been advancing gradually to the conception that all wars between nations are an outrage on human decency. All wars, that is, save wars of defence forced upon men by an 'aggression' which civilized beings have been learning to regard as immoral and wrong absolutely — though I do not suggest that this lesson has yet been at all completely learnt.

Similarly, the common conscience of our developing civilization has been learning to regard as morally wrong the domination of one people over another — though in this lesson it has advanced less far, and is still apt to regard continuing domination as defensible by prescriptive right, even while it condemns attempts to establish new dominations. Witness the difference in the ordinary educated Englishman's attitude to British rule in Malaya and to Italian rule in Ethiopia. Yet, even in relation to Malaya or the African colonies, public opinion has advanced far enough for it to be necessary for imperialists to assert that subject countries are being ruled for the advantage of their peoples, and not merely by the right of the stronger.

Take, again, the question of free speech and freedom of organization. It is not much more than a century (and much less in many countries of Western Europe) since the governing classes sought, with perfectly easy consciences, to suppress not only all Trade Unions but also all forms of popular political association on which they could lay their hands. The Nazis and their followers recently resumed and systematized these practices; but the common conscience of West European civilization (from which Nazism was a calamitous throwback) has learnt to condemn them as

An Essay on Social Morality

morally wrong, and to recognize freedom of speech and association as moral goods needed for the expression of the human spirit and for adaptation of social institutions to changing needs and opportunities. These lessons, of course, have not been fully learnt; and the learning of them is so recent that they are not very deeply rooted in the morality of the common man — especially in countries which are comparatively late-comers to Western civilization. But, up to a point, they have been learnt; and they provide foundations which are indispensable to our civilization's further growth.

Yet again, man's advance in any civilization consists largely in his collective success in recognizing that difference does not imply antagonism, in realizing that men who speak different languages and have different customs are not therefore his enemies, and in substituting curiosity and interest for hatred and contempt as the sentiments which move him in his dealings with 'foreigners'. In many parts of England, even, the word 'foreigner' still means anyone who does not belong by upbringing to the immediate neighbourhood. In Oxford, where I live, certainly a Welshman, and perhaps even a Yorkshireman, is still a 'foreigner' in the minds of many of the local folk. But this perception of difference no longer implies antagonism, or implies it only in an attenuated form which has ceased to be dangerous, and is compatible with friendly relations and fruitful social intercourse. As between 'nationals' whose habits are wider apart, the recognition of community has advanced less far; and for most men there comes a point at which the cross is too wide for antagonism not to hold sway. But Western civilization is vastly further on towards a recognition of common humanity than it was in the eighteenth century, when the slave trade was the foundation of so many fortunes and only a narrow class had, or could have, any conception of internationalism in its mind.¹

¹ I do not want here to go into the point that this growth of national feeling as against 'the foreigner' was closely associated with the rise of national States, and that mediaeval civilization in Western Europe was much more international in outlook than the civilization which followed

Essays in Social Theory

Lastly, a continuing civilization implies a growing belief in reasonableness as a social value, and in the encouragement of reasonable conduct as a course morally right. One sign of this is the growth of popular education and, within this growth, the development of a liberalizing tendency designed to stimulate the individual to use his rational faculties. Another sign is the increasing toleration, passing over into positive encouragement, of free speech and freedom of association — of which I have spoken already. This does not mean that civilization involves a belief in the entire rationality of men, even potentially, but only that it does imply a belief that the rational elements in men ought to be encouraged, and their reasoning faculties developed to the fullest possible extent. This is not to say that all the irrational elements in humanity are evil — far from it. But it is to recognize reason as the human quality which, as civilization advances, ought more and more to exercise a paramount and co-ordinating control.

These values of our civilization, and others akin to them, are possessions which we have recently been forced to defend against an attack which, if it had succeeded, would have been bound to wreck our civilization altogether, and to compel the humanity of Western Europe to begin the long and painful task of building decent ways of living all over again. But, it is vital to assert, these gains of civilized living are not, and cannot be, *static* values. We fought for the right, not to preserve them as they are, but to develop them in response to changing needs and opportunities. If we try merely to preserve them, they will die upon our hands, ceasing to be values as we cease continually to reinterpret them and to enlarge their meaning. We must seek to have continually a wider conception of all these values, and to give them a wider and deeper practical application, or we shall be well on the way to ceasing to possess them at all, however 'victorious' the outcome of the war may have been. For

upon it. This is entirely true, but it is not relevant to the point which I am putting forward in this essay ; and it would lead me too far astray from my argument were I to enlarge upon it now.

An Essay on Social Morality

there are no *static* values : everything grows, or it must decay. Nothing stays put in the realm of values, any more than in the realm of science or of economic technique.

Moral values are not static ; but they are, in their essential nature, cumulative. They continue, at any rate within any developing civilization, to accumulate fuller and deeper meanings, discarding nothing of their essence as their denotation changes, but growing as fast as civilization itself grows. By contrast, the rights and wrongs which belong to the realm of common sense, rather than to that of morality, have no abiding content, and imply no ideal development. They depend on successful adaptations to changing external conditions, and are not only derived from these conditions, but incapable of attaining, like moral values, to an independent vitality of their own. As the conditions change, they change, not by an inner development of meaning, but by total supersession, sometimes, of one ' right ' by another entirely different from it.

To this realm belong the rights and wrongs which are in their essence responses to a technical set-up of forces. It is foolish, and therefore wrong, in a world dominated by the airplane and the wireless, to go on behaving as if one were living in the days of the stage-coach and the post-boy on horseback. It is foolish, and therefore wrong, to maintain an attitude to life which ignores the discoveries of Darwin and Mendel and dismisses Freudian psychology as the ravings of a dirty-minded Jew. It is foolish, and therefore wrong, to continue either to believe that the world was created in 4004 B.C., or that its political customs have been fixed once and for all by a combination of nationalist and economic forces which are already of the past.

This realm, of non-moral right and wrong, is a realm at once of necessity and of voluntary choice. Certain ways of behaviour are excluded altogether, or condemned to sterility if they are attempted, because they are fundamentally inconsistent with inescapable facts. Among these are many of the ideas of political and economic rightness at present most cherished by professional politicians, academic students,

Essays in Social Theory

and 'practical' business men. Mankind must walk between the walls of necessity which bound its path on either hand, on penalty of running its head hard and fruitlessly against these walls.

But between the walls is the realm of liberty — of choice between really possible objectives. In choosing among 'possible' courses, men are limited not by the non-moral conditions of their environment, but by their own moral sense, which excludes some solutions, even among those which are not ruled out by environmental conditions of a material sort. But there remain alternatives among which men are free to make choices which raise no clearly defined moral issues, or perhaps no moral issue at all. These choices may often depend on the relative values attached to different kinds of satisfaction. For example, a society can choose between working harder in order to have more material goods, and enjoying more leisure at the price of having fewer material goods. Overwork beyond a certain point doubtless begins to raise moral issues — and perhaps idleness beyond a certain point does so too — but between these points there is a range of choice which depends on non-moral considerations, or would do so in a really democratic society.

This way of putting the case involves a certain oversimplification. For in reality the realm of morality has no fixed limits. In any advanced community many issues are moral issues to some people and not to others. Hunting animals for sport is an obvious example, and eating them is another. Some people simply fail to understand what moral question there can be in matters which cause endless difficulty to others. Now, the social morality of any community consists of the body of moral notions which finds widespread acceptance among its members, and is not challenged by any powerful section of its population.¹ It is this social morality, rather than the moral notions of individual citizens, that is relevant when we are considering

¹ Where one community lives embedded in another, *e.g.* the Doukhobors in Canada, or the black population in the Union of South Africa, somewhat different considerations arise. But these need not be discussed here.

An Essay on Social Morality

the moral limits upon social adaptation to changing needs. In a continuing civilization, changes must lie within limits that are compatible with the elasticity of the current social morality — not with morality as it is, but with it as it can become without destruction of its principle of life. Any change which goes beyond this limit will either tear up society by the roots or be speedily reversed by a return to enough of the broken tradition to restore the possibility of continuous social growth. I believe that the Nazis, having made such a break in the tradition of social morality, were doomed speedily either to destroy German civilization or to be broken themselves. I also believe that much that has happened in the Soviet Union in recent years is to be explained as a picking up again of what was inescapable in the moral traditions of the older Russia — inescapable, whether it be in the abstract 'good' or 'bad', because men cannot change their morality very fast without destroying it.

As civilization advances, the realm of morality grows wider. Men's consciousness of moral relationships expands: they learn to recognize additional duties towards their neighbours, their fellow-men, the animals, and also inanimate nature. It becomes immoral to desecrate natural beauty, to cause unnecessary pain to living creatures, not to uphold and practise ideas of justice and fellowship over a wider and wider range of human relationships. The moral oddities of the few become the accepted ideas of the many, who come to recognize moral obligations where previously none were discerned. Tolerance of differences develops, and begins at length to turn into recognition that differences — within limits — are a source of positive advantage. Men come to believe that it takes not all, but many, sorts to make a rounded world.

But to a hot pace of change there are, quite apart from the opposition of ruling classes or of vested interests, really formidable resistances. These resistances are at bottom of two kinds, though the two are seldom, if ever, clearly distinguished. One kind is sheer reluctance to accept changes, even when they promise plain advantages. The psycho-

Essays in Social Theory

logical foundation of this reluctance is fear of the unknown — a fear which is deeply rooted in all men, even the most adventurous. There are some natural all-round adventurers ; but they are few. There are many more who are adventurous on their own ground, or within the sphere of some special technique or interest which they have made their own. But most men are very timid whenever they are ' off their beat '. Resistance to changes which involve a re-casting of social habits is therefore formidable, even where morality puts in no word of veto.

But resistance is much stronger when fear of the unknown is reinforced by moral taboo. And, as many taboos which rank as moral have in truth no moral content, but are mere survivals of practices which had once an expediency — a survival value — that has long been obsolete, this stronger resistance may be provoked by changes, even if they belong, in the eyes of reasoning men, to the non-moral realm of ' instrumental ' right and wrong, and have no relation to true moral values. It is always the object of opponents of change to invest established institutions with a covering of morality, so as to make their supersession more difficult. To the extent to which this can be done, change can be made harder, even when it is imperatively called for by the needs of a developing material environment.

There is, however, a saving difference. Resistance to changes which are inconsistent with the basic moral traditions of a people persists, even if the changes are made in its despite. It can easily be strong enough to undo, or at any rate to wreck, a revolution. But where the moral element in the resistance is artificial and is induced by a dominant class or group in its own interest, it is unlikely to persist strongly after the class or group responsible for cultivating it has been overthrown. This does not cause it to stand less in revolution's way ; but it does mean that revolution can very speedily change such elements in the ' morality ' of a people without provoking counter-revolution.

It is therefore of the first importance for those who stand for social change to discern the difference between true and

An Essay on Social Morality

false social morality, in order to know in what directions they can safely push change to the limits of their immediate power, and in what others they need to stop short both for fear of the after-effects and because no man in his senses wants to force the pace of change beyond what human nature is fitted to endure. There is, of course, no formal way of dividing social 'morality' sharply into these two elements. Common sense and personal insight are the final instruments for telling the difference. But it can be said that the distinguishing quality of a 'true' moral idea is its capacity to grow and adapt itself, albeit gradually, to changing situations, without losing its essential character, whereas 'induced' moral ideas have a static quality, an 'ossification', that makes them readily recognizable in any situation which calls for rapidly changing responses - as revolutionary situations invariably do. 'True' moral ideas can bend without breaking: 'induced' moral ideas are stiff, and break readily under any serious strain.

This distinction is highly relevant to the present situation in Europe, where the Nazi Revolution involved not only a sharp break with the true moral tradition of West European civilization, but also an attempt swiftly to replace the broken morality with a new quasi-morality which offended at many points the consciences of a large section of the population - at any rate among the older people. Great efforts were made - with much apparent success - to indoctrinate the younger generation with this new 'morality'; but 'morality' thus instilled was bound to be stiff and brittle, lacking all plastic quality. It could not be bent, but it could be broken by military defeat. Nor can there be any doubt that, now that it has been broken, the older moral tradition, which it was designed to replace, will be found capable of resuming its influence wherever it rested on deep cultural foundations before its development was broken off; for this tradition has not been destroyed but only suppressed.

Of course, the new 'morality' of the Nazis could not have been induced at all unless there had been something in men's minds possessing an affinity to it. It was not a

Essays in Social Theory

merely artificial construction, but rather an attempt to build upon foundations which lie in the remoter past of mankind — on repressed impulses and primitive urges which were brought back above the ground-level of consciousness by the earthquakes of defeat, post-war humiliation, and severe and prolonged economic depression. Hitler's own mind, as revealed in *Mein Kampf*, was clearly a product of such an earthquake; and he became the *Führer* precisely because a similar convulsion was correspondingly affecting many other minds in Central Europe. It is not necessary, *à la* Vansittart, to attribute Nazism to any peculiar innate iniquity of the German people; for the same under-man is in all of us, ready to be thrown to the surface if our traditional morality is subjected to too severe a strain. It can, however, be agreed, first, that the German nation, or at least the Prussian part of it, had never fully assimilated the moral tradition of long-civilized Western Europe, and, secondly, that the Germans are, more than ourselves, an 'all-or-nothing' people, ever ready to carry the notion 'if I say A, I must say B' to the bitter end of the alphabet.

This latter factor, however, tended to make the new Nazi 'morality' more brittle, as well as easier to inculcate, than it would have been among less pantodogmatic peoples. Even if the Germans, as a people, have never been completely assimilated to the common civilization of Western Europe, large sections among them have had a very great share in this civilization, and they possess a great cultural tradition which is essentially part of the common European heritage, especially in the arts. The moment Hitler's military power was broken, there was a chance for these cultural forces to reassert themselves; and it should have been, from the outset, the governing principle of the post-war occupation to provide every opportunity for their re-establishment by the Germans themselves. There can be little doubt that Germany, given the right response and reception among her neighbours, will in due course re-enter the European moral system. For this re-entry, however, time will be needed, and the right response is a necessary condition. It is one of

An Essay on Social Morality

the lessons of Versailles that it is impossible for long unilaterally to disarm a great nation unless it can be at the same time convinced that it is being treated as a true partner in the arts of peace.

The Russian Revolution, hardly less than the Nazi Revolution in Germany, involved a sharp break in moral tradition. But there was a vital difference. The tradition from which the Russians broke away was *not* the common tradition of West European civilization, in which they had never more than superficially shared. It was the more than half-barbaric tradition of Czardom — a despotic tradition in no wise akin to the 'liberalism' of the West, which was represented only by a thin veneer of Parisian fashion, Berlin technique, and the theoretical philosophizing of a small intellectual class. As against Russian barbarism, the Communists largely stood for the civilizing tradition of the West, though even in them it was unhappily modified by elements drawn from the barbarism to which it was opposed. Accordingly, the true mission of the Russian Revolution was to bring to the oppressed peoples of the Czarist Empire the gift of Westernization. But this, though it remained the fundamental quality of the Revolution, was partly prevented from happening at once by two factors — the very backward condition in morality and ways of living of the huge peasant majority in the Soviet Union, and the antagonism between the Socialist beliefs and practices of the Soviet leaders and the dominant capitalism of the Western countries. Socialism and capitalism were alike Western systems, belonging to the tradition of West European civilization. But the emergent Socialism of the Soviet Union, being in bitter conflict with the capitalism of the Western Governments, was forced into a partial antagonism to the morality of the West as well.

Marxism, with its attempt to represent morality as merely derivative from the economic forces, and as therefore merely the morality which suited the book of the ruling class, gave unfortunate encouragement to this tendency. It is of course undeniable that in any society many forms of conduct are inculcated as 'moral' because they serve the interests of

Essays in Social Theory

the established order. But it is a disastrous error to confuse this 'induced' morality with the true morality which forms an essential part of the very texture of civilized living. This error was easy for a mid-nineteenth-century German to make, and easier still for a Russian. But it was none the less a disastrous error; and among the Russians and their followers in Europe the extent of the disaster has become all too plain in the most recent years. Up to the Munich ignominy of 1938 it seemed reasonable to hope that many of its consequences were being corrected as the Soviet Union settled down to the tasks of Socialist construction, and that the Soviet leaders were becoming a little aware of the difference between the two kinds of 'morality', and eager to conserve and develop in their new order the 'true' moral elements in the industrialized civilization which they were seeking to establish. But they were still confronted with the difficulty that this 'true' moral tradition is not part of the common heritage of the Soviet peoples, and had therefore to be created among them. It could not be merely released from bondage by the destruction of Czardom: nor could it be merely inculcated, as the Nazis were endeavouring to inculcate their 'new morality', by mass indoctrination. It needed to be encouraged to grow naturally, as a concomitant of the new civilization which the Soviet Union was building up by means of industrial development, agricultural improvement, and the spread of social services and popular education. Such natural growth can be greatly hastened by wise government; but it cannot be forced.

Then, alas, Soviet policy took quite disastrously a different turn. Convinced that the West was determined to divert Hitler against it, and that the moral professions of the Western statesmen were all a sham, the Soviet leaders retreated into an exaggerated version of Marxian amorality, signed their pact with the Nazis, and waited hopefully for both their enemies — Nazis and capitalists — to destroy themselves in mortal combat. There were, I agree, all too many excuses for this conduct — excuses which arose, in truth, less from the turpitude than from the cowardice and

An Essay on Social Morality

indecision of the leaders of Western opinion. But the Soviet leaders persisted in their cynicism even when the case for it had disappeared with the rally of the Western peoples in the later phases of the war; and they brought it with them into the peace, mistaking American anti-Socialism and British semi-Socialism for the intention to wage war — cold or hot — upon the Soviet Union and its basic institutions, whereas it was no such thing, except in the minds of minorities much too weak to be able to drag their countries behind them, unless the Soviet Union, by its suspicious refusal of all real collaboration, had driven the Western countries in a direction which most of their citizens by no means wished to take.

This disaster, for which I do not entirely blame the Soviet leaders, though I cannot help blaming them most, has resulted in dividing the world into rival moralities as well as into rival armed camps. Where there could have been a united effort to build foundations for a common world order, resting on the moral and cultural values that have been developing towards a fuller conception of democracy in the West, there is now a deep moral cleavage which it may take generations to bridge, even if the culminating horror of a world war with atomic weapons can be averted.

Of course there are, in the sphere of everyday living, large elements of common morality between Eastern and Western Europe; and I feel no doubt at all that, in this sphere, the beneficial effects of the Revolution have been immense. The cleavage is not nearly so much between different conceptions of what is good as about the applicability of any sort of moral code to political affairs. If politics are a mere superstructure upon economic relations, and necessarily express merely dominant class interests, morality can have no place in them, in any sense in which it transcends class interest. Accordingly, the actions of capitalist States must, on this showing, be interpreted solely in terms of capitalist interests; and there must be a radically different code of conduct for States in which the proletarian class is the source of power. Morality, as it finds expression in public affairs, will thus

Essays in Social Theory

be simply a rationalization of class interest ; and there can be no common public morality applicable to different class systems.

Such a theory involves, of course, a total denial of the views which I have put forward in this essay. Just as the Marxists deny that the capitalist oppressor State can be converted into the democratic welfare State and insist that the proletariat must set up a totally new State in its own image, so they deny that the growth of public morality can have any continuity from one social system to another. They thus throw over — in theory, though never fully in practice — the morality of capitalist society and set out to replace it by a new proletarian morality corresponding to the changed social structure. This is an intelligible objective, made the more plausible by the exceedingly backward morality of the society which the Russian Revolution subverted and renewed. But it is not the same thing to assert the need for a new morality and to deny morality altogether ; and this second thing the Soviet leaders do only because they insist that in the relations between Communist and capitalist States there can be no appeal to any *common* moral standard. This is what I deny, because I deny that class structure is the *sole* source of morality, though not that class interests have great influence in determining moral standards throughout the realm which I have defined as that of rational rather than of ultimately ethical principle.

This denial rests on the belief that there are, for any civilization and for mankind as a whole to the extent to which men share a common civilization, certain evolutionary moral standards which become by gradual diffusion and adoption part of the common possession of the peoples, too deeply rooted for any change in government or even in fundamental social institutions to upset them. If Russia had been more fully Westernized, instead of being merely veneered with Western ideas, before the Revolution, the falsity of the notion of complete relativity, even in public morals, would speedily have become plain. As things turned out, the thinness of the veneer of Western civilization in

An Essay on Social Morality

Czarist Russia made possible, and the spectacle of the Nazi throw-back in Germany reinforced, the belief that *real* politics could be successfully conducted only in a moral void.

Yet the Russians, set on bringing their vast backward country up to date with all the material equipment of the West and on imitating and carrying beyond what the West has achieved in the health services, the care of childhood, the social security arrangements that are among the greatest fruits of Western democratic advance, must surely come to realize that they cannot import Western techniques and ways of living without importing to a large extent Western values as well, and thus joining East and West in a common moral as well as technological system. They hope, no doubt, to achieve this by extending their Revolution, already triumphant over half Europe and half Asia, to the other halves of these continents and even to America, and thus imposing their pattern of 'workers' democracy' on the peoples where its impact is still being resisted. But in order to do this they must not merely compass the overthrow of capitalist governments, but also come to terms with the beliefs and attitudes of the Western peoples, among whom a faith in a moral code that transcends class differences has been the growth of many centuries of conflict mingled with accommodation.

Of course, I am not suggesting that the Soviet leaders, even if there were no ideological obstacles to hold them back, could even wish to bring the entire population of the Soviet Union within the orbit of West European civilization, or even of some modification of it which would incorporate elements drawn from their native culture. For some of the Soviet peoples, at any rate in Asia and probably in Europe also, belong to a different moral and cultural division of the human family. It is a matter of common agreement that the Soviet Union has been exceedingly successful in handling the difficult problem of 'nationalities'; and it has been markedly more successful in this field in Asia than in some parts of Eastern Europe. This is, I think, because it is easier to handle the problem of nationality when it is a

Essays in Social Theory

question of large differences, involving a radical approach, than when the nationalities whose autonomy is at issue are fairly close together in general culture and moral tradition, so that the problem tends to assume an exclusively political, rather than a cultural, form. The Mahometan and other non-Christian peoples of Asiatic Russia can be endowed with a cultural autonomy which satisfies their national aspirations without raising the question of nationalism in a political sense.

The Soviet Union furnishes indeed a remarkable example of a strong political unit which is not based throughout on a common culture or a common moral tradition, so that it cannot in any event become completely absorbed in any pan-European civilization based upon such a culture or such a tradition. Its natural mission is to serve as a bridge, or an interpreter, between the cultures of East and West. If it can thus interpret each of the great culture systems between which it lies to the other, that surely offers to the future the best possible hope of a durable peace, not merely between the nations of Europe, but over all the world.

Meantime, the task before both the Soviet Union and the West European family of nations is to complete the destruction of the false morality on which the Nazis built their power. For this task there is needed not merely co-operation between the Soviet government and the governments of Western Europe, but also social co-operation between the peoples. Whatever the difficulties in the way, and however formidably the trend of Soviet policy in recent years may appear to be in a quite opposite direction, there is no escape from this necessity. The broken bridges must be rebuilt if both groups of contestants are not to have their civilization destroyed. Can it be doubted for a moment that close collaboration and exchange of ideas will be good for both parties to the exchange? Can it be doubted that comradeship in world reconstruction between the Soviet Union and Western Europe could do a great deal to strengthen the forces which in the long run cannot but impel the Soviet peoples towards an acceptance of the basic 'true' morality

An Essay on Social Morality

of Western civilization — of the values of free speech, freedom of association, toleration leading to the ready acceptance of differences, and of kindness and clemency in the daily relations of living? Or can it be doubted that the West can profitably learn from the Soviet Union the immense release of productive and social energy which is made possible by common control of resources, by the abolition of class-parasitism, and by the unification of effort in pursuance of a common plan for the furtherance of human well-being?

VI

*Democracy Face to Face with Hugeness*¹

MEN have but a short history of civilized living, and for by far the greater part of that history they have been used to living together in quite small groups. Most of the day-to-day problems they have been called upon to solve collectively have been those of neighbourhood — problems affecting themselves and other persons whom they know as individuals, or at least know about so as to have an insight into their needs and desires. Great States have existed far back in history; but they have been external forces, acting upon the individual, but not shaped by him or calling upon him to play any conscious part in ordering their affairs. Only quite lately, over a space of time which is insignificant in relation to the whole span of social development, have ordinary men been placed in a position in which they are called upon to take part in decisions which involve the united action of millions and require a capacity for reasoning in generalizations which far transcend the limits of their practical knowledge and personal acquaintance.

It is vital to remember this in laying our plans for the democracy of to-morrow; for it is largely through forgetting it that the democracy of yesterday has gone wrong. Every man has to live through, before or after birth, the entire history of the human race, as well as the history of man's ancestors upon the earth. He comes to citizenship trailing these clouds, not of glory, but of a growth neither glorious nor inglorious in itself, but neutral, and of ever-increasing potentiality for both good and evil. His whole past, the whole past of his ancestors, is in him, alive and ready to be active, though most of it remains under normal conditions

¹ Originally written in 1941.

Democracy Face to Face with Hugeness

below the level of conscious awareness.

The art of living together in organized communities goes far back in history — even beyond the beginnings of man as the creature he is. It is the outgrowth of a primitive gregariousness, as the social psychologists call it; and men for most of their history have been slowly (though not uninterruptedly) rationalizing their ways of living together and developing their capacities towards higher and more differentiated forms of social control. But of late man's capacity to learn has been subjected to an altogether unprecedented strain. Into a world still relatively static in its basic ways of living — though, looking back on it, we can see in it the seeds of all that has happened since — the advanced thinkers in all the classes, led thereto largely by the Protestant conception of a direct and unmediated relation between the individual and God, projected the idea of representative democracy as a means of governing great States. Men, they felt, had shown their fitness to govern themselves in small groups (above all in small groups of dissenters who had to govern themselves because they rejected the discipline of a universal Church); and there seemed no reason why, having achieved so much, they should not go on to govern themselves collectively in greater groups, and take into their hands, by means of representative democracy, the government of the State.

But, over the brief period in men's history during which this experiment in democracy has been made, the material basis of living has been changing at a pace undreamt of by those who preached Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in that dawn when Wordsworth found it bliss to be alive. Men found themselves called upon to master the art not of governing the State as it was, but of prescribing for the government of a vast society which changed its basic structure so fast that the magnitude and growing complication of its problems outran hopelessly their capacity to learn the difficult art of collective control. Under the leadership of science things ran away with men, and the social mind was left groping further and further behind.

Essays in Social Theory

Now, when problems become too big for men to understand, their actions cease to be governed by the higher controlling mechanisms of their conscious minds, and the living past of the unconscious resumes its sway. Its processes are radically different from those of the conscious mind, above all in being both amoral and unco-ordinated, so that they do not reject contradiction. Nothing is easier than for this part of man's mind to believe inconsistent things: they do not appear as inconsistent, because there is no active controlling mechanism to relate them one to another.

This fact lies at the very root of the failure of parliamentary democracy. Its weakness has been that it has presented to the ordinary man problems much too remote from his knowledge and experience for him to solve rationally. As he must solve them somehow, he solves them irrationally; for his under mind resumes its sway as soon as his upper mind retires defeated before the magnitude of the task presented to it. This explains not only the weakness and irrationality of parliamentary democracy at its best, but also the ease with which it has been swept aside by dictatorship in one country after another. For dictatorship, in its appeal to the people, is neither more nor less than an unscrupulous and conscious exploitation of the under mind.

Stated in this way, the problem may seem hopeless for those who believe in democracy. I do not wish to deny its difficulty; but its hopelessness I do altogether deny. The task which the democrats of 1789 called upon the ordinary man to shoulder was far harder than they knew; for they could not anticipate the tremendously formidable pace of material change with its constant presentation of new problems long before the old ones had been solved. But it was not, I believe, even so an impossible task: nor is it now. Unhappily, the old democrats, Jacobins and Benthamites alike, made a disastrous mistake in their interpretation of democracy. Their forerunners had wished to strip man naked before God, to throw off all the trappings of Church and sacrament in order to establish a direct and personal

Democracy Face to Face with Hugeness

relationship between the individual and his Creator. The political democrats set out to strip the individual naked in his relations to the State, regarding all the older social tissue as tainted with aristocratic corruption or privileged monopoly. Their representative democracy was atomistically conceived in terms of millions of voters, each casting his individual vote into a pool which was somehow mystically to boil up into a General Will.

No such transmutation happened, or could happen. Torn away from his fellows, from the small groups which he and they had been painfully learning to manage, the individual was lost. He could not control the State: it was too big for him. Democracy in the State was a great aspiration; but in practice it was largely a sham.

Not wholly so; for men, though this task was too big for them, set busily to work creating social groups which they could manage democratically, because the decisions needed in them were such as could be taken on a basis of real collective experience. They built up Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, Friendly Societies, and a host of voluntary associations of every sort and kind; and in these the true spirit of democracy flourished. But the State Government and Law together — was hostile to these natural growths of the spirit of democracy, and recognized them only grudgingly and perforce. They were commonly regarded as dangerous enemies of a democracy which was atomistically conceived, whereas they were in truth the embodiments of the democratic spirit in the form in which its realization was most within men's grasp.

But this vital associative life had also to contend with difficulties arising out of the rapidly changing material basis of social life. The associations had to become larger and to unify organization over wider and wider fields, in order to face their own problems on an ever-growing scale. Therewith they became less completely democratic, threatening in their turn to develop the same atomistic perversion of democracy which was its ruin in the State. Moreover, these associations, each sectional and serving particular ends,

Essays in Social Theory

could not express the whole man, or form any adequate substitute for a neighbourhood group through which men could learn the art of citizenship in its more general aspect. The growth of local government did something towards bridging the gulf between the individual and the State; and the growth of political parties with a wide popular membership was a second essay in mediation. But the political party was largely ineffective because the tradition of parliamentary centralism caused it to be rather an instrument organized from the top than a force surging up from below. Parties were not shaped by their members: they set out rather to order their members from above. Nor had the national parties that intimate touch with local government which might have brought them nearer to being instruments for the true democratic formulation of will and opinion from below.

As for local government itself, its democratic qualities are very new — too new to have sunk deeply into most men's minds as yet. Only very recently has local government acquired the powers and functions which could enable it to become a vital instrument for the expression of the democratic spirit; and most unfortunately this growth of powers has been accompanied by a tremendously rapid spread of towns which has gone far towards neutralizing the development of local democracy. For urban areas have both grown so populous and complex in their problems as to reproduce many of the defects of parliamentary democracy, and have also expanded so much out of relation to the recognized areas of election and administration as to lose their living reality.

Our problem in face of all these formidable difficulties is simple to state. It is to find democratic ways of living for little men in big societies. For men are little, and their capacity cannot transcend their experience, or grow except by continuous building upon their historic past. They can control great affairs only by acting together in the control of small affairs, and finding, through the experience of neighbourhood, men whom they can entrust with larger decisions than they can take rationally for themselves.

Democracy Face to Face with Hugeness

Democracy can work in the great States (and *a fortiori* between great States or over Europe or the world) only if each State is made up of a host of little democracies, and rests finally, not on isolated individuals, but on groups small enough to express the spirit of neighbourhood and personal acquaintance.

It is worth while to be bombed or invaded, if only *blitz* or invasion can teach us this lesson. In blitzed cities here, in invaded towns and villages all over Europe, in dictator-ridden Germany, where the amoral unconscious has been invoked as an instrument of the lust for power, men and women did create new social tissue, drawn together into little groups of neighbours by suffering and oppression and insistent human need for sympathy and collective strength. These little groups are the forces out of which the new Europe must be built, if democracy is to be its moving spirit. They are the nuclei of the new social consciousness on which alone the practical architects of the social order of tomorrow can hope to build a society in which men's higher faculties of love and creative service will have soil to grow.

But to-day these little groups are pitifully isolated and unconscious one of another. Throughout Nazi-ridden Europe, the primary purpose of our propaganda should be to feed these groups with ideas, through the natural leaders who have been thrown up among them, and to make them conscious one of another, even when direct communication between them is impossible. How far our propaganda misses this mark it would take another essay to show. Here it can be said only that our propagandists do not appear even to be aiming at it. More directly relevant to my present purpose is the application of what I have been saying to our home affairs. Those of us who believe in real democracy, and not in its atomistic perversion which threatens us with ruin, must find ways of getting together and of making contact with the chosen leaders of the countless little groups which began learning to practise democratic fellowship under the savage impact of war. Wherever we can, we must live among these groups, learn by sharing in their experience,

Essays in Social Theory

and bring back lessons which we can apply to the wider tasks of social reconstruction. I know that I am only one of thousands who, in this bewildered, devastated world of broken illusions and obsolete formulations of faith or doctrine, are groping for fellowship and for new ideas or formulations, based on the relevant experience of the world of to-day. Such communications are difficult to establish. Travel is difficult: we are all busy with what seem urgent tasks: it is hard for men to meet and talk, and learn by that communion of neighbourhood of which the values often transcend speech.

But the blackout is not absolute. We can reach out one to another through the darkness. What is most urgent now is to give those who have in them the capacity of leading a few the sense that there are others besides themselves busy, each in his own narrow sphere, about the real business of democracy, which is the making of men. Our past affiliations, of party or creed or class, are irrelevant to this task, save as means of making contacts. We, whom luck or experience or intellectual cunning or divine inspiration — call it what you will — has endowed with the inward vision of democracy, must come together with faith and courage to proclaim ourselves the architects of the new society, and to offer what inspiration we may to those fellow-workers, personally unknown to us, who have laboured, consciously or but half-consciously, under stress of blasting experience, in the cause of a democracy which will not desert little men forlorn and alone in a world whose hugeness leaves them shuddering and afraid of the dark.

VII

*The Essentials of Democracy*¹

SOCIAL institutions have two, and only two, legitimate purposes — to ensure to men the supply of the material means of good living, and to give men the fullest possible scope for creative activity. It is conceivable that these two purposes — or rather the means of pursuing them — may clash; for example, if higher production requires from men a subordination to routine processes which leaves no room for the sense of creative freedom. Where such clashes do arise, compromises have to be made. Men have to choose between their desire as consumers for a higher standard of material living and their desire as producers for a less irksome way of life. The best set of social institutions is that which finds the best compromise available under the prevailing conditions.

Who, then, is to settle what is best? Who, but the whole people, who must endure for good or ill the consequences of the decision? If the good life is a blend of satisfactions achieved from consumption and satisfactions achieved from successful creation, the only answer I find tolerable is that men themselves must decide collectively what blending of these elements they like best.

I am thus led to a belief in democracy by two routes. I believe in democracy because I believe that every citizen has a right to play a part in deciding how society can best be organized in the cause of human happiness, and also because democracy is itself one of the fundamental exercises of free creative activity. It follows that I mean by democracy not merely the right of a majority to have its way, but an arrangement of public affairs which is designed to give

¹ Originally written in 1941.

Essays in Social Theory

every man and woman the best possible chance of finding out what they really want, of persuading others to accept their point of view, and of playing an active part in the working of a system thus responsive to their needs. Not that, under any system, most people will take a continuous active interest in public affairs : not at all. But everyone ought to have a fair chance of taking an interest in them and of carrying some weight if he does take an interest. This too I am sure about — that a society, whatever its formal structure, *cannot* be democratic unless a goodly number of men and women do take an interest in making and keeping it so.

That is my idea of democracy. It involves many other things — free speech, freedom of organization, freedom to develop the personality in diverse ways. It cannot mean any of these things without limit — for society in itself implies limits — but it means that the limits must be very wide. My idea of democracy excludes a regimented society, an indoctrinated society, a society in which men are not allowed to organize freely for all sorts of purposes without any interference by the police, a society in which it is supposed to be a virtue for everybody to think like his neighbours. My idea of democracy excludes too much tidiness, too much order, too much having everything taped. I believe every good democrat is a bit of an anarchist when he's scratched.

Furthermore, my notion of democracy is that it involves a sense of comradeship, friendliness, brotherhood — call it what you like. I mean a warm sense — not a mere recognition, cold as a fish. I mean that democracy means loving your neighbours, or at any rate being ready to love them when you do not happen to dislike them too much — and even then, when they are in trouble, and come to you looking for help and sympathy. A democrat is someone who has a physical glow of sympathy and love for anyone who comes to him honestly, looking for help or sympathy : a man is not a democrat, however justly he may try to behave to his fellow-man, unless he feels like that. But — and here is the point — you cannot feel that glow about people — individual people, with capacities for doing and suffering —

The Essentials of Democracy

unless and until you get to know them personally. And you cannot know, personally, more than a quite small number of people.

That is why real democracies have either to be small, or to be broken up into small, human groups in which men and women can know and love one another. If human societies get too big, and are not broken up in that way, the human spirit goes out of them ; and the spirit of democracy goes out too. What walks in instead is demagoguery — a very different thing. Men feel lonely in a great crowd unless there is someone to hustle them into herd activity. In their loneliness they follow the man with the loudest voice, or in these days, the loudest loud-speaker and the most efficient propagandist technique. They suck in mass-produced ideas as a substitute for having ideas of their own : they all shout in unison because they have no one to talk to quietly — no group to go about with, no little world of a few people in which they can count as individuals and work out lives of their own. You can have various kinds of society under these conditions. You can have Fascism, or you can have what the Fascists call plutodemocracy. You can even have Communism, of a perverted sort. But you cannot have democracy. For democracy means a society in which everyone has a chance to count as an individual, and to do something that is distinctively his own.

Rousseau, knowing all this, thought that democracy could exist only in small States. The revolutionary philosophers who followed him thought they had solved the problem of having democracy in large States by the simple device of representation, whereby one man could represent and stand for many men in public affairs. But one man cannot stand for many men, or for anybody except himself. That was where the nineteenth-century democrats went wrong, mistaking parliamentarism and representative local government for adequate instruments of democracy, which they plainly are not. If you think they are, ask the man in the street — any ordinary man who will tell you he is not much of a politician — what he thinks. He does not think Parliament is

Essays in Social Theory

democratic — even when it is elected by all the people — not a bit of it ; and he is right. One man cannot really represent another — that's flat. The odd thing is that anyone should ever have supposed he could.

So, as States get bigger, and the representative gets further away from the people he is supposed to represent, till most of his constituents do not know him, most have never seen him, and quite a number cannot even tell you his name, what democracy there was dies out of the machinery of government. For what democracy there was — and there never was very much — depended much less on the fact that people elected their M.P. than on their knowing him personally, knowing about him, what he did and how he behaved, who his father and mother were, and his cousins and his friends, how he got on with his wife, and all the rest of the things people know about one another in a village, but do not know in a big town. Villages are in many respects more democratic places than towns, even when they vote as the squire and the parson tell them. Being democratic is not the same thing as holding advanced opinions. It is not the same thing as believing in democracy. It starts with knowing your neighbours as real persons ; and unless it starts there, it does not start at all.

Of course, knowing your neighbours as real persons is not of itself democracy, any more than a steel ingot is a battleship, or even part of one. But this sort of knowing is part of the material out of which democracy has to be built. You cannot build democracy without it. That is what has gone wrong with our modern democratic societies. All the time we have been broadening the franchise, and increasing educational opportunities, and developing the social services, and all the rest of it, we have been letting the very essence of democracy get squeezed out by the mere growth in the scale of political organization. It is even true that each successive widening of the franchise has made our system less really democratic, by making the relation between electors and elected more and more unreal.

Men, being men, do not lie down quite tamely under this

The Essentials of Democracy

deprivation of democracy. They keep what they can of it by making, within the great societies, little societies of their own. They form little social groups of friends, or of persons drawn together by a common friendliness — *clubs des sans-club*. They organize for all sorts of purposes — recreative, instructive, reformatory, revolutionary, religious, economic, or simply social — in associations and groups of all sizes. But when these groups get big the same nemesis overtakes them as overtakes the political machine. Their natural democracy evaporates and bureaucracy steps into its place. You can see this happening to the Trade Unions, which are a great deal less democratic when they have grown into huge national associations than they were when they were simply little local Trade Clubs meeting in an inn or a coffee-house, so that each member knew each other personally.

Such little groups exist still — any number of them. But the growth in the scale of living drives them out of public influence. There are fewer and fewer important jobs for them to do, except in the purely social sphere. There they remain immensely important, rescuing countless souls from the torment of loneliness and despair. But they do not, in rescuing these souls, play any part in the more public affairs of society. They do not affect political or economic policies, or give any democratic character to men's behaviour in their collective concerns. As a consequence, men's public and private lives slip further and further apart; and not only artists and other exceptional people, but quite ordinary men and women too, get to despising politics in their hearts, and to saying openly that politics are a rotten game, and thinking of politics as something it will not help them to bother their heads about: so they had better not. Politics for the politicians! That is the last corruption of a democracy that has knocked the foundations from under its own feet.

(In such a society, politics is apt to be a rotten game. It is bound to be; for it has no roots in the real lives of the people. It easily comes to be either a vast make-believe or, behind its pretences, largely a sordid squabble of vested interests. In terms of vital ideas, or of common living to the

Essays in Social Theory

glory of God, or of the City, or of the spirit of man, it loses much of its meaning. That is why, in our own day, so many political structures purporting to rest on democratic foundations have shown neither imagination to create the means to the good life nor power to defend themselves against any vital new force, good or evil, that challenges their supremacy.

Fortunately, there are in the countries which live under parliamentary institutions other elements of democracy which are not so defenceless. The real democracy that does exist in Great Britain, for example, is to be found for the most part not in Parliament or in the institutions of local government, but in the smaller groups, formal or informal, in which men and women join together out of decent fellowship or for the pursuit of a common social purpose — societies, clubs, churches, and not least informal neighbourhood groups. It is in these fellowships, and in the capacity to form them swiftly under the pressure of immediate needs, that the real spirit of democracy resides. It was by virtue of this capacity that the workers in the factories responded so remarkably in 1940 to the urgent need that followed upon the fall of France, and that, a few months later, the whole people of many great cities found courage to resist the impact of intensive air bombardment. The tradition of British democracy, which goes back above all to seventeenth-century Puritanism, reasserted itself strongly in spite of the immensely powerful forces which have been sapping its foundations in recent years.

This tradition is still powerful, deep down in the consciousness of the people. Moreover, it blends with another tradition, on the surface antagonistic to it, and going much further back in the history of this country. This is the Christian ethic and the tradition of Christianity as a social force impregnating every social activity with a moral purpose. The spirit underlying mediaeval gild organization, not only in the economic sphere but also in many others, was within its limited range a true spirit of human brotherhood, the more intense because the groups through which it found expression were small and neighbourly. That kind of organ-

The Essentials of Democracy

ization (which, of course, touched the countryside only to a small extent) died out under the combined impact of economic revolution and religious reformation. Merchants intent on breaking down parochial restrictions in order to widen the market collaborated in destroying it with Puritans intent on establishing direct relations between man and his God without the mediation of Mother Church. Economics and religion set sail together for the El Dorado of individualism, taking away from men the small groups in which the older social tradition, now grown too cramping in face of the development of new knowledge, had been incorporated, and leaving the ordinary man lonelier and more afraid in a world too big for him to master or to find his way in.

That, however, was just where Puritanism, transformed into Nonconformity, was able to reassert itself as a corrective force. The traders and industrialists got their way, and converted the economic terrain into a hedgeless and fenceless open country of competitive enterprise. The religious reformers were much less thoroughly successful because the traders, having won their economic victory, ceased to battle on their side. Lutheranism came to terms with the new Nation State, and converted itself in secular matters into its obedient instrument, saving only its right to go on, other-worldly, with its business of saving souls from the everlasting fire. Calvinism, on the other hand, after a brief reign of theocracy in a few places, became a focus of opposition to the new order, as it had been to the old. Barely tolerated in most countries, and seldom given any recognition, it was compelled in self-defence to organize itself democratically in small, self-governing congregations. Dissent became in this way one of the great schools of democracy — the only, or almost the only, repository of the true democratic values until, with the advent of steam-power and the factory system, working-class organization began to develop on a basis of small-scale, neighbourhood groups of craftsmen subject to a common exploitation and conscious of common rights.

Opposition and persecution are great levellers, and there-

Essays in Social Theory

fore great teachers of democracy. Success and recognition, on the other hand, are very apt to kill the democratic spirit. This is not only because, having won something, men grow less enthusiastic for what remains to be won. It is even more because success and recognition enlarge the scale of organization, cause it to become more centralized, and diminish the importance of local leadership, local initiative, and the individual contribution of every member. Every large organization that is able to administer its affairs openly without let or hindrance develops bureaucratic tendencies. It becomes officialized — even official-ridden : its rank and file members come to feel less responsibility for its doings. The spirit of sacrifice and of brotherhood grows weaker in it. Its tasks come to be regarded as falling upon those who are paid for doing them : the duty of the member comes to be regarded as one mainly of acquiescence in the official decisions. In a persecuted body, on the other hand, and to a great extent in one which is prevented by any cause from becoming centralized, each member is under a continual pressure to be up and doing. There must be, in every group, close and constant consultation upon policy, a constant sharing-out of tasks, a constant willingness to help one another — or, in other words, the spirit of democracy must be continually evoked.

Does this mean that democracy is, in sober truth, only a by-product of persecution and intolerance? These evil forces have, there can be no doubt, been vastly important in creating the democratic spirit. It is to be hoped they are at work, re-creating it to-day, all over Europe. But we need not conclude that democracies are always fated to perish in the hour of victory, unless we also conclude that it is beyond men's power to stand out against the forces which impel societies towards bureaucratic centralization. If indeed bureaucracy is the unavoidable accompaniment of all large-scale organization — I mean, bureaucracy as its dominant force and characteristic — the game is up. But need this be ?

It will be, unless men are vigilantly on their guard against

The Essentials of Democracy

it. For both increasing population, with its accompaniment of increasing concentration in large groups, and the increasing scale of production make for bureaucracy. These forces destroy remorselessly the natural small units of earlier days — the village or little town, the group of workmates in a workshop or small factory, the personal acquaintance that crosses the barriers of class and calling. They convert the factory into a huge establishment in which it is impossible for everyone to know everyone else, the town into a huge agglomeration of strangers. They compel men to travel long distances to and from work, and therefore to scurry away from the factory as soon as the day's work is done, without building up close social contacts with their fellow-workers. At the other end, they send men scurrying from home, which becomes more and more a dormitory rather than the centre of a common life. The city develops its amusement zone, where strangers jostle; and if a man stays in his own place, the wireless ensures that a large part of his recreation shall isolate him from, instead of uniting him with, his neighbours.

There are, superficially, many conveniences in the new ways of living. So many that we may take it for granted men will never willingly give them up. Indeed, why should they, when almost every one of them, taken by itself, is a gain? For the disadvantage lies not in the technical changes themselves, but in men's failure to square up to the new problems of successful living which they involve. The disadvantage is intangible, and not easily seen (though it is experienced) by the individual who is unused to taking general views. The man or woman who has less and less intimate knowledge of his neighbours, less and less intense participation in any small social group to which he feels an obligation, a less and less integrated and purposeful life, and less and less sense of responsibility for his fellows, does not, unless he is a bit of a philosopher, inquire why these things have happened. He may indeed be unconscious that they have happened, and conscious merely of a vague and unidentified emptiness in his way of living. But even so, if I am right in believing that the void is there, he will be very ready

Essays in Social Theory

to respond to anyone who will offer him the means of filling it up.

He will respond, for good or for evil. He will be ready to join an anti-social 'gang', if no one offers him anything else. He will respond to any mass-propaganda that blares loudly enough at him with a message of comradeship. He will rally to Dr. Buchman, or to Sir Oswald Mosley, rather than not rally at all, when once he has become acutely aware of his own *malaise*. He wants comrades, even if they be comrades in enmity against something to which he has, at bottom, no real objection. He wants comrades, and the society he lives in offers him only a scurrying loneliness among the scurrying hosts of strangers.

This desire for comradeship is the stuff out of which we must build democracy, if we are to build it at all. Build it and preserve it — that is what we must do. And this means that, in this age of hugeness, we must still find means of resting our society on a foundation of small groups, of giving these small groups a functional place in our society, of integrating them with the larger organizations which are indispensable for modern living, of encouraging a continual proliferation of new groups responding to developing needs, and, last but not least, of countering every tendency towards bureaucratization of this quintessential group life.]

How can we rest a society as huge as ours on a secure foundation of small, intensively democratic groupings? This society of ours is based of necessity on large-scale production: it involves, at any rate for a long time to come, the existence of huge cities; and it is in need, in many respects, of even huger organization on a supra-national scale — for the prevention of war, for example, and for the fuller development of international trade and exchange. We cannot turn our backs on these forces: we have to accept them because they are to-day as much a part of the given environment as sea and land, mountains and river-valleys, heat and cold, and all the other things which form part of our natural environment. The task before us is not analogous to that of draining the ocean; but it is analogous to that great victory

The Essentials of Democracy

of man which turned the ocean, heretofore a barrier, into a means of communication between land and land. We have to turn the very hugeness of the modern world into a means for the higher expression of the human spirit.

We cannot do this by changing man's stature ; for man remains little, and is destined so to remain always. The Superman is a vain notion ; and ' Back to Methuselah ' is another. Mark Twain once wrote that if it were possible to educate a flea up to the size of a man, that flea would be President of the United States. It is not possible to inflate humanity up to the size of the organizations it has made. But it is possible so to arrange our affairs that little men are not merely lost in a world too big and directionless for them to find their way.

Men's easiest ways of grouping are round the places they live in and the places they work in. These are two bases of natural human relationship which can be used as bases for democracy. Take the factory. It is not enough for factory workers to belong to a Trade Union, which will represent them in negotiations about wages, hours of labour, and general working conditions throughout their trade. The Trade Union, under modern conditions, is necessarily much too remote from their working lives. Even if it is broken up into branches, these seldom coincide with the personnel of a particular factory or workshop, and are as a rule much more concerned with matters of national policy than with immediate workshop affairs. Side by side with the Trade Union, and perhaps largely independent of it, there needs to be a workshop group, consisting of all the workers in a particular shop, irrespective of their trade or degree of skill. This group ought to have a recognized right of meeting on the factory premises, its own chosen leaders, and — here is the main point — a right to discuss and resolve upon anything under the sun, from the conduct of a particular manager or foreman to the policy of the national Cabinet, or anything else about which its members happen to feel strongly.

Observe that I say ' workshop group ', and not ' factory

Essays in Social Theory

group'. In the case of small establishments, the factory may serve as a unit; but the large factory is much too big to function as a primary neighbourhood group, or to have in it the essential quality of basic democracy. The shop stewards' movement that grew up between 1915 and 1918 was feeling after just this basic democracy. But it always found the Trade Union bureaucracy against it, because it seemed to, and did, stand for an alternative basis of social organization. It was truly democratic; and accordingly the bureaucrats were eager to knock it on the head. They did not object to shop stewards who kept to their 'proper' functions — that is, acted merely as subordinate agents of the Trade Union machine. They objected strongly to a shop stewards' movement which laid claim to any independent initiative or showed signs of assuming a 'political' character.

Consider now the places in which people live. Here in my mind's eye is a street of houses — or rather several streets. This one, a row of nineteenth-century working-class dwellings, all joined on, short of light and air and comfort and even of elementary requirements. This other, a street on a post-war housing estate, immensely superior in lay-out and amenity and capacity to afford the environmental conditions of healthy living. This, again, a street of shops, and this, not exactly a street, but a great block of flats housing more people than many streets.

What is odd about these places? The oddest thing, to my mind, is that the people who live in them, though they are neighbours with a multitude of common problems, hardly ever meet in conclave to consider these problems, and have in hardly any instance any sort of common organization. It is true that the shopkeepers may just possibly have some rudimentary association among themselves — but even that is unlikely. It is true that, here and there, struggles between landlords and householders have brought into being some sort of Tenants' League, for a narrow range of purposes. But in the vast majority of streets there is not even the shadow of a social unity, joining these people together on

The Essentials of Democracy

the basis of their common neighbourhood.

A second thing, not so odd but well worth noting, is that of these bodies of street-dwellers those who know one another best are pretty certain to be those who are living under the worst housing conditions. There is a comradeship of the street in a poor working-class quarter : there is usually much less on the model housing estate or in the model block of flats.

I am suggesting that there ought to be for every street, or little group of streets, for every block of flats, and, of course, for every village and hamlet a regularly meeting, recognized, neighbourhood group, with a right to discuss and resolve upon anything under the sun. I am not merely suggesting that this ought to happen : I say it ought to be made to happen. Every new group of streets we build ought to have its little Moot Hall for such assemblies of its people, ought to have its little centre for their communal affairs. Personally, I think this Moot Hall should be also a communal restaurant and bakehouse, and a social club. I think it should include a place where children could amuse themselves, and be left in charge of somebody when their parents are away. I think, as we rebuild our cities, there should be open space round these centres — space for games, for sitting about, for children's playing. I think we should make our Community Centres, not merely one to a big housing estate, but one to every street, or group of streets, of, say, a hundred or at most a few hundred households.

But to enlarge on all this would take me too far from my immediate purpose. Whether these other things are done or not done, I am sure there must be really active neighbourhood groups in every street and village before we can call our country truly a democracy. One reason for this is that there is no other way of bringing the ordinary housewife right into politics without interfering with her duties as housewife and mother. Workshop organization may come first in the minds of the men and young women who work in factories : neighbourhood groups are the key to the active citizenship of the wife and mother.

It is of no use to think that we can have these groups and

Essays in Social Theory

confine their activities to the specific affairs of the little places to which they are directly attached. They must and will deal with these affairs, and they should be given a positive and assured status in dealing with them. But this is not their sole, or even their main, purpose. They are wanted most of all to serve as basic and natural units of democracy in a world ridden by large-scale organization. Their task is one of democratic education and awakening — of ensuring democratic vigilance through the length and breadth of the great society. Therefore they must be free, like the workshop Soviets, to discuss and resolve upon what they will.

Soviets — I have used the word at last. Soviets, as they arose all over Russia on the morrow of the revolution. Soviets, expressing directly the common attitude of small groups in any important relation of life. To what extent such Soviets are effective to-day in the Soviet Union I do not know ; but I believe them to be much more effective as agents of small-scale human democracy than the critics of the Soviet system would have us believe. I do know that they existed on the morrow of the Russian Revolution, and were the surest expression of its democratic soul.

These Soviets arose under stress of revolution because, amid the dissolution of the old despotic order, men had to find immediate means of standing together and articulating their urgent common needs. There have been faint signs of the emergence from below of similar bodies among those who remained in districts of London and other blitzed cities sorely stricken by war. There have been improvisations in reception areas, where new problems of neighbourhood, such as billeting, have had to be faced. But the effect has been small so far, because the bureaucracy has remained intact, and the political leaders of the new democracy from below have continued, on the whole, to collaborate with the bureaucracy, rather than work against it. A much greater dislocation than has yet occurred of the established machinery of administration would be needed to set the spirit of basic democracy ablaze among a people as used to being governed

The Essentials of Democracy

as ours. For our bureaucratic machine is on the whole quite competent at doing its job — competent and also honest. But it does not regard it as any part of its job to elicit the spirit of democracy. How could it, when the spirit of democracy is essentially untidy and unruly, whereas the bureaucrat lives by rules, forms, and pigeon-holes in which humanity, chopped up fine, can be neatly filed ?

But — I hear the bureaucrats and their friends objecting — but it is altogether a fallacy to suppose that the ordinary man wants, either at his workplace or in the neighbourhood of his home, to be for ever talking politics. For proof that he does not, go into the pubs and see. Go into the Women's Institutes, the Community Centres, listen in tubes and trains and restaurants. Go where you will, and hear for yourself. It is not politics that interests the ordinary man. The nearest he got to politics even under war conditions was air raids; and that was not politics: it was sheer personal concern *plus* sporting interest.

Well, I know that. Most men and women are not deeply interested in politics because (a) they could not do anything much about them even if they were, given society as it now is; (b) politics are not interesting usually, until one has already some very strong reason for being interested in them, and a tolerably clear notion of what they ought to be about; (c) the politicians, or most of them, do not want most people to be interested, except at election times, and do not do anything to get them continuously interested; (d) the bureaucrats want most people *not* to be interested, and will do their best to stamp out any organization likely really to express the ordinary man's point of view; (e) the vested interests do not want to have ordinary people prying too closely into their various concerns; (f) it is simpler to govern a society when most people are not interested in its government, and no politician or bureaucrat quite knows whether the people, if it took to having a mind of its own, would agree with him or not. It is therefore safest to let sleeping dogs lie.

Need we wonder that ordinary men and women, under

Essays in Social Theory

these conditions, are interested in politics only at rare moments when politics visibly and unmistakably come and make havoc of their lives? There has never been since the great days of Athens (save perhaps for a very brief while in Calvin's Geneva) a State, or even a city, whose rulers thought it part of every citizen's right and duty to take a continuous and active interest in political affairs.

I do not go so far as that. All I ask is that we should set out so to organize our new societies as to encourage every citizen to become politically conscious, and to believe in democracy as a precious possession of the people. And I assert that, in these days of huge States and huge-scale production, there is no way of doing this except by building upon a foundation of small neighbourhood groups, territorial and economic, because such groups alone have in them the essential qualities of unmediated, direct democracy based on personal contact and discussion, and on close mutual knowledge and community of small-scale, immediate problems. That only is democracy's sure foundation: given that, we can, I believe, safely raise upon it what towering skyscrapers we please.

VIII

*Rousseau's Political Theory*¹

THERE is no political thinker, except perhaps Plato, on whom so many different interpretations have been put as on Rousseau. I cannot hope to escape from the charge, made against so many others, of putting my own personal interpretation on his work. Nor shall I even attempt to escape it; for I propose to begin by telling what it was that made Rousseau a great influence on my own thought, and led me, first to translate and edit *Du contrat social*, and then to begin writing a big book about him as my first major piece of academic work. That book, broken off short by the outbreak of the first World War in 1914, remains the fragment it was at that point; for I have never been able to make up my mind to go back to it. But I set out to write it in the belief that Rousseau had something of special value to contribute afresh to contemporary political and social thought; and I still hold to that view.

What first captured my imagination in Rousseau was his much attacked notion of the General Will; and therefore I propose to begin with that. I found the notion, as set forth in *Du contrat social*, confusing as well as attractive; and I did not profess fully to understand it. What attracted me was that it put right at the heart of social thought the notion of *will*, rather than so passive a notion as 'consent' or so objectionable a notion as obedience of the subject to the commands of a human superior. This *will*, as Rousseau stated the matter, was not the will of a ruler, or a group of rulers, or even the will of all the citizens as men. It was clearly a special kind of will, present to some extent in every citizen, but distinguished from the rest of the individual will

¹ Written in 1948.

Essays in Social Theory

of each citizen by a quality of *generality*. It was that part of the will, in an individual or in an assembly of individuals, that was directed to the furtherance not of individual private interests, but of the general advantage of the entire group concerned.

I did not fully understand this until, after reading the *Social Contract*, I went on to study Rousseau's other writings. I found the clue to what he meant — or to what I think he meant — in a passage in the article 'Political Economy', which he contributed to the great French Encyclopedia. In that passage, which I cited in my Everyman Introduction to the *Social Contract* (I also included the entire article to which I am referring in the Everyman volume) — in that passage Rousseau was discussing not the State or Government in particular, but the much wider problem of human association in all its forms. He was insisting that men, wherever they form or connect themselves with any form of association for any active purpose, develop in relation to the association an attitude which looks to the general benefit of the association rather than to their own individual benefit. This is not to say that they cease to think of their own individual advantage — only that there is, in their associative actions, an element, which may be stronger or weaker, of seeking the advantage of the whole association, or of all its members, as distinct from the element which seeks only personal advantage. This element is the individual's contribution, in his associative behaviour, to what Rousseau calls the *moi commun* of the association.

I am sure this notion is vitally important. If no such attitude existed among men, they could not act in association with any degree of sustained success, either in associations for particular purposes or in the great association which is called 'the State'. Whether this element of what Rousseau calls 'general will' be strong or weak in men — and it is in fact strong in some and weak in others — I am sure he is right in holding that it always exists — in everyone, as a necessary element in the human make-up. All men have loyalties — of one sort or another.

Rousseau's Political Theory

Rousseau says that a general will, made up of the elements of 'generality' in the individual wills of the members, exists in every association — at all events, in every one in which there is any call on the members to decide or to act. But he says also that such general wills are general only in a relative sense. They are general in relation to the associations which call them into existence; but they are particular, and not general, in relation to society as a whole. Conceiving of the State as a great general association to which all associations within its frontiers are subordinate, Rousseau holds that all the general wills of these associations are merely particular wills in relation to the General Will (with capitals) of the whole Society, which he identifies with the General Will of the Sovereign State.

I shall come later on to the question whether Rousseau was justified in thus asserting the subordination of all other forms of association to the Sovereign State, and in differentiating between the mainly relative generality of other associative wills and the allegedly absolute generality of the General Will attached to the State. For the moment I am concerned only with his contention that every kind of active association generates in its members a will which is different from their private, individual wills, and may conflict with them, and that there are degrees of generality, corresponding to the scope of the associations with which the wills are connected, and to the nature of the ties which bind the members to these associations.

To be sure, there is an ambiguity in Rousseau's thinking even at this point. When he speaks of the *moi commun* that develops in each association, he comes near to asserting that the associations possess personality in a sense that involves the existence of a 'group mind'. I confess that I am not sure how far he meant this, or even whether he meant it at all. It is, of course, one thing to say that there exists in men individually an element of will which can cause them to will the good of a group to which they are attached, and quite another to attribute the possession of a common will to the group as a whole in any other than a metaphorical sense.

Essays in Social Theory

But there is also between these two positions a possible third position, which without asserting the existence of a 'group mind' does affirm that groups, no less than men individually, can take decisions which lead to action and can thus present, from the standpoint of the effects produced by these decisions, social consequences which can be regarded, without undue straining of words, as the outcome of group willing, even if the action and the willing are always made up of the actions and willings of the individual members. In this limited sense, if not in a fuller sense, Rousseau did assert the importance of group willing; and the most significant part of his assertion was the emphasis which he put on the entry into such acts of willing by the individual as member of a group of an element different in nature from purely individual willing, because it involved the factor of group solidarity, or of loyalty to the group. This was a conception which was later to be developed much further by Durkheim, in the stress which he laid on the influence exerted by group and society patterns on the conduct and willing of social man.

At any rate, I took from Rousseau this notion of every active group or society as tending to develop a 'will of its own', distinct from the private wills of its members. This involved the conception of the presence in each individual of a duality, or rather a plurality, of wills, or of will-elements, contributing to the formulation of decisions to act. It meant regarding each man as having in him, not only the will to pursue his own advantage or well-being on a lower or a higher plane (I shall come back later to this question of the planes of individual motivation), but also the will, based on a sense of loyalty or obligation, to act for the collective benefit of any group to which he belonged. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau was applying this same notion when he spoke of 'the tendency of all governments to deteriorate' by substituting the will of the government itself for the will of the entire society which it was supposed to represent. The government, Rousseau considered, had as a group a *moi commun* of its own, distinct from the greater *moi commun* of the whole society over whose affairs it had surveillance.

Rousseau's Political Theory

Governments thus tended to turn into conspiracies against the public, instead of serving as guardians of the general interest.

As we saw, Rousseau regarded all other 'general wills' as falling to the status of particular wills in relation to the greater General Will of the State. In the *Social Contract*, which he described as no more than a fragment of the more inclusive work he had formerly set out to write, he was concerned mainly — indeed almost exclusively — with this greater General Will which he regarded as the legitimate will of the whole society. Like the lesser 'general wills' of other associations, this General Will of the Society is something present in greater or less degree in each individual citizen, according to the extent of his patriotism, or public spirit. It is not, however, the whole of the will of all the citizens, or perhaps of any one of them. It contends in the citizens for mastery both against purely private 'wills', or will-elements, and against the general-particular wills, or will-elements, generated by the existence of partial groups or associations. In the extraordinary passage in which he sets out to show how, in a properly ordered society, the will-elements that are in conflict with the great General Will tend to cancel out one against another, leaving the elements that are in harmony with the great General Will to determine the issue, Rousseau is trying to find a way of reconciling the prevalence of good in the social order with the presence of anti-social elements in the attitudes of the citizens. In another passage, he comes directly to the part of this problem which arises out of the presence of particular-general wills emanating from partial associations. It is best, he says, in order to eliminate this cause of misbehaviour in the society, to allow no partial associations at all to exist; but, if this is impracticable, let them be as numerous as possible, in order that they may be the more certain to cancel out one against another, just as he thinks the purely private will-elements in the citizens will tend to cancel out.

Of course, this will happen, on Rousseau's showing, only in a well-ordered society. Unless the society has good basic

Essays in Social Theory

institutions there can be no assurance that it will not become the prey of organized sectional interests powerful enough to prevent the General Will from finding effective expression. For, if one or more sectional groups are so strong that their influence cannot be cancelled out by that of other groups, there can be no assurance that the decisions of the body politic will express the General Will. Accordingly Rousseau postulates a society both small and compact enough for the individual citizens to take a direct part in its control, and also an absence of extremes of privilege or inequality that would prevent the citizens from acting sufficiently in a disinterested spirit. The *Social Contract* is meant to be the bible of small Societies — of a modern version of the ancient City State. A large part of its fundamental doctrines simply ceases to apply when the State is too large for the individual to fulfil directly the role of active citizenship.

At this point it becomes necessary to get as clear as possible the meaning of the sharp distinction which Rousseau draws between the exercise of sovereignty and of government.

Government ' in Rousseau is a word of special, restricted meaning. We habitually use the word in two senses — either to mean the whole machinery of State, including the constitution and the law-making process as well as the administration, or alternatively to mean the executive arm, or, even more narrowly, the Cabinet and the lesser Ministers as distinct from the Civil Service. Neither of these senses corresponds to Rousseau's usage. When he says ' government ', he means primarily the magistrates — the holders of public office of every sort, including the judicial as well as the administrative machine, but not including the whole of what we think of as the legislature. For it is fundamental to Rousseau's thought to draw a sharp distinction between two things both of which we habitually regard as belonging to the sphere of legislation. These are, on the one hand, the making of the fundamental laws which govern the whole social system, and on the other the making of decrees and ordinances which apply these fundamental laws to particular cases or to particular persons or groups. The making of the

Rousseau's Political Theory

fundamental laws, and nothing besides, is legislation in Rousseau's sense ; and it is an act of the sovereign people — of all the citizens — and cannot be delegated to any representative assembly or body of magistrates, though it can exceptionally be handed over to a ' legislator ', when it becomes requisite to equip a society with a completely new constitutional code. Laws, in Rousseau's usage, are the formulation of constitutional principles, and it is of their essence to apply to everyone on equal terms, and not to deal at all with particular cases, or individuals, or groups. Legislation is the act of the sovereign people, or of a legislator designated by it to act on its behalf ; and in a legitimately founded society, every individual citizen must be entitled to take part directly in the legislative process. In this sphere of direct individual civic action, and in this sphere alone, does Rousseau suppose the General Will to find direct expression. He nowhere suggests that there can be any assurance that the General Will will prevail except when the citizens are acting directly as individuals in their sovereign capacity as ' legislators ' in this highly special and limited sense.

For Rousseau, ' government ' includes every form of political activity that is not a direct activity of the whole body of citizens. ' The great mass of what we ordinarily call legislation, passed by representative assemblies or ordained by magistrates, he regards as consisting, not of laws, but of decrees or ordinances belonging to the realm of particular applications and not of fundamental law. It is of the essence of such measures not to apply equally to all members of a society, but to bear differently on different persons and sections. Where this is the case, in Rousseau's view, the conditions that tend to ensure the supremacy of the General Will no longer apply, both because there is no longer the same basis for impartial voting as where every voter is aware that the law he helps to pass will apply to himself equally with everyone else, and also because all representative bodies and magistrates have wills of their own which they tend to substitute for the General Will.

Essays in Social Theory

Thus, Rousseau drew a sharp distinction between the sphere of direct, individual civic activity, to which his conception of the General Will directly applied, and the sphere of 'government', to which it could apply only in an inferior and derivative sense. The two spheres were connected, because the choice of the 'government', including both representative assemblies and magistrates, was an act of the sovereign people and accordingly fell within the domain of the direct exercise of the General Will. If the General Will prevailed in the choice of assemblies and magistrates, the acts of government would reflect this, and would be broadly consistent with the dictates of the General Will; but if the sovereign people, without willing wrongly, allowed itself to be 'deceived' in the choice of its leaders, the leaders would proceed to substitute their individual or group wills for the General Will, and the 'government' would fail to express even indirectly the general will of the sovereign people.

I have stated this point at some length, because it is so often misunderstood. Rousseau did not, as is often said, reject representative *government*: what he did was to reject representative *sovereignty*, and to assert that the function of legislation — fundamental legislation, that is — could never legitimately be delegated, but only exercised directly by the entire body of citizens. Hence his insistence on the small State, all whose citizens could assemble together for deliberation and decision. But, of course, the French Revolution gave his doctrine of the sovereignty of the people an entirely different meaning, by transferring the exercise of sovereignty from the assembled citizens to a national assembly chosen to represent them — which was precisely what Rousseau had said could never be done. No one could represent the citizen in his sovereign capacity: sovereignty was inalienably and indivisibly placed in the assembled people, attending individually and acting as individuals under the direct impulsion of the General Will.

It could, of course, be argued that Rousseau's kind of sovereignty, which reposed inalienably in the individual

Rousseau's Political Theory

citizens, had no contribution to offer towards the solution of the political problems of the modern world, dependent as these were on the great State, and that it was therefore legitimate to reshape Rousseau's doctrine to fit the conditions of the populous and extensive Nation State. Even if it was, the reshaping involved a fundamental transformation of the entire doctrine. It removed the centre of sovereignty from the people acting as individuals, and transferred it to the collective acting in its corporate capacity through a representative assembly. What had been in Rousseau an affirmation of the inalienable rights of the individual citizen to an equal voice in the settlement of the foundations of the social order was thus transformed into a denial of the rights of the individual in face of the collective. Clause after clause of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, while preserving the phrasology of individual human rights, goes on in the second half of each sentence to subordinate these rights to the requirements of the nation, as defined by the representative assembly. This is no mere change of emphasis: it is a fundamental revolution in thought. It affirms precisely what Rousseau had passionately denied — that men could legitimately be obliged by a will which they had no direct part in expressing. In place of a State made up of co-operating sovereign individuals, associated by the General Will active in each and all, it put the very different notion of the Sovereign State, in the hands of a government holding supreme power over the individuals. In such a system of social structure, the individual might still be dignified by the name of 'citizen'; but he was in fact, in Rousseau's conception, simply a subject, as much as in any autocratic régime that rested on denying him all political rights. Rousseau had asserted the supremacy of a State that effectively included as rulers all its individual members, and had rested his justification of the State's supremacy on the fact that each citizen was binding and being bound in equal measure with all the rest. The assertion of the sovereignty of an elected assembly, however chosen (even if it were to be chosen by universal suffrage), was a declaration

Essays in Social Theory

in favour of the totalitarian State, in which the rulers were authorized to ride rough-shod over personal liberties in enforcing *their* conception of the General Will, as modified by their particular wills as a governing group.

When this had happened, and the idea of *Rousseauism* had become inextricably entangled with that of the new revolutionary régime as expressed in the *Déclaration*, it was inevitable that Rousseau's doctrines should come to be widely misunderstood. For what he had said of 'government', in the restricted sense he gave to the term, came to be understood as applying to 'government' in a much wider sense, including what Rousseau had distinguished from 'government' as the exercise of sovereignty. The conception of the General Will, which had been that of a will-element present in every individual citizen, came to be transferred to the representative collective assembly, as standing for the people; and the 'people' came to be thought of as a collectivity embodied in the machinery of State, and not as a number of free individuals meeting together to shape their common affairs by deliberation and decision guided by the General Will.

In one sense, the effect of this transformation was to make the doctrine of popular self-government more democratic than it had been in Rousseau. For Rousseau had not insisted on democratic *government*, but only on popular *sovereignty*. In his view, it had been fully consistent with popular sovereignty for the sovereign people to set up an undemocratic form of government. Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy had all been legitimate forms of government, provided that they were confined to the sphere of government, and did not usurp the sovereign right of the whole people to be the only source of *laws*, as distinct from particular decrees or ordinances. Government, for Rousseau, had been essentially a *derived* power, limited to action under the laws directly voted by the whole people; and it had been merely a matter of expediency, and of time and place, whether this derived authority could best be exercised by many, or by few, or by one alone, and what means should be

Rousseau's Political Theory

used in assigning and separating the powers of government, or in laying down conditions for the holding of magisterial offices, or indeed in arranging any of the powers of government. The confounding of the functions of sovereignty and government, on the other hand, led to an insistence that government, in order to be legitimate, must be democratic and must serve to express the popular will. It led to a challenge to the claims of monarchy and aristocracy over the entire field of political action, and served as the foundation of the nineteenth-century European doctrine of political democracy based on popular representation. But the assertion of the necessity for democratic government, and not only for popular sovereignty, carried with it the implication that the sovereignty belonged to the government, and not the government to the citizens.

It is of the first importance for the understanding of contemporary politics to realize that this transformation of the doctrine of popular sovereignty into that of totalitarian democratic government never took place in the United States. The United States took its fundamental constitutional ideas not from the French Revolution, but from the English Puritans, from John Locke, and from Montesquieu and Rousseau — not from the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* or from the totalitarian tendencies that were strengthened in France by the Revolutionary Wars. The Americans still habitually think of the Constitution and of Constitutional Law as one thing, and of government as another thing which includes the ordinary act-making process and also the 'Administration'. They do this, not only because they have a written Constitution and a federal system, or because they have preserved the notion of the 'separation of powers' which the Founding Fathers derived mainly from Montesquieu, but also because they still think of the ultimate power as residing in the individual citizens rather than in any representative body. I am not suggesting that this distinction is the same as Rousseau's distinction between sovereignty and government. By no means. But there is this in common — that both affirm the individual,

Essays in Social Theory

rather than the collective, as the final source of all political authority.

Yet, it may be said, in at any rate one respect, Rousseau did show a highly totalitarian tendency. He asserted that, though the State would not, in the exercise of the General Will, intervene in all matters affecting the lives of the citizens, it must nevertheless be the sole and final judge of the limits of its intervention. The citizen, Rousseau held, could set no limits on the range of the powers which, by virtue of being a citizen, he resigned into the hands of the State; for sovereignty was by its very nature unlimited, as well as indivisible and inalienable. As a matter of expediency and common sense the State, Rousseau held, would set limits to its intervention; but it must be sole judge of these limits.

Admittedly, this has a totalitarian ring; but let us bear in mind that Rousseau said it, not of the government, but of the sovereign people. According to his view, the people could limit the functions of government as much as they pleased: what they could not limit was their own power to define these limits. In defining them, Rousseau argued, the people would be guided by the dictates of the General Will, which would warn them sufficiently against endowing the *government* with excessive powers, and against using their own *sovereignty* to excess. In practice, Rousseau was an advocate of a restricted exercise of the State's power; but he could not, in consistency, allow anyone except the assembled citizens to define the frontiers between collective obligation and personal freedom.

This insistence on unlimited popular sovereignty did, however, lead him to take up an uncompromising attitude of hostility to the claims of any other bodies, besides the Sovereign State, to impose obligations upon the individual. In the sections of the *Social Contract* in which he dealt with the relations between Church and State, and also in the 'Confession du vicaire savoyard' in *Émile*, Rousseau appeared as the exponent of an uncompromising Erastianism. This, if he was to be consistent, he had to do; for to admit the Church's claim to independent authority would have

Rousseau's Political Theory

been utterly at variance with his conception of popular sovereignty resting on all the citizens deliberating and voting as individuals inspired by the General Will. If sovereignty resided thus inalienably and indivisibly in all the citizens, it could no more belong to the Church than to the 'Government'; nor could the sovereign people entrust the exercise of subordinate political authority simultaneously to two unco-ordinated and potentially conflicting agencies — the Government and the Church. There must be one derivative political authority, responsible to the sovereign people; and this body could not be the Church, because the Church, by the very nature of its claim to be the interpreter of God's will, could not accept the office of being a mere administrator of an authority derived from the people. Accordingly, for Rousseau, the only acceptable kind of Church was an Erastian Church, acting as the subordinate agent of the secular power, and preaching a social doctrine fully consistent with the secular conception of the sovereignty of the people. Such a Church was, in effect, not an independent religious foundation, but the educational arm of the State, devoted to the inculcation of sound social doctrine and to the fostering of the General Will in the minds of the people.

This notion of the relations between Church and State was a denial of all admission of political *pluralism*; but it was not totalitarian, in any permissible sense of that much-banded word. It was not totalitarian, because the underlying purpose was not that of subordinating the individual to the State, but rather that of preserving the final right of the individual against all institutions in the exercise of his fundamental sovereignty. Rousseau's General Will no doubt went to the making of Hegel's totalitarian political philosophy, as one of the ingredients; but in using Rousseau's notion of the General Will as he did, Hegel turned it into something entirely different from what Rousseau had meant it to be.

Let us try to see how this happened, and how, much later, it became possible for Bosanquet, in his *Philosophical Theory of the State*, to present a version of Rousseau's

Essays in Social Theory

political doctrine that bore very little resemblance to the original. Rousseau's conception, as we have seen, was that of a will, or rather a will-element, present in every citizen, that looked to the well-being of the whole society and preferred that well-being to the individual's own in the exercise of political sovereignty. Immanuel Kant took this notion from Rousseau, and transferred it to the sphere of Moral Philosophy, making of it his notion that 'there is nothing good except the good will'. Kant's categorical imperative was Rousseau's General Will restated in terms of personal ethical behaviour. The objectivity which Kant affirmed as a characteristic of the 'Real Will' as contrasted with the subjectivity of the purely private practical judgement was simply an ethical version of Rousseau's contrast between the General Will and the 'Will of All'.

Then came Hegel, to translate Kant's Ethics back into Political Philosophy. Hegel did this by transferring Kant's 'Real Will' from the individual, whom he regarded as incapable of transcending his subjectivity by the aid of his own private reason, to the State, which he erected into the embodiment of objective reality—the 'March of God on Earth'. The General Will thus reappeared as an attribute of the State itself, and not as belonging to the individual citizens, who could participate in it only by surrendering themselves into the absolute power of the State. Superficially, this surrender bears an apparent resemblance to Rousseau's complete surrender of powers by the individual citizens under the terms of the *Social Contract*. Actually, it is something entirely different; for, whereas in Rousseau's version the citizens simply combined their rights, each retaining his share in their future formulation and application, in Hegel's version the surrender involved no such return as Rousseau regarded as justifying the surrender. In Hegel's version, the individual lost his rights and merged himself in the higher objectivity of the State as a reality of a superior order, whereas, in Rousseau's, he remained the very foundation on which the State was built, and helped equally with others to shape the State, instead of being shaped by it as by an

Rousseau's Political Theory

impersonal, all-transcending metaphysical power.

Perhaps it may be thought that I am overstressing the difference between the two views. I do not think I am; for I believe no difference in Political and Social Theory to go deeper than that between the view of the State as a higher metaphysical entity and the rival view that the State is simply an instrument for the collective action of the individuals who are its citizens. In the conflict between these two views, I believe Rousseau, with all his ambiguities, to have been ranged as decisively on the one side as Hegel, with all his obscurities, was on the other. What has concealed this is, above all else, the identification of *Rousseauism* with the notions of representative national sovereignty that found expression in the French Revolution. I agree, however, that Rousseau's ways of expression lent themselves to this misinterpretation of his meaning; and I do not deny that, in certain moods, he came dangerously near to slipping over into a metaphysical conception of the State — but only on condition that the State in question should be of a very peculiar kind.

I mean by this qualification that Rousseau did hold that, in a particular kind of State, which he believed to be ideally the best, the social bonds between the individual citizens would be so close that, for all practical purposes, they would completely agree about the basic institutions they preferred and the way in which they chose to be governed. Idealizing Sparta, as so many eighteenth-century thinkers did, devoted to the notion of the City State small enough to allow everyone to participate directly in public affairs, and holding the rationalist belief that there must be one right answer to every question and that good and well-brought-up men could be relied on to find it out if their minds were not perverted from the search, Rousseau thought that, in a State which complied with these requirements, the general will in each citizen would have pretty much the same content, and would prescribe pretty much the same decisions: so that the General Will of the whole society would be simply a writ-large version of the general will in the mind of each citizen.

Essays in Social Theory

In this sense, he did idealize the State, but only because he idealized the individual citizens. The individual would recognize the General Will of the Society as his own will, even if his particular will dissented from its precepts.

I am conscious that I may be taken to task, in what I have just said, for calling Rousseau a 'rationalist', despite his vehement opposition to the intellectualist rationalism which was the prevailing creed of his time. It is, of course, perfectly true that Rousseau put immense emphasis on sentiment, as against intellectual reason, as a force in the shaping of human affairs, and that his trust in social solidarity rested on the strength of community sentiment, and not merely on that of intellectual conviction. But this does not at all invalidate what I said; for Rousseau did also hold, as much as any of his contemporaries, the rationalistic conviction that all good men, if sufficiently enlightened, would agree, and this is all I asserted. His stress on sentiment led him to insist that the process of enlightenment would not of itself make men good, and that they would use their reasons for good social purposes only if they were led to do so by a strong impulsion of the sentiment of social solidarity. This induced him to insist that the General Will could operate effectively only in a rightly constituted society — by which he meant a society small enough for the citizens to be friends and neighbours as well as political associates, and homogeneous and equalitarian enough not to be torn asunder by internal factions.

These notions of the social bond are closely connected with Rousseau's conception of the springs of conduct in man, whenever his behaviour is not perverted by evil institutions. Rousseau's social psychology is best expounded in his essay on *The Origin of Inequality*, which, as well as the article on 'Political Economy', I included in my Everyman edition of Rousseau's political writings. He there distinguishes between two mental attitudes, which he calls respectively *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* — the latter being in his view a perversion of the former engendered by bad social institutions. The 'natural man', he contends,

Rousseau's Political Theory

is animated by *amour de soi* — a sentiment of self-respect which implies a recognition of equal claims on the part of other men, or at least of other members of a common society. *Amour-propre*, on the other hand, is a sentiment of exclusive self-love, involving a denial of equal claims on the part of others, and rising to a dominant position wherever unequal social institutions set men to the defence of privilege or of exclusive right, or to the aggrandizement of their position by enlarging their wealth and power. Rousseau connects the rise to dominance of this second sentiment with the development of private property, with its essentially exclusive pretensions. He regards a society in which there exist gross inequalities of wealth, or the opportunity to become rich at the expense of others, as incapable of good social living, and as therefore fatal to the effective expression of the General Will. For it is on the preponderance of *amour de soi* over *amour-propre* in the minds of the citizens that the very existence of social solidarity depends, and therefore the vitality of the General Will. This is, of course, a view which rests on a belief in men's natural goodness, in the sense that, in the absence of social institutions which definitely foster the growth of anti-social impulses, men's natural impulses towards solidarity will impel them to a recognition of social justice. This is Rousseau's form of the social optimism of the eighteenth century: it differs from the optimism of the intellectualists in resting the faith in man, not mainly on the progress of rational enlightenment, but on a primitive social impulse that has been only overlaid by bad institutions, but not destroyed.

Practically, however, Rousseau's optimism has narrow limits; and these limits are set by his belief that only in small, directly acting societies can the natural goodness of man find means of successful expression in the art of living. This, paradoxical as it may seem, is why he lays so much emphasis on State Sovereignty. In the draft which he made for a projected work on *Principes du droit politique*, intended to range over a much wider field than the *Social Contract*, Rousseau addressed himself to the problem, which the *Social*

Essays in Social Theory

Contract leaves undebated, of the relations between State and State and of the possibility of a great society, wide enough to give expression to the unity and solidarity of the entire human race. He discusses this same group of problems in his commentaries on the *Polysynodie* of the Abbé Saint-Pierre and on the same writer's *Projet de paix perpétuelle*. His conclusion is pessimistic, despite his optimistic view of man's nature; for he cannot believe that in large societies, even if their basis be federal and their units small, the individual can bring to public affairs that direct personal participation in the absence of which the General Will will be smothered by the particular or sectional wills of the governing groups entrusted with the conduct of the common business. The Sovereign State which Rousseau exalts is not the great Nation State, but the State of a small, closely-knit civic community of equal citizens; and if the Nation State is altogether too big to serve as an instrument for the expression of the General Will, so *a fortiori* is the international State or Federation. Accordingly man, by the limits of his nature, must resign his hopes of building the World State to express the common sentiment of all mankind; and Rousseau adduces a second argument against the federal unity even of all Europe — that, in order to achieve it, men would have to wade through such rivers of blood as to destroy in the process the social life that they have contrived to establish, and would ruin humanity in attempting its international reconciliation.

Rousseau was not a nationalist; but his ideas went to the making of the new belief in national sovereignty, vested in the entire people, but exercised by a sovereign representative assembly, which the French Revolution proclaimed. He was not a believer in representative government, save in a very limited sense; but his notion of the General Will was transferred by his successors from the citizens, in whom he held it to exist, to the elected politicians, to whom he most emphatically denied it. He was a believer in the virtues of the small community; but his conceptions have been applied mainly to great States, to which he regarded them as in-

Rousseau's Political Theory

applicable. No doubt, it happens to many thinkers to have their doctrines put to uses they were far from intending ; but I think this happened to Rousseau to an exceptional extent, and in such ways as to make it exceptionally difficult to recapture his real thought. At any rate, when I read other people's studies of Rousseau's political work, I am nearly always surprised at finding what they make of him — surprised, nearly every time, with a different surprise.

IX

*The Rights of Man*¹

THE Declaration of the Rights of Man, issued by the French Revolutionary Assembly in 1789 and later incorporated word for word in the Revolutionary Constitution of 1791, is one of the great documents of history. When such a document is in the hands of men, it is altogether too much to expect them to agree, either about its fundamental meaning and practical implications, or about its sources of inspiration and its claims to originality. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that there has been a great deal of dispute, both about the meaning and about the historical origins of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. It has been said again and again to have been essentially a translation of the teaching of Jean-Jacques Rousseau into the terminology of the Revolution in its formative phase, or a product of the French enlightenment of the eighteenth century; whereas others have characterized it no less unequivocally as an echo of the American Declaration of Independence, which preceded it by a mere thirteen years. How far it was any of these things we shall be able to see better when we have studied its main ideas and enunciations of policy.

We can perhaps best begin by asking why any such Declaration of Rights was felt to be needed. It was not so felt by all the members of the assembly. Not only were there rival drafts — several of them — of which, if time allowed, it would be interesting to compare the scope and purport: there were also some in the assembly who argued that it would be preferable to have no Declaration at all, and to proceed straight to the business of constitution-making without any enunciation of fundamental principles. The

¹ Written in 1948.

The Rights of Man

great majority, however, did want a Declaration, as a symbolic act as well as a proclamation of the principles that were to be embodied in the new constitution of the French State. Moreover, this desire was made plain in many of the *cahiers* on the claims of which the *Déclaration* was largely founded. The majority wanted this particular piece of symbolism, I feel sure, largely because there had been an American Declaration and because that Declaration had been a forthright challenge to the hitherto received ideas of statehood and of the nature of the social bond. Yet they were by no means certain at the outset quite what they did want, and the declaration embodied in the English Bill of Rights a hundred years earlier was in their minds hardly, if at all, less than the Declaration of the American Republic.

Yet these two Declarations — the English and the American — were essentially different, not merely in scope but in their theoretical implications. The Bill of Rights embodied nothing in the nature of a philosophical theory either of the rights of man or of the rights of citizenship. It was conceived in terms of particular rights that had been invaded, rather than of human or civic rights in general; and, so far from seeking a new foundation for the State or for society, it aimed at emphasizing and ensuring the continuity of English institutions rather than at replacing one entire system of authority by another. The Americans, on the other hand, issued their Declaration as part of the process of constituting a new State — if 'State' is the right word when the question was rather that of making a Federation of States each endowed with its own structure of sovereignty. The Americans, in proclaiming their independence of George III, were in a measure forced to go back to first principles and to assert as unequivocally as they could the very foundation on which their new establishment was to rest. The English in 1688-9 were not founding a new State — much less a new society: they were only asserting their right to change their government for what seemed to most of them — or to most who counted — a sufficient cause.

The French in 1789 stood midway between these two

Essays in Social Theory

positions. Unlike the Americans, they were not constructing a new sovereign State or confederation : they were re-constituting a State already existing and with a very long tradition behind it. But, unlike the English, they were not merely changing the government, but also carrying through a far-reaching social revolution. They were setting out, indeed, to alter the structure of society much — very much — more than the Americans had done ; and they felt a corresponding need to define the social as well as the political foundations on which the new structure was to rest. The Americans were in a position to accomplish most of what most of them wanted by simply striking away their dependence on England and the English Crown and by refashioning the existing constitutions of the separate colonies and super-adding a loose (for it was loose at first) federal structure, which alone was new. The French needed to go a great deal further because they were making a revolution not merely against royal absolutism but also against an omnipresent system of feudal and ecclesiastical privilege, and therefore needed to lay down for themselves, and for the whole world, the basic principles of the new social system that they were determining to set up.

This difference of need largely accounts for the essential difference of character between the French and American Declarations. The Americans, in the Declaration of Independence, were concerned with the ' rights of man ' mainly as political and constitutional rights — above all, the right to set up their own self-government. The language in which they did this was indeed that of the fundamental rights of man, both as individual and as member of a society of men. But only a small part of the text of the American declaration is devoted to these matters : by far the greater part of it is an enunciation of the grievances which were held to justify the American people in breaking away from Great Britain and establishing their own independent political structure. In effect, most of the matters with which the French Declaration had to deal fell, in the nascent United States, within the jurisdiction not of the confedera-

The Rights of Man

tion but of the independent States of which it was made up. It is therefore not at all surprising that there are much closer resemblances between the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* and certain Bills or Declarations of Rights drawn up by the individual North American States — for example, Virginia — than between the French *Déclaration* and the Declaration of Independence itself. Some historians, such as Professor Jellinek in his book on the subject, have gone so far as to suggest that these Declarations of the separate States served as the main models for the French *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*; and I do not deny that the influence existed, especially with Thomas Jefferson of Virginia in Paris to serve as a link. Nevertheless, I think it as misleading to attribute the *Déclaration* to American influence as to father it upon Rousseau or upon the French enlightenment. It rested in truth upon no single influence, but upon many; and in its hesitations and minglings of barely, if at all, reconcilable doctrines it was a product of the actual historical situation in which it was felt necessary to draw it up, and to do so with the least possible delay.

The very title of the *Déclaration* provides a clue to its double character. It is a proclamation of rights — rights of two kinds — rights belonging to men as *men*, that is, primarily, as individuals by virtue of their humanity, and rights belonging to these same men (or at any rate to Frenchmen) as *citizens*. In other words, it deals both with private or personal and with political and social rights; and, dealing with both kinds of rights, it has also to attempt a reconciliation between them. Indeed, it embodies an attempt not merely to reconcile but to combine these two kinds of right into a single system of rights which the new social order is to guarantee; and that, as we shall see, could be no easy matter.

The *Déclaration*, in its historical significance, is an assertion of two things — or perhaps of three. It asserts, first, that the nation, consisting of the citizens, is the supreme authority, not only as against the king, or against the privileged orders of the old régime, but also as against *la France*

Essays in Social Theory

itself — that is, as against any impersonally conceived authority of the national tradition. It asserts, unequivocally, the right, which Burke most furiously denied, of each generation of Frenchmen to govern themselves by the light of their own intelligence and not to be governed by any impersonal power save that of right reason in their own minds. It thus challenges not only the conception of the State as belonging to the King, or to any authority resting on prescriptive claims, but also that of State-right conferred by the sanctity of a national tradition derived from past experience.

Secondly, the *Déclaration* asserts that all men, by virtue of their humanity, have an *equal* right to well-being and the pursuit of happiness. Leonard Woolf, in *After the Deluge*, has admirably brought out the essential newness of this claim, as emanating from any great and widely influential authority, and therewith the immensity of the change in the climate of opinion which was connoted by the widespread acceptance, even in general terms, of so far-reaching a statement. He is unquestionably right in saying that, though this notion had been entertained before and advanced on more than one occasion as a political challenge — witness Colonel Rainborough's famous remark about the 'meanest he' reported in the Clarke Papers — never before 1789 had it been enunciated as the creed of a nation or as the basis for a Constitution in process of being drafted. There had been no hint of it in the English Revolution of 1688, and no acceptance of it, though there had been hints earlier, in the making of the Commonwealth. Even in the American Revolution, though it had appeared explicitly in the wording of the Declaration of Independence and of the Virginian Bill of Rights, under Jefferson's influence, it had constituted much less of a challenge because it had seemed to most people to emerge out of the conditions of a society so different in its structure from the societies of the Old World as to involve no clear application to them. The United States had, no doubt, at the time of the Revolution, a *de facto* aristocracy of landowners and merchants; but it

The Rights of Man

had no politically privileged noble caste to get rid of, and it did possess socially many characteristics of a democratic way of life, especially in the New England townships. It had, moreover, apart from its black slaves, very little of a proletariat, in the sense of a class permanently and evidently committed to a status of political and economic inferiority. It therefore seemed natural or inevitable that the Americans, in establishing their new Commonwealth, should base it on notions of political equality, at any rate in principle; and in practice each State was left to settle its own franchise and it was not till the middle of the nineteenth century that, blacks and poor whites apart, anything approaching adult male suffrage was actually applied throughout the Union. Jefferson's phrases, however sincerely meant, did not become the operative basis of the American political system without large qualifications. If their challenge nevertheless reacted powerfully on Europe, that was rather by giving a new turn to the debate concerning the proper basis of political association and sovereignty than by administering a direct shock such as was involved in the proclamation of the same doctrine of human rights as a sequel to the outbreak of the French Revolution.

Thirdly, the authors of the *Déclaration* assert that the sovereignty which belongs of right to the 'nation' — that is, to the citizens — is exercisable on their behalf by a popularly elected representative assembly. It does this, not by direct assertion, but by implication. In the first place, it exalts the law, which it describes as *l'expression de la volonté générale*. Then it goes on to say that '*tous les citoyens ont droit de concourir personnellement ou par leurs représentants à sa formation*' — that is, the formation of the laws. Personal participation in law-making and indirect participation through representative government are thus put on a parity as means of expressing the general will — which is precisely what Rousseau, for example, had denied they could legitimately be. As Paine recognized in his *Rights of Man*, this assertion of the final legislative power as belonging to a popularly elected assembly, rather than exclusively to all the citizens

Essays in Social Theory

acting personally, made a vast difference. It was a clear proclamation of the principle of popular sovereignty as exercisable by the instrumentality of democratic parliamentary government.

These three proclamations of principle, in favour of popular sovereignty, equal human rights, and representative democracy, together constitute the *Déclaration's* most important challenge. There was, however, as every commentator who was not immediately carried away by them, as Paine was, has recognized, an ambiguity at the very root of their fusion into a single democratic doctrine. For, if men have certain 'natural, inalienable, and sacred rights' (in the words of the preamble), what is to happen if the sovereign people or nation, acting directly or through representatives, fails to respect these rights? It can of course be declared that governments and States are (or should be) instituted for the protection and furtherance of these rights (*à la* American Declaration), or, *à la Déclaration*, the rights may be stated in a constitutional document '*afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social* (including the representatives and the government) *leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs*'; but this is no guarantee against the invasion of rights which are presented as sacred and as inalienable by the sovereign people, or by a representative assembly chosen by democratic election.

Thus, in a logical sense, the proclamation of natural rights, as Bentham pointed out in his comments on the French *Déclaration*, clashed with the proclamation of the sovereignty of the nation. (III. *Le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la nation. Nul corps, nul individu, ne peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressivement.*) On this ground the English Utilitarians would have nothing to do with natural rights, and insisted that everything should be referred to the principle of utility and decided in accordance with 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', a principle which, in the history of Utilitarianism, preceded and was at the outset independent

The Rights of Man

of any belief in political democracy. It was a standard for governments, however constituted; and only long after he had formulated this principle did Bentham come to the view that the best way to get it applied as an *operative* standard was universal or manhood suffrage = representative democracy. This, J. S. Mill saw, involved the possibility that a majority might override a minority with consequences contrary to the greatest happiness principle, and also that the happiness of a superior minority (or series of minorities) might be disregarded. This, however, would depend in the French view on the extent to which the State failed to live up to the prescribed respect for 'natural rights'. The French authors of the *Déclaration* thought that in practice they could reconcile natural rights with popular sovereignty and representative government by refusing to set any absolute limits to the State's power, but at the same time enjoining it to limit its activity to furthering the welfare of the whole without imposing restrictions on the individual that were not plainly requisite for this purpose. This, of course, is precisely what Rousseau had said when, refusing to limit sovereignty and insisting on the complete transfer of individual rights involved in the social contract, he nevertheless insisted that the sovereign State 'cannot impose upon its subjects any fetters that are useless to the community, or even wish to do so' (*Social Contract*, Bk. II, Ch. 4).

The text of the *Déclaration* is an attempt at this practical reconciliation. It opens with an assertion that 'men are born and remain free and equal in rights', and that accordingly 'social distinctions can be based only on common utility'. Note that it does not say that there should be no distinctions. It admits the utilitarian case for them, once it has been affirmed that the basic principle is that of equality of rights. But already by implication it gives to the democratic State the right to establish social distinctions in the supposed common interest. This means that the State power, guided by utilitarian considerations, can override the natural equality of men; but it still leaves equality

Essays in Social Theory

as the presumption and distinctions as something needing exceptional justification. It thus repudiates altogether the view generally held through most of human history, that some men have, quite apart from social utility, a greater claim to happiness or to privileged rights than others. It is thus basically democratic, but it differs from the American Declaration in putting the last word in the hands of the State, and not with the ultimate rights of the individual *qua* man.

Clause 2 seems to take this back by asserting categorically that 'the end of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man' (the latter word means in effect 'not liable to lapse with disuse, however long'). These rights are then specified as 'liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression'. So far it appears that any government which invades these fundamental rights ceases to be legitimate, and can legitimately be overthrown.

Next, however, in Clause 3 we get the unequivocal assertion that sovereignty resides in '*la nation*', and that all authority, personal or corporate, is valid only if *expressly* emanating from this source. 'Expressly' here means on a basis of popular decision or election.

Then comes the attempt to define the first of the 'natural' rights proclaimed in Clause 2 — Liberty. 'Liberty', we are told, 'consists in being able or empowered to do anything that is not harmful to others'. Thus, 'the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no other limits than those which ensure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of these same rights'. But there must be some authority to apply this precept in practice to the conditions of any particular time and place. So the Clause goes on, 'These limits can be determined only by [the] law'. Law is thus proclaimed, as it had often been before against tyrants, as the guardian of liberty — of the rights of man. But what is law? It had been thought of through most of history much less as something *made* by men than as something interpreted and handed down, resting on time-honoured tradition, even if modifiable in particular respects by current legislation.

The Rights of Man

The leaders of the Revolution could not be expected to think of it in this way. They were in revolt against the laws of the French State as it had been, and were busy making new laws to embody the principles of the new order. It was therefore necessary to define law and its source. But before this Clause 5 comes in, to limit the province of law in the interests of personal liberty. 'The law has the right to forbid only acts which are harmful to society. Nothing that the law does not forbid can be restricted [*empêché*], and no one can be constrained to do what the law does not command.' Thus, there is to be, it is hoped, a large realm of liberty of conduct in which neither law nor government intervenes. But again, though the point is not explicitly repeated, there must be an authority, which can be only the authority that makes the laws, to define the range of interference and non-interference.

Clause 6 proceeds to say what law is. 'Law is the expression of the general will.' That this is not a piece of metaphysics the rest of the clause makes clear. 'All the citizens', it says, 'have the right to participate [*concourir*] personally or through their representatives in its making.' Thus law is clearly something made by the people in the exercise of its sovereignty, not something handed down from the past and interpreted by a special class of wise men (judges). This is a fundamental notion, for it makes the 'law' under which men live not something above the government (in a wide sense) but a creation of the government. Thus, the protection of natural rights by the law is the protection of these rights by the sovereign people -- not *against* the government or the sovereign people. The sovereign people become the sole *interpreter* of natural rights.

Clause 6 then goes on to discuss the quality of law, as distinct from its source. 'It ought to be the same for all, whether it is protecting or punishing.' There are to be no privileges before the law, even for those who are given distinctions on grounds of utility. Then comes what seems an abrupt transition, when we are told, in the same clause,

Essays in Social Theory

that ' All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally admissible to all dignities, public places, and employments, according to their capacity, and with no other distinction than that of their virtues and talents '. In other words, the making and execution of the law are to be in the hands of any citizen who can command the confidence of his fellow-citizens, and it is assumed that this confidence will be accorded to the most virtuous and talented.

From this point the *Déclaration* proceeds in Clause 7 to lay down certain principles which are to govern the *execution* of the law. There is to be no arbitrary arrest, or accusation : all such processes are to follow legally prescribed rules. Anyone who ' solicits, furthers, executes, or causes to be executed ' an arbitrary process is to be punished ; but every citizen arrested or summonsed in accordance with the law is to ' obey instantly ' : resistance to lawful force is ' culpable '. On this follows in Clause 8 an affirmation that the law should exact only necessary penalties and that no one should be punished except by virtue of a law already in force and promulgated before his offence, and also legally applied. Everyone is to be pronounced innocent till he is found guilty (Clause 9), and any rigour not needed to ensure his detention should be severely repressed by the law. All this is directed primarily against particular abuses of the old régime.

Then, in Clause 10, we return to more general principles. ' No one should be subject to interference [*inquiétude*] on account of his opinions, including his religious opinions ', but there is the proviso ' provided that their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law '. Here again, public order is the final criterion, subject to the legal basis of it, and the right to ' manifestation ' of opinion (not to opinion itself) is made subordinate to the law. Then, in Clause 11, a general declaration in favour of the ' free communication of thoughts and opinions ' as ' one of the most precious rights of man ', is complemented by a straight assertion that every citizen should be able to speak, write, and publish freely, ' except that he must answer for the

The Rights of Man

abuse of this liberty in cases determined by law'. In effect, there is to be no prior censorship, but the law is to have the last word in limiting the freedom of speech, writing, and publication — the law being that made by the sovereign people or by its representatives.

Then comes the long-disputed question of the armed forces. The anti-government critics had been accustomed to protest against a standing army as a danger to popular liberty (*e.g.* controversies in England after 1688). The French Revolutionaries, however, recognized the need for a public force to uphold the new order — a force which would belong, not to a despot or an aristocracy but to the people. It is thus asserted that 'this force is instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the particular benefit of those to whom it is entrusted'. This is in effect an assertion that the armed forces of the State must be fully under the authority of the representatives of the nation, and must not constitute an independent power, or be in practice subject to the executive rather than to the sovereign legislative power.

The *Déclaration* then proceeds to the question of taxation, both for the upkeep of the armed forces and generally. '*Une contribution commune est indispensable*': it must be equally shared out among all the citizens, in relation to their '*facultés*' = abilities to pay (Clause 13). Then in Clause 14 it is laid down that all taxes must be levied with the assent of the people or its representatives, and that these must be entitled also to 'follow the use made of the public revenue so raised and to settle the amount, the allocation, the methods of collection, and the duration of the taxes'.

Clause 15 reaffirms more explicitly the principle already implied of the accountability of all public agents. All this, arising largely from the *cahiers*, is a statement of the means of redressing grievances widely felt under the old régime.

Finally came two general clauses, enumerating principles of constitutional structure. In Clause 16 it is affirmed that 'Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured and the separation of powers determined, has no constitution'. This is a curious clause, plainly the outcome of a

Essays in Social Theory

struggle. The first part of it is an attempt to reaffirm the ultimate validity of the rights of men, as against a possible assertion even of democratic State authority at their expense: the second, animated by the same motive, echoes Montesquieu's insistence on the 'separation of powers' as a means of safeguarding liberty by way of checks and balances. But in what degree was a separation of powers really compatible with the principle of national sovereignty? This principle, with its insistence on the law-making authority of the legislature, reduced the judiciary, though independently elected by the sovereign people, to an *interpréter* of laws made by the legislature, rather than of a tradition of law occasionally modified by new legislation. The old theory of law as existing apart from legislation, though modified by it, was not consistent with the felt need to make a new code of laws corresponding to the aims and attitudes of the new order. Moreover, the executive (which was left with the Crown) was reduced to an execution of policies determined by the legislature, and the Revolution was under the greater need to assure its subordination because at this stage it was leaving the executive authority in the hands of the King and of ministers appointed by the King and allowed only to speak and not to sit or vote as legislators. The British form of parliamentary government was not accepted: the ministers were made not independent but subordinate to a legislature, which could tie their hands and instruct them by decrees as well as by laws.

Finally, Clause 17 dealt with the rights of property. 'Property being a sacred and inviolable right, no one can be deprived of it, except when public necessity, legally established [*constituée*], plainly requires this, and subject to the condition of a just and predetermined [*préalable*] compensation [*indemnité*].' Thus the right to property as such, though not to any particular piece of property, is declared as a *droit de l'homme* valid even against the State; but it must be borne in mind that this declaration was made by the very men who were abolishing without compensation feudal rights and privileges. *Propriété* here means, then, not claims to income,

The Rights of Man

but property in a real sense, and at that property recognized by the new order as valid after the elimination of feudal dues and corporative privileges. It is the property of the peasant and the industrialist, not that of the feudal landowner or financial claimant, that is regarded as sacred and inviolable. The *cahiers* make this plain. Take, for example, the *cahiers* of Paris-beyond-the-Walls, where it is said, ' We demand the passing of a fundamental and constitutional law, declaring that all men are born free and have an equal right to security and property in their persons and in their goods '. This same statement of claims goes on to draw a distinction between valid and invalid property rights, the invalid rights resting on privileged claims to feudal or other superiority and the valid rights on what a man possesses by virtue of his own efforts and not through the concessions of arbitrary power. The *cahiers* of Paris-within-the-Walls put forward much the same point of view, and again and again in the *cahiers* from other areas the distinction between valid and invalid property rights is made to rest on a conception of the *droit naturel*. It was in no unlimited sense that the National Assembly of the French people upheld the rights of property.

There the *Déclaration* ends, having said nothing to define one out of the four fundamental rights of man laid down in Clause II, and having dealt with only an aspect of another. Liberty and Property have been made the subject of particular declarations : security has been dealt with only in its aspect of security against arbitrary arrest, punishment, and taxation : the right of resistance to oppression has not been discussed at all.

As for security, the Constitution of 1791 did something to amplify the *Déclaration*, which it incorporated. The First Title, dealing with ' *Dispositions fondamentales garanties par la constitution* ', laid down that ' There shall be set up and organised a general establishment of *secours public* [public assistance] to bring up abandoned children, to relieve the infirm poor, and to provide work for the able-bodied poor who have been unable to procure it for themselves '. Thus

Essays in Social Theory

was enunciated the doctrine, not only of public assistance to the non-able-bodied, but also of the 'right to work' — a doctrine which was to have a long subsequent history in France (*e.g.* in 1848). The same Title of the Constitution prescribed that there should be a system of 'Public Instruction common to all the citizens, free in respect of those parts of learning which are indispensable for all men'.

I do not propose in this essay to enter into a description of the terms of the Constitution of 1791, which was the direct sequel to the *Déclaration*. For this I have no room; but I must refer to one feature of it — its interpretation of the term 'citizen'. The *Déclaration* had dealt with the rights of men as such and with the rights of citizens, and had proclaimed the sovereignty of the nation as involving the participation of the citizens in the making of the law and in the exercise of final sovereignty. Were the 'nation' and 'the citizens' merely collective and individualized expressions for the same people, or were 'citizens' a restricted class? The Constitution was extremely liberal in its treatment of resident foreigners, whom it admitted easily to full citizen rights; but it did not go to the length of universal suffrage, even for French people. To begin with, though it admitted women as possessors of civic rights (in itself a great innovation) it did not accord them the right to vote. The Constitution distinguished between two kinds of citizens, active and passive, the latter in enjoyment of legal and human, but not of political rights. Besides women, it excluded from active citizenship all under 25 years old, all persons without a legal domicile in a canton, all persons who did not pay a direct tax equal at least to the value of three days' labour, and all persons 'in a state of domesticity', that is to say, '*serviteurs à gages*' — *i.e.* under a contract of service. This was derived from old French precedents. It also required every elector to have taken '*le serment civique*', that is, an oath of allegiance to the new order. This exclusion of '*serviteurs à gages*' was mainly directed against retainers of the old landlords, but it applied also to wage-workers in industry as against artisans working on

The Rights of Man

their own, or as subcontractors for a merchant. Such persons were regarded as unable to cast a free vote, because they were under undue influence, and were therefore excluded from active citizenship. This restriction was swept away in the Constitution of 1793, which also reduced the voting age to 21; but the revolutionary wars caused this more liberal Constitution to be set aside without ever coming into force. Thereafter the various Napoleonic Constitutions and voting systems reintroduced the distinction between active and passive citizens and introduced various forms of grading or indirect election in several stages; but I have no space to follow the intricacies of these later constitutional changes. My point here is that, even apart from the case of women, the Constitution of 1791 did not fully implement the idea that man as man is entitled to full civic rights as well as to equality before the law and to enjoyment of the fundamental rights of man.

In the light of this necessarily cursory survey, we can come back to our original questions. The *Déclaration* was not the setting forth of a body of philosophical doctrine, either based on Rousseau or derived from the American example or founded on the ideas of the French enlightenment. It was a medley of influences, the product of a series of compromises — if you will, a hotch-potch. Nevertheless, its philosophical shortcomings did not prevent it from enunciating a point of view which was clear, as well as challenging, enough to provide a foundation for a worldwide movement in the direction of democracy, and of democracy strongly tinged with humanitarian individualism, even though it was also pregnant with collectivist implications. If we compare it with English-made Utilitarianism, we are confronted (a) with the French insistence on the *rights of man*, which the Utilitarians sharply repudiated, and (b) with the fact that both doctrines affirmed the ultimate right of the people, through representative institutions, to make and ensure the enforcement of laws designed to promote the happiness of the greatest number, but each qualified the practical exercise of this ultimate right in a different way

Essays in Social Theory

— the French by insisting on the sanctity of individual rights, the Benthamites by insisting that, in practice, the State had best keep its hands off the economic life of the nation. Except to the extent of acting as the protector of 'legitimate' property rights (not monopolies or privileged claims to income without service), each of these attitudes in practice qualified the supremacy of the State, and prevented the total character of the claim advanced on behalf of the 'people' or 'nation' from being clearly perceived. Nevertheless, both doctrines — Utilitarianism and the democratic doctrine of the *Déclaration* — were in logic claims to an all-overriding power of the majority to do, through its chosen representatives, whatever it or they believed to be for the good of the whole. Thus, the French *Déclaration* was able to serve as a basis for the totalitarianism of the Revolution in its later phases and of the Napoleonic war régime; and Utilitarianism was able, in an environment of rapid economic development, gradually to change sides and become, in the name of the greatest happiness principle, the advocate of increasing State intervention, first in public health (Chadwick) and then over a much wider field (exemplified by Dicey in his *Law and Opinion* and in the neo-utilitarianism of the early Fabians).

Meanwhile the Americans, having set out from a Declaration of rebellion and of the 'rights of man' as related most directly to the right to rebel against their government, had enunciated a doctrine which put the rights of individuals in the first place, and treated government merely as a means to their protection and furtherance: so that there was no assertion either of the right of the assembled people, or of its representatives, to do whatever they believed useful for the people in the name of utility, or to act as the final interpreter and delimeter of the individual rights of man. On the contrary, out of Puritan influence the fathers of American independence developed a deeply individualist doctrine which put the final court of judgement in the individual conscience, and therewith ruled out all possibility of unequivocal assertion of democratic *étatisme*. The conse-

The Rights of Man

quences of these differences of attitude and approach are very much alive in the world to-day. The British are still predominantly Utilitarians, the French *étatistes* in theory who preserve in practice a deep sense of the right of the individual to disobey the State, even while they endow it with sovereign and universal powers; but the Americans believe in a State which merely or mainly holds the ring, while the greater part of the life of the community goes on independently of its doings. The newer things that have arrived since these three new winds of doctrine began to blow about the world are, first, the Hegelian mystique of the transcendent State, which led on to Fascism, and, secondly, the Marxian total claim on behalf of the class as against the nation — a claim also tinged with the Hegelian mysticism in which Marx was brought up. But of these I can say nothing in this essay. I have been trying only to disentangle the essential character of the challenge of 1789.

There are still two points on which I must say a word. It is remarkable that the *Déclaration*, in imputing all authority to the nation, disregarded entirely the claims of any *fraternité* extending beyond the national unit. This was not because the French were unaware of these claims, or desirous in 1789 to tread down other peoples. On the contrary, as much as the Russians to-day, their more ardent leaders hoped for world revolution on the French model. It was rather because they were too preoccupied with their own revolution and concerned to state the claim of the French people to inherit the authority of the *ancien régime* to give thought to the fraternity of mankind until the hostility of other countries had forced them into a position of national consolidation which converted itself with military success into Napoleonic imperialism. The effect, however, was that the French Revolution, in its world influence, became a basis for nationalism and failed to develop the cosmopolitan elements of the eighteenth-century enlightenment with its conception of the *fraternité* not merely of fellow-citizens, but of all men. In its original impulse, as distinct from its later development, there were in it the seeds of universalism,

Essays in Social Theory

but they never sprouted: they were killed by the chill climate of war.

Finally, it should be observed that the reaction against the privileged corporations of the *ancien régime* led the French into a violent hostility to all forms of association within the State, and even to a centralization of power at the expense of local government. This hostility was shared to some extent by the English Utilitarians, for the same reasons, but much less violently: so that democratic association was able to develop much more easily in nineteenth-century Britain than in France, both through local government and through such bodies as Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and voluntary associations of a wide variety of types. I have, however, no space to do more than merely note this difference, important as it was in the long run.

X

*Western Civilization and the Rights of the Individual*¹

THERE is a phrase — ‘ the greatest happiness of the greatest number ’ — which is commonly attributed to the famous reformer, Jeremy Bentham, though he was not in fact the first to use it. Although Bentham was not the originator of the idea that the great purpose of good politics is to achieve ‘ the greatest happiness of the greatest number ’, it was through Bentham, and as the slogan of the Utilitarian philosophers, that the phrase passed into current usage and came to stand for a particular attitude to the problems of society. This slogan, with its appeal to ‘ the counting of heads ’ as an alternative to ‘ breaking them ’ in civil conflict, may seem at first thought far removed from the question of individual rights. The two are, however, in truth very close together ; for what Bentham and those who agreed with him were proclaiming was that the thing that really mattered was that as many people as possible should be as happy as it was possible to make them ; and *happiness* is essentially a condition of the individual, varying from person to person in the things that go to its making, and incapable of existing except in and for individual sentient beings. That was why Immanuel Kant refused to accept it as a principle of political value. He said it was purely ‘ subjective ’, and dismissed it on that ground. The Utilitarians, on the other hand, valued it precisely because it was ‘ subjective ’ — that is, because it was a matter for and in each individual, and not something to which the individual was only a means.

In proclaiming the pursuit of happiness as a political

¹ Written in 1948.

Essays in Social Theory

principle, the Utilitarians were declaring war on all those schools of thought which found the repository of final values, not in individual men and women, but in some entity regarded as superior to them, so that they owed service to it, not it to them. In particular, they were hostile to anyone who treated the State as a mystical being entitled to bind all its citizens to its service, not because of anything the State could do for them, but because of what they could do for the State. As against this, Bentham and his followers insisted that States were in fact nothing more, in the last resort, than collections of individuals, and were of value, not in themselves, but only in as far as they contributed to the happiness and well-being of the citizens. They regarded Hegel's exaltation of the State — which has had so great an influence on German thought — as mystical nonsense, and considered it certain, if it were accepted, to lead to tyranny that would ride rough-shod over human rights and legitimate desires.

If this attitude is fundamentally correct, as I am sure it is, a great deal follows immediately from it. First, as happiness is very much an individual matter, it follows that each person should be allowed the fullest possible chance of seeking it in his own way, by doing what he wants to do and not what other people think he *ought* to want to do. There must, of course, be limitations upon this individual freedom of choice; but the limitations ought to be as few as possible. The sound principle of action in this matter seems to be that a man's (or of course a woman's) liberty should be interfered with only when its exercise would destroy more liberty for other individuals than it would allow to the individual whose liberty is being restrained. That is where the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' comes in; and that is what makes Bentham's principle so decisively *democratic* in its effects.

Secondly, it follows from Bentham's doctrine that where any existing institution or state of affairs is manifestly a cause of more unhappiness than happiness steps ought to be taken to set things to rights. Bentham, in his day, saw the

Western Civilization and Individual Rights

State doing a great many things that plainly did lead to unnecessary suffering — for example, he saw very harsh penal laws, entrenchment of overbearing privilege and of monopolistic restrictions that kept goods scarce and dear, and power in the hands of corrupt municipal corporations which treated the public property as a means to private enjoyment for themselves and made no attempt to give their towns such benefits as proper drains or a supply of pure water. Those who followed his precepts set to work not only to sweep away all the bad interferences with individual liberty, but also to build up good forms of interference that would make for the diffusion of individual happiness. Each individual's happiness may be very much a personal affair ; but that does not prevent us all from knowing that the freedom to catch typhoid from impure water is not a freedom that makes for happiness, or one that we should set out to preserve.

Thirdly, the thinkers who made happiness the goal of political action gradually came to realize that the existence of differences of taste and opinion between man and man was not something to be deplored, but was, on the contrary, valuable and desirable. Tom Paine, the author of *Rights of Man*, who gave utterance in turn to the democratic doctrines set in motion by the American and French Revolutions, put this point of view best when he exclaimed that what was wanted in society was not merely toleration, but recognition of the positive *virtue* of difference. Paine held that it was through the free discussion of varying opinions that men were most likely to get nearer to the truth and to recognize that there was not one abstract truth contrasted with many forms of falsehood, but a great variety of truths all capable of contributing to the vigorous life of a society and to the richness of the lives men could lead as members of it. Here, again, it has of course to be recognized that *some* limits have to be set to the freedom of discussion ; for we cannot afford to allow open advocacy of crime or cruelty, or the open preaching, beyond a point, of doctrines which threaten to destroy the values of our civilization. But, here again, if

Essays in Social Theory

we begin by treating individual differences as good, and not as deplorable lapses from the one true doctrine, we shall be most likely to keep our restrictions on the freedom of discussion within the narrowest limits that are compatible with social survival.

I have been speaking so far of the nature of the liberty of the individual in close relation to the idea of the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' — that is, of the notion in its modern democratic form. In our Western 'way of life' as it is to-day we think of liberty as a thing which every individual ought to enjoy to the fullest practicable extent. But this was not how it was always thought of. In the eighteenth century and earlier there were many thinkers who set a very high value on individual liberty, but did so only for a limited number of people whom they regarded as capable of profiting by it — not for the 'swinish multitude', by which phrase was meant the largest part of the people. As we look back, we can indeed see the notion of individual rights broadening out to include more and more of the people, until it came at length to be extended to them all. It was the great message of the French Revolution to proclaim the doctrine of the 'rights of man' as applying to all men simply because they are men, and not only to some men, because of some special superiority or prestige. The French or English or German aristocrat had often a great idea of the amount of liberty to which he and others whom he recognized as his equals were entitled, but none at all of the claims of the common people. Even further back, the burghers of the corporate towns fought hard for their own rights, but had no thought of claiming similar rights either for their servants or for the mass of peasants in the countryside. Even when lawyers proclaimed the great doctrine of the equality of all men before the law, which lies at the very foundation of our individual liberties, most of them had no notion of extending this equality outside the strictly legal domain, or of refusing to recognize, even in law, such inequalities as that which the law continued so long to maintain between 'master' and 'servant' — so that, even in England, up to 1867, a master

Western Civilization and Individual Rights

could give evidence on his own behalf, whereas a servant could not.

Individual liberty used, in effect, to be regarded as a special privilege, to be allowed bountifully to a few, but to be doled out in niggardly fashion to the great majority of men, who were supposed either not to be fit for it, or to have no special claim to be permitted its enjoyment. Then, gradually, the concept was democratized. But the growth of democracy, though it has done an immense amount to broaden the conception of individual liberty, has carried with it also certain unmistakable dangers. For it is possible to regard democracy, not as a means of extending individual liberty to everybody, but in a quite different way as authorizing the domination of the 'mass' over the individuals who make it up. This can be done, as it was done to some extent in the great French Revolution, by exalting the notion of *la patrie* — the fatherland — above that of individual men and women. Or it can be done, as Hitler did it, by proclaiming the *Führer* as the charismatic leader (to use Max Weber's term) entitled to speak for, and to represent, all the people, irrespective of their personal attitudes and scales of value. Or, again, it can be done, as Marxists tend to do it, by exalting the class above the individuals who belong to it, and treading down personal freedom in the name of class-freedom from the oppression of a dominant class.

All these notions are in conflict with what seems to me to be the living tradition of our Western civilization — a tradition which sets the final value on the individual sentient human being, with his singular and personal capacity for experiencing pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness, well-being and poverty of life. As a Socialist, I believe that it is necessary to provide a framework of social regulation within which the individual citizens can pursue their several notions of what makes for happiness. I believe that this framework must guarantee a fair measure of social security for all, must protect the weak against the strong, and must ensure that the resources at the disposal of society are used to the best advantage for the benefit of the whole people.

Essays in Social Theory

But emphatically I do not believe that, in order to bring these things about, we need or should discard the private liberties which it is the greatest achievement of our civilization to have extended, more than ever before, to the general run of men and women.

In calling upon governments to assume larger and more positive tasks for furthering the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number', the peoples of the West have no intention of allowing governments to become so much their masters as to dictate to them how they are to behave or what they are to believe. Governments should belong to the peoples, not peoples to their governments, and the purpose of democracy is to ensure that governments shall use the powers given to them for the enlargement of men's personal freedoms, and that individual men and women shall not be degraded by their rulers into instruments of any collective entity set apart from themselves as an embodiment of superior or superhuman values. I for one am not the less individualist in my outlook for being a Socialist: indeed I regard Socialism, not as an end, but as a means to the enlargement of individual capacities and liberties. In this I believe myself to be playing my small part in the guardianship of a great tradition, which has been broadening down for centuries from aristocracy to democracy. This democracy, however incomplete, is a foundation on which the West can hope to build; and I am sure it would be folly to fling it away or to allow it to be destroyed. For, let me repeat, the great faith of our Western civilization is that men and women matter, that their happiness and well-being matter, and that in the final resort nothing else matters — not States, or classes, or any abstractions or collective entities, but simply and solely the individual sentient beings of whom such entities are made up.

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

of errors and of merely transitory truths, some quality of imaginative insight that not merely interpreted, with apparent appositeness, the conditions of the period at which it was written, but also went below the surface of these conditions to an understanding of great historical forces that are still shaping the course of social evolution to-day. In this study, though I shall have much to say in criticism of the social theory which the *Manifesto* expresses, my primary purpose will be to stress those elements in it which account for its persistent vitality and the spread of its influence all over the world.

Yet the first thing that falls to be noticed about the *Communist Manifesto* is that its immediate influence was almost nothing. Its publication, at the end of February 1848, in no wise affected the course of the European Revolutions of that and the following years. It was not even translated into most of the European languages until these Revolutions were over, or their fate settled. In its original German version it was read at the time by very few Germans : the French version, issued in June 1848, had no influence on the main body of French Socialist and working-class opinion. The first English version appeared only in 1850, in George Julian Harney's *Red Republican*, which was read by few. The first Russian translation, published in Switzerland, dates from about 1860. Nothing much was heard about the *Manifesto*, save in small circles, mainly of *émigré* Germans and their friends, between the defeat of the European Revolutions and the foundation of the International Working Men's Association — the First International — in 1864. From then, indeed, its influence has been continuous ; for the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 and the eclipse of the First International did not involve the disappearance of Marxism as a widespread political influence. The developing Socialist Parties of the 1870s and 1880s mostly professed to rest their doctrines upon Marxist foundations and looked back to the *Communist Manifesto* as the first coherent statement of their Socialist outlook. But all this came about only long after the *Mani-*

Essays in Social Theory

festo's original appearance. In relation to the actual events of 1848 it has simply no significance at all. For the historian of that period it is a portent rather than a document of current history.

Doubtless the diligent historian of Socialism can trace its effects from the very moment of its publication. He can follow out its impact on the minds of individual thinkers and leaders in various countries — for example, in England, on Ernest Jones. But however deeply Jones, or any other individual, was influenced by this early formulation of Marxian Socialism, and however true it may be that always, after 1848, there were little groups of Marxists who took their inspiration from this source, the fact remains that the *Manifesto* had no substantial influence on the development of events, or on the organization and attitude of the working-class and Socialist movement, until it had been in circulation, or at any rate in existence, for the best part of twenty years.

Nevertheless, the *Communist Manifesto* is, in many respects, very much a product of its day. It reflects, not merely in many of its sentences but in much of its underlying conception, Marx's interpretation of the actual conditions of the 1840s — that is, of the decade in which he had come to full manhood and had first arrived at the social philosophy that everywhere passes under his name. This is the case most of all with the formulation in the *Manifesto* of the key doctrine of 'class-struggle', which occupies the central position in it — and indeed in all Marx's thought. In considering this formulation we have of course to bear in mind that Marx was writing, not a scientific treatise, but a manifesto intended to inspire men to action, and was writing primarily, not for an inner group of convinced revolutionary Socialists who needed only a firmer theoretical basis for their will to action, but for a wide public including not only radicals and workers of every description but also those whom he looked on as enemies. He wished to sharpen the sense of class conflict, not only by inspiring the proletariat with a sense of its historic mission, but also by frightening away the idealists and demagogues who were competing with

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

the Communists for the leadership of the working class, and by proclaiming to the governing classes as starkly as he knew how the appearance on the political stage of a new revolutionary force that would in due course compass their entire destruction. In such a document it would be foolish to look for the niceties of qualifying clauses and explanatory footnotes: Marx was blowing a trumpet-call, not making soft chamber music for (the ears of) a few *dilettanti* to savour at their leisure. Marx wrote what he wrote, correctly believing revolution to be immediately impending in Europe, and at least hoping that this revolution could be given to a significant extent a proletarian instead of a merely *bourgeois* turn.

Niceties, then, we must not look for: nor is it profitable to cavil at the phrasing of the *Manifesto* over secondary matters, or to pay much heed to the large space lavished in it on long outmoded Socialist theories and on parties that were soon to be swept into oblivion by the swift march of events. We are, however, entitled to take full account of whatever appears to be vital to the gist of Marx's argument and to form an essential part of the fundamental theory he was setting out to proclaim. As the class-struggle was given the key position in his statement, we are entitled to ask precisely how Marx conceived it, both on the broad stage of all human history and in relation to its contemporary phase and tendency.

'The history of all hitherto existing society', proclaims the *Manifesto*, 'is the history of class struggles' — to which statement Engels later appended a footnote exempting pre-historic societies. Then follows, so succinctly as to sweep all the pre-capitalist epochs together into a single sentence of embracing generalization, an application of this key idea to the ancient world, to the feudalism and the gild system of the Middle Ages, and, by implication, to any type of society neither primitively communal nor in its essence capitalistic. The reader is next told that 'in the earlier epochs of history we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social

Essays in Social Theory

rank', but that the *bourgeois* epoch, the epoch of capitalism, 'possesses this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms'. 'Society, as a whole,' we are told, 'is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — *bourgeoisie* and proletariat.'

This historical tendency towards the simplification of class-relations and towards the sharp confrontation of two — and only two — contending classes lies at the very root of the doctrine proclaimed in the *Manifesto*. Marx believed, on the basis of his observation of contemporary society, that the necessary tendency of capitalism was towards this simplification. He believed that the great property owners who were in command of the new techniques of production and of business dealing were rapidly ousting the small capitalists whose methods were being rendered obsolete, and that the fate which was awaiting — by no means distantly — the classes lying between the great *bourgeoisie* and the proletariat was that of being flung down into the proletariat. The *petite bourgeoisie* — which he thought of as a class essentially dependent on small-scale, unmechanized methods of production — was, in his view, a class doomed to rapid extinction in face of the advance of large-scale production and the amassing of financial resources into larger aggregations. Moreover, he believed no less firmly that the proletariat, far from improving its lot with the advance of productivity, was doomed to 'increasing misery' as the traditional skills of the craftsmen gave way more and more to the machines, which could be operated by unskilled labour, and as the contradictions of capitalism were manifested in crises of increasing severity on account of the tendency to multiply products beyond the advance in consuming power and to replace the labour of men by machines to which human labour, and therefore the wages accruing to it, would bear an ever-decreasing ratio. Thus capital would accumulate, and men decay; and the *petits bourgeois* who were flung down into the proletarian ranks would be assimilated, not to the upper strata of the skilled workers, but to the growing

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

horde of unskilled factory workers and labourers competing more and more intensely for a chance to serve the machine and its fewer and fewer wealthy masters.

The entire presentation of the contemporary phase of the class-struggle in the *Communist Manifesto* rests on these assumptions concerning the historical tendency of capitalist production; and there was a great deal in the situation at which Marx was actually looking that made them highly plausible. The new power-driven machines that had come in with the Industrial Revolution were ruining and throwing down into the proletariat many craftsmen and small masters whose skills and methods they superseded: banks and other credit agencies were being consolidated into larger units; and to a great extent the new machines were being operated by relatively unskilled workers, including a high proportion of women and children. Except in a very few cases, the new skills based upon power-driven machinery had not yet become clearly defined, or easily visible above the general ruck of mere machine operators. The cotton spinners were the chief exception; but their case still appeared to be a special one, and they were few in comparison with the numbers employed in operations that were still regarded as calling for but little skill. The joint stock company with a wide body of shareholders had indeed appeared, especially in connection with the development of the railways; but it had not yet advanced far in the great majority of industries — even of those which had been foremost in the new techniques — and, in the case of the railways, its advance had been marked by an extraordinary instability which again and again wiped out fortunes almost as fast as they were made. The typical business in cotton or in mining or even in metal manufacture — still more in metal-working — was still the concern of one man or of a small group of partners, and was not financed with the aid of a large body of shareholders most of whom had only a small stake in its fortunes. Moreover, there had been no clear emergence of a new class of professionals and salary-earners holding an intermediate position between the *bourgeoisie* and the proletariat. The

Essays in Social Theory

Manifesto does mention the 'perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants' who are a characteristic feature of the new 'industrial army'. But it mentions them without any appreciation of their significance as an emergent class destined to take the place of the declining *petite bourgeoisie* of small masters, shopkeepers, and artisans. In these respects Marx showed no prescience of the coming structure of capitalist society: he foresaw the social role neither of the small shareholder nor of the new salaried and professional groups. But it can be fairly noted that neither of these phenomena had, in the 1840s, emerged so far into prominence in the economic structure as to be in a position to play any significant part in the impending revolutionary struggles of the next few years.

Marx, in effect, projected into the future tendencies which had been really characteristic of the capitalism of the first half of the nineteenth century in those countries — above all, England — where it had made the most rapid advance. His theory of the 'increasing misery' of the proletariat, of the destruction of traditional skills, of the ruin of the *petite bourgeoisie* in vain competition with the new techniques, and of the increasing concentration of capital in the hands of great *entrepreneurs*, did appear to be justified by what had actually been happening, and was happening more and more; and it could not have been easy, in 1848, to anticipate to how great an extent these apparently strong tendencies were destined to be reversed, even within a few years. Yet in fact, at any rate in Great Britain, they were markedly reversed in the 1850s — with the general grant of limited liability to those who chose to adopt the joint stock structure, with the rapid development of new forms of skill based upon the machine, with the growth of the demand for technical competence in mining and metallurgy — and, in a different aspect, with the rapid opening up of new sources of cheap food in the untilled spaces of the world.

None of this did Marx foresee in 1848. Nor, having formulated his essential doctrine before it could be seen in practice, could he ever bring himself later to modify his

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

theory in order to take full account of the changing conditions. Why, then, it can fairly be asked, did the *Communist Manifesto*, if its diagnosis was so soon invalidated in the country in which capitalism was most advanced, grow in influence instead of losing its appeal as capitalism entered on a new and radically different phase?

The answer is that Marxism, though it came in the 1850s to be much less applicable to British conditions, remained highly applicable to most countries that followed the course of capitalistic development which Great Britain had already experienced before 1848. It could not be applied, without large modifications, to the United States or to the British Dominions overseas, because in these countries there was no great pre-capitalist labour force to be drawn on so as to swell, and at the same time to keep down the claims of, the industrial proletariat. It did, however, fit itself reasonably well to the growing pains of capitalism elsewhere, not only on the European continent, but also wherever new methods of production were developed with the aid of great masses of low-paid native labour, either on plantations or in mines and power-using factories. Indeed, it could be plausibly argued that it had ceased to hold good for Great Britain largely because the British economy was parasitical on capitalist colonial exploitation, which provided subsidies to raise British standards of living and to check the supersession of the British intermediate classes. Great Britain, said the Marxists, had been able to turn its upper proletariat into *bourgeois*, and so to offset the levelling tendency of capitalism that Marx had prophetically defined.

Even so, one part of the Marxian theory — that of increasing misery and the progressive proletarianization of the middle groups — grew harder to defend in Western Europe as other advanced capitalist countries began to follow Great Britain into a phase in which undoubtedly working-class standards of living were improving, and a new *petite bourgeoisie* grew a great deal faster than the old *petite bourgeoisie* of small masters and artisans declined. That change underlay not only Bernstein's 'Revisionism', but also the practical

Essays in Social Theory

attitude of the German Social Democratic majority which continued to profess its Marxist orthodoxy. For a time, insistence on the increasing severity of capitalist crises, and on the imminence of the destruction of capitalism from this cause, replaced 'increasing misery' in its simpler form as the great capitalist 'contradiction'. Then, for a time, the intensity of crises in the capitalist world grew much less; and this form of the doctrine went out of fashion in its turn, only to be revived dramatically after 1918 and still more during the world-wide crisis of the 1930s. To-day, it still underlies the anxiety of hope or fear with which men from both sides of the Iron Curtain watch for the signs of a great American slump.

Whatever be the truth or untruth of the view that capitalism, because of its tendency to multiply production faster than mass consuming power, can never escape from the recurrence of crises, it must be recognized that even if both the theory of capitalist crisis and the theory of increasing misery, and with them the theory of the progressive elimination of the intermediate classes, were to be jettisoned from the doctrine of the *Communist Manifesto*, a great deal of Marx's theory would be left intact. It was always a paradoxical view that, whereas the capitalists had climbed to political power by becoming both more wealthy and more powerful as a social force, the proletariat was expected to win power by becoming increasingly miserable. True, this was never the whole of Marx's doctrine; for he believed that the proletariat, even while its misery was increasing, was also growing stronger in consciousness and organization and was being impelled towards victory by the increasingly social and co-operative character of the work process itself — by the very loss of the labourer's individuality, which made him more and more a mere unit in a vast impersonal labour force. Leave out the 'increasing misery', and the impending victory of the proletariat appears, not less, but more, a logical deduction from the trend of capitalist development. So indeed it appeared to more and more Socialists in the advanced countries, whereas in those

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

countries which were still at the earlier stages of capitalist evolution, and had not even passed through the transition from feudal to *bourgeois* economy, the social doctrine of the *Communist Manifesto* continued to have a growing appeal — not least as political consciousness began to develop in exploited colonial areas, and as the Soviet Union, firmly established on a foundation of pure Marxist doctrine, was able to serve as a world centre for the diffusion of Communist ideas.

After all, the essence of the *Manifesto* was that it preached to the working classes of all the world a gospel of revolution and of self-reliance, telling them that their cause was one in all lands and that their emancipation must be their own work, in which the forces of historical evolution would be on their side. This stood, whatever might be the fate of the rest of the doctrines taught in the *Manifesto*, and however much of it might turn into mere mumbo-jumbo because it dealt with matters that had ceased to be of any current concern. The *Manifesto* remained alive — and kicking — because it was a gospel of hope to the oppressed, promising them, instead of God's aid — in which they had been disappointed often enough — the more tangible aid of the so-called 'materialistic' forces of social evolution, and promising this at a time when, as never before, the tremendous social impact of those very forces had been plainly demonstrated in the transformations attendant on the Industrial Revolution. The *Manifesto's* 'materialistic' approach fitted in with men's positive experience of the world around them; for everywhere men's ways of living and the political structures of human societies were being fast transformed to fit in with the new class-structures based on the development of capitalism, or else the old State-systems and traditional ways of life were coming more and more into conflict with the rapidly developing economic forces.

It must never be left out of mind in studying the *Communist Manifesto* that, though its outlook was definitely international, its origins were essentially German. I mean much more than that it was written by a German — Marx —

Essays in Social Theory

with the aid of another German — Engels. It was the product of a body — the Communist League — which was primarily a society of German exiles living in Brussels, Paris, and London. A few Frenchmen, a few Belgians, a few Poles, and a few Englishmen either belonged to the League or were in close touch with it; but the main body in all three centres was German, and nowhere had the League or the local groups out of which it arose made any wide impact on the national working-class and Socialist movements of their places of exile. In France, then the main centre of Socialist thought and agitation, Proudhon, Blanqui, Cabet, and Louis Blanc had all much larger followings than the Communist League: in England the exiles were in close touch with Harney and Ernest Jones and a few other leading Chartists, and Engels with a wider circle; but the main body of the Chartists was by no means under Communist influence, while the Owenites, still an important sect, stood altogether aloof from political action. The impending German Revolution, much more than the French or any other of the European Revolutions that came to a head in 1848, was predominantly in Marx's mind as he drafted in Brussels the document which the Communist League, urged on by Engels, had invited him to prepare. He regarded the coming events in Germany as the clue to the fate of continental Europe, and fully expected Great Britain, despite its greater maturity as a capitalist country, to stand aside — for he was well aware that Chartism, at any rate for the time being, was on the wane.

Exiled from Germany, and looking nostalgically at the 'Fatherland', the Germans in London, Paris, and Brussels, including Marx himself, undoubtedly both over-estimated in 1848 the strength of revolutionary feeling among the German workmen and partly misunderstood the character of that feeling. They could not help knowing the immaturity of the German working-class from the standpoint of its proletarian status and outlook: indeed, this was what led them to urge, as they did also in France, a temporary alliance with the *petit-bourgeois* Social Democrats, with whom

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

the large artisan element among the workers was closely connected. They did not, however, allow enough for this immaturity, which made it impracticable for the proletarian Communists to take the lead in the coming Revolution ; or perhaps one should say rather that, however fully they had admitted this immaturity in their private thoughts, they were not prepared to admit it publicly. Had they done so, they would have been spoiling such chances as they had ; and the change, first proposed by Engels, from a mere statement of faith, or ' Communist Catechism ', to a manifesto meant that the felt imminence of revolution had converted the proposed document from a mere presentment of a case into a trumpet-call to action. In such a pronouncement no nicely objective evaluation of forces was to be expected : the purpose of the *Manifesto* was to declare not what the Communist League thought likely, but what it wanted, to occur, and to make the Communist movement appear as strong and as menacing as it could possibly be made out.

I am not suggesting that Marx and his group were not interested in the European Revolution outside Germany. Of course they were deeply interested, for they held firmly that the European Revolution could not succeed unless it were international to the extent of covering the main areas of Western and Central continental Europe. They wanted, not a German but a continental revolution, extending to Poland and Austria-Hungary as well as to Germany and France and Belgium and Holland, and perhaps Switzerland and Italy and one or two other countries. Of Russia they had no hopes, and few or none of England — none, of course, of the United States either, at that stage. But they thought of Germany and France as forming together the key area ; and their hopes were centred on making this European revolution under the inspiration of German ideas and with the German workers as the main driving force to impel the whole mass forward from the stage of *bourgeois* to that of proletarian dominance.

These were their hopes, well ahead of what the situation made possible, as such hopes are apt to be. Their expecta-

Essays in Social Theory

tions, on the other hand, as far as can be judged from the preliminary papers given to Marx as a basis for his work as draftsman, were a long way behind these hopes, at any rate until the European revolutionary movement was already almost at boiling-point so as to carry their soberer thoughts away. In these papers — in the drafts for the proposed *Catechism* and in the statement of policy issued in the sole published number of *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* of 1847 — it is reiterated that the Communists realize the impossibility of advancing all at once, even by revolution, to a Communist society. 'The task of our generation', proclaims the *Zeitschrift* article, using words which also appeared in much the same form in Engels' draft of the *Catechism*, 'is to discover and to bring to a practical stage the constructional materials that are necessary for building the new edifice: the task of the generations to come will be to raise this edifice.' No doubt, the *Manifesto* insists on the need to smash the existing State and to build a new structure under the dominance of the proletariat. It insists on the need for revolution as a first step towards the building of the new order (though even on this point the *Zeitschrift* makes tentative exceptions in favour of Great Britain and the United States). But it is made evident that the State which needs to be smashed and replaced is the 'police State' as it existed in Prussia and largely in France, and though the *Manifesto* speaks of 'raising the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy', the 'dictatorship' of which it speaks is put on a par with the dictatorship actually exercised by the *bourgeoisie* as a ruling class, and does not appear to connote the establishment of a 'one-party' State under complete Communist control, or a more than gradual transition from the old order to the new. 'The proletariat', we are told, 'will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the *bourgeoisie*, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.' The passage which follows makes it clear that

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

only 'in the course of a development' to be spread over a succession of stages can class distinctions be expected to disappear, or all production to become concentrated in the hands of the new State. Only at the end of this process will States disappear; for 'political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another', and cannot survive the advent of a classless society. Thus, in the view proclaimed in the *Manifesto*, all political power is 'class dictatorship', and there is nothing distinctive about the dictatorship of the proletariat except the shift in the seat of class power. The dictatorship of the proletariat, in the form in which it appears in the *Manifesto*, is in no wise inconsistent with parliamentary democracy, provided that, at the outset, the revolution smashes the police State and puts in its place a set of institutions consistent with the exercise of power by the proletariat as a majority of the whole people. The 'one-party State', and 'dictatorship' in the form that involves such a State, are not part of the doctrine set out in the *Communist Manifesto*. They are later developments of Marxist thought — indeed, largely Leninist glosses on what Marx wrote much later in *The Civil War in France*, dealing with the Paris Commune, and in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1875.

One long section of the *Communist Manifesto* is concerned with a criticism of rival Socialist schools. This is bitterest in its attacks on what it calls 'Feudal Socialism' as preached in France by certain royalist groups and in Great Britain by Disraeli and the 'Young England' party; on the various brands of so-called 'Christian Socialism'; and on German 'True Socialism' based on Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, from which Marx had emancipated himself not so many years before. All these are attacked as fundamentally reactionary, and as not really Socialism at all, because they rest on a denial of the class-struggle and of the historic mission of the proletariat as a class. 'Petit-bourgeois Socialism' in turn comes under attack, because, though it exposes the evils of capitalist society, the real desire of those who profess it is to go back to a pre-capitalist system in the interests of the independ-

Essays in Social Theory

ent small producer or trader and not forward to the collective control of the new powers unloosed by the Industrial Revolution. Finally, a contrast is drawn between Communism, as a rallying cry for the entire proletariat, and 'Utopian Socialism', which merely dreams dreams of ideal societies, varying with each projector's fancy, instead of concerning itself with what is practicable in terms of power-relations between the contending classes. The 'Utopian Socialisms' of Fourier and Saint-Simon and Robert Owen are dismissed as characteristic of an 'early, undeveloped period' in the struggle between proletariat and *bourgeoisie*; and the successors of these Utopists are severely censured for putting forward their dreams of the ideal as panaceas, instead of throwing themselves into the developing class-struggle. Both the draft *Catechism* and the *Manifesto* wax satirical at the expense of projectors who set out to plan the details of the new social order without giving any consideration to the means of realizing it save by the spell of their own persuasive powers, which they try to exercise upon all men, instead of making a direct appeal to the proletariat as a class. Already in 1848 Marx was scornful of any form of idealist planning of the future, of any attempt to look beyond the struggle to its outcome, save in the most general terms of the evolution of class-power. This made him ungenerous to his Socialist predecessors, though he was in truth building largely on foundations which they had laid. The only predecessor to whom he did pay tribute at this time was Babeuf, who had attempted to raise in the great French Revolution the standard of proletarian revolt. Of Blanqui he was critical, because he in common with the rest of the Communist exiles both realized the danger of destroying their chances by premature uprisings that would invite more drastic suppression and disliked Blanqui's conspiratorial methods and dissented from his notion that the revolution could be made by a picked corps of revolutionaries even without the support of the mass. Similarly, he objected strongly to Weitling's notion of using the discontents of the *Lumpenproletariat* as a basis for revolutionary action. The

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

revolution, he held, must be made by the action of the most advanced sections of the proletariat, not the most backward ; and in order that it should be so made, the Communists must beware of constituting themselves a party or faction divorced from the actual leaders of the organized sections of the working class. The Communists must lead, not as a separate party, like the followers of Cabet or of Ledru-Rollin, but as the trusted confidants of the most active elements in the working class as a whole.

That they were in fact far, in 1848, from having achieved this leadership Marx must well have known. He and his friends knew too the danger of reducing themselves to a faction by creating a dogmatic programme of their own. They did not, however, consider that their formulation of the 'materialist conception of history' and of the theory of 'class-struggle' constituted a programme in this sense, or would have the consequence of marking them off as a sect. Marx was very angry when Proudhon accused him of trying to put a new dogma in place of the old ones that were being dissolved by Socialist criticism : it was indeed this anger, more than anything else, that caused his acerbity in denouncing Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, published in 1847. The doctrines of class-struggle and historical determinism, Marx held, would unite the proletariat - not divide it as did the rival Utopias of Owenites, Fourierites, Cabetites, Saint-Simonians, and the rest of the projecting sects. Thus, to Marx's mind, the sharp intolerance of the *Manifesto* towards other Socialists was in no way inconsistent with the claim that the Communists' aim was to unite the entire working class.

At this point I must leave the *Manifesto*, having said nothing of its relation to the events of 1848 and the succeeding years of revolution and counter-revolution in Europe, for the simple and sufficient reason that there is nothing much to be said.

The *Communist Manifesto* had but little influence on the course of events in 1848. The working classes were not strong enough, even if they had followed Marx's guidance,

Essays in Social Theory

to make their own revolution or to take the leadership of the revolutionary forces in Europe. In those struggles of 1848 the lead was inevitably taken by Nationalists, and by the advocates of capitalism who wanted freedom to develop private business enterprise without being controlled by monarchs or land-owning aristocrats who held fast to obsolete feudal privileges. In 1848 these capitalistic forces were much stronger and better organized than the working class, which was still everywhere immature — even in England, where the Industrial Revolution had made by far the biggest advance. Over most of Europe the factory system, which has been the chief factor in crowding its workers into big towns and in the fostering of Trade Unionism, was still at a rudimentary stage. Whatever Marx thought, it was by no means true in 1848 that Capitalism had reached the limits of its economic development or become a 'fetter' on the further advance of production.

There is, however, a further thing to bear in mind about the conditions in which the *Manifesto* was written. In 1848, in most countries, very few people had the vote, and governments were still very autocratic. There was but little freedom of speech or of organization: Trade Unions were still in most places liable to suppression; working-class parties in the modern sense of the term did not exist. Working-class meetings were dispersed by the police, and working-class leaders were often imprisoned or exiled. There seemed to be no possibility for the workers of winning power by constitutional means, or of organizing except by underground conspiracy. Even in Great Britain, which was the least shackled country, Trade Unions were still barely tolerated, and most of the working-class leaders had spent periods in prison, and saw no chance of successful parliamentary action. Not until 1867 did any substantial section, even of the skilled workers in Great Britain, get the right to vote. In these circumstances, it was inevitable that in 1848 Socialists and Communists should turn to revolutionary, or at any rate to unconstitutional, action, as the only means of realizing their aims. Presently, however, in some countries,

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

though not in all, the situation changed. Very broadly, it can be said that in Western Europe parliamentary government developed in a democratic direction. The working men — more and more of them — got votes; and the State was partly transformed so as to give more and more people some real share in political power and influence. Trade Unions were made lawful, and were able to bargain openly with the employers: the right to strike was recognized. Moreover, with the enlargement of the electorate went a growth of social legislation, which made the State seem less entirely the enemy of the working class.

This, however, did not happen everywhere. It happened least of all in Russia and over most of Eastern Europe; and it happened to a much less extent in Germany than in Great Britain or over a good deal of Western Europe. This divergence of historical development led to conflicting interpretations of the doctrine of the *Communist Manifesto*. Where parliamentary democracy failed to grow, the cap still fitted; and most Socialists continued to hold by the full revolutionary gospel according to Marx. On the other hand, where the chance was given for Socialists and Labour Parties to organize constitutionally, to win seats in Parliament, and to influence the course of social legislation, a great many Socialists turned away from revolutionary doctrines. Even if they continued to believe in the Materialist Conception of History and in the Class-Struggle, they came to hold that Socialism might be won by peaceful conquest and by transformation of the existing State rather than by revolution which involved destroying the State and setting up a brand-new proletarian State in its stead.

To-day, all over the world and not only in Europe, the Communist Parties are the exponents of the full Marxist gospel of the *Communist Manifesto*, which makes its appeal most strongly in countries which have never experienced the growth of parliamentary democracy of the Western type. Some Social Democrats try to argue that they and not the Communists are in truth faithful to Marx's teaching; but what I do know is that the *Communist Manifesto* is a

Essays in Social Theory

thoroughly and frankly revolutionary document, and that the modern Communists — for good or for ill — *are* acting very much in accordance with the *letter* of what it prescribes. But I know also that it is fully possible to agree largely, or even entirely, with the fundamental notion embodied in Marx's Conception of History and in the *Manifesto* without accepting all the deductions which he drew from it, and that it is possible on this score to look back to the *Manifesto* as a great landmark in social thought without agreeing that the present-day Communists are right in regarding it as a satisfactory guide for the workers of the twentieth century all over the world.

XIII

*Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians*¹

THE Victorian Age, and more particularly the earlier part of it, was an age of 'self-made men' --- that is, of men who, from poverty and obscurity, had risen to positions of wealth and influence in society. To most of these men, and to most of their contemporaries, their rise seemed to have been due to certain personal qualities which they possessed much above other people. Their admirers spoke of these qualities as 'initiative, enterprise, personal driving force', and also as 'abstinence, frugality, and a self-control which enabled them to brush aside pleasure and other distractions, and to concentrate their energies on doing with all their might the job they had marked out for themselves'. Their detractors painted a different picture, in which initiative and enterprise were metamorphosed into greed and overreaching, personal driving force into lust for irresponsible power, abstinence and frugality into meanness, avarice, and a will to impose privation upon others, and self-control into a soulless lack of cultural values which left the new capitalists with no other interest in life than the pursuit of wealth in this world and of salvation in a next world which they conceived in the image of their own spiritual poverty.

The truth, of course, lay betwixt and between these estimates. The age in which the early Victorians grew up was one in which, though many fortunes were made from lowly beginnings, the competitive struggle was always hard. Though many succeeded, many more failed, and were thrust down again into poverty: and most of the successes were not achieved without the aid, not only of very hard work, but also of big risks, tough times in the early stages, and, not

¹ Written in 1948.

Essays in Social Theory

least, harshness, sometimes approaching savagery, in dealing with other men, and in particular with the men, women, and children who ranked with the machines they tended as indispensable 'factors of production'. For many among the successful the causes making for harshness in social behaviour were aggravated by a kind of religion that stressed above all else the 'other-worldly' values and looked on this world as a vale of tears and tribulations through which men must pass to a 'hereafter' to which the final values of life were firmly relegated. Religion, indeed, among the early Victorians, faced two ways; and this was true above all of the various forms of Methodism, both inside and outside of the Established Church. One kind, much the most prevalent, stressed the need for the saving of souls, and made little of the material tribulations of men's — or even of children's — bodies and minds under the impact of the new industrialism. The other kind, expressed in the work both of the Christian Socialists, such as Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley, and in the efforts of the factory reformers, Richard Oastler and Joseph Rayner Stephens as well as Lord Shaftesbury, insisted that the Kingdom of God was of this world as well as of the next, and denounced as intolerable in the eyes of God and man the hideous exploitation of the factory children — and indeed of the grown-ups as well. The Methodists of the first kind were intolerant of these criticisms: they had a feeling that worldly success was a test of achievement and that they could set about making money to the glory of God, provided only that they were scrupulous in the spending of it. In this spirit, even while they fought bitterly against all wage increases, all reductions in the hours of labour, and all attempts to impose on them even the most elementary rules of sanitation, heating, lighting, and ventilation of factories and employer-owned houses and tenements, they gave largely to build chapels, to support revivalist and temperance crusades, and to encourage societies for the suppression of vice and mendicancy. They felt no contrast in these attitudes, because they were so carried away by the immense achievements of the new industrial system in in-

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

creasing productivity as to regard anyone who threatened to interfere with it as opposing himself to an order of natural development that was plainly ordained by God.

These conditions, prevalent over more and more of the economic and social field despite all the efforts of the reformers, bred an attitude of self-righteous assurance which was in most of the protagonists totally inaccessible to argument. The effect was to exalt self-reliance, which is undoubtedly a virtue, into a contemptuous sweeping-aside of 'failure', which emphatically is not. I am not at all suggesting that this attitude went at any stage unchallenged. It did not. Indeed, the revolt against it had begun long before the Great Queen ascended the throne. Thomas Carlyle was already fulminating against the 'dismal science'; Lord Shaftesbury was already heading the crusade for factory reform; Robert Owen had long been proclaiming the superiority of co-operation over competition when William IV died. The Chartist agitation, with its impassioned cry for social justice and against the horrors of the New Poor Law and the factory system, was already beginning. Trade Unionism, heavily crushed in 1834, was already again raising its head. Nevertheless, though always challenged, the attitude I have been describing was largely dominant among the successful; and it spread downwards through the social structure, infecting every grade of minor manager, supervisor, and foreman — indeed, everyone who, having got a foot on any grade of the social ladder, saw in imitation of those higher up the line hope of rising both in status and in social prestige. The early Victorian Age was one in which the thoroughgoing believers in the benefits of *laissez-faire* had most things their own way. Employers refused to discuss anything with their operatives except on a basis of purely individual bargaining, on the plea that anything else violated freedom of contract and undermined the personal relation between man and man. The Poor Law, the only form of public relief open to the destitute or the unemployed, was administered in a spirit of ferocious deterrence which even humane men sought to justify as necessary if the

Essays in Social Theory

springs of self-reliance were not to be weakened. Nor was it only against State charity that the shafts of the enthusiasts were directed: they attacked 'indiscriminate' voluntary charity just as fiercely, and sought to limit it to the 'deserving' and to those who could be helped by it to help themselves.

Let us remember that what was occurring in the early Victorian era was a stage — in a sense the first stage — in the process that leads on to democracy. Under the impact partly of ideas let loose by the French Revolution and partly of the new conditions of mass-aggregation of workers in factories and in factory towns, the 'lower classes' were making, incoherently and often turbulently, their claim to be recognized as men entitled to equal claims and rights. This challenge was not so much resented as *feared* both by the older governing classes, which saw in it a threat to their conceptions of good and civilized standards of living, and also by the 'new men' who had raised themselves out of the mass by making themselves the masters of the new techniques of production and of control. Fear, as always, prompted repression, and conduced to sheer inhumanity towards those of whom the superior classes were afraid. Even the more progressive and the more humanitarian among the educated classes were subject to this fear of the mass. Shaftesbury, ardent for factory reform, was intensely hostile to every sort of Radicalism; and such men as John Bright, who were ardent political Radicals, bitterly opposed factory reform. Most middle-class Radicals, even if they wished to bring in a wider electorate in order to reinforce their power against the older aristocracy, stopped short at the will to enfranchise the 'respectable' artisans — as was done in 1867 by the second Reform Act — and remained full of fear of the great illiterate mass below. They could never join hands with Chartism, because it derived its strength as a movement so largely from these very untutored masses of which they were afraid.

Hostility to demands for social legislation, and insistence on self-reliance as the sovereign virtue which nothing must

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

be done by the State or by private charity to undermine, thus proceeded from a mixture of motives and attitudes — from a feeling of triumphant self-assurance resting on the new industrialism; from fears that anything done to meet the claims of discontent would serve only to strengthen the dangerously uneducated and uncivilized mass of common people; and from an other-worldliness which discounted the importance of suffering in this world, and even regarded it — at any rate for others — as wholesome purgation for the life to come.

The second half of the Victorian era saw a powerful reaction against these attitudes, and converted the protesters against them from voices crying in the wilderness into increasingly influential inspirers of many movements of social reform. Each battle was hard-fought, and, of course, there was no complete victory of one attitude over another; but, by and large, the change was great and unmistakable. Now why?

Not, I think, mainly because the reformers made out a better case than they had been making earlier, when they were kicking vainly against the pricks. It was much more because the classes which had some share in social power — classes enlarged by the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 — were very much less afraid than they had been of the classes below them. As the wealth generated by high productivity filtered down — and it had to filter down if there were to be outlets for the vastly increased output of goods and services — a larger proportion of the common people became more civilized, turned away from the violence of hunger-revolts, set to work to imitate in some degree the behaviour of its 'betters' — and, in doing these things, became less a source of both rational and irrational fears. The cry 'we must educate our masters' was heard: the prospect of democracy became, for the time, much less terrifying both to the cultured and to the rich. There was accordingly less opposition to anything that looked like concession to the claims of the poor, and also more readiness to regard the poor as men and women possessing elementary

Essays in Social Theory

rights and claims. Nor can we afford to disregard the fact that the industrial system itself was becoming less a jungle of unregulated struggle to survive. Joint stock companies were spreading fast; more power was in the hands of big businesses, and more of the big businesses were run by men of the second or third generation — men who had inherited fortunes, even if they went on greatly to enlarge them, and had not started with nothing and made their own way in the world. Such men were less ruthless, because any act of ruth exposed them much less to the threat of ruin. They were beginning to take for granted that they must treat certain minimum conditions in their factories as objective costs that had to be met, and would fall upon their competitors as well as on themselves. The more the scale of business increased, the more these new conditions applied, and the less resistance was offered to the growth of Trade Unions and to the recognition of at any rate some rights of collective bargaining. As business became more impersonal, there was less insistence on the purely individual character of the wage-contract, as between each master and each separate workman. Where the business was a collectivity, it was easier for the workers' collective, the Trade Union, to force its way. There was also under these conditions much less resentment at factory legislation as an infraction of the employer's personal rights — for a company could less easily plead to be the embodiment of the virtues of individual self-reliance.

How far did this change go — how far has this change gone in the much further development of it in the world of to-day — in undermining personal qualities which are indispensable for the health of society? The answer is not nearly so simple as many who have attempted to give one would have us believe. In the first place, of whom are we speaking? The Victorian Age — particularly in its earlier phase — was an age of sharp contrasts. If it encouraged in some people — the successful and the climbers who were seeking success — not merely a spirit of self-reliance but a perversion of that spirit into an exaggerated pushfulness and

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

disregard of others, equally, at the other end of the scale, it discouraged these qualities in the great mass of the people. It did this by keeping them much too low to give such attitudes of mind any scope. The thriftless and the slavishly dependent were fully as much the characteristic products of the early Victorian Age as the abstinent and the self-assertive; and it is quite beyond doubt that as social conditions in general improved later in the century a very large number of people were lifted up to positions which gave them the chance both of practising thrift and self-reliance and of becoming members of the community in a far more real sense. This aspect of the great change must be kept always in mind. The huge scope which the conditions of the early Victorian era offered to personal initiative and enterprise — for both good and evil — for *some* of the people had as their correlative a sheer denial of such opportunities to a much *greater* number. True, the two groups were not marked off from each other by any sharp definition of status. Men could rise out of the one into the other; but for one who possessed the qualities required for such a self-elevation there were a hundred who did not, and were condemned to the fate of 'devil-take-the-hindmost' by the arduous conditions of the struggle.

The other factor working against the current of *laissez-faire* doctrines in the 1840s I shall call, with picturesque licence, 'Chadwick's nose'. Edwin Chadwick, the architect of the new Poor Law and the most hated man in England, was fanatically devoted to *laissez-faire* notions in many respects, and no man believed more strongly in the supreme virtue of self-reliance. But this same Chadwick was also the principal inspirer of the first *effective* Factory Act — that of 1833 — and when, in the 1840s, he visited the factory districts again and smelt the fetid odour of poverty for himself, no man cried out louder that it was the public's business to ensure the supply of pure water and of efficient drainage in the growing towns, to enforce reasonable sanitary precautions against infectious and contagious diseases, and to give the town populations an environment

Essays in Social Theory

that would afford them at any rate some chance of living decent, happy and self-reliant lives.

Chadwick was a disciple of the great Jeremy Bentham, who preached at all seasons the paramountcy of the utilitarian principle — the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It is important to understand this principle aright, if one wishes to understand the movement of ideas in Victorian England, because it is so often misunderstood by those who confuse Benthamism with *laissez-faire*. The two were in truth radically different. The *laissez-faire* advocates said — as Herbert Spencer said later — that everything would come reasonably right if only the State would let matters alone to take their natural course. Bentham, on the other hand, maintained that, where men's interests were not naturally harmonious, it was the State's business, by legislation, to establish an artificial harmony of interests that would serve to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Bentham did indeed argue that most of the existing forms of State regulation were harmful because they neither promoted nor were designed to promote this harmony of interests. He wanted to sweep most of the existing regulations away, and he believed that most things would be better unregulated than ill-regulated as they were. But the Benthamites, as far as they were true to their master, were never against State regulation as such. They were in favour of it, wherever it could be applied in such a way as to procure the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

That brings me back to Chadwick's nose. Chadwick smelt the towns, knew that they were not good, and set out to get them put to rights. He was not tactful about it, and he encountered ferocious opposition; but, helped by the cholera scare, he did start modern sanitary legislation right in the middle of the hey-day of capitalist *laissez-faire*.

In the case of the Factory Acts, it was possible to argue that, as the legislation applied only to children and later to women — who were not regarded as able to look after themselves — the sacred principle of leaving he-men to sole reliance on themselves, under the system of free contract,

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

was not being infringed. But pure water and drains could not be provided for women and children only : the Health legislation of 1848 embodied a recognition of the fact that individual men were not in a position to look after themselves and that public compulsion was needed to protect them — and therewith the whole community — against preventable disease and misery. It was the thin — I agree, the very thin — end of a wedge which has been hammered in harder and harder ever since. That was why a *laissez-faire* Parliament, as soon as it dared, swept Chadwick's General Board of Health away. But Parliament could not sweep away the Local Boards which had been set up under the same Act ; and from that time on the health activities of Local Government began steadily to grow, until in the 1870s two great Public Health Acts gave full recognition to the principle of State responsibility in that particular field.

The growth of social legislation, of education, of Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies, and of the standard of life, in the latter part of the nineteenth century created, I feel sure, a much greater sum-total of self-reliance and personal sense of responsibility than it did away with by mitigating the severity of the competitive struggle. If we are simply counting heads that is a sufficient answer. But, of course, it will be replied that this is a quite illegitimate way of stating the case. The qualities of a community, it will be said, depend, not on the characteristics diffused over the main body of the public, so much as on those which are found among its leaders in the various walks of life. Thus, even if a hundred households gained in self-reliance and personal responsibility for every one that lost, the gain may be regarded as more than outweighed if the one that lost was performing an indispensable function of social leadership. I am not stating this as my view — for it strikes at the very heart of the democratic conceptions in which I believe. I am stating it as a view, much more widely held than clearly expressed, which has to be taken into account.

My contention on this point is that the development of State intervention, of social legislation, and of collective

Essays in Social Theory

bargaining based on the recognition of Trade Union rights was not the cause of any decline that occurred in the initiative, the enterprise, and the self-reliance of the leaders of late Victorian and of more recent society. The causes of the change in attitude among these leading groups arose, as did the social legislation and the rest of the new developments, out of the changes in the underlying social and economic situation. The era of scrambling competitive capitalism passed away as the scale of enterprise increased, as the leading types of business became less personal, as team-work of necessity superseded purely individual business adventure, and as ownership and management were more and more divorced. I do not say that the change was exclusively the result of this economic process; but I do say that the economic changes brought into the big business partnerships based on wide shareholding an *élite* which was much less able, or even minded, to resist to the last the increasing pressure of an enlarged electorate, an enlarged body of educated opinion, and a growingly powerful movement demanding social security. Under these circumstances, the early Victorian type of hard-faced man ceased to be admired as he had been, or to command the same prestige; and the attractions of behaving as such a man grew less. I am entirely unable to regret this: indeed, it appears to me as an enormous advance in civilization and decent living; but what I have to admit is that the problems of eliciting the required responses of initiative and enterprise *under the changed conditions* were most inadequately faced.

This inadequacy has three distinct aspects. In the first place, whereas the preceding conditions had left the individual *entrepreneur* always on his toes, in the pursuit of fortune or for the avoidance of bankruptcy, the new conditions made it much harder to go bankrupt, and much easier to arrange 'gentlemen's agreements' to lessen the competitive struggle *between firms*. Thus, the road was cleared for the development of various forms of monopoly — from trade agreements between competitors to vast mergers into trusts and combines which could dominate the market.

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

Personal risks were greatly reduced in this way, and it became much easier for big business men to survive both without any great effort to improve their methods and without going nearly so far as they had done in screwing the last ounce of energy out of their workers for the lowest possible wage.

Secondly, management, divorced more and more from ownership, and no longer staking personal survival on the fortunes of the businesses it served, could afford to relax, and to accept a customary standard instead of trying continually to keep a step ahead.

Thirdly, pressure on the workers grew less, both because they had organizations behind them to fight their competitive battles, and because the State no longer took sides, at any rate so openly, against them, and also because there were less urgent purely physical compulsions of threatened starvation and destitution to drive most of them on.

In face of these new factors — which, I would remind you, were necessary concomitants of the new phase of industrial development — there was a clear need to work out new incentives and new ways of eliciting initiative and enterprise, at all levels, within the limiting conditions set by the changed structure of the economic system. These problems of a changing society were, however, simply not faced — mainly because the new conditions came in gradually and piecemeal, and in such a way that their nature was seldom clearly recognized. The result, seen in our own day, has been a society in which, on the one hand, the qualities of self-reliance and personal responsibility are more widely *diffused* than ever before, in the sense that they reach further down the social scale, but at the same time the application of these qualities to production and to business generally has been in some degree lessened because, in these fields, they need now to be applied in a different, and a much more democratic, way.

And yet . . . quite a number of people will say . . . surely the present generation is a good deal less . . . strongly personal than the people portrayed by Charles Dickens or

Essays in Social Theory

even than the types who appear in lesser Victorian novelists — by whose writings, in default of other evidence, most of us are apt to judge of the characteristics of the generation before us. I agree: of course the modern age is much more standardized in manners, and therewith less obviously idiosyncratic or, if you will, less eccentric, as well as less proud of being masterful . . . or even bullying. Popular education has combined with the growing standardization of working conditions to produce this effect. The Sam Wellers and Mark Tapleys of to-day are less flamboyantly individual; the Silas Marners, too, have been largely obliterated by the growth of large-scale production, and the Gradgrinds grind a good deal less hard, and with less pride in grinding, than used to be the case. But, even after we have discounted the novelist's licence in presenting such characters as these, we cannot reasonably identify personality with peculiarity, or responsibility with eccentricity, or enterprise with bullying. A man can be as self-reliant as Mark Tapley without expressing himself in so Dickensian a fashion. And he can be a much better business man than Gradgrind and have better morals as well as better manners. The real question is whether men have become less enterprising, as well as less idiosyncratic.

On that point, I have said already what I believe the truth to be. I believe it to be nonsense to suggest that modern social legislation, in limiting the burdens falling on the individual, has lessened self-reliance or the feeling of personal responsibility. There are, I know, a good many people who maintain that personal responsibility has been undermined by the modern growth of social provision. I agree, of course, that it has been *limited*, in the sense that the State now does a great deal more for the individual than it used to do. I deny, however, that this has involved a destruction of personal responsibility. On the contrary, it has enabled a great many more people squarely to face their responsibilities, by making these less impossibly burdensome. The modern parent, by and large, does not feel less responsibility for the welfare of his children than his parents

Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians

or grandparents did: he feels more. There are a great many fewer cases of neglect, of sheer abandonment, of what readers of Dickens will recognize if I call it 'Tom-all-alone-ness', than there were in the Victorian Age; and this is not only because parents are compelled to behave better, but at least as much because they are given a better chance and a more manageable task. Nor does the case of children stand alone: there is also much less insanitariness of personal and household behaviour, except among a quite small group, not only because higher standards are enforced and slums cleared, but also because there are fewer 'down and outs' who have been left, in the name of personal responsibility, to stew in their own juice under the conditions of free contract and no State interference. Doubtless the new conditions have made some men less *abstinent* — less willing to sacrifice present enjoyments for the sake of the future. But is this a bad thing? I am sure it is not; for I am sure that the Victorian exaggeration of the virtues of abstinence and thrift was the cause of a great deal of quite unnecessary suffering. This does not mean that I underestimate the need to secure, in the community as a whole, a level of saving high enough to provide for increasing population and for a rising standard of life. Assuredly I do not; but, in the first place, I hold that the requisite level of productive saving can be achieved by collective action as well as by personal abstinence, and in the second place I deny that thrift has decreased among the poorer classes — whatever may have happened among the rich. The decline in abstinence among some sections of the people has been much more than offset by the spread of saving to a much larger proportion of the whole — a spread made possible by the general improvement in living standards, which is itself partly a product of the very social legislation that is accused of undermining personal responsibility.

That is half the answer; but the other half remains. The early Victorians relied on the drives inherent in a particular sort of temperament to impel both the possessors themselves and the rest of the people — the great majority. Such a

Essays in Social Theory

solution was essentially undemocratic, and its inconsistency with political democracy has been sufficiently proved here, and is, I think, being proved even in the United States. We, as a democracy, at any rate in purpose and in the making, have to find ways of getting the drives and incentives that are requisite for high industrial production on different and on more democratic terms. How we should set about the task it is none of my business to attempt to say in this essay : all I can say, in conclusion, is that I feel sure the thing can be done, and that we ought to have set about doing it a very long while ago. Indeed, I have been saying just that — not, I fear to much purpose — for the best part of forty years.

The Claims of Nationality

NATIONALITY is, by the common consent of those who have made the attempt, exceedingly difficult to define. The question 'How many nations are there in Europe?' is simply unanswerable, because nationality is a matter not of absolute being or not being, but also of feeling or not feeling. It does not imply, though the sense of it may be strengthened by, a community of blood: it can exist, though not without frictions, in the absence of a common language; and it admits of varying degrees of intensity. It is possible for a collection of persons to be more or less a nation; and it is also possible for a group, lying between two more clearly defined peoples, to be quite uncertain which way its national allegiance lies. Nor is nationality a fixed concept in time: national consciousness can wax and wane, die out altogether, or be re-created when it has seemed for a long time to have lost all its force.

These uncertainties do not, however, mean that nationality is unimportant. Quite the contrary. It is, among the majority of Europeans, an exceedingly powerful sentiment -- one which moves the ordinary man to deeds of enthusiasm and sacrifice more readily than any other social or political concept. It is not so continuous a motive as that of economic self-interest; but this is not because it is weaker, but rather because the occasions which evoke it as a stimulus to action are, in modern societies, fewer and more intermittent. It is, I think, all the more powerful when it is evoked because it is not, like the economic motive, being continually practised upon small things. For it is in response to rare calls, and not to everyday stimuli, that men show their capacity for heroic doings.

¹ Originally written in 1941.

Essays in Social Theory

Powerful as the sentiment of nationality is, its predominance as an inducement to heroism is relatively modern. Only during the nineteenth century did it become widely diffused among the main body of the peoples. An Englishman of the days of Nelson resisted the press-gang without any sense of behaving unpatriotically; and no one expected the peasants of pre-revolutionary France to be moved by a passion for serving the fatherland. It has often been said that, though the Nation State came in with the Renaissance and the Reformation, the spirit of national patriotism began as a popular sentiment, over most of Europe, only with the French Revolution of 1789. The watchwords of that revolution were 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'; but these words came, as a consequence of it, to be interpreted practically in nationalistic terms.

The rise of the Nation State obviously corresponded closely to economic needs. It was indispensable for economic security and progress that there should be laws uniformly administered over wide territories, national markets liberated from the restrictions of local tolls and monopolies, large-scale authorities to foster the growth of trade and enterprise in distant regions, improved means of communication across wide countrysides, and a host of other developments which required unified administration over the largest manageable areas. These needs did not by themselves call the National State into being; but they caused those who were aware of them to take the side of the monarchs who were seeking to consolidate their hold over great bodies of subjects, and thus ensured the success of the State-builders' plans.

But this process of building Nation States did not connote any widespread growth of the sentiment of nationality. The enthusiasms which entered into the wars of the seventeenth century were religious rather than national. Where national sentiment existed at all, it was mainly an aristocratic and not a popular passion. It needed the conception of democracy — of States as belonging to their peoples rather than to their kings or to a ruling oligarchy — to give national

The Claims of Nationality

sentiment a lodging in the minds of the common run of citizens..

As the spirit of democracy was aroused, it naturally sought first of all to make conquest of the Nation States which were by then the established units of government. In each country, those who struggled to make their State democratic and their own came, in proportion to their success or even out of proportion to it, to attach to the Nation State their collective sentiment for democracy; and out of this marriage the sentiment of national patriotism as a popular passion was born. When it had been born two further consequences followed. Aristocrats sought to detach the sentiment of patriotism from the democratic sentiment which had inspired it, and to convert it into an instrument of the Nation State in its undemocratic form. This attempt is visible in the history of Hegelianism as a political theory, and in the record of many Nationalist Parties — for example, those of Germany and Italy. At the same time, there were many States in which it was very difficult for a common democratic sentiment of nationality to be aroused, because they were made up of subjects not only speaking different languages, but also living at widely different levels of culture, practising different religions, and having little in common beyond subjection to a single ruler. In such countries, nationalism developed on the one hand as the sentiment of a 'superior' national group which claimed the right to shape the State to suit its own convenience, and on the other as a revolt of the 'inferior' groups, which acquired, and subsequently rationalized under intellectual leadership, nationalist sentiments of their own. These latter sentiments, in the circumstances of the time, inevitably took shape in political nationalist movements aiming at the creation of new, separate Nation States, or, at the very least, autonomous national governments within a wider federal grouping.

Thus, in general, the Nation State arose first, and the sentiment of nationality thereafter became attached to it. But among subjected peoples the sentiment of nationality arose by way of reaction from the nationalism of the ruling

Essays in Social Theory

peoples, and shaped itself as a desire to create new Nation States. In both cases the ideas of nationality and of statehood became very closely linked together in men's minds. It seemed as if only by creating or keeping for themselves a separate Nation State could men hope to have the means of satisfying their common national desires.

The Nation State, from the time of its birth right up to its full development in the course of the nineteenth century, was on the whole a liberating influence in the economic field. It had, indeed, increasingly manifest disadvantages as the markets of the world became increasingly international and as the interdependence of one country and another in economic matters grew greater. But it had for the merchants and industrialists the immense advantage of giving them an assured basis of operations governed firmly by laws which met their principal needs, and in addition a treaty-making body which could with a fair degree of success protect them in their dealings across State frontiers. As trade and industry were predominantly a matter of competitive private enterprise, what the traders and industrialists chiefly wanted was the effective operation of law, national and international, on principles consistent with their needs and interests. This the system of Nation States gave them to a thoroughly satisfying extent; and accordingly the mercantile interests, despite the internationalism of trade, were in general strong upholders of the Nation State and of the sentiment of nationality as attaching to it.

Only towards the end of the nineteenth century, and then not everywhere, did the possibilities of a serious clash between the limits of Nation States and the requirements of the economic order begin to appear. The first clear sign of this clash was the raising of protective tariff walls designed to limit international trade in the interests of national production. Each National State, or rather its rulers, desired to be as powerful as possible; and each group of traders or producers within it saw a prospect of securing differential advantages for itself if it could get the State's support. In one country after another, the rulers and the industrialists

The Claims of Nationality

carried through a 'deal' — the rulers desiring particular forms of home economic development as a means to national power and the industrialists, seeing prospects of better profits in a monopolized home market than in world-wide free competition with the industrialists of other countries. With this development went also the growth of economic imperialism — the attempt by States to promote both wealth and national glory by appropriating less advanced countries, which could be made valuable either as closed or preferential markets or as exclusive sources of raw materials, or as fields for profitable investment and 'honourable' employment for the surplus children of the ruling classes.

This type of imperialism was not, of course, new in the latter part of the nineteenth century — witness India ; but it received at that time a greatly extended application, above all in the rapid partition of the African continent after 1880. With this process went a grafting on of imperialist to national sentiment, accompanied by a profound modification in its character. There had been from the first an imperialist element in the nationalism of those peoples who ruled over subject groups within their State territories — for example, Russians, Hungarians, Germans, and also of course the British peoples. But the new imperialism was different from this, because it began to envisage the world in terms of a few Empires, dominated by chosen nations with a mission of 'civilization' — and economic exploitation — akin to that of the Roman Empire in the ancient world.

From that time Nationalism and Imperialism were involved in curiously complicated relationships. Nationalism existed as the enemy of Imperialism among subject peoples at all stages of civilization save the very lowest ; and it was notable that the less advanced the people the more its nationalist movement usually stood for the claims of a privileged order within it (*e.g.* Arab landowners, Indian mill-owners, Slovakian landlords and church dignitaries). At the other extreme, among ruling peoples Nationalism and Imperialism tended to appear as allies, and even to fuse, up to a point, into a mixed sentiment. Finally, in Nation States

Essays in Social Theory

which had no dependent empires Nationalism existed as a sentiment attached primarily to the idea of the separateness and independence of the State, though in States of mixed language and culture there were sometimes secondary influences pulling different ways towards the Nationalisms of their greater neighbours (*e.g.* in Belgium).

In all these varied forms, Nationalism has come to be closely associated with the idea of political independence. Each group which looks upon itself as a nation wants to have a State of its own, partly out of a rational desire to satisfy its collective aspirations, preserve and develop its common culture, and be able to have its public affairs administered in its own language and by officials who share its collective peculiarities and outlook, but also partly because statehood has come to be regarded as the hallmark of national success. Each group which has a State wants its State to be expressive of its national character, and tends to seek the suppression within its borders of any rival expression of nationality, both as a potential source of weakness and disaffection and as inconsistent with the essential character of the Nation State. In all Western Europe Switzerland stands alone as the example of a Nation State based on equality among a number of peoples speaking different languages, practising different religious observances, and possessing strong affinities to three larger neighbouring States. Every other 'mixed' State is troubled, in greater or lesser degree, by malcontent nationalist movements among its linguistic, religious, or racial minorities.

Nationalism pressed to these lengths could never have prevailed without coming into conflict with the basic economic needs of the peoples. But the nationalism of the larger national groups was not, until quite recently, open to serious objection on this score. On the contrary, it was on the whole a unifying force, facilitating more than it hindered higher production and the exchange of goods over larger areas. Most of the smaller groups whose national separateness would have been at any time an economic nuisance did not attain to independent statehood until the Peace Settle-

The Claims of Nationality

ments of 1919 and 1920 set up in Europe a number of new States, made out of fragments of the old Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. Thus, one result of Versailles and of the other treaties imposed after the first World War was to aggravate very greatly the discrepancy between political frontiers and economic needs, by actually breaking up what had been single economic systems into a number of separate fragments and delineating new frontiers with the scantiest regard for the complex structures of production and exchange. The consequent disturbance of economic balance was one powerful factor driving the greater States towards attempts at economic self-sufficiency, or at least towards the re-creation within their frontiers of industries which they had lost by the peace, or towards the creation of industries which they deemed essential to their security in the event of war. In the extreme case, it led them towards war itself, as a means of achieving *autarkie* by bringing 'complementary' countries under their control.

The entire period between the two wars was one of increasing economic nationalism — deliberately willed in some cases, and in others forced on reluctant governments by the behaviour of their neighbours or by the general chaos of world economic affairs. Rising tariffs on a much higher scale than before 1914 showed the strength of this tendency; but soon there were added to tariffs all manner of devices for fostering home industries and limiting foreign competition — subsidies to manufacturers, quotas imposed upon importers, licensing systems, exchange controls which regulated foreign trade indirectly by granting or refusing the means of payment, special bilateral arrangements for the direct exchange of surpluses and for the clearing of past debts and current commercial accounts, and so on. The collapse of the gold standard and the enforced substitution of monetary 'management' for a mainly automatic regulation of financial affairs provided ready opportunities for the manipulation of foreign trade in the supposed interest of the nation; and every step taken by one Nation State led to reprisals or parallel movements by others.

Essays in Social Theory

All this time the swift advance of industrial technique was bringing larger and larger productive units into existence and creating an imperative need for larger markets. Many of the characteristic industries of the twentieth century — for example, the making of motor-cars — cannot be carried on at all on an economic basis by a small country dependent on its home market; and some of the greatest basic industries — *e.g.* steel-making — can be located only at a very high cost in countries which lack the right combinations of fuel and raw materials. This situation has tremendous military as well as economic consequences. As war became more and more a matter of intensive mechanization — of great air fleets and panzer divisions, of oil and rubber, and of skill in the mechanical arts, and still more recently of very costly atomic plants — the armed forces of the smaller nations grew nearly helpless against the more advanced military equipment which only a few great States could afford or command. It had been a postulate of nineteenth-century Nationalism that even small Nation States could at need put up enough resistance to the forces of their greater neighbours to make the latter think twice before attacking them, and could defend themselves long enough for allies to mobilize and come to their help. It was an unspoken postulate of the Peace Treaties of 1919 and 1920 that this condition still held good, and that alliances of small nations could possess a significant amount of military strength. But the events of 1939 and 1940 showed very plainly that these conditions had practically ceased to operate, and that a great, highly mechanized army, accompanied by a great force of fighting and bombing airplanes, even in the absence of atomic warfare, could simply blast out of its way the feeble resistance which could be offered by any lesser Power, or by any possible combination of lesser Powers.

These events plainly foreshadowed the impending disappearance of a state system based on the idea of national independence as a sovereign right of men. For the Sovereign State which cannot defend itself, even for a time, against foreign attack is an obvious impostor, laying claim to an

The Claims of Nationality

authority which it does not in fact possess. In the circumstances of to-day, the only Nation State which can in truth possess the attributes of sovereign independence is the great State ; and in the case of great States surrounded by smaller neighbours it is inevitable, if State Sovereignty is to remain the basis of political relationships, that the great States should seek to engulf their neighbours, and the small States be kept alive, if at all, only when they are in the position of satellites or of buffers between the great. Nationalism as a basis for the State can survive under these conditions only in its perverted imperialist form — that is, by expressing the will of the great nation, not to self-determination, but to imperial rule over its weaker neighbours.

Parallel to this military process of annihilation of the real political independence of the smaller nations is the economic process which makes them unable to pursue independent policies of their own in the sphere of trade and production. Dependent on their greater neighbours both for markets and for most forms of capital equipment and many kinds of essential consumers' goods, compelled to link their financial systems to one or another of the world's major currencies, and driven to render their domestic apparatus of production subservient to the needs of one or more of the major consuming countries, they can retain no real economic independence, though they can still to some extent balance themselves between the conflicting claims of the great States. In their economic dealings with these great States, the smaller States are almost always at a disadvantage ; for usually the great States have alternative sources of supply, whereas the small ones have no alternative markets. Even when a small State is in a monopolistic position as a supplier of particular goods, this only renders it more an object of desire to its greater neighbours, and, though it may enable it for a time to drive harder bargains, makes its independence more precarious.

Most unhappily placed of all are the peasant countries, which cannot afford to industrialize themselves, even if they possess the requisite raw materials for developed production,

Essays in Social Theory

but must depend for their supplies of industrial goods on the regular sale abroad of their basic agricultural products. For the world's agricultural markets are not only narrowed by protective policies designed to increase domestic output of foodstuffs and to lessen the internal differences between rural and urban standards of living, but are also for the most part so highly competitive that the peasant exporters are at a serious disadvantage, and can be compelled by a ruthless and stronger neighbour to make their exchanges on very unfavourable terms. It is notorious that the Nazis, in their dealings with these countries, exploited their bargaining advantages with very great success. They compelled the peasant countries to take in exchange for their food exports not what they wanted, but what the Nazis were ready to supply. It is true that, even so, the peasants may have profited, in the sense that if the Germans had not bought their produce it would have remained unsold. But this does not alter the fact that the great State — Germany — was able systematically to exploit the smaller States for its own economic advantage.

It would be possible to enlarge at almost any length on the absurdities of the European frontiers of 1939 from the standpoint of economic convenience and well-being. But this has been done so often that it seems unnecessary to do it yet again. It is often suggested that these absurdities were caused by the folly of the statesmen of 1919 in refusing to give sufficient weight to the economic factors. But in truth the source of the trouble went much deeper. It was utterly beyond the bounds of possibility so to draw the frontiers of Europe that each 'nation' should constitute a separate, independent State and at the same time to preserve the essential units of economic co-operation. No doubt, this would not have mattered if the Nation States had been prepared to treat their independence as purely 'political', and to refrain from putting any barriers in the way of free intercourse — including not only the exchange of goods, but in addition free movement of capital, freedom of migration, and international co-ordination of transport and finance.

The Claims of Nationality

But it was plainly out of the question that this could happen. Statehood was taken by the rulers of each State as including the right to pursue an independent economic policy ; and, though it was in practice impossible for the small States to be economically independent of the great, this limitation on their powers made them only the more determined to practise economic independence at one another's expense.

Even if the League of Nations had completely fulfilled the promise of its constitution, this would not have fundamentally altered the position. For the League was, in its very conception, a League of independent Nation States, within which certain privileges were conferred of necessity on the Great Powers, but in economic matters each State, large or small, retained the fullest nominal independence. It was doubtless intended, by using the power of the great national banks to promote a general return to the gold standard, to pin down all the League States to the observance of certain traditional rules of economic behaviour --- especially to deflation at the call of the great banks ('When Father says Deflate, we all deflate'). But this in practice made matters worse ; for when observance of the 'gold standard rules' imposed intolerable strains on the dislocated economies of one country after another, the inevitable outcome was a resort to extreme nationalist financial policies as the only way of checking the dissolution of the national economy and preventing the outbreak of revolutions of despair.

Pre-war Europe was, in effect, an economic monstrosity, fully as absurd, from the economic point of view, as if each State within the United States of America were to pursue a policy of complete economic independence, with tariff walls against the other States, quotas on imports, control over 'foreign' payments to other States, and a separate currency system of its own. So much was this the case that, from the purely economic point of view, it was quite arguable that it would have been better to let Hitler conquer all Europe short of the Soviet Union, and thereafter exploit it ruthlessly in the Nazi interest, than to go back to the pre-war

Essays in Social Theory

order of independent Nation States with frontiers drawn so as to cut right across the natural units of production and exchange. This was part of the reason why there was in the Nation States which the Nazis overran no general repudiation of the Nazis' 'new economic order'. If the defeat of Germany were to mean a return to pre-war conditions, why should the peasants of Rumania or Yugoslavia have desired it? Might not any sort of European economic unification have been, from their point of view as poor producers, better than none?

The conclusion is that it would have been sheer disaster if the victors at the end of the second World War had succeeded in restoring anything at all resembling the pre-war system of separate and independent Nation States. But it will be no less a disaster if the economic unification which is imperatively needed in Europe is brought about in either East or West at the cost of flouting the spirit of nationality. For it is not true, even in the long run, that the economic forces are bound to prevail over the national spirit to the extent of making men content to live in a far-flung supra-national State which denies their several national aspirations. The economic forces may be strong enough to compel them to live in such a State, and they may be materially better off for doing so. But that does not mean that they will live in it happily, or contentedly, or at peace.

Economic factors have been considered at some length in the foregoing paragraphs, almost to the exclusion of other factors which are of no less importance in determining the future. It is easy enough to make out a clear case showing the importance, on economic grounds, of achieving supra-national unity in Europe, and the sheer necessity of achieving it if backward peoples are to be lifted out of primary poverty or advanced peoples to be rescued from insecurity and unemployment because of the poverty of the markets in which they seek to sell their goods. All this is easy enough; but it does not answer the vital question 'Will men do it?' Will men be able so to overcome their nationalist exclusiveness as positively to struggle to bring about a wider unity; or will

The Claims of Nationality

they, on the contrary, remain so determinedly exclusive and hostile to 'foreign rule' that they will sooner submit to foreign force and be conquered by their more powerful neighbours than join hands voluntarily in a supra-national order designed both to prevent war and to end economic insecurity? In other words, are men so blindly nationalistic that only a Hitler or some alternative Juggernaut can combine them over a wide enough area to conform to the needs of modern technique?

It is possible that men are 'pig-headed' to this degree. But I am loth to credit the existence of so much folly and so little wisdom as this conclusion implies. I do believe it possible to get the peoples, under Socialist leadership, to work for supra-national unity. But I am sure they will not do this unless the supra-national order is so designed as to make ample provision for the satisfaction of real national needs.

What are the claims of nationality, when one has disentangled from them claims which rest on the identification of its essence with the achievement of complete political independence for a national State? In the first place, any group which feels itself to be a nation wants the fullest freedom to use its own language — the language that comes natural to it and embodies an important part of its cultural tradition. It wants this language to be employed in official as well as in private affairs. It wants its laws to be written and interpreted in this language: it wants this language to be spoken in its courts, police stations, and administrative offices. It wants the teaching of this language to be basic in its schools, and the teaching of other subjects to be carried on in this language. It wants newspapers to be published, books written, dramas performed, in this language. In other words, it wants its traditional tongue to be unmistakably the language of the country. Nationalist movements among subject peoples may go beyond this, and seek to boycott altogether what they regard as the language of their conquerors; but I am not aware that any self-governing nation objects to the teaching or use of languages other than its

Essays in Social Theory

own, provided the primacy of its own language is admitted and practically assured.

Secondly, in close connection with these linguistic aspirations, reasonable nationalists want their schools to be places where the young are taught to understand and value the national history and traditions, and to master the national values and ideas of living. They want national Universities to continue these processes, and cultural institutions of every sort to be imbued with a sense of national aspiration and achievement. They want those arts in which there is a tradition of national excellence to be especially cultivated : and they want poets, painters, musicians, sculptors, and architects alike to celebrate the peculiar virtues of the national spirit. Of course, this purely cultural side of nationalism is much stronger in some cases than in others. But it is nearly always present in some degree — usually with a certain archaeological flavour when nationalists are endeavouring to revive a submerged or weakened nationalism by appeals to the past.

Thirdly, nationalists commonly claim the right to follow the traditional religion of their nation. This is a much less definable claim than those discussed already ; for it may range from a mere demand for freedom of worship and religious organization to a claim for the exclusive practice of the national religion and its secure establishment by the State as the sole religion of the people. Some nationalists will be content with freedom of worship, provided that it carries with it the right to organize a national Church with native priests and prelates and a liturgy in the national language. Some, on the other hand, will assert that a people cannot be firmly bound together without full community of religious observance, and that no one who is not in communion with the national Church can truly share in the common traditions of the people. Moreover, some religions are by profession tolerant, and others intolerant ; and this makes a great difference to nationalist claims on their behalf. Some Churches are purely national, whereas others are national sections of international Churches, such

The Claims of Nationality

as the Catholic. Some Churches are much more Erastian in doctrine than others ; and this affects the nature of their relations to nationalist politicians. Whereas in the case of language and lay culture most nationalist movements make closely similar claims, in the case of religion there are endless varieties of demand.

Now, there seems to be no good reason why the linguistic and cultural claims of nationalism should not be fully reconcilable with the needs of the supra-national State, wherever such a State is based, not on imperialism, but on the will to deal fairly by all the citizens. But in the case of religion other important considerations arise. The claim that a nation must, if it is to preserve and get the full value of its national traditions, profess collectively a uniform national religion is inconsistent with the right of individual and group self-expression which all democratic state machinery ought to safeguard and to encourage. These rights are, indeed, at variance with any claim that a particular set of religious observances ought to be established by law, or that the professors of a particular set of beliefs ought to enjoy any special privileges or preferences in the educational system or in any other part of the machinery of government and administration. Churches and Governments ought to be entirely separate : there ought to be no confounding of the persons of ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction. The Elizabethan Act of Uniformity, as an attempt to build up a broad Church to which the great majority of the people could be induced to subscribe, may have been justifiable as a necessary compromise. The thoroughgoing Erastianism of Rousseau's attempt to formulate the idea of a State Church, based on the broadest sort of Deism, may have been a natural element in the first foundation of the theory of democratic sovereignty. But neither the one nor the other is consistent with a developed conception of the requirements of a democratic society. It is fundamental to the very idea of such a society that, so far from enforcing uniformity or, on a more advanced plane, recognizing a particular 'establishment' while extending

Essays in Social Theory

'toleration' to 'dissenters', it should value the presence in its midst of widely different interpretations of man's spiritual nature.

It is, however, no less true that there must be limits to this recognition of the value of differences. These limits are set by the moral notions which are at the root of the common civilization which holds the nation together. A Church which advocated cannibalism as a religious rite would clearly exclude itself from recognition in any advanced or democratic society. But so, I hold, does any Church which denies, as part of its basic doctrine, the right of men to worship God in their own way, or not to worship God at all, or which claims that the State ought to prohibit to all citizens practices which it condemns on the score of its religious belief. I am not, of course, denying the right of, say, Catholics to condemn divorce or birth control, or to do their best to get their views adopted by the societies in which they live. But I am condemning any claim that the Catholic, or any other, Church ought to be given power itself to enforce such doctrines, or to act in any matter as the agent for their enforcement. A Catholic has as much right as anyone else to express any view he pleases, and to endeavour to persuade others to accept his view. But no religious body has any right to exercise any coercive power over persons who do not belong to it, or to be entrusted by the State with any coercive authority.

In practice it may be necessary, in the existing state of opinion, to admit certain limited compromises. Where the great majority of a nation belong to a particular Church, it may be unavoidable to allow that Church some part in the public ceremonials of the people — in the celebration of national festivals, for example. But it would be altogether a mistake to stretch the compromise to the point of allowing any national Church to insist on membership as a qualification for any office, for admission to any University or other public institution, or for any right of citizenship; and it would be wholly indefensible to endow any such Church with any control over public education, or with any power

The Claims of Nationality

at all over any persons not voluntarily belonging to it.

The reason for this is that freedom of opinion, and the equal right to hold all opinions not directly excluded by the basic conditions of the civilization, rank among the absolute requirements of real democracy. This freedom is accordingly a right which needs to be fully safeguarded by the charter of the supra-national authority, and one which no national group can legitimately invade. Subject to this, each national group should have the right, as part of its cultural autonomy, to develop its religious institutions in its own way, recognizing such varieties of religious belief, national or international, as any of its citizens may profess, and allowing the adherents of any Church to link its worship as they please either to the culture of the nation, or to the developing wider culture that transcends national frontiers.

This freedom is essential to the sense of cultural autonomy. But there are other aspects of nationality, besides those which I have discussed so far, which must be safeguarded if the peoples are to live at ease within the framework of a supra-national society. Not least among them is the right to have their affairs administered in their own language, by public officers who speak that language as natives and have as part of their mental make-up the traditions of the nation. It would no doubt greatly simplify the unification of Europe if all Europeans spoke the same language — spoke it, I mean, as their native language and not merely as a foreign language learnt for convenience of intercourse. It would be a considerable convenience if all Europeans — or indeed all peoples throughout the world — had a common second language in addition to their own, and could thus communicate one with another without interpreters in all the simpler affairs of life. But language is not only a means of matter-of-fact communication, but also an invaluable instrument of thought and a rich repository of sentiment; and the full understanding of one another's minds is something very different from the ability to make and answer inquiries about the times of trains, or even to exchange specialized technical information without error.

Essays in Social Theory

Oratory, as well as literature, depends on the fine appreciation of language, to which few can attain for any tongue save that which is native to them. Each nation's language is a storehouse of the thoughts and emotions of many generations of men; and no people can afford to discard its own language in its public affairs without heavy loss of social content and tradition.

It is therefore futile to propose the deliberate adoption of any one language, whether it be an existing national language or one invented or adapted for the purpose (*e.g.* Esperanto or Basic English), as the official language of public affairs throughout the territories of a supra-national State. There is much to be said for the universal acquisition, for purposes of factual convenience, of a second language. But, whether this is done or not, the national languages must remain, not only as instruments of literature, but also as the current languages of administration in the various national areas. Conceivably, in course of generations, a second language, taught throughout the supra-national area, could be used for many purposes for which it could not be used to-day. But it could not become the universal language of public affairs until men had learnt, over the entire area, to think instinctively in it, or until it had itself developed, as a result of such thinking, into a real supra-national language expressing the thoughts and sentiments and traditions of closely unified peoples.

Nor is the question one of language only. Local affairs must be administered mainly by men and women who share the cultural traditions and outlook of the men and women whose lives are affected by their doings. A national group will not have the sense of collective freedom if a large proportion of those who hold public offices in its midst are foreigners — even though these foreigners may speak their second language exceedingly well. They want to be governed by persons of their own sort in all matters which closely and directly affect their individual lives and involve personal contacts between the administrator and the citizen.

These are, I believe, the essential non-economic condi-

The Claims of Nationality

tions of national contentment under supra-national co-ordination. They involve, especially, national control of schools, courts of law, institutions of social service, cultural institutions, and of the entire apparatus of local and regional government. Moreover, in the economic field, though certain key services must be actually administered over the whole of the supra-national area, it is of vital importance to avoid in the great majority of services any centralization of actual management. Co-ordination of plans does not involve centralized administration; and spontaneity and democratic initiative cannot be secured where centralization is allowed to proceed beyond what is imperatively required by considerations of technique. The small unit is valuable in itself, as a liberating influence upon the human spirit; and the vaster the scale of production and distribution that is enforced on men by the advances of applied science, the more important it becomes to miss no opportunity of breaking up administration into manageable units, in which the individual can hope to exert a significant influence.

I believe that in the foregoing pages I have set down the real requirements of nationality as a basic psychological force. But the case as I have stated it is of course very far from meeting the claims of nationalist politicians, or of political nationalism as a whole. The nationalist politicians want national politics to be important in the eyes of the people: they want an abundance of high offices for themselves and their friends, and they want power. They have convinced themselves, with much truth as long as a capitalist social order is taken for granted, that the true national values can be maintained only if they are protected by a fully independent Nation State, with its own entire sovereignty in law-making as well as in internal administration, its own show of force (even if the reality is impossible), and its entire freedom from any supra-national interference with its political system, its internal economic affairs, and its structure of class-relationships. They aim at persuading their nationalist followers that the spirit of nationality can

Essays in Social Theory

be conserved and expressed only by the achievement and maintenance of complete national sovereignty.

But is this what their followers really want? The politicians have a natural impulse to want it, because it increases their sense of importance and their real power if they are small men. A big man may find satisfaction in working co-operatively within the greater, supra-national unity: a small man will want to be boss over an area small enough for him to manage. Better to reign in 'Serbonia' than serve in Europe! For the peoples, on the other hand, there is no similar prospect of self-aggrandizement in the small national unit. Even the local 'boss' is not less, but rather more, a boss if his local organization forms part of a supra-national organization than if it is related merely to a national unit. And, if this is true of local leaders, it is true much more of the great mass of the people.

Why, then, are nationalist leaders able to bamboozle so many followers into a belief that the successful expression of the national spirit requires an independent national Sovereign State? They can do this, because up to the present it has been so largely true. Ireland could never have achieved full cultural freedom (which is none the less freedom for having been abused in a number of ways) without achieving first, not merely Home Rule, but in effect independent sovereignty. The same is true of Poland, of Czechoslovakia, of Finland — indeed, of all the Nation States in Europe which have succeeded in freeing themselves from political subjection to their larger neighbours. Historically, it is true that, in Western civilization generally, national rights of self-development and expression could be won only by winning first complete emancipation from foreign rule.

This has set up very powerful psychological forces which drive nationalists to an assertion of the necessity of full political independence. But it does not follow that the one truly of necessity involves the other. Independence of a domineering conqueror intent on imposing his national culture upon his subject peoples is one thing — independence of a supra-national authority based on the idea of

The Claims of Nationality

equal co-operation between many national cultures is quite another. If the supra-national authority is itself neither nationalist nor nationalist-imperialist, but international in spirit and structure, there is no valid reason why the nationalities included within its scope should not find the fullest opportunity for national self-expression without either sovereign independence or exclusive national control in the economic field.

Reform in the Civil Service

ATTACKING Civil Servants has long been a popular pastime; and I have no wish to find myself a play-mate in this activity with Sir Ernest Benn's Individualist League or with the *Daily Mail*. So let me say at the outset that I believe our permanent Civil Servants, at all levels from the highest to the lowest, to be pretty competent, honest and conscientious, and not at all sadistically disposed. I do not believe that they take a fiendish pleasure in devising forms for the rest of us to fill up; I do not believe they are habitual slackers; and I do not believe in the least that they are wicked bureaucrats, fanatically avid of power. I have had a fair amount to do with them, over a good number of years; and I must admit that, in their collective capacity, I do not love them. But emphatically these are not the charges which I think can be preferred against them with any substantial element of truth.

My charges are quite different, and are largely directed against the system, rather than against the individuals who are its victims. I think that the average highly-placed Civil Servant has too little experience of being anything except a Civil Servant and too little knowledge of people outside the narrow group with which he ordinarily mixes in social affairs. I think he is caught too young, and tamed too thoroughly in the practice of a particular routine. I think he enjoys too much security, under conditions which tend to make him erect into an ideal the negative virtue of never making a mistake. I think he is very apt to be the kind of man who puts a high value on mere security, and lacks all instinct for adventure. I think he suffers under a depart-

¹ Written in 1943.

Reform in the Civil Service

mental system of organization which breaks up responsibility into too small pieces, and tends to make a virtue of avoiding it altogether. I think he shares with many other professionals the habit of clannishness and of feeling himself one of a corporate group perpetually on its defence against the rest of the world. And I think he exists under a system of grading and promotion and of Treasury supervision which is destructive of initiative for the majority of those subjected to it, and often wrongly selective in those whom it raises to the highest positions.

These are criticisms of the higher Civil Service as it exists in time of peace, and in relation to its normal duties. In wartime, of course, the Civil Service is greatly diluted by 'temporaries' of various types, from 'dollar a year' men seconded from trades and industries as controllers of this or that, or as technical advisers to controllers, to typists who fall a long way below the normal civil service standards of accuracy. Among these 'temporaries' are not a few members of my own profession — the 'dons' — and I should not be surprised if my fellow-academics were found to have behaved quite as bureaucratically as the 'regulars', and indeed to have displayed many of the same mental characteristics. For dons, like Civil Servants of the higher grades, are recruited largely from among cleverish, unadventurous persons who like a quiet life, set a high value on security, and regard the rest of humanity as, in Carlyle's famous phrase referring to the electorate, 'mostly fools'.

It is not, however, my purpose to devote this essay to a discussion of the peculiarities of the Civil Service in wartime. What I am setting out to consider is the sort of Civil Service we want in times of peace, and in that connection what were the merits and defects of the Civil Service which we actually had up to 1939. If references to war conditions come into this study, they will be only incidental: my main concern is with the permanent — in technical phrase the 'established' — Civil Service.

It is a great thing, which we take nowadays so much for granted as often to forget how great it is, that this

Essays in Social Theory

established Civil Service of ours is, for all practical purposes, incorruptible. Not merely do its members not take bribes : they are for the most part continuously on their guard against much more subtle and insidious forms of corruption. If someone asks them out to dinner, they are very ready to ask themselves whether it is really for the sake of their *beaux yeux*, or from some ulterior motive ; and they are even, perhaps, a little apt to be unduly suspicious of that part of the world which does not follow their own high calling. Or perhaps they are not unduly suspicious ; for the ways of what are called ' contact men ' are dark, and the guardians of the public virtue need to be careful not to be beguiled. At all events, dishonesty among Civil Servants is a very rare event ; and, if I need say no more in this essay about the morals of the Civil Service, it is because the moral qualities of its members, in their official behaviour, shine like good deeds in a naughty world.

They are clever too, as well as honest, these servants of the public. In every grade, the standards required of new entrants are high, in point of intellectual attainments, in comparison with what is called for in most walks in life. When they go wrong, it is not because they are mutton-heads, or unable to appreciate even subtle intellectual points, but for some quite different reason.

Is it, then, that there is nothing amiss with our Civil Servants, and that, if many of us do not love them, that is only because it is in the nature of their calling not to be loved ? It is their mission to ensure that private persons, in their dealings with the State, shall do, not as they would do, but as they would be done by, and so that, in Kant's phrase, whatsoever they do shall be in accordance with ' law universal '. They have to go by rule, because they must show no favour to one man as against another ; and the rule, when we find it applied to our own case, often seems hard and inhuman, and quite often lacking in common sense. The Civil Servant is essentially an applier of general rules to particular cases ; and it is in the nature of his duty that he has no liberty to make exceptions. He is a trustee, and not a

Reform in the Civil Service

dispenser of charity : an interpreter of laws, and not their maker ; a servant of servants — for Minister means servant — and not a master, at any rate in the theory of the Constitution : a regulator, and not an original source, of power. If this is theory, and in practice the Civil Servant often becomes the master of the Minister he is supposed to serve, and even of the public that Minister is supposed to serve, how can he help it ? He is the expert, who knows all the ropes ; and what he knows best of all is that Ministers are but amateurs, who blunder sadly if he does not continually save them from themselves.

The relations between Ministers and Civil Servants are, indeed, at the very heart of the problem we are setting out to discuss. Broadly speaking, a Government Department has two distinct functions to fulfil. It has to see to the practical and orderly administration of an existing body of law, and of rules and regulations based on law and custom ; and it has to play its part in the making of new laws or the amendment of existing rules and practices. Inevitably Ministers are much more concerned with the second than with the first of these functions. They may regard themselves as endowed with a mission to effect changes in policy, and yet be fully aware of their shortcomings as arbiters of administrative methods. The typical Minister does not greatly interfere with the working of those parts of his department's duties which are not immediately affected either by popular controversy or by proposals for legislative change. He leaves the running of such things mainly to the permanent secretary and his subordinates, and attends principally to those matters about which he is likely to be questioned in Parliament or to have to take charge of a Bill. The habit of shifting Ministers frequently from one office to another obviously makes for leaving the high Civil Servants largely free to run the departmental machine as they please, subject to the knowledge that the Minister will be bound to interfere if their proceedings give rise to public protest or offend any powerful interest. It is very much the concern of most officials to avoid having the Minister's

Essays in Social Theory

attention drawn to matters which they deem him, in most cases, ill-qualified to understand. An incautious reply by a Minister to a questioner in Parliament may upset their best-laid plans and cause an upheaval in their department; and a Minister, who knows the rules much less well than they do, is exceedingly apt, in judging the particular case on its merits, to overlook the endless repercussions of what may seem to be an obviously just or sensible judgement. They have to protect him against his own humane impulses and his wish to please, and in doing so have to protect themselves against administrative complications which might land everybody in a mess.

There is no denying the force of the Civil Servant's case when he argues that it is dangerous to give the Minister his head. Yet this attitude of the custodian of orderly administration passes easily into the perversion in which it becomes sheer obstruction to change. What is comes, because of the complications involved in changing it, to be identified with what ought to be; and this happens the more easily because of the unchanging rhythm of the high-up Civil Servant's everyday life. From home to office, from office to club, where he hob-nobs largely with other Civil Servants of his own standing, from club back to office, and from office to home, his life follows, in times of peace, a singularly invariable course. His job itself is not monotonous, in the sense in which monotony is the lot of the routine worker from day to day; but its rhythm is constant, even if there is variety in the things which he has to do. It would be remarkable if it did not make him, unless he happens to have strong anarchistic instincts, conservative and averse from change, more apt to envisage difficulties than opportunities, and disposed to let well alone and to define 'well' as meaning that which least disturbs the evenness of his days. That his work is interesting does not militate against this conservatism but may even exaggerate it; for he is not discontented with what he has to do, and has therefore no inner urge to get it altered. He has chosen his career with his eyes open, knowing its limitations as well as its privileges; and

Reform in the Civil Service

he is aware that he is most likely to be allowed to get on with his job in his own way if he does nothing that will cause him to be interfered with. Consequently, he fears, or even resents, a parliamentary question which touches upon his duties; and in priming his Minister with the required answer; or with the arguments to be used in debate, he is concerned mainly to afford no opening for further questioning, and to get away with giving as little information as will serve to keep the questioner quiet, and give the press no handle for comment that may set the public mind astir.

This kind of Civil Service is a product of the reforming zeal of the nineteenth century. It superseded a service very differently constituted, in which sinecurists held many of the most lucrative posts, and the more laborious minor offices were filled largely by favouritism and nomination of the dependants of the great. Competitive examination was the new broom which swept the incompetents away, and enforced a high intellectual standard; and the moral standard rose simultaneously with the intellectual, under the stern governance of the preceptors of retrenchment and reform. When this reformation was effected, the job of the Civil Service was almost exclusively regulative, rather than administrative: it was concerned much more with seeing that certain things were *not* done than with doing things in any positive sense. Apart from the Post Office, which long remained anomalous in its methods, it had no big service to manage save that of tax-collection; and it came little into contact with the general run of men. Assiduousness and integrity were the qualities chiefly demanded of it: human sympathy was not much in request, or business capacity, or imagination, or even initiative in any of its more creative forms. There were men in it who did nevertheless display these qualities — for example, in the development of the public health services or in the field of education. But even in these fields of activity there was but limited scope for the creative powers. The local authorities were the responsible executants of the policies prescribed or permitted by law: the Civil Servant's function was rather that of ensuring that

Essays in Social Theory

they should not exceed their powers than that of spurring them on to new endeavours. The overriding assumption was that government ought to interfere as little as possible, save to prevent abuse: hostility to centralization was exceedingly strong, and the belief in *laissez-faire* not indeed unchallenged but deep and pervasive throughout the influential part of society.

Since those days conditions have changed greatly in more than one respect. For one thing, the social gulf between Ministers and Civil Servants has narrowed a great deal. Politicians have ceased to be mainly aristocrats; and Ministers, even Conservative Ministers, are nowadays a very mixed lot. As against this, the spread of secondary education has also altered the social complexion of the higher Civil Service; but the general effect has been to put Ministers and their departmental officials much more on a personal equality than they used to be, and therewith to give the greater expert knowledge of the official a stronger influence — the more so because the intricacy of administrative detail has immensely increased. This change in personal relations goes with a vast increase in the size of departmental staffs and in the range of duties falling within the scope of each department. The Civil Service has much more to do; and much more of its work is directly administrative and not merely supervisory. This, of course, applies very unevenly between departments; and, over all, the Service still regulates much more than it administers. But there have grown up huge departments directly managing services which bring their officials into close and constant contact with the general public. The Ministry of Labour, with its Employment Exchanges and Training Centres, is one outstanding example; and the Ministry of National Insurance is another. But, apart from these, the general run of departments have many more points of contact with the public than they used to have. The Board of Trade is in much closer contact with business men over matters of industrial and commercial policy; the Ministry of Education is in much closer touch with the schools, including those outside the

Reform in the Civil Service

State system ; the Ministry of Agriculture is in daily contact with farmers and dealers in farm produce ; the Ministry of Health is in much closer relations than it used to be, not only with local authorities, but also with doctors, nurses, private builders, insurance companies, hospitals, clinics, and all manner of social service agencies. The new Ministry of Town and Country Planning furnishes yet another example. In a great many fields there has grown up a new, and still rapidly developing, relationship between statutory and non-statutory agencies — an uneasy partnership in which the functions of the partners are subject to continuous and subtle alteration, both by law and in the gradual modifications of practice outside the law. Consultation with outside agencies has become a vital part of the technique of legislation and administration alike ; and the wider the State's functions become, the more needful is it for this partnership of public and private agencies to be developed.

One thing I feel sure of is that under these conditions it would be of advantage to have a regular practice of interchange between the Civil Service and the parallel service of local government. One occasionally meets even now officials who have had experience in both these fields ; and it would be of advantage if there were many more of them. Moreover, the interchange ought to take place not only among senior officials but also, and above all, among juniors in the course of getting their basis of experience. I am aware that there are practical administrative difficulties in the way of this, as there are in the way of that unification of conditions in the local government service which is on its own account greatly to be desired. But these difficulties — in relation to pension rights, and so on — could be easily overcome if there were any will to deal with them ; and I am sure the Whitehall official would be in many cases a better man if he had enjoyed some first-hand experience of the workings of local government, and the local official a better man if he had served for a time under the conditions of Whitehall.

Greater mobility at all stages, but especially before the Civil Servant has settled down in mind and habit, is, I am

Essays in Social Theory

sure, highly desirable, both from one central department to another and between central and local government. This could be brought about within the existing framework of the service without any fundamental change. At the same time, a great deal more should be done to break down the rigidity of caste divisions inside the service, especially between those who enter it at different ages and with different educational backgrounds. It ought to be made much easier for those who enter as boys or girls, if they show promise, to rise to the highest positions ; and these positions ought not, as they largely are to-day, to be reserved for university and public school men. In order to make this easier, there should be a provision on a generous scale of bursaries or fellowships, with the aid of which Civil Servants whose early education had been cut short could be sent for a year or even for several years to a University equipped to receive them, for the purpose of improving their cultural and professional qualifications. I should much prefer this to the creation of an isolated Civil Service Staff College, which is now being advocated in certain quarters. The Civil Servant needs not more but less isolation from the rest of mankind, and will find better and wider opportunities in a University which handles students of all sorts than in a specialized institution — provided only that the University takes proper pains to equip itself for giving him what he needs. In addition to such longer full-time courses, there ought to be an abundant provision of shorter ' refresher ' courses of all sorts and kinds, to meet the needs of men and women of different ages, interests and capacities and to keep the Civil Servant up to date with the best current thought and experience in fields related to his professional work.

There are, however, much wider questions than these to which we must give our consideration. Modern government is branching out not only on the social and administrative sides, with which I have been dealing so far, but also on the economic and business side. It is now pretty generally agreed that when the State takes over from private enterprise the running of any industry or economic service the best

Reform in the Civil Service

way of running it is not through a civil service department staffed by regular Civil Servants recruited in the ordinary way and subject to the rigours of Treasury control, but rather through some sort of public board or corporation. Such bodies have been set up in quite considerable numbers in recent years, with widely varying constitutions and relations to the Government and to Parliament. In general, the practice has been to regard their staffs, from the top downwards, as being not Civil Servants, but simply employees of the particular boards or commissions concerned. No attempt has been made to introduce any uniformity of grading or salaries or other conditions of service ; and there has been no formal security of employment, such as applies to the established branches of the Civil Service.

What this means is that in practice there has been growing up, side by side with the recognized Civil Service, a second unrecognized body of public servants working under substantially different conditions, intentionally made to resemble much more closely the conditions of private enterprise. I think the refusal to work out any common standards for the employees of the various corporations has been deliberate, and in effect a part of the attempt to keep them assimilated as nearly as possible to private forms of business. This has been possible as long as there have been only a few such bodies, and as long as their establishment has been in the hands of governments which hold public operation of industries to be the exception and private enterprise the rule. But the situation is bound to alter now that socialized control had been extended to a considerable number of industries and services and the State, instead of regarding each socialized enterprise as an isolated business, to be managed on the assumptions of a capitalist environment, is half-embarked on a form of coherent economic planning, such as is necessarily involved in any real attempt to follow a national policy aiming at full employment. As soon as the State comes to take a large hand in the running of the essential industries and to pursue any real system of economic planning, the need is bound to arise for bringing the several public enterprise

Essays in Social Theory

corporations under some sort of co-ordinated public control.

Two issues will then have to be faced. Some common principles will have to be worked out to govern the conditions of service in this sort of socialized enterprise; and it will have to be decided whether there is to be a sharp dichotomy between the industrial servants of the State, who run these enterprises on the public behalf, and the administrative servants, who co-ordinate their running, supervise them on behalf of the responsible Ministers, prepare answers to parliamentary questions about them, and advise the government as a whole concerning the formulation and development of the State's economic plans. Some such dichotomy has existed in the past in the Post Office, where a line has been drawn between the Secretary's department, an ordinary branch of the Civil Service, and the departments concerned with the actual running of the various sections of the Post Office's enterprise. This division has been, I think, unsatisfactory, and to some extent its working has been altered as a consequence of the changes introduced after the Report of the Bridgeman Committee. At all events, it would be a most unfortunate model to adopt for the running of other socialized services or for the general work of economic planning and co-ordination, either in relation to policies for the promotion of full employment or in any other connection.

The greatest danger of all is that, as the State's control over industries and economic services is extended, the co-ordinating authority in relation to them may fall permanently into the hands of the Treasury. This, I am convinced, would be a disaster. The Treasury is, in essence, an institution whose business it is to check expenditure and to enforce a rigid observance of uniform rules. It is an exceedingly conservative department, and better satisfied with itself than any body of persons it has ever been my fortune to meet. Its members have high qualities of integrity and personal intelligence; but their mental outlook is precisely that which is likeliest to verify all the most gloomy prophecies of the opponents of nationalization and public

Reform in the Civil Service

control. It would indeed be a miracle if it were not so, and if the same group of men were good both at sitting on the heads of the spending departments of State and at promoting initiative and enterprise in the agencies set up for the conduct of productive business. The Treasury's natural bias is against spending money : its natural assumption is that money spent is money lost — an assumption which it carried to a sheerly ridiculous extreme in the notorious 'Treasury Memorandum' of 1929, where it argued that public investment could not possibly add to the volume of employment because it would inevitably carry with it an equivalent decrease in the volume of private investment. Not even the Treasury would put forward so absurd a contention nowadays ; but the fact remains that it has not, and cannot be expected to have, the mood of the adventurous promoter of new enterprise, nor can it be suitable to control, save in a purely negative way, the activities of those who have. One does not set an accountant to run a business — except as a receiver of a bankrupt concern --- however much those who are running it may benefit by his advice.

If the State is to embark upon a wide range of economic activities, if it is to take over the running of more industries and services and is to co-ordinate their policies in terms of some sort of general economic plan, there will have to be a new public instrument for the making of this plan and for the exercise of these functions of control ; and this new body will have to recruit its members and staff in a way different from that of the ordinary Civil Service. It will need fewer 'Greats' men or other University graduates well versed in the humanities as the key to knowledge, and many more experts in particular fields of economics and technology and science ; and above all it will need men of practical experience, men who have not spent the whole of their working lives at a single office desk, or at a sequence of desks as like as two peas, but have worked in various branches of industry or commerce, or in applied research. The staff of such a co-ordinating and planning body will need to change con-

Essays in Social Theory

siderably as the emphasis changes from one kind of development to another ; and there will need to be much coming and going between the central body and the more specialized administrations of the particular industries and services subject to public operation or control.

It will, I think, become natural, if this new type of public service develops, for men attached to it to be seconded to the ordinary civil service departments, just as men from the Treasury are seconded now for a different purpose, to work in them on jobs for which their special qualifications are required. So far from the regular Civil Service supervising the industrial and other economic enterprises run under public auspices, these enterprises will be run on autonomous lines, through public corporations which will be largely self-governing, but will be subject to general policy directives transmitted to them through the central planning agency and will be staffed on a basis which will involve frequent interchanges both between the corporations and between the central planning agency and the corporations for particular services.

I do not propose to discuss in detail what the conditions of recruitment or employment should be for this new second Civil Service which I envisage as developing rapidly as economic planning extends its scope. One great question that will have to be faced is whether there is to be easy interchange between it and the service of profit-making enterprise. Hitherto, except in time of war, it has been deemed necessary to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of such interchange, and to tie the Civil Servant down to lifelong service largely as a means of diminishing the risks of corruption. There have been cases in which men have left the Civil Service for high positions in private business ; but the penalty — forfeiture of pension rights — has been deterrent except in the case of major appointments. On the other hand, the new public corporations have, as a matter of course, been staffed largely by men taken over from private enterprise ; and there has been, as far as I know, no attempt to make it difficult for such men to shift back if they so desire.

Reform in the Civil Service

I feel sure that this shifting will have to be accepted as a normal thing, as the State extends its field of economic operations. It will be desirable for men working in the public service to have the opportunity of a wide range of technical and administrative experience; and it will be most undesirable to pin down the publicly operated services to keep for good and all anyone they appoint. It is one of the disadvantages of the present civil service system that the incompetent, or the square pegs in round holes, can as a rule only be 'kicked upstairs'; and such a condition of things, bad enough in relation to the Civil Service as it is, would be quite intolerable if it were applied to the running of industries subject to continual and often very rapid technical development. The doctrine of the job for life cannot be applied to the higher ranges of industry without hampering economic progress. There is too much of it already in large-scale private enterprise. Either it must be made easy to sack the old-fashioned and the incompetent; or, if they are to be kept on, it must be made easy to kick them downstairs instead of up.

In my own view, the development of socialization is likely to take the form, not only of transferring certain entire industries and services from private to public operation, but also of part-transference, either of certain key processes or establishments within an industry, or by the development of what are called 'mixed enterprises', in which public and private capital work together. There are examples of this already — the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company is a well-known instance — and I think there is likely to be a multiplication of cases in which publicly and privately appointed directors sit side by side. Marketing Boards are a probable field for this type of development; and it will be necessary to give considerable thought to the types of persons whom the State is to appoint in such cases, and to the status and powers they are to enjoy. I envisage them as coming from the new economic planning agency, as being drawn from its specialist staff, and as receiving their orders through it in matters of general policy, while being left free, subject to certain rules

Essays in Social Theory

of conduct, to take their own line in day-to-day matters.

I know it will be argued that it is dangerous thus to mix public and private enterprise, or thus to admit the principle of interchange between the service of the public and the service of private profit. But how else can one envisage the advent of a 'mixed economy' under which some branches of industry will be publicly and some privately run and there will be all sorts and degrees of state intervention and control in the working of private industry? How else, I say, do those who envisage this sort of economy expect to get the job done? That it cannot be done by a Civil Service recruited as in the past is evident; and I think it is no less clear that it cannot be done merely by taking outside experts and technicians and business men into the Civil Service, on the basis of an entirely one-way traffic.

Of course, no such problems as I have been discussing arise if it can be assumed either that there is to be no considerable extension of the range of public enterprise, or that, even with such an extension, public corporations can continue to be set up entirely *ad hoc*, without any attempt at co-ordinating them or establishing any general machinery for the planning of economic policy or bringing them under any common principles in respect of their conditions of service. If, however, there is to be at the least some substantial growth of socialization, coupled with effective measures for the control of monopoly, and some planning of investment and production with a view to full employment — and, speaking from a Socialist standpoint, I certainly cannot assume less than this — the problems which I have been outlining will be bound to arise.

Indeed, they arise now, in the sense that one of the most formidable obstacles to the acceptance of Socialism as an objective is, for many men in the professional and business classes, the nightmare of civil service control. Making every allowance for the temporary reactions set up in men's minds by the orgy of form-filling which was an unavoidable accompaniment of war, we must still admit that this feeling would be very strong even if there had been no war to

Reform in the Civil Service

exacerbate it, and that ' Does Socialism Mean Bureaucracy ? ' is a constant question from which it is of no use for Socialists to attempt to slide away. We can, of course, make the debating answer that bureaucracy is no prerogative of the public service, and that it is found in equal measure in many large, and in some quite small, organizations with which the State has little or no concern. I have heard it suggested that railway companies, insurance companies, banks, and even great industrial concerns have not been immune from it ; and I think the most bureaucratic body I ever worked for was the University of London. This answer, however, will not serve : it is indeed no more than the pot calling the kettle black. That there are inherent tendencies towards bureaucracy in every large organization, public or private, is perfectly plain ; but that is a reason, not for lying down under it, but for doing all we can to combat it wherever it threatens to arise.

Now, in relation to the existing Civil Service in the performance of its traditional tasks — that is to say, quite apart from the new duties which are falling upon it in both the business and the social service sphere — the charge of bureaucracy is centred upon an allegation that the civil service system leads to an evasion of responsibility which makes it exceedingly difficult for the private citizen to get his affairs attended to. *Passed to You, Please* was the title of a recent book made up of a series of variations on this theme.

I believe it to be the case that the existing civil service system does lend itself to this evasion of responsibility, and that the key to the solution is to be looked for in the curious system of filing and minuting which still dominates the service. I have read many of those curious files of documents in which the original papers are accompanied by a growing series of largely illegible notes in the handwritings of the series of departmental officers under whose scrutiny the files have passed — each recipient passing the dossier on to someone else, his immediate next up or next down in the hierarchy, in the expectation that some day the file will get into the hands of somebody who will proceed to take

Essays in Social Theory

action upon it. The effect of this system is that, to a great extent, action in the Civil Service proceeds in single file, instead of by a simultaneous advance. I suppose the system was devised as an elaborate check, in order to prevent the possibility of self-contradiction by the department through different officers acting simultaneously in different ways. Some check, I have no doubt, is needed; but it seems to me that the file system, as it is ordinarily used, does slow matters up very badly, and does make it unduly easy for anyone who wishes to evade responsibility to pass it on to someone else. I know that this file system is not slavishly adhered to, even in peace, and that Civil Servants do ring one another up on the telephone without observing the strict order of official precedence. But there is a good deal too much of this slowly circulating file arrangement; and I think a good many files do in practice go on passing from hand to hand so long, without anything being done, that, hard as most senior Civil Servants nowadays undoubtedly work, the matter in question sometimes settles itself by sheer lapse of time before the file has come to rest.

I am sure, also, that the Civil Servant's attitude is far too much dominated by the fear of making a mistake. No doubt, mistakes are more serious when capital may be made out of them in newspaper or Parliament than they are in most private transactions. But the fact has to be recognized that nobody can effectively run anything without making mistakes, and that it is often more important to do something without delay than to get what is done absolutely right. The civil service tradition is all against doing anything — and still more against letting anyone else do anything — until one is absolutely sure about it; and the more work there is to be done, the more inhibiting this negative standard of perfection becomes. Moreover, under the existing system, each department regards itself to a quite undue extent as a self-contained unit. It is impossible in practice to keep the spheres of the different departments altogether separate: issues are continually cropping up with which several departments are necessarily concerned.

Reform in the Civil Service

Technical training, for example, concerns both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour; housing affects the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and the Ministry of Works and Buildings; water supply affects both the Ministry of Health and the Board of Trade. It would be easy to multiply instances; but it is unnecessary. My point is that, though heads of departments can of course consult together and inter-departmental committees be set up, there is very little communication between departmental officials lower down the scale. Once again, the desire for tidiness and correctness is allowed to override the claims of speed and flexibility; and I am sure the results are bad.

‘Hidebound by precedent and tradition’ is another charge that is commonly flung at the Civil Service. Here I cannot help sympathizing in some degree with the Civil Servant, who, if he were continually settling each case on its merits without regard to what had been done before, would soon land himself and everybody else in an intolerable mess. To a considerable extent, the Civil Servant has to go by precedent; for there are always eyes upon him, and plenty of claimants ready to demand that what he has done for one of them he must be prepared to do for all. Yet it is, I think, true that the Civil Service often carries its devotion to precedent too far, and uses it to evade the facing of really new problems as they arise. This is of a piece with the unadventurous and conservative temperament which pervades its higher ranks. There is no cure for it, except a new spirit of creative adventure; and the stimulation of this new spirit is bound to be a task rather for a government bent on constructive achievement than for the permanent servants of the State.

Beyond this, it is necessary to say something about the relations between Ministers and Civil Servants. The Civil Servant is supposed to act anonymously, as the servant and adviser of his Minister, whose policy he is supposed to be carrying into effect. This, however, is bound, as we have seen, to be almost pure fiction in relation to the main body

Essays in Social Theory

of departmental administration ; for it is quite beyond the powers of short-lived Ministers to master more than a small fraction of the work of their departments, and in practice most Ministers think they have done well if they understand the legislation they have to propose or to defend in Parliament and also acquire a reasonable familiarity with any questions over which they are likely to be criticized in public. Great power is thus thrown into the hands of the Permanent Secretary and his immediate deputies, who in effect run the department with little or no interference from the Minister except at a few special points. These permanent officials have had hitherto very little contact with Parliament, and it has tended to become an ideal for them so to run their departments as to attract as little parliamentary notice as possible.

I believe this to be a bad ideal. I think there ought, as long as we remain under a parliamentary system, to be a group or committee of Members of Parliament in regular touch with the affairs of each department, and meeting regularly the principal permanent officials. I think these officials ought to have regularly to give an account of their administrative doings to this group of M.P.s, and to take responsibility for what they have done, in the sense of being ready to defend it against criticism without taking refuge behind their Minister. I think the Minister ought probably to preside over some sort of joint committee of M.P.s and officials, through whom a regular scrutiny of the department's proceedings could be carried out.

Finally, a word must be said about the special problems of such bodies as the Employment Exchanges and the Assistance Board, through which the State deals directly with a host of ordinary men and women, including very many who are ill-educated, inarticulate, and ill-informed about their rights and the correct ways of presenting their case. It is of the greatest importance that such bodies as these shall be staffed by men and women of strong human sympathy and understanding ; for it is very largely from personal contacts with these staffs that the ordinary man

Reform in the Civil Service

gets his impression of what the State is like to deal with. In the past, there has been a good deal of haphazard in the methods of recruitment for these and other 'contact' services, and there have been, as far as I am aware, no arrangements at all for formal training or preparation before a man is actually on the job. Surely this question will have to be taken much more seriously in the future, and there will have to be a much greater provision of special courses for training in social work not only young people taking up these callings at the end of their full-time education but also suitable recruits of maturer years who have had outside experience in other callings. I am not making any complaint against the actual officials of either the Employment Exchanges or the Assistance Board: nor am I making capital out of their great difficulties of staffing under war conditions. But it surely is true that the Beveridge proposal to convert Industrial Insurance into a public service run by a public corporation would have been greeted much more enthusiastically than it was had the insured public been on friendlier terms with the local officials of the Ministry of Labour and the Assistance Board.

I am in no doubt that this essay will have left many of my readers unsatisfied, and some highly critical of what I have said. Civil Servants are so often blamed for being right that it is no wonder if they get rather touchy; and those who attack Civil Servants out and out are apt to be so unreasonable that it is profitless to discuss anything with them. My summing up will probably please neither of these groups; but here it is, for what it is worth.

1. The present civil service system was designed to ensure strict integrity and a very high degree of accuracy in the management of public affairs. It does secure both these things, but at a high cost in speed of action and in initiative.

2. The present civil service system, however appropriate for the purposes for which it was designed, is entirely unfitted for the control or operation of productive enterprises or economic services, or for the undertaking of major tasks

Essays in Social Theory

of economic planning — *e.g.* planning for full employment.

3. It will be impracticable, as the range of public economic enterprise is widened, to treat the case of each socialized service *ad hoc*; and it will become necessary to build up a second 'Civil Service' of a predominantly functional character, to undertake the tasks of economic co-ordination and control.

4. The Treasury is entirely unsuitable to act as the controlling agency for this new functional service, or for the economic work of a State which assumes any general responsibility for industrial planning and policy; and it will be necessary for the new functional service to develop a central co-ordinating agency of its own, apart from the Treasury.

5. There ought to be much more interchange between the existing Civil Service and the various branches of the local government service; and in the new functional service there will have to be less security and much more coming and going between public employment and employment under private, or 'mixed', forms of enterprise.

6. In the social branches of the public service, where the public servant is brought into daily and intimate contact with ordinary men and women, improved methods of recruitment and training are urgently needed.

7. Throughout the Civil Service there ought to be greatly enlarged provision for promotion of good men from grade to grade, and for 'post-entry' education through bursaries for further study, refresher courses, and the like.

8. The Civil Service would do well to overhaul its business methods, with a view to improving speed of action and ease of contact between officials in different departments at different levels over matters affecting more than one department.

9. Socialists especially would do well to give their proposals for the reform and development of the public services a prominent place in their propaganda, in order to meet those critics who oppose Socialism on the ground that it means 'bureaucracy'.

XVI

What I Take for Granted

[The following pages are taken from the Introduction to *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post-War World*, which I published in 1947. I reproduce them here almost without change because I want something of the sort to appear in this volume and do not know how to write their substance over again better — or indeed as well.]

IT will be known to some of my readers that I have been for a long time closely connected both with the Socialist movement and with academic life. I have been a University teacher, holding Socialist opinions, but pursuing teaching and writing, and not 'practical politics', as my professional job. I had never stood for Parliament until I consented under pressure to stand for my own University in 1945; and I was much relieved not to be elected. Nor have I ever attempted to become a delegate to the Labour Party Conference, or aspired to the position of a leader in the world of politics, for which I have a temperamental lack of aptitude and taste. I have often expressed strong opinions, and have always dissented energetically from the view -- usually held only in relation to those whose opinions are 'advanced' — that it is improper in a teacher to express his views strongly, or even to be known to have strong views on any political question. I assert my right, as a teacher, to teach what I believe to be the truth, whether other people agree with me or not — but with the proviso that, if I set out to teach, I must never conceal a weakness in my own case or allow myself to be diverted by considerations of political expediency from telling the truth to the best of my ability to see it. To teach on any other terms would be to consent to ply my calling with less than my whole mind, and with less than the best of my mind; and

Essays in Social Theory

how could I hope to be a good teacher if I had to place myself in so false a position with my pupils as to conceal from them a vital part of my thought?

The relation of writer to reader is inevitably less personal than the relation of oral teacher to those with whom he is placed in personal contact. But the need for frankness is no less: it may even be greater, because readers cannot ask questions, and oral learners can. This elementary confession of assumptions is my answer to those who wish to know what are my motives in writing, and along what paths I am attempting to draw them in what I have written down.

(1) *Standards of Living.* I assume that the most universally important of all the objects of political and social activity is to raise the standards of living of ordinary people in our own country and throughout the world (we have a special responsibility for our own country, but an only less immediate responsibility for others), in such a way as to put an end to malnutrition, preventable disease and mortality, illiteracy and ignorance, and sub-human living and working conditions wherever they exist. I assume that no other object can claim any allegiance when it conflicts seriously with this primary object.

(2) *Personal and Political Freedom.* I assume that freedom and self-government are good things, for both individuals and societies, and that it is the business of all good men to oppose tyranny, either of man over man, or of ruling State over subject people. But I cannot state this second assumption in as unequivocal terms as the first, because obviously neither individuals nor societies can be left entirely uncontrolled. There must be a rule of law, for both men and peoples; and all that can be sought is that this rule shall be such as to provide within the social environment the largest amounts of liberty for all men and for all peoples that are consistent with the equal claims of other men and of other peoples. This, however, includes the assumption that self-government is good *in itself*, and that the good constitution is that which gives all the inhabitants

What I Take for Granted

of a country (or of the world) the best chance they are capable of taking to play a real and effective part in government.

(3) *Canons of Social Conduct.* I assume that, whenever a man, or a government, or any group of men or governments, acts in a way that can be defended only on the ground that the action is necessary because of the imperfections of individual, group, or government moral behaviour, the necessity for so acting is to be regarded as a challenge to use all possible efforts to raise the standards of such behaviour, and that no one is ever justified in invoking this defence unless he is using his best endeavours to that end.

(4) *The Duty of Service.* I assume that every person is under an obligation to use his powers, whatever they are, in such a way as not merely to avoid being a burden on society, if he or she can help it, but positively to contribute to social well-being. This implies, for all normal persons, an obligation to do a fair day's work and not to be unduly exacting about the reward, an obligation to develop valuable talents and not to fritter them away, and an obligation to be a good colleague, so as to help instead of hindering the work of others.

(5) *The Right to Go One's Own Way.* I assume that every person has a right, within wide limits, to go his own way and not to be interfered with or badgered about on grounds of nonconformity, as long as he is tolerably fulfilling his obligations as set out in the previous clause. I assume that it takes many sorts (not *all*) to make a good world, and that the only sorts it does not take are those who are either deliberately trying to make a bad one or unprepared to recognize any code of social behaviour resting on the notion of moral rights and duties.

(6) *Morality.* I assume that the simple rules of common morality are valid, and that no one is ever entitled to override a moral rule except in pursuit of a higher moral end falling within (and not beyond) the ambit of common morality. I define these moral rules, for working purposes, as (*a*) a duty to be kind, (*b*) a duty to be tolerant of differences within the

Essays in Social Theory

limits of morality as here defined, (c) a duty to regard every human being as an end and not a means, (d) a duty to deny the validity of, and to resist all claims that are contrary to fundamental human equality of rights, (e) a duty to be active, up to the limit of one's powers, in standing up for the observance of these principles.

(7) *The Brotherhood of Man.* I assume that all men are brothers, and that the only valid reason for hating one's brother is that he is acting against what is good and right, in denial of our fundamental common morality.

(8) *Truth.* I assume that truth is preferable to falsehood, and that it is good to enlarge the realm of truth both by new discovery and by the spreading of existing knowledge. I assume that men are better for being educated in the truth, whether they are happier or not.

(9) *Freedom of Speech.* It follows that I assume the freedom of speech and publication to be good, with the sole restriction that they cannot legitimately be used either (a) to deny fundamental common morality, or (b) to attack toleration and freedom of speech and publication within this sole limit.

(10) *Freedom of Association.* I assume that freedom of association is good, because men cannot enjoy full opportunities of self-government or of discovery of truth unless they are free to join together for common group purposes. I assume that the only limitations on the freedom of association should be identical with those limiting freedom of speech and publication.

(11) *Freedom of Will.* I assume that men enjoy free will, in the sense that their history is not predestined, but made by their own ways of handling the opportunities presented to them in each generation by (a) their physical and traditional environments, and (b) their knowledge and abilities. Accordingly, I assume that the world may get better or worse, as men by their wisdom or stupidity make it better or worse.

(12) *Right and Wrong Vision.* I assume that everyone who acts against these principles is either a scoundrel, or

What I Take for Granted

blind. But, believing real scoundrels to be rare, I assume most of those who offend to be suffering from defective vision. By vision I here mean imagination, especially power to put oneself in the places of others, and to think objectively, setting self-interest apart. No one can do these things wholly; but everyone can try to achieve them if he is given a chance. To give all men the best possible chance is one of the three great purposes of education. The other two are (a) to teach truth, (b) to teach citizenship.

This is not meant to be a complete *credo* of assumptions. It is, however, I hope, enough to make my point of view sufficiently plain. It is not a call to men to act after an impracticably high standard, but only to be always doing what they can to pull up the standards by which they and other men act. I am well aware of the dangers of 'idealistic' behaviour that ignores realities: we are all so often reminded of these dangers nowadays that there is no risk of our forgetting them. I wish rather to stress the danger of acting without any moral standards at all. The attempt to be realistically amoral is nonsensical. A man cannot be realistic in political or social matters except in relation to an end, and that end cannot be devoid of moral content. It may be a bad end, or a good one: it cannot be merely neutral. The cant which suggests that one can set out to be 'scientific' instead of being moral is based on sheer muddled thinking. One can set out to be scientific *and* moral, or scientific and immoral; but the realm of science is that of means, not of ends. Ends are essentially moral. The outlook for the world would not be any the less good, or bad, if it could be predicted scientifically.

I have written all this down in as simple language as I can because I want there to be no mistake about the side I am on. I am on the side of the common people, in the sense that I want *all* men to have an equal chance of the good life and of living it in the ways that suit them best. This does not mean that I want all men to have everything the majority of them would vote for now, if they were asked. I do not stand for that kind of democracy. I want people to have

Essays in Social Theory

good nutrition, good housing, good education, good working conditions, freedom of speech, writing and association, self-government, peaceful relations with their neighbours, sound moral notions, whether they would vote for having them or not. To this extent, but no further, I am prepared to assert that I know better what is good for people than many of them can know for themselves, being less well informed and more held in mental subjection. By the democracy I stand for I mean making the people really free and self-governing, not the votes they record when they are neither. Voting is merely a handy device: it is not to be identified with democracy, which is a mental and moral relation of man to man.

I am, in effect, a Socialist. By Socialism I mean fundamentally, not a particular economic arrangement by which the State owns and runs industry, but the entire body of principles I have set out on the foregoing propositions. The public ownership of the essential means of production follows from these principles, at the present stage of social evolution, at any rate in the more advanced countries. It is a means towards making them effective, not an end in itself, or to be pursued save to the extent to which it is a means. There is nothing sacred about socialization; but can we find, for the main industries and services, any alternative way of ensuring that they shall be used to serve the ends here postulated? Without a high degree of economic equality, we cannot have either freedom and self-government for all, or a satisfactory standard of living for all. At any rate, that is my view: why it is so, I have done my best to make clear in my writings. I may be wrong about this; for about means one may at any time be wrong. But I am not wrong about the ends I have laid down as good. They *are* good, in a thoroughly and finally objective sense. They are good, not merely for us, at the present point in historical development, and not merely in relation to the particular pattern of living which our civilization has worked out. They are good altogether and *for good*, from the moment of their conception in any man's mind. Their goodness can-

What I Take for Granted

not be altered, though its implications can be broadened and deepened, as a consequence of anything that may happen to mankind. They are as true in the 'atomic' as in the 'pre-atomic' era; and they will be no less true in a hundred or a thousand years than they are to-day. Anyone who denies their truth is blind, or mad, or wicked, or at least purblind. They are the postulates from which I set out; and I am not arguing with anyone who denies them: I am simply telling him.

NOTE

SOME of the studies included in this volume have been published previously, though most of them appear here in an altered form. Thus 'Sociology and Politics in the Twentieth Century' was originally published in *Politics and Letters* in 1947, 'The Teaching of Social Studies in British Universities' appeared in the *Universities Quarterly* in 1948, 'Democracy Face to Face with Hugeness' was first published as a Supplement to *The Christian News-Letter* in 1941, 'Reform in the Civil Service' is based on a lecture given to the Fabian Society in December 1943 and subsequently reprinted in a collected volume of Fabian lectures, *Can Planning be Democratic?*, published in 1944. 'An Essay on Social Morality', 'The Essentials of Democracy', and 'The Claims of Nationality' are redrafted from chapters in my book *Europe, Russia, and the Future*, first published by Victor Gollancz in 1941. In addition to my Inaugural Lecture as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford, reprinted by kind permission of the Clarendon Press, four other essays are based on public lectures delivered at various times in the University. These are 'Rousseau's Political Theory', 'The Rights of Man', 'Auguste Comte', and 'The Communist Manifesto of 1848'. None of these four has been previously published. 'The Aims of Education' was originally written in 1942 for the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey and was privately circulated but has not hitherto been published. The two remaining essays — 'Western Civilization and the Rights of the Individual' and 'Ideals and Beliefs of the Victorians' — are based on broadcast talks given in 1948. Finally, the *Credo*, here called 'What I Take for Granted', is reprinted from the General Introduction to *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post-War World*, first published in 1947.

THE END

