DR. SÁNDOR GIESSWEIN

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

EURÓPA A JÖVÖNK EGYESÜLET

sallux
ECPP FOUNDATION

DR. SÁNDOR GIESSWEIN

SOCIAL PROBLEMS
AND
THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

DR. SÁNDOR GIESSWEIN

SOCIAL PROBLEMS
AND
THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Responsible publisher:
Európa a jövőnk Egyesület
Europe Is Our Future

Main partner:
Sallux Foundation

2025

Source edition:
Giesswein Sándor
Társadalmi problémák és keresztény világnézet. Budapest,
Szent István Kiadó, 1907

ISBN 978-615-02-5650-4

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL IDEA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the time of Saint Stephen, our country, Hungary, chose Western Christianity and, with it, Europe. We, at Europe Is Our Future, together with our European partner Sallux, are working to ensure that this choice continues in the 21st century as well. We wish to take part in the creation of a better Europe, and we firmly believe that a just society, an independent, livable, and proud Hungary can only be built in a country that is prospering in every respect, including its spiritual foundations. We are convinced that socially sensitive political ideas based on Christian principles still have a rightful place under the sun in the 21st century.

Just as Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum novarum at the end of the 19th century marked the serious emergence of Christian social principles and politics, we believe that the election of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV may bring about a similar revival, creating a modern and renewed political direction.

These principles ensure that, within a social market economy, Hungarian and European citizens have access — without discrimination — to education, healthcare, and culture. This is the world we believe in: a just and fair world in which every citizen, regardless of gender or political affiliation, can exercise the rights guaranteed by democracy — freedom of speech, assembly, and the press — where equality of opportunity knows no bounds, and where no one is left behind.

The most outstanding figure of Christian social thought in Hungary is Sándor Giesswein, whose ancestors came to Hungary from Alsace during the reign of Maria Theresa. After theological studies in Vienna and Budapest, he was ordained a priest in 1878. His political career began in 1898, and from 1904 he served as president of the Federation of Christian Social Associations. As a candidate of the Catholic People's Party, he won a parliamentary mandate in 1905 and represented his constituents in the Hungarian National Assembly for nearly twenty years. We considered it important to republish his comprehensive work Social Problems and the Christian Worldview, in order to rescue it from the somewhat forgotten status that it has undeservedly suffered. At the same time, we have prepared the English-language edition as well, since through Sallux, a European Christian think tank, it can make widely known the fact that outstanding personalities who pursued politics on Christian foundations did not exist only in the West. In this way, we too can connect to the 21st-century circulation of this system of ideas.

So be it!

Dr. Koloman Brenner
President of the Europe Is Our Future

With fraternal affection and respect to the members of the Hungarian House of Representatives,

dedicated by

the author

PREFACE

The ruling planet of ideas in our era is the social question. It is what preoccupies, above all, the philosopher and the scholar, the politician and the statesman, the artist and the writer today. We look for social implications in scientific works, in drama and novels, in the creations of painters and sculptors, and equally in the moments of everyday life.

And if this question sometimes presents itself to us in a combative form, and if, in response, others call for social peace, we must not forget that the social question, with its thousand kaleidoscopic variations, is at heart the great problem of justice. The much-desired social peace can — and must — be created through social justice.

It was chiefly this completely objective viewpoint that guided me in writing this work, for I had no other aim than to point to the great role that ideal currents are called upon to play in the present transformative crisis of our economic and political life. Amid the clash of the modern economic and political world, two banners increasingly gather the various groups engaged in the struggle, and ever more these two watchwords squeeze out the rest: *materialism and idealism.* The former, rejecting every ideal aspiration, counts only material factors in the process of development, and consigns the concepts of religion, homeland, virtue, and so on to the realm of outdated things fit only for museum preservation; the latter sees the spread and development of general prosperity and culture as inseparable from these immortal ideas.

And if we wish noble idealism to triumph for the good of humanity and culture, we must ensure that ideals do not remain empty slogans but become the driving springs and guiding forces of our civic and political life.

Budapest, 27 May 1907

The Author.

INTRODUCTION

In social life, just as in the Earth's atmosphere, there is never complete calm. Even if the lower layers of our atmosphere appear tranquil, those long-drawn cloud formations, woven as it were from tangled, criss-crossing threads in the midst of the bluish sky, show an ongoing fierce struggle of opposing currents up above.

Social life, too, is never lacking in clashes between opposing currents of ideas and interests, and the attentive observer, even amid the seeming calm of the present, can sense where the future storm will raise higher waves.

The social life of our age, however, can least of all be called tranquil; mighty currents of ideas and interests stand opposed to one another, which, if they collide head-on, may unleash a raging and destructive storm capable of setting back our cultural development — one of the prides of our age — by a considerable degree.

This is the motive that brings the social question above all others into the foreground today. All signs indicate that Europe is entering a new phase of development in the economic and social spheres, and that the shape of the future depends on the encounter of opposing currents: if they strike one another with full force, they give birth to a subversive whirlwind whose traces are marked by trunks snapped in half and ruins; if they meet obliquely, they become a refreshing breeze that stirs up blessing-bearing clouds and, with its invigorating ozone, brings into nature a life-awakening power.

There is, however, one great difference between the processes of natural and social transformation and equilibration. In the former, human beings usually take part only as mere spectators, for they cannot change the direction of the winds, perhaps being able to slightly disperse the cloud of a hailstorm at best. But in the guidance of social currents, human beings themselves appear as active forces. This is acknowledged in practice even by those who otherwise, in theory, teach that social development proceeds with the necessity of natural law according to the processes of economic life. For if every social movement, like some mechanical process or even a biological development, were to arise, continue, and conclude under the sole dominion of natural laws, then all agitation, persuasion, and argument, all effort and organization, would be entirely superfluous.

Indeed, if every social movement were fundamentally nothing more than a projection of economic development, then no one could speak of freedom, equality, fraternity, or love of country, of fidelity to principles, readiness for sacrifice, and so on; for then the sole driving force in society would remain only more or less concealed self-interest, and this alone could be recognized as a justified and legitimate social factor, whether it appeared in purely individual form or as a class interest serving the common aims of a group.

If this were the case, then of course there could be no talk of the social tasks and influence of Christianity. Yet it is not only we who speak of this, but also those who, adopting the standpoint of historical materialism, declare war on the Christian worldview and seek to present it, at least in its present form, as antisocial.

In the struggle that the modern schools of economic policy have launched against the Christian worldview and outlook, we can observe a peculiar phenomenon—one that may otherwise be noticed among other attackers of Christian truth as well—namely, that precisely the most contradictory accusations are brought against Christianity: while, for example, a Protestant writer, proceeding from the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, claims that an inner affinity exists between Catholicism and socialism, [1] from another side our Social Democratic leaders portray Christianity as the greatest enemy of socialism, as though it were the codifier and maintainer of every social injustice, or, according to Liebknecht, the religion of private property and the ruling classes.[2]

One reason for this opposing assessment is that the truth which follows the middle way lies equally far from both the extreme right and the extreme left; and just as the sober and frugal person appears, in the eyes of the spendthrift and reveller, as a miserly philistine, while in the eyes of the tight-fisted and selfish as a squanderer, so a social doctrine permeated by the spirit of Christianity appears, from the liberal individualist point of view, to incline toward socialism, while it seems individualistic when seen through the spectacles of absolute socialism, namely social democracy. At the sight of this phenomenon, we are almost reminded of those words from the Acts of the Apostles with which the Jews addressed Paul, asking him for clarification concerning Christian teaching, for, as they

1 **P. Heinrich:** *Die sociale Befähigung der Kirche*. Berlin, 1891. 147.

2 **Peabody:** *Jesus Christus und die sociale Frage*. Giessen, 1903. 17.

said, „we know that this sect is spoken against everywhere."[1]

And nothing confirms better than this circumstance that the Christian worldview here also proceeds along the only correct middle path. For on the one hand, it is far removed from that absolute individualism which completely detaches the individual from society and makes him, so to speak, the centre of social life—an individualistic worldview whose most consistent exponents were Max Stirner and Nietzsche . But on the other hand, the Christian conception of society must not be confused with extreme socialism, which turns society into a Moloch that devours individuality. From both of these extremes the Christian view stands apart, and its simplest, most pointed expression—surpassing all human wisdom—is found in this chief commandment, which is at the same time the fundamental teaching of Christian sociology: *"Love your neighbour as yourself."* With unsurpassable simplicity, this expresses the basic condition for the balance of social order, namely that neither may the individual place himself above society (absolute individualism), nor may society absorb and swallow up individuality (absolute socialism).

But a certain lack of clarity also plays a role in the false assessment of Christianity's social significance—and this not only among its opponents, but even among its well-intentioned friends. From both sides, things are often presented as postulates or results of Christianity which, strictly speaking, do not belong to Christianity at all—things without which the Catholic Church has existed and can exist, and which have no connection whatsoever either with its teaching or with its hierarchical organization. And it happens time and again that those who wish to exalt the Church from this point of view, and attribute to it merits that do not properly belong within its sphere of competence, thereby place weapons in the hands of others to wage war against the Church on economic grounds.

We must never forget the words of the Gospel, that pearls are not to be cast before swine. Time and again the misunderstanding of Christian truth — of this exalted truth that far surpasses all human wisdom — arises from the fact that it has been thrown into the dirty arena of class interests. Christian truth stands above all class struggle and all interests; like a star in the heavens it shines and glitters in purity, even when a veil of mist obscures its rays from our eyes, and upon the sea of life it gives direction equally to all — whether one sails toward one's harbour, one's appointed goal, on a richly laden ship or rows there in a small skiff.

1 Acts 28

CHAPTER I
NATIONAL ECONOMY AND ETHICS

The social organization and stratification of peoples are undoubtedly closely connected with the economic order and mode of production prevailing among them, which in turn depend on soil and climatic conditions, cultural attainment, racial character, and perhaps above all on population density; for the more people the same land has to feed, the more intensive a form of economic system must be developed there.

The gradual sequence of economic systems is usually illustrated by the following order: *(a)* fishing and hunting, *(b)* animal husbandry, *(c)* agriculture, *(d)* industrial production — first in the form of handicraft, and later as machine-driven industry. These economic stages, of course, are not to be understood in an exclusive sense, nor should they be regarded as a general norm. For industry, at least in the form of domestic craft, can be found even among the most primitive peoples; on the other hand, there has hitherto been no people—and even in future development there will scarcely be one—that occupies itself exclusively with industry alone, while agriculture, for its part, cannot exist without animal husbandry.

These stages of development therefore refer rather only to the type of occupation that provides sustenance for the greatest part of the tribe or people. Thus, this gradualness is not so much to be regarded as the result of a natural process, nor does it express a universal rule; rather, it serves to illustrate which form of occupation enables the same land to feed the greatest possible number of people.

Tribes engaged in fishing and hunting must range over vast territories in order to procure the nourishment necessary for survival; otherwise the complaint soon arises that there are many Eskimos but few seals.

Pastoral nomadic peoples can confine themselves within relatively narrower limits, although even among them no genuine settlement or delimitation of landed property can arise. Agriculture is the occupation that binds people, as it were, to the soil, because the land demands constant labour if it is to provide nourishment. Permanent settlements therefore occur among peoples who know and practice agriculture. All this creates more orderly social conditions and ensures the sustenance of a larger population.

More highly developed industry and commerce, such as already exist-

ed, for example, in medieval towns, bring together greater numbers of workers; on the one hand they again make people freer in their relation to the land, introduce a certain movement of migration among them, and group them into centres of production or mediation. As a result, industrial occupations are able to provide for even larger numbers of people within the same place.

Consequently, the densification of population inevitably compels people to turn increasingly toward those more intensive forms of economy that secure the nourishment of more individuals. On the other hand, however, we must not forget the dependent relationship and close connection of the more developed and more intensive modes of production to the preceding ones. Agriculture does not displace animal husbandry but rather develops it; industry does not displace agriculture, but rather provides it with markets, perfects its tools, and imparts new momentum to it. The various kinds of productive methods therefore do not operate in a mutually exclusive manner; on the contrary, each is the preparatory condition for the other and in turn furthers its development.

But there is no doubt that in the process of development through which peoples more or less all pass — when they move from one mode of production to another, or more accurately, when alongside the predominance of one they acquire the more intensive cultivation of another — certain critical conditions occur.

There are, indeed, those who invoke the old saying: *Non datur saltus in natura* – there is no leap in nature and wish to literally apply this to historical development as well. But human life itself contradicts this. Here, too, all development does indeed build layer upon layer, yet the process that leads from cradle to grave is not a path measured out by an even descent and canal-like straightness; rather, this course resembles the winding and varied movement of a flowing river; it must often force its way through rocks, and there is no lack of cataracts and falls attended by jolts and shocks, where roaring, foaming waves hurry toward their goal with catastrophic thunder. Changes in the social milieu also produce perceptible jolts in the life of the individual, moments in which one must break with old relations and adapt to new ones. All this is accomplished not only by the bodily organism but involves the struggle of the soul as well.

To turn children into cultural beings, they are taken from the home, from the undivided sphere of the mother, and brought to school. They find themselves in a new milieu; their free movement is hindered by new, hitherto unknown constraints, which in the first days draw bitter tears

from the eyes of many a child, until they grow accustomed to the new conditions and the soul's thirst for knowledge and noble striving find ample compensation in these previously unknown goods, in place of those they had to renounce.

Perhaps even more keenly felt is the jolt brought by adolescence with the development of the bodily organism — a phase which, alongside the poetry of the teenage years, conceals much inner struggle. It is a developmental process that takes place at a faster-than-usual tempo, during which the soul can scarcely absorb the impressions of a new world hitherto unknown to it, while at the same time taking leave of the familiar and cherished things of the past. This is the struggle of the child's and youth's soul, in which the desire for the new seeks to drive it forward with ever quicker steps, while attachment to the accustomed seeks to hold it back. In short, this is the period in which the principle of progress and the principle of conservatism—both of which lie within human nature—fight their first battle.

Further jolts in human life are represented by leaving the family circle, choosing a profession, founding a family; all these lead a person into a new social milieu, tear them away from old things, and cast them into relationships not previously known. And the formation of all these does not arise and take shape merely from the development of the bodily organism but receives its wholesome and beneficial direction from the moderating and guiding power of the soul.

It is commonly said today, especially with regard to the jolt brought by adolescence, that *nature should simply be allowed to run its course.* But this one-sided conception of nature, erroneous when applied to the human being, has countless victims. Many a grave mound covers such a "spent" nature, and still more numerous are the prematurely aged youths and ruined existences who walk among us—the pitiable products of so-called natural excess. They have fallen victim to the false assumption that the bonds and relations of human life are determined solely by the physical constitution of the body; that they failed to recognize the commanding voice and inexorable rule of the moral law and thus lost the balance of their soul and character.

The phenomena that manifest themselves in the life of the individual can likewise be observed in the groupings of human beings. For tribes, peoples, and every social formation in general derive from combined human forces, and therefore must, in broad terms, pass through similar phases and stand under the influence of similar laws.

For this reason, the process of social evolution cannot stand under the dominion of economic requirements alone. The initial impulse that leads peoples to turn to other means of livelihood lies in economic conditions: the quality of the soil, the quantity of produce spontaneously offered by nature, the number of working hands and hungry stomachs determine and, as it were, prescribe the direction in which emerging needs must be satisfied. But it is always human beings who actually perform the work, for machines, just like beasts of burden, are merely instruments of labour; and therefore, in the shaping of social order, it is not only the stomach that demands its rights, but the moral sense of the human being—the ethical principle—also seeks its satisfaction.

This is acknowledged in practice even by those who deny it in theory. I mean the adherents of historical materialism, the social democrats and the so-called armchair socialists, who on the one hand regard every moral principle solely as a reflex of economic conditions — an ideology, as they call it, that is, a figment lacking any real foundation — yet alongside this nevertheless demand justice above all and beyond all else in social organization, and proclaim a struggle against everything they deem to be social injustice or deprivation of rights.

All those slogans that make up the armoury of social democracy—such as the exploitation of the working class, wage slavery, crying abuses or unjust treatment, the confiscation of popular rights, and so forth—are in fact ethical critiques, moral judgements, which have meaning and legitimacy only insofar as there exists an eternal moral law, independent of human beings and standing above economic conditions. For if there is no moral law, if we accept the thesis of the liberal-social legal scholar A. Menger that power, law, and morality are concepts that coincide—if, that is, the source of law lies in human arbitrariness and economic conditions—then one cannot appeal to the demands of justice; for then justice and right are whatever power, whether in the hands of one or of the multitude, dictates and commands, as Thrasymachus already maintained in Plato's famous dialogue, asserting that what is just is that which best accords with the interests of the stronger.

For this reason, even the Italian socialist A. Loria acknowledges that in economic formations moral evaluation still possesses outstanding significance, and for this reason he places before social development the following maxim as its guiding motto: ***Verso la Giustizia sociale*** – toward social justice.[1]

---

1 **A. Loria**, *Verso la Giustizia sociale*, p. 13 – *„Il giudizio morale sulle singole forme economiche conserva pur sempre un eminente valore."*

Therefore it is correctly pointed out by the excellent representative of modern physiocracy, Henry George: *"If our inquiry into the cause which makes low wages and pauperism the accompaniments of material progress has led us to a correct conclusion, it will bear translation from terms of political economy into terms of ethics, and as the source of social evils show a wrong."*[1]

And for the same reason H. George carries his investigations over into the realm of ethics, proceeding from the principle that *the law of social life derives from the great moral fundamental law of justice.*[2]

Justice is neither a mathematical nor a political-economic proposition, but a moral concept; and therefore, whoever wishes to bring justice into social life must not separate it from ethics.

From this it also becomes clear in what sense we wish to bring Christianity into connection with political economy: as far as we regard it as the purest expression of ethics. Neither ethical doctrines nor Christianity have created or do create economic systems; but in order that not only crude egoism may find satisfaction in the sphere of political economy, purified moral concepts are indispensable.

Whoever studies the Old Testament from the standpoint of social policy may discover new wonders there: institutions and norms of social organization which, in relation to the economic and cultural conditions of their time, always seek to secure the triumph of social justice. The Mosaic Law contains regulations extending to the smallest details for the protection of the weak and for the prevention of the excesses of capitalism. And the brazen voice of the prophets never thundered more fearsomely than when they scourged the oppressors of the poor and parasitic existences.

Social justice is manifested in no literary monument of antiquity with such inexorable decisiveness, such circumspect wisdom, and such divine power as in the law code of the Old Testament and in its prophets.[3]

What the Law and the Prophets were, from the particularistic and preparatory standpoint of the Old Testament, the **Gospel** is for us from the universal human standpoint.

---

1 **Henry George**, *Progress and Poverty*, Volume VII, Chapter 1.

2 Loc. cit., *Preface.*

3 See **Fidao**, *Le Droit des Humbles*. Paris, 1904 and **Walter**, *Volkswirtschaftliche Tätigkeit der Propheten.*

The new law — the law of freedom and love — by its very nature does not move within the narrower confines of Jewish law. It cannot contain principles of political economy that vary greatly according to the circumstances of place and time, so that what was equitable and just under certain conditions may at another time become inequitable and unjust. But it does contain the fundamental principles of eternal justice, which may not be disregarded in the practical application of any economic system whatsoever.

Christianity, therefore, has not created and does not create, has not maintained and does not maintain, any economic system; it is itself independent of them all, just as it is independent of forms of secular government. But it does indeed introduce, and must introduce, the principles of justice into every individual economic system that circumstances of place and time bring into being.

This is its indisputable task and vocation, which it has fulfilled in the past for the benefit of peoples; and if it is prevented from fulfilling this task, which occurs to the detriment of peoples and of progress. Accordingly, it is a false assumption, asserted without any scientific foundation, that feudalism was created by the Church, or at least maintained by it, or even that feudalism is the favoured economic system of the Catholic conception. The Catholic Church no more created a feudal system than it created a communist or collectivist society. Feudalism was created by those social conditions that arose from the cultural and economic situation of the semi-barbarian peoples who stepped into the inheritance of the disintegrating **Roman Empire** . And it cost the Church much struggle to bring the principles of social justice to victory against the arbitrary domination and arrogance of barbaric primal force. In this sense, Christianity does have — and the Church does have — a social mission.

The Kingdom of Christ — as He Himself said — is not of this world; it is not its vocation to shape and maintain forms of government or economic systems, but it is indeed its vocation to declare what is true and what justice demands.

The ethical foundation, whose purest expression Christianity provides, is most needed in the life of nations precisely in critical, transitional periods. The history of the Hungarian nation sufficiently bears this out as well. For our nation it was a matter of existence, when it settled here in the middle of Europe, that it undergoes a social transformation appropriate to the conditions of place and time. There was no room here for a people overflowing with mere belligerence. And the spiritual strength

and moral impulse necessary for a healthy transformation were provided to it by Christianity. Raw power and swelling force may have been present to a greater degree among the predecessors of the conquering Hungarians—the Huns and Avars—but since they lacked that moral force which could have given the impulse for their social transformation, they vanished from the map of Europe and from the stage of history, disappearing without a trace, as if they had never been here at all.

Whoever observes with alert eyes the cultural and especially the social conditions of our age cannot fail to notice that wherever the winds of Western civilization blow, there the fermenting seeds of a transforming social movement are present. There is no doubt that in the process of our social development we are approaching a cataract, a waterfall — indeed, to a greater or lesser extent we are already within its rushing course. Whoever does not see this is playing blindman's buff with the demands of the age or learning wisdom from the ostrich.

At present we are in a social transformation similar to that in which the peoples of Europe found themselves after the fall of the Roman Empire**,** or — though on a smaller scale — after the discovery of America , or again with the advance of machine labour. The present social movement is, by its nature, a consequence of the former, though in certain respects also a reaction to its first result. That first result was the exclusive dominance of the capitalist mode of production, against which today the democratic form of a socializing mode of production seeks to assert itself.

From a general ethical standpoint this tendency can only be appreciated and approved, as far as it rests upon the principles of social justice . However, we must not overlook here the highly significant words of L. Stein that socialism must either be placed on an ethical foundation or cease to exist. It represents progress only if it is permeated by religious ideas and moral thought.[1] Our social movement is indeed set in motion by economic and demographic conditions, but its compass must be provided by ethical principles; and among these we unquestionably include the demand that the hungry receive food — not only out of charity and compassion, but as a matter of justice. Yet by this the demands of justice are not fulfilled in their entirety, for man does not live by bread alone.

---

1 **Stein**, *Die soziale Frage im Lichte der Phllosophie,*12.:
"Socialism must undergo an ethical–religious turn if it wishes to accomplish a genuine cultural task… In a word: socialism must be permeated by religious (not ecclesiastical-dogmatic) ideas and imbued with moral thought if, in the light of philosophy, it is to signify progress; it will be ethical, or it will not be at all."

And it is here that Christianity must intervene, from above as well as from below. It must place the ethical foundation vividly before the eyes of everyone, whether one sits at the summit of power or is a child of the great masses. For in truth everyone ought to weigh those words spoken by the truly objective-minded Neapolitan professor, Chiapelli, when he says the following:

"I do not know, nor do I dare to assert, what the future social formation will be like. But I do assert that if the present agitation of the so-called proletariat is not elevated and guided in a noble, broad-minded, and genuinely humane spirit (in which respect the more educated individuals and the leading classes themselves could do much in a thousand ways), and if the social spirit is not fostered and cultivated in general, but on the contrary the seed of political rebirth which it bears within itself is stifled—on the one hand by abandoning the workers entirely to that natural instinct which urges them toward violent retaliation, and on the other hand by applying against them nothing but the cruel measures of reaction and repression—then indeed I assert, and I dare to prophesy, that we are heading toward one of the darkest periods of history, or at least that for humanity the advent of a future socially better than the present will be postponed far into the distance." [1]

Thus speaks Chiapelli. And to his words we wish only to add that our economic conditions are preparing and bringing about social transformation. Whether this can take place without such convulsions as bury nations and lay countries in ruins depends on whether those nations are able to grasp the social idea in its true justice, and whether they possess the ethical strength to apply the principles of justice to modern social and economic conditions and to make them prevail. If they do, then despite all the inevitable smaller and greater jolts, these nations will row into the waters of political regeneration and social development; if they do not—if the upper and lower strata, lacking a sense of social justice and socio-political wisdom, abandon themselves to their savage instincts—then, with the shipwreck of general culture, a new and violent absolutism, whether of the masses or of individuals, is to be expected, which would at the same time jeopardize the continued existence of independent national life. For one thing is, beyond all doubt, certain from the whole course of history: the people that does not fulfill its social task grows weak and perishes, just as it is also certain that social tasks in the direction of progress can be fulfilled only on an ethical foundation.

---

1 **A. Chiapelli,** *El Socialismo y el Pensamiento moderno. Trad. Migiiel Domengue y Mir.* Barcelona, 1906. I. 16.

CHAPTER II
THE TWO PRINCIPAL DIRECTIONS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Historical materialism conceives the whole of social life as the product of economic development alone, in such a way that every social institution—religion, law, customs, culture, state governance — depends exclusively on the economic order; this is the sole driving force, while ideas, the so-called ideologies, are merely epiphenomena, external coverings of that process which takes place in the name and in the interest of self-preservation and the preservation of the species.

And although no one denies, nor can deny, that life itself is the fundamental condition of all things ideal — of religion, morality, law, and so forth — for where there is no living human being, or where human beings were to renounce existence, the realization and outward manifestation of ideas would dissolve along with human existence — at least here on this earthly planet — yet these ideas must not be regarded merely as subjective matters and as mere instruments. Just as mathematical truths remain true and unassailable whether or not there exists a human being or any other living creature to perceive and apply them, so religious and moral truths and fundamental principles possess an objective reality independent of human beings.

Indeed, even under the most primitive social conditions, the sole aim of human activity is not constituted by self-preservation and the preservation of the species. They do not exhaust the mission of the human being and of society. On the contrary, they very often appear as means for the attainment of a higher goal. We can see that both the individual person and society itself become all the more perfected the less they are compelled to devote their strength and time exclusively to animal functions. The greater the proportion of social forces consumed by self-preservation and the preservation of the species, the lower the level of culture on which that society remains; and the greater the portion that a society is able to devote to work of ideal value, the higher the culture it develops. Naturally, in the absence of favourable conditions for self-preservation and reproduction, culture cannot develop, for then human beings must devote all their strength precisely to the struggle against an unfavourable milieu . Therefore, under entirely adverse economic conditions, more advanced culture cannot arise, although favourable conditions in themselves still do not create culture as such; conversely, intellectual culture enhances and promotes economic advancement and progress.

Accordingly, the economic and the cultural moments stand in a certain reciprocity and correlation with one another, and together they constitute the social organization of peoples.

The economic moment, in this sense, as a fundamental factor, is highly significant, and is a factor that directs, and at times limits or hinders, development in social life.

Within the development of social and economic life, we repeatedly encounter points of collision between two opposing currents: the general social tendency and the partial, that is, the individualistic tendency. Economic organization, in this respect, displays a certain wave-like movement, whose peaks and troughs naturally fall at quite different times in different societies.

The strongly social economic and political organization of the Roman respublica declines, and in its place arise, in the economic sphere, slave-holding latifundial agriculture, and in the political sphere the absolutism of the Empire. The states of Western Europe emerging from barbarism in the Middle Ages once again set the social tendency in motion, which was then replaced by the individualistic current of the Renaissance and the Reformation, bringing with it economic capitalism and political absolutism.

Yet these two currents have never been as sharply opposed as they are today, nor have they ever divided society into two camps as profoundly as in our own time. For today the question is no longer how these two currents might be fitted to one another, but which of them will overpower the other. On one side stands absolute socialism, on the other absolute individualism; neither is willing to compromise with the other or to seek a state of balance. The reason for this lies in the fact that, on the one hand, society (or the state), and on the other the individual, are regarded as ends in themselves, as autonomous, independent of every other law, and are proclaimed the absolute source of right and justice—in short, they are deified. Two powers stand opposed to one another: here the idea of a deified humanity, Comte's Être suprême; there the deified human being, Fichte's great Ego. These two now seem to be gathering all their strength to rush at one another in a life-and-death struggle until the adversary is destroyed.

The question is whether there is not a way to reconcile them, to grant each its own legitimate claims, and thus, reconciled, to induce them to work together for the good of humanity and of the human person.

In order to answer this question, let us examine the forces and tactics of the two adversaries.

a) Individualism in Philosophy and Economics

The most beautiful dreams of youth includes that period when a person awakens to consciousness of his own self, of his personal worth, and directs his highest aspirations toward the creation of an independent existence. Even the loving care of parents can then become a burden to him, for in it he now sees chiefly the restriction of guardianship. And if this striving does not overstep the bounds of sober moderation, it can become the source of many noble resolutions and deeds.

In the sphere of Western civilization, this energetic period for peoples begins with the age of the *Rinascimento*, which on the one hand awakened national consciousness, and on the other developed a nobler form of individualism.

Dante still called the resonant language of Tuscany a lingua vulgaris, a common tongue, yet he handled it with such perfection that in formal beauty he equalled his classical masters and surpassed them in the depth of ideas.

And the nations saw that beauty and nobility could be conceived and expressed in the language of the people as well.

And Christianity directed the emergence of individuality into a noble channel by accustoming humankind to an entirely new standard: in place of the martial spirit and knightly virtues it introduced the valuation of the soul and raised the dignity and freedom of the human soul to a height previously unimagined. Only as the image of God and the object of Redemption did the human soul truly become a microcosm. Thus, Christianity created individualism without egoism. And this strengthened sense of individuality gave rise to the great creative spirits who appeared at the dawn of the modern age—the Raphaels, the Michelangelos—though alongside them we also see the more unbridled types of self-importance, in the Machiavellis, the Medici family, and the Reformers.

Finally, the individualistic tendency in its boundless form is represented by those who profess as their own the axiom of Louis XIV: *L'Etat, c'est moi.* This is no longer so much self-awareness as self-idolatry. The art and antique nobility of the Renaissance pass over into the affectation of the Rococo and Baroque, with which they frequently conceal the noble

soaring of heaven-striving Gothic.

In the realm of philosophy, Descartes made individualism the foundation of his system. *Cogito ergo sum* — this is the basis of his philosophy, and by it he made the self the point of departure, viewing the universe in the reflection of the ego.

And what Hume, Locke, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel further developed in this direction — the deification of the self — was carried to its climax in the nineteenth century by two audacious and eccentric minds, with an inexorable consistency that concurrently bears the stamp of absurdity.

One of them is Max Stirner, a much buffeted but little regarded personality in his own lifetime, whose work *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* at first raised little dust. The summary of his doctrine is given by the following words: *"Everything that is in no way mine must be removed! I am my own concern, and I am neither bad nor good. Neither has any meaning for me. The divine is God's concern, the human is man's concern. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, neither the true, the good, the free, nor the just, but only my own—which is not general, but unique, because I am unique. Above myself there is nothing."*

And the other is Nietzsche, the Antichrist of the last century, who in his Übermensch, as the culmination of human perfection, glorifies those heroes who live only for themselves and rise ever higher by trampling down as much inferior human material as possible. The whole work of history — so he maintains — is concentrated in a few great men; in them it has reached its goal, and the entire historical process counts only as far as it provides the means and strength for such men to assert themselves. Therefore, it is wrong to speak much of historical development because it merely consumes our strength and agitates the great masses. The great mass of humanity is only an instrument or an obstacle; as for the rest, let the d...l and statistics take them. Society is merely a substructure and scaffolding for exalted beings who form the aristocracy of humanity, just as the great climbing plant of Java clings to the oak in order to rise above it with its crown and, striving toward the light, display its glory on high.[1] This is nothing other than the glorification of parasitism; it is no longer merely egoism, but egocentrism.

These principles were transferred into the sphere of political economy by

1 Jenseits von Gut und Böse. 258. Aphor.

Quesnay (1694–1774), the father of physiocracy. According to his individualistic conception, human beings are by nature entitled to use all their abilities in order to secure for themselves the greatest possible advantage.

The complete freedom of competition (la concurrence libre et immense) that he demands recognizes no other limitation than well-understood self-interest (intérêt bien entendu).

Adam Smith (1723–1790), the founder of the so-called classical school of political economy, went even further. In his view, the driving forces of the entire economic life are the so-called selfish passions. These need only be allowed to play freely, and of their own accord, quite naturally, they will lead to the optimal distribution of earthly goods and will cause no harm even if every other consideration is disregarded and no altruistic goodwill whatsoever is shown. In this way it was in fact Adam Smith who completely separated political economy from moral philosophy and opened the gates wide to undisguised egoism.

These were the principles that the legislation of the French Revolution codified as the fundamental ideas of economic liberalism. And with regard to this liberalism Lacordaire very aptly remarked: *„La liberté du fort c'est l'oppression du faible"* (the liberty of the strong is the oppression of the weak).

Every theory is tested by its practical application, and how mistaken this theory was demonstrated within a brief time by its practical consequences. For the demands of freedom put forward by this liberalism can be summarized in economic terms as follows:

a) Free land, that is, everyone may do with his land whatever he wishes, using it in whatever way he deems most advantageous for his individual purposes.

b) Free industry and free labour: everyone may work wherever and however he wishes; wages are regulated solely by supply and demand; no one — neither the state nor any other body — has anything to do with determining working hours or working conditions. All this belongs to the sphere of free agreement between employer and worker, and if there is a worker willing to accept employment under less favourable conditions, no one may forbid him from doing so.

c) Free trade and free interest rates: free competition is the sole regulator of trade; everyone sells his goods as best he can, and if instead of genui-

ne goods he puts counterfeit ones into circulation and the buyer does not complain, then again it is no one's concern. Likewise, money may be lent at whatever rate of interest it can command, and if there is someone willing to pay a high rate, this is to be regarded as a purely private matter.

Although the injustice of these propositions is not difficult to recognize, the utilitarian morality of so-called positive sociology nevertheless fully approves them. Thus, for example, Herbert Spencer, in the work in which he discusses the relationship of the individual to society (The Man versus the State), rejects all state intervention aimed at enforcing the demands of social justice, on the basis of Darwin's theory. For — so he argues — according to the laws of biology, in the struggle for existence the more fit prevail, and living beings are perfected precisely by selecting out, that is, allowing to perish, those who are unfit. Therefore, the state should not intervene in this struggle between the strong and the weak, since by doing so it might prevent the strong from overcoming the weak, which would be detrimental to progress.

Ratzenhofer, moreover, posited as the principal tenet of this morality (lucus a non lucendo) pure egoism devoid of altruism. He suggests that altruism is an impossibility since human beings are by nature egoistic and therefore incapable of acting in any other than a selfish manner. Thus, in his eyes, everything that is said about love and self-sacrifice appears as falsehood, pretence, and hypocrisy.[1] All this is nothing other than a justification, cloaked in scientific garb, of everything we regard as injustice.

Thus, it is that noble, self-conscious individualism—the individualism of the soul, the fine ideal of individual freedom, the liberal idea—under the influence of materialism was transformed into the crudest and most repellent egoism and tyrannical arbitrariness. All this is the result not only of ignoring ethics, but also of neglecting an important sociological fact, a neglect that has given rise to a fatal error.

This error consists in the false assumption that the individual can be separated, torn away, from society. Yet the isolated individual is just as little a reality as the abstract concept of humanity.[2] The latter was deified by Comte, who alongside it completely annihilated individuality; the former is deified by exaggerated individualists, who alongside it disrupts

1 *Positive Ethik. Die Verwirklichung des Seinsollenden.* 1901. 67, 79, 81, 83 1 and passim.

2 **Jones**, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*. London. 95. *"The isolated self is no more real than the conjunct self."*

the balance of the social organism. Individuality and society hold one another in equilibrium; society consists of a sum of individuals, and the individual grows out of society and for society—but can do so only if, at the same time, he does not renounce his own independent existence. Society has no need of zeros, for even the sum of an infinite number of zeros remains zero.

Nevertheless, the isolated individual, taken by himself, is a dwindling insignificance. Let us imagine ourselves in Robinson Crusoe's situation as described in Defoe's novel. How much laborious effort it cost him to procure the most elementary necessities of life! And yet even Robinson was not isolated from society: he brought with him much knowledge and skill that he had acquired from society. He made use of the remnants of the ship that the waves cast ashore. Without all this he would have perished helplessly within a brief time. All this shows what immense injustices egocentric individualism commits against society.

And when, through this step-by-step progression, individuality—that is to say, the strong, the propertied, those belonging to the class of the *beati possidentes*—becomes the unconditional and unlimited master of all its wealth and talents, burdened by no responsibility other than obedience to the law of nature, by which it cultivates and enriches its own precious self and regards itself as the centre of social life; when the climax of egoism raises the Titans of the earth up to the heavens—then we must regard it as a natural consequence that the trampled and discarded human material makes its voice of protest heard and cries out to the strong: you have no right to all that you possess; your wealth and your ownership, from which you exclude others, and which you have acquired and increase through the labour of others, are the fruit of injustice. Materialistic individualism can have no other consequence than an equally materialistic socialism.

b) The Various Forms of Socialism

It is almost astonishing that, although nowadays the word socialism belongs among the most current and widely used terms — not only in parliaments and popular assemblies, but equally in university lecture halls, scholarly societies, workshops, and factories — there is scarcely any word whose meaning is so indefinite, so blurred, so to speak so elastic, as this one. And perhaps it is precisely for this reason that the expression is so well suited to become a political slogan, into whose mantle everyone can wrap his own views and theories.

Yet the word socialism also has its own history, and the *usus loquendi,*

the usage of language, gradually shapes its conceptual scope.

Proudhon once replied to the question of what socialism is as follows: *"By socialism we understand every kind of striving that aims at the improvement of society."*[1] The dictionary of the French Academy defines the term in a similar manner in the following words: *"Socialism is the doctrine of those who wish to change the present state of society and to transform it entirely according to a new plan."*

Littré's definition is scarcely clearer in this respect; it goes as follows: *"Socialism is a system which, subordinating political reforms, presents a plan directed toward social reforms."*

And in order to bring more light into this twilight, Littré himself adds as a form of explanation: *„Socialisms e.g.: Communism, Saint-Simonism, Fouriérism."*[2]

Yet none of these definitions fully covers what people generally understand by the word socialism. The confusion arises from the fact that nowadays this word has, in common usage, become almost synonymous with the concepts of communism and collectivism, and incidentally also includes the denial of everything ideal or spiritual. This is due to the fact that the Social Democrats have entirely appropriated the word socialism for themselves, so that whenever socialism is spoken of *pur et simple*, without any further qualification or addition, what is generally meant is Marx's system, of which he himself said: *"Our doctrine can be summed up in this proposition: the abolition of individual ownership."*

Nevertheless, in order to be able to include within the conceptual scope of socialism, understood in this sense, every system built upon the principle of social production, it was still deemed necessary to introduce certain restrictions into this definition. Thus, for example, G. Adler, one of the outstanding historians of socialism, understands by socialism and communism in general that social condition in which economic production is carried out to a great extent by the collective means of the community on the basis of collective ownership. Here again we find ourselves in the

1 **Mermeix**, *Le Socialisme*. 2⁰ Éd. Paris, 1906. 2.

2 **Naudet**, *Le Christianisme Social*. Paris, 1898. 81.
Various definitions of socialism are offered in Count József Majláth's work: *Socialism and Catholicism.* Budapest, 1907. 7. Volume 1

realm of indeterminacy, for Adler himself notes that he does not wish to decide how far the community should extend or what its nature should be.[1]

In this way, the concepts of socialism and communism would include not only their absolute and wholly radical conceptions and therefore would not in themselves necessarily destroy individual activity.

Yet the confusion by which the word socialism was reserved as a collective label for Marx's doctrines has also produced another fatal error. Marx, namely, brought socialism and communism into close connection with so-called historical materialism—a connection that, by the very nature of the matter, does not exist.

Based on a materialistic worldview, one can be just as well an individualist, and indeed in the most radical sense, as we in fact see in Stirner and Nietzsche. There has been and is socialism without materialism, just as there is materialism without socialism.

The conceptual confusion arising from this has had decidedly harmful consequences in public life as well. In England, it has happened that when someone spoke out, in the interest of the common good, in favour of the nationalization of the railways, shareholders anxious about their profits declared him a socialist. In Germany, on the other hand, the word socialism acquired a politically pejorative meaning, and almost every effort at social reform was branded with this stigmatizing label; during the debates on the workers' insurance law, one deputy even gave voice to the concern that if the state were to pay an annual contribution to this institution, we would immediately find ourselves in a socialist state. And likewise in Germany it occurred that when, in a provincial town, someone proposed that poor schoolchildren be given free milk for breakfast at the expense of the municipal treasury, another city councillor branded

---

1 **Adler**, *Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus*. Leipzig, 1899. I. 1. *"Today the concepts of socialism and communism are in fact generally used in an identical sense. This is a state of affairs that scholarship must simply take note of, just as it must take note of the meaning ordinarily attributed to these words, which refers to a condition of broad economic community existing in the life of a nation. If we raise this meaning to the level required by scientific precision, then socialism and communism can only be defined in the same way, namely as a social condition in which economic activity is carried on to a substantial extent by the means of the community, on the basis of collective ownership… For the time being, there is no need to decide how far communal economic activity should go, or what its nature should be."*

this as a socialist measure.[1] Similar examples could also be cited from Hungary, but I shall refrain from doing so.

Perhaps such slips of the tongue may even have a beneficial effect, for from them public opinion may gradually learn that if the promotion of the common good and whatever runs counter to narrow-mindedness are labelled socialistic, then the essence of socialism cannot after all be materialism, together with its accompanying mockery of religion and lack of patriotism.

But we need to clarify the concepts; in speech and in writing, we must strive to ensure that the words socialism and socialist are purified of all attachments that do not properly belong to them. It is admittedly undeniable that custom also wields great power in the realm of language, against which the individual struggles in vain; yet in the end every custom is the result of habituation, and what people have been able to become accustomed to, they can also unlearn.

Therefore, by the word socialism we wish to designate that social tendency which opposes the exclusive rule and excesses of individualism and seeks to enforce the principles of social justice against the arbitrary conduct of individuals.

By the names *communism* or *collectivism*, on the other hand, we designate that economic system which is built upon common ownership and common production.

This would at once resolve the question as to whether one may rightly speak of Christian socialism, since Christianity and socialism fused with historical materialism exclude one another. The improper use of the word socialism in public life has indeed deterred many from employing the expressions Christian social or Christian socialism, to which a Carlyle, a Lacordaire, a Vogelsang, and others have lent so much dignity. Among the French today the expressions *christianisme social* or *catholicisme social* are more in vogue; the Belgians and Italians prefer to speak of Christian democracy; and we know that Pope Pius X himself also gave preference to this term.[2]

---

1 **Diehl**, *Über Sozialismus, Kommunismus und Anarchismus.* Jena, 1906. 3.

2 **Pesch**, *Der moderne Sozialismus*. Freiburg, 1900. 17.1., Cathrein, *Sozialismus*. 9. Aufl. Freiburg, 1903. 9.1., **Fr. Walter**, *Kapitalismus, Sozialismus und Christentum*. München, 1906. 80.1.

But custom proves to be a powerful force here as well, and the term Christian socialism persists as the designation of that socio-political tendency which, on the basis of Christian ethics, seeks to oppose the social injustices produced by domineering individualism and to secure healthy social development by introducing reforms of this nature. And if this expression persists, it can only serve to clarify concepts regarding the true essence of socialism.

Christian socialism, therefore, must be understood in the sense that it is a synthesis, a system, of Christian social reform — so to speak, the practical application of Christian justice in social and economic life.

And thus, while we do not shy away from it, indeed rightly take pleasure in speaking of Christian social reform, Christian social action, and Christian social principles, we may also consistently speak of Christian socialism, just as we might speak of Christian individualism, in contrast to that socialism and individualism which derive their power, laws, rights, and truths from themselves, fashion them according to their own liking, and in the end lead either to the loss and complete suppression of individual justice or of social justice. Christian socialism is therefore something entirely different from Christian communism or collectivism although it can be such — and indeed has been.

Nevertheless, if the expressions Christian socialist or Christian socialism could not be correctly understood by public opinion, if people were unable to understand socialism as anything other than subversive theories, then in our view the designation *Christian solidarism* would be most fitting to indicate Christian social restoration and the complex of Christian social reform ideas.

In any case, in order to become acquainted with the true nature of socialism, communism, and collectivism, and so that the partially overlapping and indeterminate expressions may not mislead us, it will be useful to familiarize ourselves with the natural history and psychology of collectivism.

CHAPTER III
COLLECTIVISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

People of idealistic disposition have always been pained by that oft-recurring tragedy of social life in which the just, the upright, the honest, the industrious, the faithful fall victim to lawlessness, deceit, dishonour, frivolity, and violence. They have also seen that the chief motive of this unjust struggle is the desire to possess earthly goods and the grasping after power; and that unbroken chain in which Catilines, Neros, Tiberiuses, Richard IIIs, Macbeths, Machiavellis, Borgias — in short, innumerable figures of tyranny, debauchery, and moral corruption — step forth and trample virtue and right underfoot deeply wounds and offends their souls, which thirst for justice. This false note offends their sensitive hearts; they would like to bring harmony into social life. In their lofty-soaring and more or less daring imagination, they create for themselves a new social world in which, naturally, everyone secures a ruling place for the idea most dear and cherished to him. Accordingly, they would like to reach that ideal state by different paths — the state which the Latin poet connects with the cradle of humanity, as though they wished to revive that Golden Age in which people had no need of judges and, without laws, voluntarily did what was just and honourable.[1]

Just as the great mass of the people, who are most immediately surrounded by life's struggles and therefore can rise less easily to ideal heights, yet feel deprivation in their own flesh, tell tales in their imagination of a happy land, of an El Dorado where roast pigs run about the streets offering themselves, and sausages fall from the trees; so do those who live in the world of ideas flatter themselves with visions of a happy country in which virtue — or at least what they take to be virtue — rules and commands without rival, triumphing without struggle and without sacrifice.

Herein lies the psychology of those works which, following the example of a distinguished German political economist, Robert von Mohl, are commonly called "state novels," and after Thomas More's work entitled *Utopia*, are known as utopias. Most of them were hardly conceived with the thought or intention that they should ever be fully realised by humanity. They are rather allegorical in nature, intended to set the social distortions and anomalies of their own age, the sad and dispiriting reality, against an ideal condition; they set up, as it were, an unrealizable ideal,

1 Ovid. Metamorph. ... quae víndice nullo – Sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque colebat.

toward which, however, they wish to guide and direct society.

The first and archetype of them all is Plato's dialogue on the state. The Greek philosopher truly sets out from the most ideal standpoint, for with the title of his work, "The State, or On Justice," he expresses what he regards as the principal aim of the state—or of society, since to the Greek mind the two denote one and the same concept; yet Plato is so absorbed by the idea of the state interest that the individual disappears before him, and in order to achieve the ends of the state he does not shrink even from dishonourable means: he seeks to press Machiavellianism into the service of idealism. In shaping his ideal state, the organisation of the Spartan state may also have had some influence on him.

The line of thought in Plato's dialogue runs approximately as follows: The principle aim of human life is happiness; but this aim is in truth attained only by the virtuous, for lasting peace of mind is found only by one who is good and just, whatever his earthly fate may otherwise be; whereas the unjust man's soul is diseased, since he subjects what is divine within him to what is animal, and therefore, even amid his greatest successes in this worldly life, must feel dissatisfied and miserable.

Since the state consists of the totality of human beings, it follows that, if the honour of virtue is to be secured upon this earth, the state must provide for the virtue and true happiness of its citizens (which, according to Plato, are one and the same), and social life as a whole must be the embodiment of the four cardinal virtues, namely wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. This, however, is possible only if government rests in the hands of those who shine forth in these virtues. The example of Athenian democracy led Plato to the conviction that this could not be achieved under the rule of the multitude; the masses—so he says—cannot philosophise, and therefore he wishes to secure absolute governing power for those few who, through strict education and prolonged observation, have proved themselves to be genuine sages.

In Plato's state, the upper classes are represented by the warriors and the rulers; these constitute the aristocracy of the state, which, however, is not an aristocracy of birth, since these two interrelated classes arise from the selection of the most excellent elements of the civic class.

The task of the warriors consists in being, after the example of noble dogs, gentle toward friends and acquaintances, but fearsome toward enemies. For this reason, it is necessary that they be physically strong, brave, ready for service, keen of sense, and in addition possess the intelligence

required for philosophising, so that they may learn gladly and with enthusiasm, and be able clearly to distinguish friend from foe.

To this end, however, the youth must be educated—boys and girls alike—for Plato is at the same time a feminist and includes women as well in martial labour and in the service of the state. For this very reason Plato is also an advocate of coeducation, and indeed in the most far-reaching sense, insofar as he wishes to extend joint education even to physical training, during which the Greeks laid aside their garments; and at such times—so he says—women should cover themselves not with clothing but with virtue.

Education must make the young God-fearing and, as far as is possible for human beings, like unto the gods. And since the influences of childhood are the most enduring, the training of the warriors must begin at the earliest age. Until now, youth had been entertained with the tales of Homer and Hesiod, through which they acquired many false notions, since these poets relate not the most edifying things about the gods. But warriors must not fear death either, and therefore the poets' accounts of the underworld and the realm of shadows must also be suitably corrected, so that death may appear as something free from all terror. For this reason, every literary work, both ancient and those to be published in the future, must be subjected to state censorship.

Furthermore , it is important for the young to be accustomed to truthfulness. Lying, in general, whether in youth or adulthood, must be punished severely; only the rulers may permit themselves, if the interest of the state so requires, certain pia fraus. In addition, youth must be taught self-control, so that on the one hand they obey the rulers, and on the other hand are masters of themselves in food, drink, and love, and remain free from every base emotion, greed, and licentiousness. Consequently, those plays, poems, and tales must be prohibited which violate this rule.

From the warrior class thus educated both physically and intellectually, Plato would, on the basis of the most careful examination, select the ruling class that conducts government, as the elite of society. To this end, the warriors would be kept under constant secret supervision by the state, through which observation it would be possible to learn who, in all his actions, keeps the interest of the fatherland most firmly in view, and who, under difficult and dangerous circumstances, possesses sufficient prudence and alertness of mind. Those who pass this test, whether men or women, may be admitted among the rulers once they have reached their fiftieth year, and as governors, each in turn when his time comes, rule

with full and unrestricted power.

But although Plato believes that in this way he can ensure that rule and governance fall into the hands of the wisest and most upright, he still has one further concern, namely that private and family interests might divert even the best of them from the path of justice. For this reason, among the warriors and the ruling class he would abolish private property and the institution of the family in the most radical manner. They are to receive everything from the state, but call nothing their own; and so that no family ties may hinder them in the service of the state, women, men, and children are all to be their common relatives, so that the father does not know his child, and the child does not know his father.

The regulation of sexual relations Plato likewise wishes to entrust solely to the rulers at the head of the state. They would be called upon to ensure, through the selection of the most excellent, the emergence of ever more perfected generations, while the children of the weak and imperfect would be condemned to die almost as soon as they are born. Plato himself believes that the delicate task of pairing suitable mates will not be achievable without all manner of deception and subterfuge.

It would further be the task of the rulers to assign to citizens the sphere of work appropriate to their talents and abilities. Here Plato no longer goes into detail, for to him the non-philosophising human being seems to be only a second-rate creature, with whom he need not concern himself so meticulously. He believes that once rule has been reserved and secured for the wisest, the rest will take care of itself and will create for everyone complete satisfaction and a more pleasant life than the blissful years of Olympic victors.

Plato did not regard this ideal of his — in which lofty aspiration, elevated thinking, naïve conception, ruthless absolutism, the deification of the idea of the state, and political cunning are wondrously interwoven — as a mere dream image. He knew well that in his homeland, Athens, it would find no honour, yet he was seriously intent on persuading Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, to bring it into being. However, the lord of Syracuse, who otherwise listened with pleasure to the witty conversations of the wise man, did not take this matter lightly. And Plato, who repeatedly pressed his favourite idea upon the prince's attention, was compelled to flee in secret in order to save his life.

Although tendencies inclining toward communism were not lacking, and certain Jewish and Christian sects (the Essenes and the Carpocratian

Gnostics, the Albigensians and the Waldensians) formed small communistic communities, still some nineteen hundred years passed before a work appeared that dealt systematically with ideas akin to Plato's theory of the state. This was, as it were, a Christian pendant to Plato's doctrine of the state: the famous Utopia of Thomas More, England's heroic martyr-chancellor.

More, whom Henry VIII had beheaded in the Tower in the year 1535 because of his firmness of character and fidelity to his faith, composed this work, whose full title is: *De optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*, he wrote it at the age of 38. The work was released in 1516, and its publication was undertaken by one of the greatest scholars of the age, Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Thomas More, the humanistically trained scholar and diplomat, undoubtedly had Plato's ideal state in mind when writing his piece, yet he far surpasses his master in terms of humane feeling and in the noble sense of liberal thought. The Christian worldview that permeated his soul preserved him from those fatal errors which in Plato's work so unpleasantly offend the mind and sensibility of those who think and feel humanely.

More hardly wrote his work with the intention of presenting a model for a new order to be established sooner or later. It is suggested by the name of the imaginary island country itself: Utopia, which might best be rendered as "no-place" or "non-existent place" (from the Greek οὐ, "not, no," and τόπος, "place"). Yet More did not write his fine work without purpose, for he deliberately contrasts the happy conditions of Utopia with the disordered economic circumstances of his own country, which threatened it with mass pauperism. More scarcely wished to be a radical social reformer, but he did seek to draw attention to the social ills of his age, brought about by unscrupulous abuse of private property and by the unbridled egoism of landowners.

This emerges clearly from the introductory part of the book, which is cast in the form of a conversation between More's friend, Peter Giles of Antwerp, and a certain Raphael Hythloday, the discoverer of the island of Utopia. In the course of the discussion, More laments the deplorable condition of his country, caused by the steadily increasing misery and the spread of bands of thieves.

This, in turn, was due to the many wars, the dismissal of soldiers, and the ostentation of the wealthy, who discharged part of their numerous idle servants and thus swelled the ranks of the unemployed. This problem was

accompanied by the crisis in agriculture. For in recent times sheep-breeding, owing to the rise of the wool industry, had become an extremely profitable enterprise, and therefore the great landowners, turning their arable land into pastures, dismissed their tenants and serfs. While agriculture employed many people and provided bread for many, sheep-breeding requires only a few shepherds; as a result, many farm labourers are left without work and bread, indeed even without a home. In tears, they leave their native land and flock to the towns or wander through the countryside, until as beggars they become inmates of poorhouses or as vagrant thieves the filling of prisons. Everywhere, says More, sheep are gentle, harmless animals, but in England they have become cruel predators that devour men.

More also sees many other dark features in the economic conditions of his country at that time. The decline of agriculture led to a rise in the price of foodstuffs, and with it the price of wool also soared, so that those who had formerly earned their living by weaving could no longer buy wool and thus found themselves without work. However much the number of sheep may increase, the price of wool does not fall, because the sellers, even if they do not possess a monopoly, still have an oligopoly (what we would today call a cartel or a trust), that is, almost all the sheep are in the hands of a few wealthy men, who sell only when they feel like it, and they feel like it only when they receive high prices. A similar rise in prices can be observed in meat as well.

In this way—More continues—the greed of certain individuals, if nothing restrains it, brings about the extraordinary enrichment of a few who find themselves in favourable circumstances, while the great multitude suffers want and deprivation. If this mode of acquiring wealth is weighed from the standpoint of ideal justice, a devastating verdict must be pronounced. The nobles, goldsmiths (the bankers of that age), and usurers—in short, those people who do not work, or at least do not perform work useful to the community—live splendidly and revel in pleasures, while day labourers, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and farmers, whose work society could not dispense with for even a single year, eke out the most miserable existence and live worse than draught animals. For the latter do not work so long, their food is better, and they do not worry about the future, whereas the worker is worn out by excessive labour and in old age faces the alarming prospect of the beggar's sack. This circumstance shows that society is ungrateful and unjust toward these poor people.

But I go even further, says More: the rich are not content with dishonestly

forcing down the wages of the poor by cunning tricks, but even strive to achieve the same end through laws. What has always counted as injustice—the ingratitude shown toward those who have earned merit through useful services—they have now made even baser by protecting it with law and cloaking it in the garb of legality. My God, when I consider all this, it almost seems to me as though the states of today were nothing other than conspiracies of the rich, established to advance their own interests under the pretext of the common good and to defend their unjust acquisitions, and on the other hand to exploit the poor at will.

As can be seen from all this, More's keen eye clearly perceived the devastation that the developing capitalist system was inflicting upon economic life at that time and was about to inflict to an even greater degree. His unusually strong social sensibility and love of justice for that age deeply pained him. As an outstanding political economist, who clearly grasped the causal connections of economic life, he considered social reforms necessary. He demands that those who have torn down houses and villages should rebuild them, and that the land should once again be handed over to the peasantry for cultivation. In opposition to the land hunger of the great landowners, a maximum size of landholdings must be determined, likewise a maximum rate of interest, and he calls for the monopolization of prices to be made impossible by legal measures.

Up to this point the realist politician has spoken; from here on, a fictitious figure takes over: Raphael Hythloday, a Portuguese sailor. He recounts his experiences of the imaginary island country of Utopia, whose constitution and social and economic organisation are such as to bar the way to every injustice.

On this island there are twenty beautifully built large cities, which are completely identical in language, customs, institutions, and laws, and are built on the same plan, each surrounded by a suitably sized area of arable land. These twenty cities form a federated state, at the head of which stands a prince elected for life, while the magistrates set over every thirty families (the phylarchs) and the two hundred senators (the protophylarchs) elected by them are chosen annually.

Theft, pauperism, and dishonest competition cannot occur in this imaginary state, because their driving force — private property — does not exist. There are thieves only where there is something to steal, More believes, to which, however, one might remark that it is possible to appropriate not only private but also common property.

In the absence of private property and wages, people are driven to work by a sense of honour and a social spirit. Yet this does not exert sufficient influence on everyone, and therefore a certain form of compulsory labour had to be introduced. Work is supervised by the sycophants, who make sure that everywhere it is begun at the proper time. A working day of six hours is prescribed for everyone, eight hours are allotted to sleep, and each person may dispose freely of the remaining time. Agriculture is compulsory for everyone for a certain period, much as military service is with us; accordingly, people of other occupations are assigned for two years to the villages to perform this work. On the other hand, everyone, whether man or woman, must also learn a particular craft. As a rule, each person learns the craft corresponding to his father's occupation, since this is what he can master most easily.

The so-called liberal arts—what we would call a scholarly or scientific career—cannot be chosen at will; rather, on the recommendation of the priests, permission for higher studies is granted by the people through secret ballot. Anyone who proves unfit is sent back among the craftsmen; conversely, a craftsman who shows outstanding aptitude for learning may pass into the class of scholars. Priests and those pursuing a scholarly career are exempt from physical labour, so that they may devote themselves all the more zealously to their vocational tasks.

To the question of whether, under such labour conditions, there are people willing to undertake unpleasant, repulsive, dangerous, and publicly demeaning work, More replies that there are some who take it upon themselves out of religious feeling, in order by their particularly arduous labour to perform something pleasing to God; but on the other hand, such tasks are also carried out by slaves, recruited from prisoners of war, criminals sentenced to forced labour, and persons condemned to death abroad.

Just as production, so consumption too proceeds entirely according to communistic principles. All products of labour are deposited in warehouses located in the city's main market, from which each head of household supplies himself with what his family needs. There is no money in Utopia because commerce does not exist. Any surplus of produce is distributed among the poor abroad or sold overseas, and the proceeds are set aside in order to recruit foreign mercenaries in case of war.

Otherwise, gold and silver are used—so as to make them as dishonourable as possible in the public mind—for the manufacture of slaves' chains and objects of low and base purpose.

In Utopia, the family bond is sacred and inviolable; there is no community of women, but monogamous marriage. Although woman is otherwise equal in rights to man, may compete with him both in the military and in the scholarly career, and even proves particularly well suited to medical and surgical professions, the position of head of the family belongs to the husband. Nevertheless, family life itself is, as it were, placed under state supervision. Sons must remain within the family circle even in adulthood until the number of adult family members rises above sixteen. Conversely, ten adult members constitute the minimum; therefore, surplus members of larger families are incorporated into smaller ones. In the same way, if the population of one city grows excessively, the surplus is transplanted into another with a sparser population, and if all of Utopia were to become overpopulated, some of the citizens would be compelled to emigrate. In any case, every Utopian citizen has become accustomed to moving, for every ten years they must exchange their dwelling houses as well, lest anyone regard them as his own.

In brief, such is the content of Thomas More's Utopia. Especially in more recent times he has found numerous followers, from Campanella to Bellamy, though none of them has equalled him in elevation of thought. But now we do not wish to concern ourselves with these subjective imaginings; rather, let us compare realities with ideals in the realm of collectivism or communism, in order to see whether everything that gleams in the various utopias is truly the gold of justice, and whether it might not also occur to the inhabitants of Utopia themselves to indulge in utopian dreaming.

What the tyrant of Syracuse did not do at the wise Plato's urging was done a millennium and a half later—naturally without ever having heard of Plato — in America by the Incas, who, as befits a conquering tribe, combined the communistic principle with extreme absolutism. For the Inca tribe of the Aymara Indians conquered what is now Peru and Bolivia some four hundred years before the Spanish Conquest, later annexing Quito and part of present-day Chile as well.

On the basis of the older civilizations they found there, they created a distinctive cultural state that has scarcely any equal in the world. In the person of the head of the Inca tribe — the Inca par excellence — all power was concentrated in its entirety. As the son of the sun god, he was in fact the real and unconditional lord of life and death, of the entire empire and of all its subjects. His seat was the splendid city of Cuzco, where he was surrounded by tribal warriors, a kind of praetorian guard. His lawful wives could be only women of the Inca tribe, but he could beget an heir

to the throne only with his own sister; beyond this, he had a right to every maiden among his subjects, whom he could summon to his harem in whatever number he pleased and dismiss again at will.

The entire land of the country was divided into three parts: one belonged to the subjects, another to the Inca, and the third, as the property of the sun god, served cultic purposes. There was no private property; every family received, in proportion to the number of its members, a determined plot of land and a dwelling for usufruct, which reverted to the state upon the death of the family's head. The state provided seed grain and the necessary irrigation; in times of scarcity or bad harvests, it supplied from the share allotted to the court and the cult whatever was required for subsistence. Money did not exist, and thus neither did taxation; yet in truth the subject was essentially a slave of state power, and as such was obliged to cultivate the lands of the Inca and of the sun god as well. Furthermore, these state slaves had to produce all clothing, weapons, furniture, and the like for the court and the military caste, and ancient remains show that handicrafts were fairly highly developed.

Every inhabitant of Tahuantinsuyu—that is, the "Land of the Four Quarters," the official name of the Inca Empire—was entered into the most exact statistical registers, and according to these statistics the entire course of each person's life was regulated by his superiors. There were no schools in the proper sense, but everyone had to learn the language of the state (Quechua); at the age of twenty-four the youth was taken over by the state as its own, at twenty-five he was married off, so that throughout the entire community there was one single wedding day each year for all the young men born that year; marriage into another community was forbidden. Travel was permitted only with higher authorization; but if necessity required, entire tribes were transferred from one part of the empire to another, or, if their loyalty was suspect, were even exterminated.

These conditions naturally required a large bureaucratic apparatus. Every ten families stood under the supervision of a headman, and five such headmen were in turn controlled by a chief; in addition, there were captains and colonels. The higher offices were in the hands of members of the Inca tribe, and from time to time the ruler himself travelled through his empire to assure himself that everything was in order.

Thus, in this country the state did indeed provide for every citizen, and the anxieties of mere subsistence troubled no one; but in return the citizen had to surrender his personal freedom without reservation. And it is very natural that under such an all-powerful police system, spying, informing,

and denunciation should have played a key role.[1]

Just as Thomas More's Utopia relates to Plato's ideal state, so the Jesuit reductions of Paraguay were the Christian pendant to the social organization of the Inca Empire.

The aim of the Jesuits was to protect the Indians — whom they had converted to the Christian faith with great effort — from persecution by Portuguese slave hunters. They petitioned Philip III, who wore the crowns of both Spain and Portugal, the territory lying between Paraguay and Uruguay, so that they might settle the Guaraní Indians there and civilize them free from all the corrupting influences of Europeans. Later, the Chiquitos living in Upper Peru (Bolivia) were also incorporated. At the height of its prosperity, this province, which stood directly under the authority of the Spanish king, numbered more than 160,000 inhabitants living in forty-four settlements.

The Jesuits organized these settlements almost entirely on the basis of collectivism. Whether Plato's ideas hovered before them, or the social conditions of the Inca Empire, we do not know; but the Jesuits were all the more able to do this because among the uncultivated Guaraní tribes private property was scarcely developed. Culturally they had not yet reached the stage at which they would have felt the need for private ownership, so no injustice was done to them in this respect. It may be said that the Jesuits merely preserved, or rather perfected, the economic system they found in place.

All the settlements were built according to the same plan. The church stood in the centre, beside it the house of the fathers, one of whom directed the spiritual life while the other attended to economic affairs. The common granary was also there, into which all produce had to be brought. At the head of the settlement stood the corregidor, appointed from among the natives by the governor of Asunción in the name of the Spanish king; the other members of the *cabildo*, or council, were elected by the people and confirmed by the fathers.

There was no private property in the entire reduction. The arable land belonged to the community; each family was given a house by the settlement; the crops were brought into the common granary. In every settlement there was also a portion called God's property, which served the needs of the church and the maintenance of the fathers. The herds of

1 **O. Martens,** *Ein sozialistischer Großstaat vor 400 Jahren.* 3. Aufl. Berlin, 1905.

cattle and sheep were likewise communal; only the small garden around the house could be cultivated by each family for its own use, and the produce of that plot belonged to the family that worked it. The community had craftsmen as well. The Jesuits taught them not only to produce the necessities of life, but even to manufacture luxury goods: there were clock-makers, woodcarvers, and even printers.

Work proceeded as follows: in the morning, half an hour before sunrise, the bell signalled the time to rise, after which Mass was celebrated. When Mass was over, they set out to the common labour to the sound of trumpets and drums; this usually lasted half a day, and at its conclusion they returned home again accompanied by music. The women furthermore engaged in domestic crafts, and the linen they produced even found its way to European markets. Schools were established for the children, where, besides the catechism, they learned to write, read, and count, and also acquired a little Spanish or Latin.

The monotony of life was relieved by splendid church festivals, and the Lord's Day was celebrated with particular magnificence. Moreover, the Jesuits did not neglect to develop the Guaraní's outstanding musical abilities. At a later period, when the settlements were attacked and partly dispersed by Brazilian Mamelucos — adventurous slave hunters — they were compelled to organize a militia as well. Every settlement had a free hospital and pharmacy.

Thus, the days of the settlers passed peacefully and quietly, without material worries. From mutually destructive warrior tribes they became industrious citizens; the rigor of the law scarcely needed to be applied, and people were guided along the paths of justice, as it were, from the confessional. The scholar Muratori, who followed the organization of the reductions with particular attention and even wrote a book about them, believed he could characterize this institution in two words: "*il cristianesimo felice* — happy Christianity."

However, critics of this Christian collectivist republic were not lacking, nor are they lacking even today. What is objected to in the fathers' methods of governance culminates roughly in the claim that they kept the Indians under excessively strong tutelage and supervision. But this system goes hand in hand with collectivism and must do so to an even greater extent the less cultivated the people to whom it is applied. Where people — especially uncultivated ones — are not driven to work by hunger, they tend rather not to work; and where common labour lacks proper supervision, one always encounters someone lazier who prefers to have others

do his work for him. Anyone with a little psychology and life experience knows that the Indians could not have been civilized by mere preaching, just as, for example, our own wandering Gypsies cannot be integrated into the framework of modern civilization through humane moral instruction alone. Indeed, if we compare the collectivist society of the reductions with others of a similar nature, we are led to the conviction that the organization of these reductions allowed far greater freedom for the development of individuality than the others — whether theoretical or practical. It is the spirit of Christianity that never permits the individual, as a free being, to be wholly absorbed by society; and conversely, in the realm of individualism, its socializing force does not allow the individual to detach himself from society and become a social atom.

The Jesuit reductions were destroyed by external violence, capitalist greed, and envy. Absolutism, cloaked in the garb of enlightenment and humanism and represented by the all-powerful Portuguese minister Pombal, pronounced the death sentence upon the reductions, and through his intrigues the Jesuits were forced to leave the land where, for 150 years, they had sustained this unique community with selfless love of humanity and self-sacrifice.

Thus, the fate of the reductions was sealed. Amid South American civil wars, the rivalries of Spaniards and Portuguese, of Brazil and Argentina, the settlements were destroyed one after another. Some of the Indians withdrew once more into the depths of the primeval forests, and in many places only the abandoned, ornate church bears witness to the Jesuits' civilizing work. Situated far from the world, the settlements of the Chiquito Indians of Upper Peru (Bolivia) were the only ones able to preserve their independence and, by and large, their old organization. The eleven settlements lying between Paraguay and the Paraná likewise maintained their old organization until the year 1848, but then López, the president of the Argentine republic, abolished the collectivist system in the name of liberalism and compelled the settlers to pay rent to the republic for their dwellings, while confiscating the communal property. As a result, many once again withdrew into the forests. In more recent times, the surviving settlements of southern Brazil and Argentina — now accessible by railway — have begun to revive, but their mixed population and the competitive spirit of modern life will likely put an end to the old organization, and perhaps to the civilized Indian tribes themselves.[1]

1 **A. Rastoul**, *Une Organisation Socialiste Chrétienne. Les Jésuites au Paraguay.* Paris, Bloud, 1907. **Helmolt**, *Weltgeschichte*. Leipzig u. Wien, 1899. I. 405.

America — mainly the territory of the United States — also became the testing ground for numerous communist settlement experiments in the last century, which were intended to realize modern utopias. Most of these fell apart, or else turned into joint-stock companies, as for example the Oneida settlement founded by Dr. Noyes, in which, alongside collectivism, they also sought to introduce — according to Plato's ideal state — general marriage, that is, the community of men and women. This settlement, yielding to the demands of American business life, now exists in reality as a productive joint-stock company under the name *Oneida Community Limited*.

These American communist settlements moreover generally confirm what the German Social Democrat Hugo and the Hungarian Jenő Schmitt likewise emphasize: that in collectivist societies a certain viability can be observed only where the religious element forms a binding link (for example Amana, the Shakers' settlements, Utah). As this weakens, egoistic impulses gain the upper hand and shake the colony to its foundations.[1] This experience stands in direct contradiction to the Social Democrats' theory built on historical materialism.

However, closer observation of the newer theoretical and practical utopias leads to another interesting lesson. We are forced to conclude that these utopias — quite apart from the fact that they are largely built on the unstable ground of imagination and enthusiasm — usually suffer from the further flaw of seeking to organize a definitively fixed social order for human society, as though any kind of final settlement were possible in social development.

Their fate is therefore the same as that once suffered by Volapük and likely to be suffered by Esperanto. As scientific curiosities these too are very interesting, and they may even serve as artificial languages mediating world communication, but they will never be languages of a people; or if they do become so, they cease to be Volapük or Esperanto, because humanity cannot be bound to refrain from altering its language according to its own taste—which is extremely varied—and under the influence of the external world. The same holds true of social organization.

No one can conceive—still less realize—such a utopia as would meet with everyone's approval; and even in the most perfect utopia, seemingly satisfying in every respect the demands of social justice, there will be people who are not content with everything, who complain that they, who

1 **Katscher**, *Soziale und andere interessante Gemeinwesen*. Dresden, X. 1.

bore the heat and burden of the day, receive no more than those who only entered the work at the twelfth hour.

Human nature is such that one's own circumstances never fully satisfy; one grows weary of them, longs for the unknown, and it is therefore certain that under the rule of absolute socialism there would be people who yearn for the redeeming era of individualism and personal freedom—and it is impossible to know whether they might not soon form a majority. For even if there is some exaggeration in it, there is nonetheless undeniable truth in what Bastiat says: *„Le socialisme, c'est le despotisme incarné – Socialism is despotism incarnated"*. One thing is certain: a collectivist society organized on socialist lines can exist only under the maintenance of the strictest, almost tyrannical discipline. On the other hand, Goethe expresses a profound psychological truth when he says that king, servant, and people alike agree that humanity's greatest happiness lies in the free manifestation of personality.

One enthusiastic supporter of the collectivist idea does indeed believe that in a collectivist society the idea of freedom will assume an entirely different form. *"To replace the conception of freedom held by the ruling members of today's society,"* writes Dr. Ervin Szabó, *"which consists in advancement in the economic sphere, a new conception of freedom will arise in the minds of all members of socialist society: the possibility of working, advancing, and distinguishing themselves in the sphere of public life and intellectual activity."*[1]

But who, after all, can guarantee that the ambition of the people in a socialist state will find satisfaction? And will not precisely these outstanding and ambitious individuals be regarded as dangerous to the state, as people who might disturb the principle of equality? Will their fate not be that of a Miltiades or an Aristides, driven into exile by the jealousy of lesser men? Nor, on the other hand, can one expect that complete abundance of the necessities of life would eliminate all competition. Napoleon had an ample supply of all necessities on Elba and on the island of Saint Helena, yet his spirit could not endure confinement. Who can assure us that the society of the future will not give birth to such aspiring spirits, who cannot tolerate the limits of collectivism?Collectivist societies have been formed and can be formed. But a society that satisfies everyone, in which every human desire is fulfilled, where both the indolent and the ambitious soul feel equally happy — such a society can not only not be created, but it also cannot even be imagined. Those who wish to force society into the

1 *A szocializmus*. Huszadik Század ("20th Century"). Volume V. 269.

framework of their ideas and bind it there forever act like the inhuman custom of Eastern peoples who breed dwarfs by placing small children into barrels so that only their heads remain free. This will only make the head grow, while the rest of the body remains undeveloped.

Society, however, cannot be stunted. Therefore, just as the original communal ownership of land — among hunting and fishing peoples — later passed, under the demands of social development, into the stage of private ownership because this better served the common interest, so may a similar course of development unfold in every other collectivist society.A communistic society, as we have seen, can indeed exist and can coexist quite well even with Catholicism; but in itself it cannot guarantee social justice, and may even lead to the most tyrannical absolutism. For this reason, a communistic society presupposes, as it were, a higher degree of moral perfection if it is not to degenerate. The essential question is not whether ownership is communal or private, but whether, alongside the free self-realization of the human individual, social justice and the common good suffer no harm.

We may draw the conclusion that *the correct social order lies in a fortunate combination of individualism and socialism.*

And if, in the face of corrupt social conditions, the cry is justified: *save society!*, then equally justified, in the face of efforts that shackle individuality, is the other cry: *save individuality!*

CHAPTER IV
CHRISTIANITY AS A SOCIAL FACTOR

In the history of the ancient Jewish people there is a trait that raises it high above the surrounding peoples of more advanced culture. This people — crushed and worn down from two sides by two great powers, the Egyptian and the Assyrian, later the Neo-Babylonian; torn within by dynastic conflicts and internal party strife; and by no means free from a sensuous disposition that longed for earthly goods — nevertheless harboured an idealism that lifted it up and set it on its feet again after every downfall.

It believed and placed its hopes in God's justice with unbreakable trust. *"And he shall judge the world in righteousness;*" says the Psalmist, *"He shall minister judgement to the people in uprightness; The Lord also will*

be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."[1]

And the El Dorado or Utopia of which this people dreamed — its central idea, the object of its longing and prayers, of which its prophets and sages spoke to it in vivid and encouraging words — this hope for the future took the form of the kingdom of justice, whose prince would be the Messiah, who would *"judge the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, and humble the oppressor."*

"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy." [2]

This thirst for justice has scarcely any parallel in world literature, and this fact alone shows that from the bosom of this people had to arise that transforming spirit which would revalue values, so that power, splendour, glory, gold, and wealth would no longer be what is precious, esteemed, and desirable, but above all justice.

The awaited Messiah came — not, as many had imagined, in light, splendour, and glory, but in humility and poverty. His kingdom was spread within a few years by fishermen to every corner of the then known world, without weapons and without rhetoric, by the persuasive power of truth. They did not overturn empires or topple royal thrones, yet the echo of their preaching penetrated into the imperial palace as well, and there too it found ears that were not deaf. The new teaching did not bring about a social revolution, but it accomplished a transformed social way of thinking, making common property of what had previously been chiefly a hidden treasure of individual souls. To awaken, ignite, and set into action the sense of justice — this is the quintessence of Christianity's social calling. Its direct vocation is not to enact secular laws, to alter property relations, to establish new legal institutions, or to overthrow old ones. Rather, it is to illuminate every corner and recess of human and social life; to rouse sleeping consciences; to take the poor and the weak under its protection; to alleviate misery and want; and to proclaim social duties equally to ruler and servant, to the powerful and the subject. Its direct vocation is not to enact secular laws, to alter property relations, to establish new legal institutions, or to overthrow old ones.

1 Psalm 9:8–9

2 Psalm 72:7, 12-14

Let us therefore see how Christianity, from its divine founder to our own day, has answered and continues to answer its social calling.

a) Christ and the Apostles

Renan presents Christ in a completely false light when he depicts him as a social agitator and subversive reformer. "Jesus," says the modern fabricator of gospels, "was in certain respects an anarchist, who had no sense at all for the institution of the state." At this point Renan forgets that Jesus also said: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's," and that he answered Pilate: "You would have no power if it had not been given to you from above." And when Renan further claims that Jesus' teaching was essentially Ebionitism, according to which only the poor (the Ebionites) are saved, and when he calls him a Galilean socialist who dreamed of overthrowing all authority through a social revolution, then he forgets much else as well that is written in the Gospels. One cannot, by torn-out quotations, give a faithful picture of an age or a character; whoever wishes to do so must grasp the entire Gospel in its coherence and penetrate to its depths.[1]

What characterizes Jesus in his social activity is his undivided love for everyone, which becomes most effective, most striking, most compelling when it concerns the abandoned, those suffering bodily and spiritual distress: the sick, the crippled, the blind, sinners, children, and above all the poor.

Therefore, when Jesus calls the poor blessed and cries woe to the rich, he does so neither with the demagogue's rallying cry, who wishes to stir up envy and hatred, nor with the soothing intent of the diplomat who seeks to pacify the masses dissatisfied with an unjust social order. In the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus enumerates the beatitudes that accord with his heart, something quite different is at stake: here a revaluation of values in the spirit of the Gospel takes place. He says thereby that it is not those whom common opinion considers happy, because they swim in riches, who are truly blessed, but those who are able to be poor in spirit, to be like the poor.[2]

---

1 Very rightly from an economic aspect, Laveleye says *(Revue des deux Mondes,* 1878, p. 421): *"What Jesus proclaimed was the change of hearts, inner renewal. It never even occurred to him to change the society around him."*

2 Zahn and Lyttelton rightly note that the Gospel (Matthew 5:3) does not use the word πενής (needy, poor), but πτωχός, which rather means a beggar; thus the emphasis is not on the fact of material deprivation, but on the humble spirit that asks its needs of God, in contrast to the rich person who is self-confident in his possessions.

This statement is entirely understandable in the age of Jesus, when, under the corruption of Roman rule, the pursuit of money and the unscrupulous competition for every kind of enrichment had seized the upper classes.

Jesus' teaching, therefore, is not that only those who are destitute may enter his kingdom, but that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who can be like the poor. Jesus does not demand of his followers that they be needy, dependent on the beneficence of others, nor that they be unable to acquire property by honest means.

Christ's particular love for the poor, and the consoling word with which he calls them blessed, at the same time corrects that materialistic conception among the Jews according to which God's love and blessing manifest themselves only in earthly well-being and wealth, so that poverty was regarded as the punishment of sin.

It is in this sense, for example, that Job's friends and his wife reason that he must be guilty of sin, concluding from the fact that Job has fallen into misery and lost his possessions. The Jews held the same opinion of the afflicted; hence the Pharisees thought it a trick question when they asked Jesus to decide who had sinned — the man born blind or his parents.

Christ takes his stand against this false notion when he draws the poor to himself with special love — those whom the Pharisaic view regarded as poor because they were sinful — and sets them, as it were, before others as examples to be followed. For this reason, he himself says to the disciples of John the Baptist, as the sign by which the coming of the Messiah may be recognized, that the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, is preached to the poor. Behold, here is the Prince of justice, here comes the kingdom of justice — the poor are not excluded from the kingdom of God; indeed, they are its favoured citizens.

In his life Jesus put into practice the principle that today is expressed thus: *aux plus déshérités le plus d'amour* – to those excluded from the inheritance of earthly goods, the greatest love — so much so that he himself became poor, in which the modern apostles of communism do not follow his example. However, he did not turn away from the rich and the well-to-do either. Among those dear to him were Nicodemus, Lazarus — whom he raised from the dead — and Joseph of Arimathea, all of whom were wealthy men. And he also treats Zacchaeus with goodwill, being satisfied when the wealthy tax collector gives half of his goods to

---

Lyttelton, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount.* London. 1905. 56.

the poor and restores fourfold to those he may have defrauded. Indeed, even his apostles were not all without property, as people today like to say — proletarians. John apparently had a house of his own, into which he received Jesus' mother after the death of her holy Son.

But Jesus opened up a new perspective for the strivings of human life, in which wealth and poverty, property and lack of property, play no role as ends in themselves; all of them are merely means to the attainment of the chief end, which must be sought above all else, namely, the righteousness of God.

And therefore Jesus—who otherwise offers counsel and consolation in every distress and conflict—turns away the man who asks him to render judgement in a dispute over an inheritance: *"Man!"* he says, *who made me a judge or a divider over you?"*[1]

And while on the one hand he calls the reckless striving after earthly goods the Mammon of unrighteousness, on the other hand he declares striving after righteousness to be blessed: *"Blessed are they", he says again in the Sermon on the Mount, "which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."* In fact, wealth and riches, though in themselves are indifferent things, may become a harmful obstacle to the attainment of this goal; and in such a case there is no room for hesitation: the follower of Christ, the citizen of the kingdom of righteousness, can only be one who is able to leave behind his house, his field, his farmland, and everything he has.

Christ's words apply to everyone: *"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*[2] *"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."*(the god of earthly possessions).[3] From every believer Christ requires the ready willingness to renounce possessions for the sake of righteousness; but he requires this in particular of his apostles and disciples—that they be entirely free from love of earthly riches, and that, in fulfilling their calling, they be able to renounce them altogether. For this reason he says to the rich young man — who was already almost won over by Jesus' teaching and who carried in his heart the ambition to be admitted among Jesus' disciples: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou*

1 Luke. 12:14.

2 Luke 12:15

3 Matthew 6:24 - Luke. 18:22

shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."[1] "If thou wilt enter into life," the Saviour had answered his earlier question, "keep the commandments"; and when the young man asks further, "What lack I yet?"— as though he were longing for some higher rank in the kingdom of God, wishing to draw even closer to Jesus — then the Saviour adds, as counsel: If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast.

The disciples themselves were astonished at these words. They, who in order always to be with Jesus had left behind the little they possessed, could not understand why the rich man too should have to abandon everything. Jesus perceives their hesitation and therefore says to them: *"Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*

The disciples were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus, looking upon them, said: *"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."*

These words are often cited and misinterpreted—either in the sense that Christianity would be incompatible with life in the world, and in particular with human striving to secure material well-being,[2] or else with the aim of portraying Jesus as a communist agitator.[3]

But Christ himself explains in two parables who those rich men are who do not enter the kingdom of God, presenting, as it were, two types of the affluent who sin against justice and fail to fulfill the obligations that accompany wealth.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose

1 Matthew 19:21

2 Thus, for example, **Kautz**, *Theorie und Geschichte der Nationalökonomie*. 1860. II. 102.

3 Beside Renan, Cabet *(Voyage en Icarie)* and Hertzka *(Freiland)*.

shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."[1]

Behold, this is one type of foolish rich men: the miserly, who heap up wealth and delight in it. Of the other type — the sumptuously rich man and the poor Lazarus—the Saviour speaks in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. This rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, who pays no heed to the poor Lazarus, is the type of the spendthrifts who use their wealth solely for their own benefit and personal enjoyment, and who regard their possessions as their unconditional private property — in short, those who believe only the principles of utilitarian morality to be binding upon themselves. These are possessors of wealth without a sense of responsibility. For such people, who continually sin against social justice, it is not merely difficult but impossible to enter the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of justice.

If we put all this together, we will no longer have doubts as to what Jesus' teaching was with regard to wealth: namely, that the acquisition of wealth is not the goal of human life; that earthly goods are to be handled — so to speak, traded with — in such a way that we lay up treasures for ourselves in the kingdom of heaven. Unjust enrichment, the cult of Mammon, is incompatible with the service of God. Jesus' teaching contains neither obligatory poverty nor obligatory community of property.

And nothing is farther from it than any form of class struggle. The spirit of the Gospel soars at such a height that all class distinctions disappear, and people are classified according to entirely different criteria than wealth or poverty, rank or social subordination. And anyone who, striving for ideal goals, moves in the arena of modern social, political, or business life must again and again recall Jesus' words: *"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"*

And how did the apostles themselves understand Jesus' teaching? As the waves of the Gospel spread ever wider, so too do the social types multiply whom the Church of Christ receives into its fold. Alongside the poor — whose livelihood had to be provided for by alms — there appear Pharisees, the chamberlain of Queen Candace, the proconsul Paulus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Crispus, a ruler of a Jewish synagogue. All of these become members of the Christian community without renouncing their social position or becoming members of a communistic society.

1 Luke 12:16–21

Only the Jerusalem congregation seems at first glance—at least in its earliest phase—to have exercised a stronger egalitarian effect. The passage most frequently cited in this regard reads: *"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."*[1] This is supplemented by the following passage from the Acts of the Apostles: *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common… Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."*[2]

However, there is no question here of institutional communism, of a system in which production and consumption are held in common. The "communism" of the Jerusalem primitive Church is a communion of love, which literally fulfills the wish of Deuteronomy that there be no poor among you. This love makes no distinction between mine and thine, without thereby creating a community of property; what each person possesses is not regarded as exclusively his own but is shared with his neighbour.[3]

This sharing was entirely voluntary, not enforced; it flowed solely from the motive of love of God and neighbour. It was an extraordinary exaltation of souls filled with the Holy Ghost, whose sole goal was the seeking of the righteousness of God. There was no definite command to divide one's property. Ananias and Sapphira are punished not because they did not bring the full value of their possessions to the apostles' feet, but because, through base dissimulation, they pretended as though they were sacrificing everything — in short, because they sought false advertisement through charity.[4]

---

1 Acts 2:44–45

2 Acts 4:32–35

3 As **Adler** likewise notes (op. cit., p. 75): "Detailed investigation leads to the result that among the first Christians community of goods did not exist in the sense of an economic institution." Just as **Harnack**, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten. Leipzig*, 1906, p. 131 and **Sommerlad**, *Das Wirtschaftsprogramm d. Kirche des Mittelalters*. Leipzig, 1903, p. 23)

4 Acts 5:4

Saint James the Apostle, the first bishop of Jerusalem—who, as a close relative of Jesus, was called the Lord's brother — turns with harsh words to the merciless rich: *"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you… Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."*[1]

However, communism cannot be read out of these words. James views the same types of rich men of whom the Lord Jesus declared that it is hard for them to enter the kingdom of God. Of these same people he also says: *"him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."*[2]

Thus, it is not wealth itself that is sinful, but on the one hand unjust acquisition of wealth, and on the other the exclusive appropriation of its enjoyment.

The duties of the Christian who lives in comfort and wealth are beautifully summed up by the Apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy: *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."*[3]

Behold, this is the Christian conception of the purpose of earthly wealth: it is a means, a gift of God, which must be made fruitful in good works; and the more one has received, the greater the responsibility one bears. This is what Christian justice demands.

b) Ecclesiastical tradition

The same evangelical community born of Christian love, and the same teaching on the fruitful use of wealth for higher purposes, are proclaimed by the writers and Church Fathers of the first centuries of Christianity.

1 James 5:1–4

2 James 4:17

3 1 Timothy 6:17–19

The ancient writing known as the Teaching of the Apostles virtually repeats the wording of the Acts of the Apostles when it demands that no one call his possessions his own; the so-called Epistle of Barnabas speaks in the same way. There is no question of communism i.e., community of property, for then property itself would not exist. Rather, these words clearly state that ownership does not come without responsibility, and that no one has been given possessions solely for his own ends.

It is of this community of love that the African apologist of the Church speaks when he proudly remarks that even the pagans speak enviously of the Christians: "See how they love one another" (vide ut invicem se diligant). Faith and hope unite Christians into a single body, where — unlike among the pagans — there is no quarrelling over inheritance, for those who are united in soul and spirit are also ready to share their possessions (itaque qui animo animaque miscemur nihil de rei communicatione dubitamus).[1] This is not the coercive communism of the economic world, but the voluntary, truly idealistic sharing born of love.

Saint Cyprian, the martyred bishop of Carthage, rebukes with harsh words those rich men who refuse to take part in such sharing: *"They cannot attain heaven whom earthly desires hold back. They believe their wealth belongs to them, whereas rather they belong to their wealth; they are not masters but slaves of their money."*[2]

In another place he says: *"They call that money their own which, like something foreign, they keep locked away at home with anxious care; they possess what is theirs only so that others may not possess it; and they call goods what they use only for evil."* [3]

Clement of Alexandria expounds the Christian understanding with particular clarity in opposition to Carpocrates, who combined Gnosticism with Platonic community of property and women. Clement treats this question not only in the work entitled Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be

---

1 **Tertullian**, Apologeticus, ch. 39

2 Cypr. de lapsis, ch. 12. *„Possidere se credunt, qui potius possidentur, census sui servi nec ad pecuniam domini sed magis pecuniae mancipati"*

3 Ad Donatum, ch. 12 Pecuniam suam dicunt, quam velut alienam domi clausam sollicito labore custodiunt, ex qua non amicis, non liberis quicquam, non sibi denique impertiunt, possident ad hoc tantum, ne possidere alteri liceat et, o nominum quanta diversitas, bona appellant, ex quibus nullus illis nisi ad res malas usus est.

Saved? (*Τίς ὁ σωζόμενος πλούσιος;*), but in his other works as well (*Protrepticus, Stromata, Paedagogus*). According to him, wealth — just like health, physical strength, and beauty — belongs among earthly goods; yet the truly rich person is not the one who possesses wealth, but the one who manages it well.[1]

In the same spirit speak the Apostolic Constitutions, which embody the tradition of the Eastern Church; and in the West, Lactantius, the "Christian Cicero."

The ethical foundations of the question of wealth were examined in greater depth in the fourth century by two shining stars of the Greek Church: Saint Basil and Saint John Chrysostom — whom only those can label communists (as, for example, Sommerlad does) who are not properly acquainted with the Christian doctrine of property. Saint Basil also proclaims with oratorical fervour and emphasis the evangelical conviction that each person is only the steward of his goods. In this sense he even calls the miser a robber: *"What you have received for stewardship,"* says the bishop of Caesarea, *"do you not keep it as if it were your own? He who steals a garment is called a thief; and he who does not clothe the naked — though he could — does he deserve another name? The bread you withhold belongs to the hungry; the garment you lock away in your chests belongs to the naked; the shoes that rot with mould in your possession belong to the barefoot; the money you bury belongs to the needy. Thus, you commit injustice against all those whom you could help."*[2]

There is nothing communistic in all this. Nor is there in the even harsher words he spoke in the year 368, when famine struck Caesarea: "*Let us not be more merciless,"* he says in those days of crisis, *"than senseless animals, which graze together and even help one another. Yet we,"* he cries out to his faithful, *"appropriate to ourselves what is common, and claim as our own what belongs to the many."*

Community of property can only be seen in these words by someone who does not understand that, in the Christian view, private property is neither absolute nor exclusive — and that life is a higher good than property, so that the right of private ownership must give way in times of famine and general necessity.

Saint John Chrysostom treats the question of poverty in detail on two oc-

1 Paedag. III. 12.

2 Homilia in Lucam 12, 17

casions. Once, in a sermon addressed to the faithful of Antioch — where he proposes a method for the communal organization of poor relief — he may be said to lay down the principles of what would later be called the Elberfeld system. He points out that the Church of Antioch itself, whose income amounted to no more than that of a single wealthy man, supported 3000 poor persons; and that it would therefore not be a great undertaking if the wealthy citizens of Antioch (about 30,000) and those of moderate means (about 240,000) were to provide for the remaining portion of the approximately thirty thousand poor.

He addresses the same issue a second time in Constantinople. In this discourse, the bishop of Constantinople actually argues that under a system of shared consumption poverty would disappear; and, holding up the primitive Church of Jerusalem as a model, he warmly urges his faithful to put the idea to the test. Yet there is no suggestion that Christianity imposes, as a command flowing from its essence, that everyone renounce his own property.

Although Saint John enters into his proposal in great detail, the collectivism he recommends is not one of coercion or compulsion, but of love and expediency. Nor do we know whether he ever attempted to put it into practice. But he certainly achieved this much: he powerfully impressed upon his faithful the responsibility that accompanies earthly wealth.

Similar ideas are proclaimed in this period by the brilliant triad of the Western Church: Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, and Saint Augustine. They are also far removed from any communism that sees something illicit or a deprivation of rights in private ownership; but they sharply rebuke the boundless luxury that had taken root even in the declining Roman Empire, and the thirst for money that resulted from it — where wealth became like an oasis in the immeasurable desert of pauperism. In contrast, they regard as ideal that condition in which — as Saint John Chrysostom says in one place — those two harsh words, mine and thine, no longer exist.

"You bring gold up from the mines," says the eloquent bishop of Milan, "only to hide it away again. How many lives do you bury with that gold!" And again, he turns to the rich who live off the misery of others with these words: *"You call yourself rich—you who demand wages from the poor!"* And when he further says that in giving alms to the poor you are not giving from what is yours, but merely returning what you owe—since the earth belongs to everyone—he is not preaching strict communism of property, but the Christian truth that the goods of the earth are not

exclusive possessions, but are given for the use of all (in omnium usum datum).

The bishop of Hippo — who, as a promoter and cultivator of monastic institutions, very warmly recommends communal ownership as a means leading to perfection within monastic communities — does not reject private property, although in his view humanity in its original state held the earth in common, and the delimitation of property is a consequence of original sin. *"He who possesses property,"* he says, *"possesses it by human right; for by divine right the earth belongs to the Lord, but this human right is granted by God through princes."* With regard to the use and enjoyment of private property, Augustine naturally adheres to the same principles as the Church Fathers already cited.

With respect to all this, we merely note that the Fathers and early ecclesiastical writers — quite naturally — do not speak the language of modern political economy; yet they establish a great social principle, which today is usually expressed as follows: the greatest possible well-being for the greatest possible number. Modern political economy does not regard almsgiving, taken by itself, as desirable, and undoubtedly the most perfect form would be that which renders almsgiving as superfluous as possible. This, however, can be achieved only if human beings are guided not by egoism, but by the Christian sense of duty that arises from ownership — a sense of duty that gives everyone his due wage, and ensures that those worn out by labour or rendered incapable of work may look to the future without anxiety, in accordance with the demands of social justice.

In the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas Aquinas, with his all-encompassing and penetrating intellect, provided a precise synthesis of everything that Christian thought had made the question of wealth an object of reflection.

Saint Thomas distinguishes between natural law (jus naturale), the law of nations (jus gentium) and positive law. In this respect, he follows the example of the Roman jurists. However, they understood natural law only as that which human beings share with animals. In Saint Thomas, by contrast, *jus gentium* also belongs to the broader category of natural law. "The law of nations," he says, "belongs in a certain sense to the nature of man as a rational being." As for the juridical nature of property, he expresses himself as follows: "They say that according to natural law goods are held in common — not because the law of nature commands that all private ownership be excluded, but because such ownership does not arise from natural law, but from human agreement, which belongs to

positive law... Therefore, private property is not contrary to natural law, but is, as it were, an addition to it, devised by human reason."[1]

He further suggests that this addition — being consonant with human nature — arose from considerations of expediency.

Here we see the difference between the Christian conception, on the one hand, and the absolute socialist, that is, communistic conception, on the other, as well as the absolute individualistic conception.

Communism, at least in the form represented by modern social democracy, regards private property in principle as something unnatural and irrational; economic liberalism, by contrast, declares it absolute and exclusive.

Saint Thomas's theses concerning the mode of ownership may be summarized as follows:

God gave the earth to human beings not so that disorder might reign over it, but so that human diligence and the institutions of peoples might establish boundaries—yet always for the benefit of all.

Consequently, as far as use is concerned, goods are common in nature, not exclusive.

Property, therefore, is not meant to serve only the enjoyment of its owner but must also serve the advancement of the common good. [2]

Thus, according to Saint Thomas, the system of private ownership does not conflict with the Christian conception. While communal ownership, taken in itself, does not necessarily conflict with it either, it certainly does conflict with it if one claims that private property is incompatible with Christianity.

Nor should anyone imagine that those social truths — those demands of social justice — whose ethical foundations were laid down in the works

---

1 2, 2, 66, 2, ad 1. Juri naturali superadditur per adinventionem rationis humanae. As to how to interpret this; I. 60, 2, c. Intellectus enim cognoscit principia naturaliter; et ex hac cognitione causatur in homine scientia conclusionum, quae non cognoscuntur naturaliter ab homine, sed per inventionem vel doctrinam.

2 Naudet, op. cit. p. 33; **Schaub**, *Die Eigentumslehre von Thomas v. Aquein.* Freiburg, 1898, 265.

of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers were intended merely for the schools and for theory. The apostles of humanism, who would reserve love of humanity for themselves, act today as though they alone had torn the veil from social injustice, as though they were the first to discover that the right to life, to bread, to well-being, and to rights belongs not only to society's privileged classes, and as though they alone had thought of society's outcasts.

The great social saints — if I may use this expression — a Francis of Assisi, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Philip Neri, Saint Vincent de Paul, and many other heroes of Christian virtue, did not understand charity from the standpoint of condescending almsgiving; they were apostles not only of *charitas*, but of social justice — and apostles, moreover, who preached not only with words, but with deeds.

From the dwellers of the Thebaid desert through Saint Benedict, Saint Bernard, Saint Francis, Saint Dominic, and the sons of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the religious orders, who followed the evangelical counsels, renounced the enjoyment of private property. In every age, they have been living exemplars of Christian communism and correctives to the social injustice created by the cult of Mammon.

Despite moving within the milieu of absolutism, men such as Bossuet and Bourdaloue had the manly courage to tell princes, the powerful, and the wealthy alike what their duties were from the standpoint of Christian justice. The bishop of Meaux delivered an outstanding masterpiece of eloquence on this subject:

"How unjust it is," says Bossuet, *"that all burdens should be borne by the poor, and that the entire weight of misery should rest upon their shoulders! Why does the fortunate man live in such abundance that he can satisfy even his most capricious desires, while the wretched man — who is otherwise just as good as the former — can neither support his family nor appease his hunger?*

At the sight of such a startling disproportion, could Providence be absolved of the charge of mismanaging its treasures, since they fall only to the rich—if it had no other means of providing for the poor, and of establishing a certain balance among them? It is for this reason that God founded his Church, into which he admits the rich as well, on the condition that they serve the poor; and he commands that abundance make up for deficiency, and that those in need be granted, as it were, a right to the

surplus of the wealthy."[1]

More recently, in figures such as Ketteler and Manning, social science has been added to this warm social sensibility. Speaking of the opposing tendencies of capitalism and communistic socialism, the great bishop of Mainz says, among other things:

"The false theory of absolute ownership is an enduring sin against nature; for it considers it perfectly just that someone should devote to the satisfaction of his boundless desires and unrestrained sensuality what God intended as food and clothing for all human beings. The famous saying that property is theft (La propriété, c'est le vol—Proudhon) is not entirely false; alongside a great falsehood it also contains a great truth. One unnatural sin begets another. From the false theory of ownership arose the false communist theory."

What Ketteler did in Germany, Manning did in England; Cardinal Gibbons in the United States; and among the laity, Count de Mun in France and Decurtins in Switzerland. And the principles followed by this social reform, nourished by the traditions of the early Church, were endowed, as it were, with apostolic authority by Pope Leo XIII, especially in the encyclical *Rerum novarum* .

Two fundamental principles stand out from all that the Gospel and ecclesiastical tradition lay down as ethical truths concerning economic life.

The first is that every human being has an inviolable right to the enjoyment of earthly goods as far as this is necessary for a decent sustenance of life. This is the primary and fundamental principle.

The second principle states that the institution of private ownership, as far as it is exercised justly and in accordance with human nature, does not conflict with this right. In fact, at least under present conditions, it appears to be the most expedient means of securing the first principle. Only the abuse of the institution of private property frustrates the realization of the first principle; and therefore, those who abuse it endanger the institution itself. In contrast to the communistic doctrine, the conception of law grounded in the Christian worldview affirms what one of our positivist legal philosophers has expressed as follows: "*The subjective capacity for*

1 *Bossuet Oeuvres*. Paris Didot 1841; Volume 2, 293. *Sermon pour le Dimanclie de la Septuagésime. Éininente dignité des pauvres dans l'Église.* **Acsay F.** *Bossuet Speeche*s. I. 151.

the acquisition of property is equally inherent in every human being."[1]

On the other hand, in opposition to the individualistic view that regards a person as the absolute and irresponsible master of his property, a French author rightly observes that it is not the communists and socialists who are the greatest enemies of the system of private ownership, [2] but rather those who, lacking ethical principles and neglecting their responsibility, fail to fulfill the duties that accompany it—whether as private individuals or as citizens. For ethics and social justice require that the first principle be realized above all. And the masses rightly demand, says a Spanish writer, that the consequences of Christianity be fully drawn. [3]

Bringing all this together, we find that Christianity, in itself, is neither collectivist nor an unconditional defender of private property.

On the one hand, Christianity ennobles the human being's inherent inclination and capacity to acquire property by setting ethical aims, restrains its excesses, and most effectively calls attention to the ethical obligations that accompany private ownership — so that, under the guidance of the Christian spirit, ownership can unite within itself the advantages and blessings of both private and communal possession. On the other hand, where circumstances permit and where lofty souls aspire to it, Christianity provides the noblest motives and most perfect forms of communal ownership.

There is only one thing with which the true Christian spirit cannot coexist: social injustice—whether it is committed under the guise of collectivism or of individualism.

CHAPTER V
EQUALITY

Equality! This magic word — how many hearts has it stirred and continues to stir into fervent motion!

How often has this resounding word been spoken in parliaments, at mass

1 **Illés Pollák**, *Erősek és gyengék.* Budapest, 1902, 291.

2 Naudet, op. cit., p. 47;

3 **G. de Azcárate**, *Estudio sobre los deberes de la Riqueza,* Barcelona, 1904, 96.

meetings, by high-ranking statesmen and by Social Democratic agitators — and yet I can find no corresponding concept behind it in any of them, neither above nor below.

Countless heads have already been separated from the neck in the name of equality, yet we have not come a single step closer to social equality. The old aristocracies — let us say class rulers — are replaced by new aristocracies no better than their predecessors; they too merely want to rule, just as those before them did, and just as their successors will do — then as now, and perhaps even more so if the class rule of social democracy were to be proclaimed.

So, are we incapable of creating equality? It is as though we were only moving farther away from it. The Roman Empire saw slaves become emperors while royal offspring became servants under the soul-transforming influence of Christianity. Today, however, even in the smallest village, a mismatched marriage between a landowner and a farmhand causes greater scandal than some culpable deed.

The upper ten thousand have their own cream of the cream; the middle class has its notables; and the existence of a moneyed and peasant aristocracy is by no means unknown. Nor should anyone imagine that the "fourth estate" does not possess its own aristocracy within its own ranks. Even one of our Hungarian communistic social philosophers, Samu Révai, speaks of his utopia by saying that *"there is freedom and equality there, but law—and indeed precisely by virtue of the principle of freedom and equality, law—and this law is the assertion of excellence, the predominance of talents."*[1]

So, is equality — the cause for which so many hearts have beat passionately — perhaps nothing more than a utopian dream?

Some believe that social inequality was created by unequal property relations, i.e., that private property is the cause of social inequality. Yet this assumption does not accord at all with the basic principle of the positivist school to which they belong; for according to that view, humanity in its primitive state practiced a system of communal ownership. That system, however, could only be overturned once inequality arose within society; thus social inequality is not the consequence but the cause of economic inequality.

1 *A társadalmi jólét föltételei*. Budapest, 1901, 53.

It is a fact that in the course of further development a certain chain-like connection arises between these two kinds of inequality: a higher social rank can create a stronger economic position, and greater economic power qualifies one for, or at least facilitates the attainment of, greater social weight. But in this sequence the first link must nevertheless have taken hold in inequality of social position. For this very reason, there is no hope that a future communistic society could permanently abolish social inequality, just as none have been able to do so thus far—neither the theoretical nor the practical ones. In fact, we might even say that in some of them — for example, in the empire of the Incas — this inequality rose to the highest degree of despotism.

The idea of equality, one of the prides of our age, thus remains a great problem; a greater one than ever before from a purely natural-scientific point of view. For the answer that natural science has offered as a solution to this problem is truly startling. For example, Haeckel — whom the Social Democrats regard as their own special scientist, probably because of his pronounced and cynical atheism, in which respect they are kindred spirits — states quite openly, in polemic with Virchow, that Darwin's theory is anything but socialist, for it teaches that the fate of the weak mass is disappearance, annihilation; for which reason its tendency can only be aristocratic, by no means democratic. For this reason, he continues, the theory of evolution is the best antidote to absurd levelling utopias.[1]

Schmidt O. writes similarly: *"If the socialists were to think the matter through," these are his words, "they would do everything possible in the world to smother the doctrine of descent, because this theory teaches quite openly that socialist ideas are not feasible."*[2]Ziegler, for his part,refutes the basic principles of social democracy point by point by setting them against the tenets of Darwinism.[3]

It is as if science itself had conspired to render worthless the slogans of democracy inherited from the French Revolution. Huxley, the eminent English natural scientist and further developer of Darwin's theory, turns against the advocates of social equality with these words: *"That human beings are born free and equal is, from a scientific point of view, a ridiculous assertion. As long as human beings remain human beings*

1 **Bouglé**, *La Démocratie devan la Science.* Paris. 1904. 17.

2 Ausland ibid. **Ferrzi** *Socialisme et science positive.* 14.

3 **Ziegler**, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die sozialdemokratische Theorie.* Stuttgart, 1894.

and society remains society, the equality of human beings will remain a dream image." The hypothesis of equality rests on a factual error, and this already puts with the stamp of impossibility on all social theories that build upon it.[1]

Ammon O. expounds his view on this matter in the following way: *"The foundation of social order is inequality, and this inequality is not something that can be eliminated, because it is just as inseparable from the human race as birth and death; unchangeable like mathematical truths; eternal like the laws governing the motion of the planets."*[2] But Garofalo expresses himself most pregnantly in these emphatic words: *"Nature recoils from equality. Consequently, the objective reality of science stands in opposition to the subjective aspirations of humanity."*[3]

The words of these scientific authorities sufficiently justify the claim that natural science and so-called positive sociology neither recognize nor can recognize liberty, equality, and fraternity. Even so, we cannot fully subscribe to what Ch. Maurras calls a scientific result:

„The senseless illuminism of the men of the Terreur *said:* ***Fraternity or death!*** *Political science raises a completely different yet certain dilemma. It suggests people: Inequality or decline! Inequality or anarchy! Inequality or death!*[4]

So, should we perhaps cry death to the beautiful idea of equality? By no means — **provided we can place ourselves on an ethical foundation.** For there is an equality which is not sameness, not a mathematical or biological concept, but an ethical principle, and the foundation and creative force of true fraternity.

And the formula for this was pronounced by Christ with unsurpassable precision and with the full richness of love for mankind, by setting forth his own example.

Non ministrari, sed ministrare — this was His motto; and He sets this same rule before His disciples as well: *"Whoever wishes to be great*

---

1 Zukunft, March 1894, No. 31.

2 *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen. Entwurf einer Sozialantropologhie.* 256.

3 **Topinard**, *L'Anthropolige et la science sociale.* 703.

4 Enquete sur la monarchie, 38.

among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the servant of all."[1]

These words express an extraordinarily great social–ethical concept: namely, that the greater the service one renders to society, the greater one is; and conversely, it follows from this that the more one has received from God or from society — in talent, strength, power, wealth, or authority — the greater the service one is obliged to render to one's fellow human beings.

Borrowing a formula from the field of mechanics, this could be expressed as follows:

P : Q = p : q.

That is to say: the social work performed by someone (and by this we naturally mean not only physical labour, nor only that service which can be measured in wages) should be proportionate to the strength (talent, power, wealth) at their disposal. The greater the strength (P, p), the greater the social work (Q, q) should be; and the greater the social work someone performs, the greater the strength that should be placed at their disposal. This proportion benefits not only — in fact, not even primarily — the individual, but rather society.

Any society where this proportion is not enforced as far as possible in public life, experiences the prevalence of pathological conditions with a period of decline setting in. If it is not merits and talents (P), but patronage and individual interests that direct the development of the social factors of power, not only social justice suffers injury, but the welfare, economic, and cultural progress of society as a whole is put at risk.

And indeed: it is not relative inequality that offends and violates social justice, but disproportion.

Relative inequality is not harmful to society — on the contrary, it is beneficial — but disproportion is harmful.

Absolute equality , therefore, is needed neither by the individual nor by society, nor does justice demand it. On the contrary: absolute equality or uniformity would operate precisely to the detriment of distributive justice, by making no distinction between individuals according to their

1 Matthew 20:26–29; Mark 10:43–45.

strength, talent, and willingness to work. For this reason, communistic utopias which — not only like those of Plato and More — demand common ownership and consumption, but also seek to establish strict equality within society, contain the element of injustice.

Absolute social uniformity is only put forth by those demagogues who flatter the masses merely in order to become their masters, and who thereby overthrow the principle of equality along with proportionality and justice.

Social equality is expressed in the following — mathematically fully valid — equation:

$$\frac{P}{Q} = \frac{p}{q}$$

whoever wishes to impose equal burdens under unequal forces, or, under unequal burdens, wishes to employ only equal forces, disrupts the social equilibrium and commits injustice.

That tendency of society — sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious — by which it seeks to give effect to justice reaches its goal only when it is able to establish this correct proportion;

$$\frac{P}{Q} = \frac{p}{q}$$

that is, when, in accordance with the demands of the times and circumstances, it correctly determines the quantities that must be set.

For this, however, moral sensibility is required; for this a sensitive heart is also required — one that apprehends and understands, and for this purpose is even capable of making sacrifices — that in social life there must exist that solidarity which binds individual persons together, as complementary parts of a single organism.

The Apostle Saint Paul repeatedly engages with this thought and emphatically stresses that for the new person clothed in the spirit of Christ the outward form of class distinction does not alter the principle of equality. There is neither free nor slave, neither Greek nor Jew, neither male nor female.[1]

Yet each person should fulfil the duties of his own calling, without this hindering him in his noble aspirations. Before God, no one is great and

1 Romans 10:12; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11.

no one is small by reason of social rank; therefore: "If you were called as a slave, do not let it trouble you; but if you can become free, rather make use of it. For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman; likewise, whoever was called as a freedman is Christ's slave."[1]

The social classes must therefore stand in proper correlation, so that each may answer to its own task, for its own good and for the good of the whole.

The Apostle indeed conceives of society as a kind of organic organism, in which every member has its own function. In vain would the foot say, "I am not of the body"—would it therefore not be of the body? And in vain would the ear say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body" — would it therefore not be of the body? And if the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? Or if it were all ear, where would the sense of smell be? Thus, according to Saint Paul, just as in the body every member and every organ is necessary for proper cooperation, each supporting and complementing the other, so it must be in society as well; accordingly, no one has the right to consider himself indispensable or more important than the others: *"Nor can the eye say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem weaker are all the more necessary."*[2]

Thus, although Christianity neither has nor seeks to establish an economic system, and although it does not consider social position as an end in itself but only a means, it is nevertheless the Christian worldview that provides the ethical foundation upon which, despite physical and biological differences, proportional equality can and must be built. In the atmosphere of Christianity, classes do not disappear, nor does the relationship between superiority and subordination; but since it is the moral duty of those in authority not to pursue their own ends, but to serve those who are subordinate, true class antagonism and class struggle come to an end.

"With God no one is a slave and no one is a master"— thus the Christian Cicero expresses this thought — *"for if we all have one Father (God), then with equal right we are all His children. Before God no one is poor except the one who is lacking in justice; no one is rich except the one who abounds in virtues."*[3]

---

1 1 Corinthians 7:21–22.

2 1 Corinthians 12:14–21.

3 **Lactantius**, Divinae Institutiones. V, 1, ch. 14.

Precisely by being able to place itself above earthly things while moving upon the earth, Christianity provides the means to correct, through the equality of spiritual dignity, the inequality created by the animal part of human nature. This puts Christianity above all science, for — let me add — Christianity is not only theory but practice; it does not merely lay down propositions, but it permeates and sets hearts in motion with divine power. Therefore, it does not merely proclaim brotherhood but truly makes brothers of those who are permeated by the spirit of Jesus.

Where this spirit is present, inequality is not experienced as unpleasant but rather shows itself from its pleasing and beneficial side. For social life does not consist of monochrome sameness, monotony, and uniformity, but of the assimilation of differences, of the joint cooperation of diverse forces. At the meeting of these forces, harmony is required to prevent oppositions from pushing into the foreground — which destroys part of the forces — thus allowing the community of interests to dominate. And harmony is nothing other than proportionality: those tones with vibrations in proportion blend into a pleasing chord; tones with identical vibrations produce monotony, while those with disproportionate vibrations create disharmony. By more than anything else, this desirable harmony is brought about by a solidarism founded on Christian love and a sense of justice.

In more recent times, the so-called solidarists seek to derive the sense that binds people and social classes together purely from socio-philosophical considerations.

Léon Bourgeois, in his book entitled *Solidarité*,[1] which forms something like the gospel of this social doctrine, develops the following proposition as its fundamental theme: Man possesses everything that he is and everything that he has as a gift, and as a gift he must give it back; the services we have received from society bind us to render similar services in return.

To this Fouillée replied, quite rightly: *"Yes, what we are and what we possess is a gift, and this constitutes natural solidarity; but that we must also give it back already belongs to moral solidarity, and this latter does not follow of itself from the former, but only through the intervention of higher motives. The obligation exists, but in order for us to fulfil it there is need of that ethical foundation which no philosophy has yet been able to lay down as clearly and purely as Christianity has done."*[2]

1 Paris Colin, 3éme éd., t. 1902.

2 **Cf. G. Goyau**, *Autour du Catholicisme social*. Paris, Perrin, 1907, 8.

CHAPTER VI
FEMINISM

The development of economic and social life has created new conditions for women as well. They have been drawn into the vortex of modern commercial life, and those whose activity was formerly confined more to the walls of the home, and the framework of family life now step onto the field of public life as competitors of men.

These altered conditions have raised numerous problematic questions as to how women are to be integrated into the new economic and social position created for them. Considering all the above, we subsume all these issues under the name of the woman question ; and since every question calls and presses for an answer, we demand one that is satisfactory from the standpoint of social justice.

The woman question is therefore one significant branch of the social question. In this regard we readily make our own the following words of Señorita Ximeno, spoken in 1903 at a feminist congress in Madrid: *"The problem of the feminist question deserves greater attention than the agrarian or industrial question, since it is a psychologico-social problem that concerns half of humanity."* In fact, we would go even further, for in my view the feminist question deserves the attention not only of women, but must draw the attention of all humanity, since the future of social and national development depends upon it.

What is feminism, then? Instead of the many more or less correct and verbose definitions with which this concept has been approached, we simply say this: feminism is that part of the social problem which concerns the position of women, and in this respect it is intricately connected with the question of equality.

Therefore, when it comes to solving the feminist problem, we are confronted with the same two tendencies that are currently striving to resolve the social question. One views the entire social question — and thus the feminist problem as well — as a purely and exclusively economic issue and consequently recognizes no perspectives other than the supposedly natural-law–like economic principles dogmatized by historical materialism. The other, both in the feminist problem and in the social question more generally, wishes to take ethical considerations into account alongside economic and natural-scientific principles, indeed expecting the proper appreciation of these very considerations to yield the correct and appropriate solution to the great problem.

Accordingly, just as the idea of Christian social reform, which is grounded in idealism yet fully realistic, stands opposed to materialistic socialism, so does Christian feminism — drawing its nourishment from the purest and most genuine idealism — form the corrective and complementary system to purely naturalistic feminism. In this respect, we wholeheartedly associate ourselves with the fine words of Brunetière: *"If we were true Christians — that is, Christians who always relate their outward actions to the great idea that the service of God includes the service of one's neighbour — then we would be excellent democrats, and today I may add: excellent feminists as well."*[1]

In opposition to the modern feminist movement, the question has repeatedly been raised as to what kind of legal or moral basis it actually has.

Feminism — so speaks a French anti-feminist — is understandable in Cambodia or in the Sudan, where woman is the companion, servant, and beast of burden for man. Feminism is understandable among the Japanese, who regard woman as a being of a lower order and make man the woman's true lord and god.

Feminism is understandable in Turkey and China, where female slavery prevails alongside polygamy. But in France, the classical land of chivalry, what utter nonsense feminism is![2] With equal justification, one might regard it as nonsense throughout the entire realm of Western civilization.

We, however, do not regard feminism as nonsense on European soil, and we consider it justified also because of those wild growths of modern culturewhich, springing from the soil of materialism and naturalism, have stamped women just as much with the mark of inferiority.

Oddly enough, the favourite philosophers of modern women's salons, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche take the lead in this regard. Schopenhauer openly defends polygamy and wishes to create a situation for woman similar to that in Turkey and China, because he believes it is the way for women, as inferior beings (*subordiniertes Wesen*), to occupy their true and natural place in society.[3]

---

1 From his lecture for *L'Action sociale de la Femme*, see *La Femme contemporaine.* 1904, 122.

2 Joran, *Le mensonge du Féminisme.* Paris, p. 295.

3 *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Chapter XXVII: Über die Weiber

When it comes to disparaging women, the master was surpassed even by his disciple, who delighted in playing the role of the Antichrist , i.e., Nietzsche, who continually emphasizes the inferiority of the female sex, indeed, according to him, its baseness. Any man with deeper insight — so speaks the philosopher of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* about woman — can think only in an Eastern manner. He must not see in woman anything other than an object of possession, property that can be locked away, something that is created for servitude, and that attains its purpose only in this way. We must adopt Asia's exceedingly profound conception, for only the thinkers of Asia have correctly grasped the essence of woman.

And if, in addition, one reads the book of the ill-fated Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which in its entirety is a systematic belittling of woman from a naturalistic point of view, then one must inevitably arrive at the conviction that feminism in Europe is a very much justified endeavour, and that the struggle against this infiltration of Asian conditions can only be taken up with success under the banner of Christian idealism.

For it remains an incontestable fact that it was, in truth, the spirit of the Gospel that broke the Asian conception of woman's position. Neither the refined culture and philosophizing contemplation of Hellenism, nor the strong juridical sense of Roman culture was sufficient to establish the parity of man and woman; this was properly accomplished only by Christianity through the proclamation of the principle of equal morality.

For the equality between man and woman lies not so much in the physical and psychological sphere, nor primarily and exclusively in economic relations, but in the moral valuation of the sexes.

The representatives of historical materialism seek at all costs to obscure this fact with clouds of historical falsehoods. In this regard, German Social Democratic leader Bebel takes the lead, attempting in his book *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* to prove Christianity's misogynistic position by means of false, torn-out, and wrongly interpreted quotations. The views set forth in this party-political pamphlet have unfortunately been taken over without criticism into Charlotte Perkins Gilman's work *Women and Economics* .

"By this means (through polygamy) woman is restored to her proper and natural position as a subordinate being, and the 'lady' — that monstrosity of European civilization and Christian-German stupidity, with her ridiculous claims to respect and esteem — disappears from the world."

Anyone who reads the Gospel and the apostolic writings will already be convinced from these alone that the role of woman in Christian society and in the spread of Christianity, though not contemplated as identical or the same, is nevertheless regarded as of equal to that of man.

And that this spirit of the Gospel lived on in the tradition of the Church and brought forth the most beautiful blossoms — both on the soil of Greco-Roman culture and later in the Christianization of the semi-barbaric Germanic and Celtic tribes — is sufficiently attested by the numerous and most emphatically formulated statements of the Fathers of the Church and medieval ecclesiastical writers.

"Everyone, whether man or woman," says the great bishop of Milan, Saint Ambrose, *"must know that he bears within himself the image and likeness of God, and must strive to attain the beauty of the soul. For our essence consists in the soul and in the power of the spirit."* (Exhort. virg., p. 68) *"And in the soul there is no distinction of sexes."* (In Luc. II. 28.)

For this reason Saint Ambrose demands an equal moral standard for both sexes, and he does not accept the excuse that was advanced — apparently even in his own time — in mitigation of what was reproached to women as a lesser weakness, namely a lack of discretion, namely that this imperfection would belong to the female character as such. *"The fault,"* he says to the woman, *"is your personal fault, not your femininity's; your sex is holy."* (In Luc. II. 54.)

The equality of sexual morality, however, was emphasized most forcefully by Saint Jerome, when he says: *"With us, what is not permitted to women is in exactly the same way not permitted to men either."* (Epist. 77.) In fact, Saint Augustine considers infidelity to be subject to a graver imputation in the man than in the woman.

After this, the tale that — as far as I know — was first circulated by Bebel, and later reproduced by Perkins Gilman, becomes ridiculous in advance. They claim that in the sixth century, at Mâcon (in France), the assembled council fathers declared by a majority of one vote that woman indeed has a soul. It would seem to follow from this claim that even the ecclesiastical men themselves doubted whether woman was a being equal in rank to man.

At Mâcon in the sixth century two councils were in fact held, and among their decrees, with regard to the woman question, only this occurs: that one canon makes it the strict duty of bishops to protect widows and or-

phans, while another forbids incestuous unions. All this can scarcely be reconciled with the notion that woman has no soul.[1]

Materialistic feminism, however, has in fact achieved the very opposite of what Bebel imputes to the Mâcon minority. On the one hand, it denies the soul not only to woman but to man as well; on the other hand, some of the over-enthusiastic adherents consider man the inferior being and thus disturbs parity.

In this regard, it would be hard to surpass what Elisa Farnham expresses in the following words: *"The days have arrived when men, this brutal and coarse breed, are compelled to hand over dominion to women — the dominion which they have hitherto exercised to the greatest detriment of humanity. Women are more perfect than men; their disposition is gentler and more receptive; woman stands in relation to man as man stands to the gorilla."*

Yet in these extravagant words there lies something of the truth that our materialistically minded feminists fail to take into account—namely, that alongside the complete equality of value between man and woman, there is not complete sameness. Our materialistic feminists — whether men or women — regularly confuse equality with sameness. Yet man and woman are not the same physiologically or psychologically, and whoever wishes to make woman identical with man deprives her of that by which she is greater and more perfect than man: her delicate spiritual receptivity and her rich emotional world — without being able to give her that which she lacks of man's vocation-bound perfection. Thus, this very attempt at

---

1 Moreover, a note by Saint Gregory of Tours sheds vivid light on how such scholarly fables arise, or how they are artificially manufactured. The said author relates in his History of the Franks (Book VIII, ch. 20) that addressing the council of Mâcon in the year 585, one of the bishops — probably in the course of explaining a passage of Scripture — ventured the opinion that the Latin expression *homo* (man, human being) does not include woman as well. (Just as indeed the Latin *homo*, and the French *homme* often stand in contrast to *mulier*, *femme* .) The other council fathers, however, proved to him from the words of the Old and New Testament Scriptures that the expression *homo* does include woman as well. In this case, the matter concerned a purely exegetical question, in which it is by no means said that even that one council father doubted whether woman possesses an immortal soul just as man does. Such doubt would already be inconceivable in an ecclesiastical man for the simple reason that the Church venerates female saints just as much as those of the male sex. And sainthood is inconceivable without an immortal soul. Thus, we see what blossoms grow from Bebel's superficial pseudo-science!

"improving nature" can lead only to the degradation of woman and to the corruption of her moral equality. For Marcel Prévost, the feminist writer, is right when he says: *"La femme qui se virilise est une fleur qui perd son parfum."*

These excessively egalitarian tendencies cannot exert a beneficial influence on the development of social life, because just as family life, so too society — if it is to develop harmoniously — presupposes the joint activity of the two sexes, complementing one another and flowing from their natural inclinations and capacities. In the absence of this, only deformities can arise.

Therefore, the feminist question are even more closely intertwines economic and ethical considerations than any other social questions because the principle of equality can only be secured on an ethical foundation in this case.

Woman's physical constitution and vocation in life do not qualify her for productive labour by which she could, in general terms, compete with man; and therefore, where labour is judged solely from a materialistic point of view, where one fails to grasp how many treasures woman brings into social life through the richness of her inner life and her self-sacrificing love, there woman must inevitably draw the shorter straw in economic competition and social position.

For this reason, in the economic emancipation of woman one must beware lest woman, as cheaper labour, be set in opposition to man in competitive struggle. Even in today's economic life, spheres of vocation appropriate to man and woman must be preserved, although the boundary line no longer coincides with the old one.[1]

I believe that if the feminist movement, in its aspirations, takes ethical considerations into account, then the economic emancipation of woman—within the indicated limits—will not loosen the bonds of family life, but will rather free it from that somewhat materialistic dust which modern economic life has settled upon it.

---

1 **Elsbeth Krukenberg**, Über das Eindringen der Frauen in männliche Berufe. *"The reform of women's occupations—this cannot be repeated often enough—is the most effective means of mitigating the danger that in reality exists, namely that ever more female labor power should penetrate into male occupations, and of encouraging women to work in fields suited to their particular endowments." (40.)*

True feminism, therefore, if it is genuinely to fulfill its task, must not lose sight of two considerations.

The first is that it must preserve femininity for woman.

According to Frau Gnauck-Kühne, this lies chiefly in motherhood. *Weiblich sein heisst mütterlich sein* is how this distinguished feminist writer succinctly expresses it, quite rightly drawing a distinction between motherhood (Mutterschaft) and maternal disposition (Mütterlichkeit). Unfortunately, not every mother is at the same time maternal in the noble sense of the word. Motherhood belongs to nature; maternal disposition belongs to the soul. And it is precisely to this that even the woman who has not become a mother according to nature is called — often in an even more ideal way.

The second consideration is that every tendency which attacks the marital bond at the same time becomes dangerous to the social position of woman, and every institution that protects family life thereby protects woman as well.[1] Thus true feminism, as a striving to promote the well-being and intellectual development of woman, can be conceived only alongside the safeguarding of the sanctity of family life.

Since there is a kind of feminism which, together with the Russian socialist Novikov, locates the liberation of woman in replacing marriage with free union, there must therefore also exist a Christian feminism permeated by a higher idealism — one that protects woman from a relapse into Asiatic conditions and, at the same time, saves and safeguards our national culture from stagnation and decay.

CHAPTER VII
LABOUR

The materialistic utilitarianism which social democracy adopted from the liberal, so-called classical school of economics has completely confused and obscured the concept and value of work.

This utilitarianism led to viewing the entire national economy solely as a means of enrichment, whether national or individual. Every ethical con-

1 **Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne**, *Die deutsche Frau um die Jahrhundertwende.* 2te Aufl. Berlin, 1907. 122 and 161.

cept was eliminated from it, proceeding from the principle expressed by a German statesman (Miguel) in the words: *"One cannot build railways with moral principles."*

However, the consequences that followed in the wake of economic liberalism nevertheless showed that for the construction of railways, besides iron, timber, earthworks — in short, all these purely material things — something else is also required: something which liberalism likewise regarded merely as a commodity, but which we evaluate from a moral standpoint as well — namely human labour, the labour of mind and body.

Nowadays very many definitions of labour are offered, but almost all of them grasp it exclusively from the standpoint of national economics, as an activity carried out in the interest of production, possessing some material value, something that can be paid for with money.[1]

Yet this is a very one-sided evaluation of labour, one that least of all encompasses its full worth. We do not deny that man's first concern has always been, and always will be, to secure his subsistence. Accordingly, human activity and exertion of energy primarily serve this aim. However, human activity is not exhausted by this, for only a completely coarsened soul could say with Kropotkin that a good pair of boots is worth more to him than all of Raphael's Madonnas.

Therefore, if we incorporate into sociology — as indeed we must — the phenomena of man's spiritual life and his higher cultural aspirations, then under the concept of labour we must include every effort and activity which man expends in the service of the beautiful, the good, and the true. It is labour what the scholar performs when he reflects upon great problems; it is labour what the artist performs when he embodies noble ideas, when he translates feelings into poetic language or into sounds. What labour it is that love so often performs unseen — from the devoted self-sacrifice which the mother offers for her child from the cradle onward, all the way to the moment when the angel of charity closes the eyes of the utterly unknown and abandoned dying person.

All of this the mercantilists, the physiocrats, the economists in the tradition of Adam Smith, and following them the scientific socialists (Rodber-

---

1 **Földes, B.**, *Társadalmi gazdaságtan*.155. "Activity exerted in the interest of production." - **Conrad**, *Handwb. d. Staatswissenschaften*: *"A manifestation of force for the purpose of producing something useful — something which, as such, is suited to serve a human need and thus possesses value."*

tus, Marx), dismissively call unproductive labour, as something that does not increase national wealth and represents no ponderable value.

If this view became a general or common conception, that the accomplishment of a Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Sophocles, Virgil, Cicero, Dante, Calderón, Milton, Shakespeare, Newton, Kepler, Goethe, Petőfi, Vörösmarty, Raphael, Michelangelo, and so forth was unproductive labour, then our culture would already have been doomed.

For to regard as unproductive and useless labour what raised humanity's spiritual level, intelligence, and sphere of ideas — on the grounds that no interest can be collected from it — is tantamount to leading mankind back to a state in which it was troubled by no concern other than the satisfaction of its animal needs.

In opposition to such a low-minded conception, we regard as labour every activity that takes place in the governing and ordering of society, in its spiritual development, intellectual formation, the ennoblement of its thinking, and the intensification of its powers. It may be that these activities demand less muscular exertion, but even if we consider the matter purely from a physiological point of view, they involve the straining of the brain and nervous system and no small wearing down of vital energy.

Thus, the burden of labour is borne not only by the one who performs it with muscular force, transforming bodily strength into a product, but also by the one whose production consists in thoughts, feelings, ideas, and sacrifices.

This, however, now leads us to a second question — namely, to what extent labour is a burden, and how it therefore corresponds to human nature, which strives to avoid everything unpleasant.

Labour is indeed a burden, and a burden whether we consider predominantly intellectual or predominantly physical work. In fact, the very words by which peoples designate the concept of labour present it as something painful.

Ancient Greek expressed the concepts of work, toil, poverty, and torment by words of common origin (*μέμομαι* to work, to be in want; *μόνος* toil, struggle; *πονέω* to work, *πονηρός* unpleasant, bad; *πένης* poor). In Latin, *labour* means exertion, work, torment, and pain; and the Hungarian word munka, which we borrowed from the Slavs, signifies torment and suffering both in Old Slavic and in the modern Slavic languages (Old Slavic

monka, Polish *męka*, Russian, Slovenian, Croatian, Slovakian *muka*).

All this shows that labour belongs among those things which man, by virtue of his animal nature — or, to put it plainly, relying solely on the laws of biology and physiology — strives to avoid at all costs and by no means seeks out.

And indeed, even in unconsciously performed actions, man is concerned to avoid useless labour. Linguistics provides an extremely interesting example of this. Studying the process of linguistic development, we learn that this subconscious effort on man's part to make the organs of speech perform as little work as possible.

Every sound assimilation arises from this effort —that is, the gradual approximation of various kinds of sounds that come to stand next to one another in word formation, until they finally become identical, because in pronouncing them the organs of speech have to perform less work. Thus, for example, the original Hungarian forms of *hozjuk*, *nézjük* became the present *hozzuk*, *nézzük*; or the Latin *septem*, *octo* became the Italian *sette*, *otto*.

The avoidance of labour therefore rests upon a biophysiological law, and if we consider man solely from this point of view, Lafargue, the French socialist who wrote a little book *on the right to idleness*, was right.

Besides the unpleasant character of labour, however, we must take into account yet another factor, one which shows precisely that every kind of labour consists not only in the exertion of the musculature but is at the same time a product of the mind, however mechanical that labour may be.

Let us look at the practitioners of the various noble sports: there we see, for example, the champions of regattas, who on a single summer day in scorching heat perform superhuman labour; there we see the mountaineers, who in rain, snow, and storm, amid mortal dangers, exert such muscular effort as equals the energy expended by the most heavily burdened labourer over several days; and yet it is as though they felt no fatigue at all — they do not complain about the unpleasantness of work. In short, it does not weigh upon them as a burden, and this precisely because they perform this work entirely of their own free will, so to speak, out of sheer pleasure.

It is clear that in work — even in bodily labour itself — we must also take

into account yet another factor besides the musculature and the brain directing the activity. In every conscious activity, beyond physical strength and the work of the brain, there is the work of the soul: the will. In fact, this is what precedes the others, sets them in motion, and steels anew the strength that is being depleted.

For this reason, the evaluation of work must necessarily take into account this moral factor as well, which not only makes work easier but also renders its product more precious — so to speak, more ideal — and elevates work almost to the rank of art.

It is true that we perform no work at all without the exertion of the will; yet there is still a significant difference as to whether this will is guided by external compulsion or inner constraint, or instead by self-determination or a sense of duty.

Work was performed under external compulsion by slaves; under inner compulsion by all those who work only so as not to starve, and who would immediately lay aside their labour as soon as this reason ceased to exist. He who knows that work is a duty works out of self-determination.

This duty was set forth and proclaimed to the world most decisively and most clearly by Christianity, applying it to every human being without exception: *"He that does not work, let him not eat,"*, as Saint Paul the Apostle expressed it. This command is the correlative of the principle that every human being has a right to the enjoyment of the goods of the earth. Since the goods of the earth — which include not only food, drink, clothing, and the necessities of bodily life, but also the necessities of culture and spiritual life — come into being through labour, however, or come under our disposal and dominion by means of labour, it follows that everyone must take part in this conquering struggle by which humanity becomes the master of nature, and indeed to a greater extent the greater the strength — spiritual, material, or physical — with which one is endowed. Debitores sumus, we are debtors. Every human being must repeat these words of Saint Paul, for we are all debtors—each to a greater or lesser degree—to the society that raised us, provides for us, feeds us, clothes us, educates us; we are debtors to the past, debtors to the present, and indeed to a greater extent the more we have received in spiritual and material goods, in powers of soul and body. This debt must be repaid through social labour, through the exertion of our spiritual or physical strength; and each person repays it best by developing his or her talents in accordance with needs, in such a way as to raise social well-being as much as possible — which includes not only the requisites of material

life, but also the advancement and dissemination of culture.

Jesus expresses this as follows: *"To whom much is given, from him much will be required."*[1]

This is the proper measure which alone can restore social equilibrium. For since — as we have seen — natural science leads to the conclusion that absolute equality does not exist, the effort of communistic socialism to impose as equal a burden as possible upon everyone, to place strong and weak, man and woman, the more and the less developed in mind or body, under a single measure, is the greatest social injustice.

This would not be equality, but rather a distortion of equality, for since here, with the variation of the value of *P, p* Q remains equal to *(Q = q)*; consequently,  in accordance with this,  .

By following its Master, who as a *"carpenter and the carpenter's son"* first performed manual labour and then the labour of teaching, which He brought to completion with the divine work of Redemption, the Church set work before mankind as a universal human duty and thereby accustomed people to an entirely new evaluation of work.

While Plato's theory of the state regards labourers and craftsmen as second-rate people, since their occupation is base and dirty and therefore unworthy of an honourable man; and whereas according to Cicero one cannot live in a workshop and be respectable, and the occupation of craftsmen is not noble[2]; by contrast, the proclaimers of the Gospel were for the most part fishermen, and even the highly learned Apostle Paul earns his bread by making tents on his journeys, so as not to be a burden to others.

How different is the conception of the philosophers of classical antiquity from what is expressed by the writing known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* , which gives voice to the public opinion of the Church in the first centuries, when it declares work to be a duty for everyone who is capable of performing it, because idleness is a shameful thing.[3] I wish to refer to Saint Basil of the Church Fathers, who expounds this theme with genuine social insight. *"It is not necessary for me to say," writes the bishop of*

1 Luke 12:48.

2 De Officiis 7, 42.

3 Const. Apost. II. 62.

Caesarea, "how great an evil idleness is, since the Apostle says that he who does not work should not eat. Just as daily nourishment is necessary for everyone, so too is work proportionate to one's strength"; and again: *"None of us is able by himself to procure the necessities of life; rather, each is dependent upon the other."*[1]

The moral value which Christianity invested in work—this was and always will be the weapon by which the various forms of slavery, in their cruder and more refined manifestations, can be overcome.

Nowadays there are those who, examining history only superficially, raise as an accusation against the Church that it did not take the struggle against slavery seriously, that it applied, as it were, the principle of *tolerari posse* to this immoral institution. It is true enough that neither Christ nor the Apostles were Spartacuses; for—as Peabody rightly observes—Jesus was not the Master of the *Mechanics of labour*, but of the dynamism of the soul.[2] For this reason, His disciples did not incite slaves against their masters to measure their strength in a struggle of uncertain outcome. Yet by establishing the principle that work is a moral duty and at the same time a moral value, they overthrew the very legal title of slavery; and wherever, and insofar as, this purified moral conception permeates hearts and minds both above and below, there slavery must of itself cease; indeed, only there can it truly cease. Where the moral value of work is lacking, the institution of slavery revives again in some form.

Although this may appear an almost dreadful truth, it is nevertheless entirely natural. For where there is no awareness of a moral obligation to work, there work is performed only under compulsion — whether internal or external — and therefore it is not regarded as something befitting and worthy of a free human being. Far be it from me to be an apologist for slavery; yet in this circumstance one nevertheless sees this institution justified—an institution which, in its crude form, offends our sense of justice, but in its disguised form is present among us still: it reappears like a weed which we believed eradicated, though its root still lay hidden in the soil.

Thus it happened, for example, throughout Europe and among us as well in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the serfs who had emerged from slaves were burdened with ever heavier obligations through the ascendancy of estates, Roman law, and a capitalist outlook; from this arose

1 Aprocrisis 7 and 20, 3. (Migne vol. 31, pp. 928 and 973.)

2 Ibid., p. 201.

sharp class antagonisms and, on several occasions, bloody class struggles, which among us reached their sad climax in the Dózsa uprising .[1]

The same thing is repeated in our own days, when wage labour, shaped according to the principles of the classical school of political economy that lacks an ethical foundation, has been thrown entirely to the chances of supply and demand. We may add that without the moral evaluation of work —as state-commanded work performed under police supervision— would be a form of concealed slavery even in the imaginary communist society labour, for which it would be scant consolation that everyone would groan under the same fate.

Both the estates driven by absolutistic aspirations and the Manchester politicians guided by capitalist principles failed to regard work as a moral value and the worker as a moral factor. They saw only the material utility of labour and the human material — and we may add that they acted consistently from a materialistic standpoint. One who adopts a materialistic position, whether a Haeckel-style scholar or a Social Democrat belonging to the school of Marx, has no right to judge or condemn their conduct. He can only say that since might is right, as long as their tactics lead to success, they acted — and act — correctly.

Only one who takes an ethical standpoint, who appeals to the principles of the eternal law of eternal justice rather than to utilitarian mimicry-ethics, can pass judgement on their conduct and say that they sinned against social justice.

But together with them, sin all those who fail to grasp work according to its moral value and who apostolize the right to idleness. And those sin as well who do not wish to work; and the punishment of their sin is precisely slave labour—for since society cannot exist without work, still less can it advance and develop: therefore, where people do not work voluntarily, where the moral motive for work is unknown, there labour performed under compulsion—slave labour in the milder or stricter sense—must necessarily prevail.

On a materialistic basis, neither the protection of work nor that of the worker can truly be secured—at most by the methods of a Spartacus or a György Dózsa, the outcome of which nevertheless remains doubtful. From a materialistic aspect one cannot appeal to the demands of justice, since according to such view the strong always possess justice, and the

1 **Acsády Ignác**, *A magyar Jobbágyság története.* Budapest, 1906. 7.

fate of the weak is to perish and be destroyed.

"That is why," as Julius Werner says "the imponderables must be brought into *social reform ; moral idealism proves itself to be the true realism here as well. And it is the banner of Christianity that leads to the moral evaluation of work and to the reform of social conditions connected with labour relations."*[1]

It similarly concludes with Béla Földes' words as follows: *"Every system of labour must be such that it also keeps in view the social, moral, cultural, and health interests of the workers. Any system of labour that would disregard these, that would look only to the economic productive capacity of work, would bring about the greatest barrenness."*[2]

It is true that such a system of labour can be achieved only if, in a certain sense, we all regard ourselves as workers and, as a matter of duty, take part in social labour to the extent for which our strength, training, and vocation make us fit. It is Christianity that teaches us this most effectively and with the greatest vigour. In fact, we also derive the strength for renunciation and self-sacrifice from it, for renunciation and self-sacrifice are also work — and work in the noblest sense of the word — something that is above all necessary if social harmony is not to be disrupted.

On the other hand, Christianity also teaches us to hold work in proper esteem. Today's society, and with it its peace and culture, are in grave danger because of the continual wage struggles and work stoppages, whose legitimate basis lies in the fact that the materialistic worldview regards labour merely as a commodity that can be bought. Strikes are, as it were, protests against this distorted conception, and in this respect strikes are entirely justified.

In the face of liberal economic theory, labour truly has no protection at all: it falls entirely under the chances of supply and demand, and if strikes — or the fear of strikes — did not restrain egoistic employers alien to the Christian worldview, we would awaken to a new form of slavery.

Therefore, the peace of labour, which we rightly long for, cannot arrive until the moral evaluation of work gains ground. So long as labour is placed in a position of subordination under the dominion of capital, labour can enforce its legitimate demands only by means of the revolutio-

1 **Werner,** *Soziales Christentum.* 27.

2 Ibid., 154.

nary element of the strike; and so long as this is the case, a strike cannot in general be regarded as a breach of contract, but rather as legitimate self-defence.

We can see in a strike an unconditional breach of contract only when, in the labour agreement, the right of labour can fully prevail — when labour, as a fully equal factor, can set forth its demands just as capital now does in most cases, unilaterally or at least with superior force.

Those wage struggles which, chiefly under the rule of the capitalist conception, disturb social and industrial peace — even if they temporarily impede the development of economic life — constitute a form of struggle for freedom, in which labour fights for its constitution. This constitution, which secures more peaceful development, can be won not by a materialistic but only by an ethical worldview. Therefore, those who desire peace in industry and labour—and this desire is equally natural and justified for employer and worker alike and is not to be dismissed from political and national-economic perspectives—must return to the moral evaluation of work. This alone can permanently secure social justice**,** as the creator of social peace.

From a moral standpoint, work is a social duty — and for this very reason it is in turn the duty of society to reward work appropriately, namely with a fitting wage and at the same time with corresponding rights.

CHAPTER VIII
THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION

What the flower and fruit are to the tree and the plant, culture is to human society. The plant sends its roots down into the depths of the earth, seeks its nourishment there, and through a peculiar chemical process transforms that filthy mud in its petals into the most vivid colours, and exhales it as sweet fragrance.

Man, too, tills the earth in order to nourish himself; yet he does not live merely in order to eat, but in order to think. What the human intellect thinks and devises, and what human hands embody from that thought of the intellect — that is the flower of human society: cultivation, culture. Culture, therefore, is the product of labour and, so to speak, of labour raised to a higher power**.** Labor of the first degree, like the roots of the tree, procures nourishment; and when the trunk has grown strong and sin-

ewy, when this tree already has branches and leaves, then comes the period of budding and flowering, and from the flower the fruit will emerge, once the day of national prosperity ripens it.

There is something ideal, something poetic in every flower, and yet it serves the most realistic aims, those of the preservation of the species. Culture, too, is the ideal part of human activity, and yet it is precisely what secures the true existence of nations and thus serves the realism of survival.

From the flower of culture comes fruit, which in turn scatters the seeds of national growth. In fact, it does even more: culture grants immortality to nations.

Empires forged together by bloody wars fall apart. Peoples are absorbed by new arrivals. But what human thought has created and what the work of hands has immortalized does not pass away.

Hyksos, Ethiopians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and finally Arabs ruled in the valley of the Nile; yet the pyramids, which were erected in the barren lifeless desert as symbols of immortality, still stand today. In fact, even the people of the Ice Age were not without cultural remains, though even their racial affiliation is mysterious; yet even in their primitive condition they performed work beyond what was strictly necessary for the tasks of mere survival and preservation of the species.

This is where proper culture begins and lies the difference between man and animal. For animals, too, perform work, and often astonishing work. Yet their labour relates strictly only to the preservation of the individual and the species. Although the constructions of some of them — for example, the nests of certain birds or the cells of bees — reach the nonplus ultra of expediency from this point of view, they do not rise above this level.

Human civilization, says Lester Ward, advances according to the economy of the intellect, whereas the development of animals proceeds according to the economy of life; and the difference between these two economies is fundamental. They not only do not resemble one another but stand in direct opposition: the psychological law that governs civilization in a sense undermines the biological law.[1]

1 **Lester F. Ward**, *The Psychic Factors of Civilization.* 2nd Ed. Boston 1906, 259.

But even in those matters that relate purely to the aims of mere survival and the preservation of the species, man does not content himself with what is necessary; rather, he strives to produce something more perfect, something different from what already exists. This can be observed even among the most primitive peoples. Clay vessels, knives, tools, weapons, and the like would all fulfill their purposes perfectly well without any ornamentation; yet even here man already sought to satisfy his aesthetic sensibility. This shows that labour is not merely a sheer productive force, not merely something meant to feed human beings, but something that elevates and perfects them spiritually.

This is the other point in which human activity differs from that of animals: progress, perfection. Accordingly, culture — as the sum total of the manifestations of spiritual life — is the distinguishing mark between man and animal. Human beings may stand at a low, even a very low level of culture, but there are no peoples who are entirely uncultivated and without culture. Animals may form state-like societies — as bees and ants do — but they have no culture, because they have no ideal; they have their goal, which they must reach and do reach, but they do not have that goal toward which they must continually strive and press forward.

The phenomenon that visibly withdraws human culture from the other realms of nature, from the laws of biology and physiology, has caused no small confusion in those circles where the material world forms the outermost boundary of the intellectual horizon. Hand in hand with this goes the confusion that lies in the evaluation of the worth of culture. It seems almost unbelievable that in the present age, when we bask self-satisfied in the bright sunshine of modern civilization, sceptics arise who raise the question of whether culture — modern education and civilization — is to be regarded rather as a blessing or as a curse weighing upon humanity.[1]

Again and again, and ever more loudly, we hear the cry: "Back to nature!" A Carpenter regards it as the ideal future culture where man should once again feel at one with animals, with mountains and rivers, with the earth itself and with the stars that traverse the heavens.[2]

But the question arises whether culture is indeed in opposition to nature, and whether culture is synonymous with a struggle against nature.[3] Be-

1 **Erpan**, *Ist die Kultur ein Fluch oder ein Segen?*

2 *Die Zivilisation.* Leipzig 1903, 91.

3 E.g. **Ziegler**, *Das Wesen der Kultur 16.*: *"Man's first step above nature is at the same time a step taken against it."*

cause it determines whether culture has a right to exist at all, and whether it is man or culture that must disappear from the face of the earth.

Over-refined cultures that typically inclined toward decadence have always been characterized by the desire to return to nature; people come to loathe the artificiality and falseness of such cultures, and the consequence is a striving toward what is natural and true. Such a reaction was, for example, the movement of the idyllists in Greek culture, who, in their imagination, retreated from the corrupt age of their own time back to the days of Homer. Just as old men become children again, so they placed themselves back into the natural milieu of primeval times.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in Rousseau and in the romantics of the last century, although the nature into which they imagined themselves was more like stage scenery. Even so, the enthusiasm with which they embraced the naïveté and freshness of natural life resembles the instinctive longing of the city dweller to rest his overwrought nerves in the quiet of rural life or on the lofty heights of sky-piercing mountain ranges.

Today, however, we also encounter those who hold as their ideal the wildness and boundlessness of nature-like barbarism, the Nietzschean pre-moral age, in which the value of action was judged by its results, and no one asked how those results came about.[1]n all these cases, however, we see that they are not clear about what is natural with regard to man. In this respect, even Brunetière errs when he presents morality, civilization, and culture as the opposite of nature.

"Nature," he says, "is immoral from head to toe—so immoral that in certain respects all morality, namely in its fundamental principles, is nothing other than a direct reaction against the teachings and counsels that nature gives. ***Vitium hominis, natura pecoris****, says Saint Augustine, if I am not mistaken; and in fact, there is no vice for which nature does not give instruction, and no virtue from which it does not deter us… If we were to follow nature, would we not have to abandon all hope for the future of humanity? They cry out to us: "Immerse yourselves in nature!" But if we are not careful, this would amount to an immersion in animality. Certain natural scientists who call upon us to follow the voice of nature in everything do not take care that we would be steering the course of history and culture backward by doing so. We have become human only insofar, and can become ever more so only insofar, as we are able to separate ourselves from nature and occupy within its domain a place of our*

1 **Nietzsche**, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. 57.

own—like a state within a state."[1]

This, however, immediately appears to be a paradoxical assertion, and I agree with one of Chamberlain's critics when, in opposition to that cultural historian's claim that the aim of culture is emancipation from nature, he advances the thesis that we can do nothing against nature; that struggle against nature is equivalent to self-destruction, and that the highest ideal lies in struggling for nature. However, it is just as clearly an error — and one that also contradicts the facts — to conclude that the highest ideal is therefore animality.[2] For on the basis of natural-scientific sociology one would then also have to say that culture is something nonsensical; for if culture and nature are opposed to one another, then culture, as something purposeless or even counter-purposeful, would hinder development, and thus no other judgement could be pronounced upon it than: *censeo delendum*. On the other hand, however, the whole of human history shows that healthy culture promotes development; that more cultivated peoples are also stronger peoples; in fact, that man would not even be able to compete with animals if it was not for his culture, for what establishes man's superiority is not his physical strength, but his culture.

All these intermingling confusions flow from a single fundamental error. This error consists in failing to distinguish human nature from the rest of nature, in regarding human nature as nothing more than a mere complex of biological laws. From a purely biological point of view, culture is unnatural, and as such could never have come into being; but if it had nevertheless arisen through some blunder of nature, then nothing would remain but to follow the alleged wisdom of Caliph Omar and tear down our cultural monuments and burn our libraries. It is to be feared that if materialism were to take power into its own hands, this is what would indeed occur. At the very least it would have to occur, if materialism were to draw its ultimate conclusions: it would then have to do what one fanatic of the Paris Commune wished to do, when he sought to reduce the art treasures of the Louvre to ashes with petroleum flames.

However, culture does exist — and no one can deny it; it exists to such an extent that we cannot even conceive of man without it; it is so much a necessity of human beings that without it man would have missed his purpose; it is inseparable from him, and the higher he stands on the ladder

1 *Discours de Combat*, I, 92.

2 **Fr. Wüst**, *Entgegnung*. 1905, 29.: „*"There is no higher ideal than the natural; only a culture fanatic could perhaps dispute this."*

of development, the greater the degree of culture he has attained.

Consequently, strict logic dictates as an incontestable fact that man as a whole is a dual being, both physical and spiritual, and that therefore the process of development of the individual and of all humanity must be assessed and evaluated not only according to biological laws, but also according to ethical and metaphysical ones.

Tertium non datur. Man is either an animal, in which case the highest ideal left to him is animality, and everything else is nothing but the fanaticism and illusion of culture – or else he has higher aspirations which he must attain, and which he does attain partly by means of his animal nature and partly in spite of it. However, such aspirations do exist; in fact, without them there is no human development. And since all development consists not in what is unnatural, but in the perfection of what is natural, it follows that ideals standing above material nature belong to human nature itself, as a necessary complement of being a human. A human being who is moved solely by the laws of biology is as inconceivable as an animal or a plant that would exist under the dominion of the laws of mechanics alone.

Consequently, man — individually as a person and collectively as a society — possesses a teleology, an ultimate end, which extends beyond the realm of visible things. I am aware that this word, teleology, has been struck from the vocabulary of so-called positive science. But it has not been able to replace it with an adequate equivalent; for what it has put in its place — evolution — by no means fulfills the calming and satisfying task that the concept of teleology fulfills for the inquiring and ever-questioning intellect. Teleology, like force in mechanics, can be expressed by a line in which I see the point of origin and the final point: one is the point of departure, the other the final goal. Evolution, by contrast, can be represented only by a line whose beginning and end cannot be seen. He who speaks only of evolution stands down in the valley beside the roadway: he sees the trees, shrubs, and milestones along the road, he can examine the material and structure of the road itself, but from all this he still does not know where it begins and where it leads.

He who speaks of teleology ascends to a mountain summit, from which he can survey the endpoints, even if he cannot explore all the details. In short: evolution merely indicates direction, and direction is not yet a force that moves, but only marks the path of movement.

It is shown beautifully by Kidd in a more recent work that we must rise

from the valley of evolution to the heights of teleology; that the word development does not provide a final solution; that development itself is not the play of blind chance; in fact, that there is teleology even within evolution. He points out that the work of the present proceeds for the future according to an unconscious plan. This is so in the animal and plant world, and so it is in human society as well.

Other sociologists of positivist orientation such as Taine, Tarde, Stein are compelled to recognize religion as the most significant cultural and social force, and to acknowledge that nothing has been able to rival Christianity in consolidating society and in spreading general culture.

Let us conclude with the words of Taine, the French positivist, which he wrote on the irreplaceable nature of Christianity as a cultural factor in his work *Origines de la France contemporaine* :

"Today, after eighteen centuries, Christianity is the spiritual organ and wing of four hundred million human beings, without which they would not be able to rise above themselves. And whenever, over the course of these eighteen centuries, these wings have grown weary or have been broken, public and private morals also decline. We see people become pagans in Italy during the Renaissance, in England during the Restoration, and in France during the period of the Directory; cruelty and sensuality proliferate, and society becomes, as it were, a den of robbers and a place without honour. Only when one examines this phenomenon more closely does one truly learn to appreciate what Christianity has brought into our modern society. Neither philosophical reason, nor artistic and literary culture, nor any form of government can replace these services. Only Christianity can hold us back from the dangerous slope on which we stand. The ancient Gospel is still today the most effective instrument of the social instinct."

What the French thinker says here is fundamentally the same as what Tertullian expressed with classical brevity in these words: *Anima humana naturaliter christiana.* The human soul is by nature Christian — that is, it is drawn toward that idealism which is a life-giving intellect, and which finds its unadulterated expression in Christianity.

Everything that nourishes and strengthens this idealism carries man and humanity forward; and everything that attacks and weakens it leads toward decadence.

Responsible publisher:
Dr. Koloman Brenner
President of Europe Is Our Future

Printed and bound by: Schwarcz és Társa Kft.
www.schwarcznyomda.hu

English language editing by:
Sándor Joó

2025

Main partner:
Sallux | ECPP Foundation

Office room: 2.10
Koningin Wilhelminalaan 5
3818 HN Amersfort
The Netherlands

E-mail: info@sallux.eu

Sallux is the political foundation for the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM). Sallux means "Salt and Light" and we want to spark a salted debate where needed and shed light on the issues we face. We present solutions by organising events and distributing relevant publications and will not stay on the safe side of the status quo.

Disclaimer:
Since 2011, the activities of Sallux have been financially supported by the European Parliament. The liability for any communication or publication by Sallux, in any form and any medium, rests with Sallux. The European Parliament is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

Dr. Sándor Giesswein (1856–1923) was a prominent figure in the Hungarian Christian Democratic movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through his ideas and scholarly work, he made a significant contribution to the rooting of Christian social thought in Hungary as articulated by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*.

One of his most important works, *Social Problems and the Christian Worldview*, was published in 1907. Giesswein dedicated the book to his fellow Members of Parliament of the time. The content and core messages of the book remain relevant to this day, not only for politicians, but for all those who seek Christian responses to contemporary social challenges.

Responsible Publisher:

EURÓPA A JÖVŐNK
EGYESÜLET

sallux
ECPP FOUNDATION