

The Science of Socialism

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THE SOUL OF MAN AND SOCIALISM.

RUDOLF Eucken, the great German philosopher, rejects the basic principles of Socialism because "Socialistic culture directs itself chiefly to the outward conditions of life, but in care for these it neglects life itself."

He tells us, with great eloquence, that the great aim of humankind is to pass from the natural to the spiritual plane of life, and "This particular way is not a mere development, but a self-development. The aim of the spiritual is to develop its own self through the human being. In this way man is given the possibility of developing a self, a personality in a very real sense."

This self, personality, or soul of man, is of the highest importance. Its suppression means infinite loss not merely to the individual, but to society as well.

And it is because Socialism is purely materialist and "directs itself to the outward conditions of life" (meaning, thereby, the food, shelter, and clothing which are essential to life), that Rudolf Eucken rejects Socialism. He finds in its principles the negation of all that which is noblest and best in man, the ruthless suppression of the spiritual life of the individual and of society.

This contention, so ably and so eloquently placed before the world, is considered by many to be unanswerable, and to dispose of Socialism once and for all. Let us examine the relations of Socialism to this spiritual life of man which Eucken deems to be of such paramount import.

In the first place, the Socialist contends that the most important task of men's lives is in the provision of ample food, warm shelter and adequate clothing. They further assert that until these primary needs are supplied it is useless to talk of the soul of man and to appeal to the spiritual life of human kind.

There can be very few persons who will deny the above assertion. Everywhere do we find that hunger, and squalor and misery are the foes of the highest and the noblest in human life. When the wolf of hunger stalks through the front door, the inspiration of the spiritual slinks out of the back door.

Who can say that the conditions of life and of work which obtain today are such that the highest and the noblest in man can gain supremacy? Who dare say that the spiritual in man can live and have its being under the deplorable conditions of the existing social order?

Think, for a moment, of the existing condition of affairs. The overwhelming mass of the people in every country find themselves condemned to a life of toil. Early and late do they work. They are summoned to their tasks in the morning by the strident tones of the factory whistle, and in that factory—which is often extremely unhealthy—they turn a wheel or tend a machine under the watchful eye of the foreman. Their home-life is spent in surroundings which bear the ugly impress of commercialism, and where the soul of man gives place to dollars and cents. Insufficient food, unhealthy homes; the direct want and anxiety always on the door-step—is there one man who dare say that art and science, philosophy and culture can thrive in such conditions. Modern Capitalism, in its ceaseless search for profit and still more profit, crushes beneath its iron-heel, the souls of men and women. The highest and the best, the purest and the noblest, all that which raises man above the brute beast of the forest and the jungle, all this is ruthlessly suppressed. Capitalism is the direct antithesis of the spiritual in man.

The Socialist is in the forefront of those who desire the development of the soul of man, and who want for the personality of man an opportunity for

a wider and fuller expression. And he asserts, that this development can take place and this desideratum be gained only when there is a change in the economic basis of society. He demands that the material needs of every man, woman and child be amply supplied, confident that by so doing the soul will have ample opportunity to function.

As we have seen in previous articles, the history of the human race has been the story of class-struggles. Man has been striving, practically aimlessly, to satisfy his material needs. This struggle for bread and butter has excluded, to a very large extent, music and science and art—all that which makes life worth living. Says Engels

"In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind . . . has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class-struggles forms a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and oppressing class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, expression, class-distinctions and class struggles."

Thus does Engels proclaim, in a sentence which has become classical, the historical basis of Socialism, and point the way to the spiritual emancipation of man. As long as exploitation and oppression continue, so long must the personality or soul of man be in thralldom.

The history of mankind is rich in its lessons. Since the establishment of private property in land, the history of mankind has been one long and sordid series of class-struggles. Man has been the servant of his environment, the slave of the conditions which he himself has created.

Especially is this so today. The "tool-using animal" has invented many and complex machines to do his bidding and to satisfy his needs. The last fifty years have witnessed a wonderful increase in the power of man over the great forces of nature. By the development in his power he is enabled to create mountains of wealth and to pile up riches greater far than those of Fortunatus.

Despite this increase in wealth-producing power, however, the great mass of the people are working early and late for a bare pittance, are compelled to struggle against each other for a crust of bread, are forced to become the slaves of the tools and the machines which their fellows have created.

Never in the long history of the human race, was man so much and so helplessly the slave of material conditions, the hapless victim of his social environment. In other words, the struggle for a living has become so intense and the warfare between the two classes has developed such bitterness that altruism is almost dead and the soul of man a hollow sham. Man has yielded to the gold-lust and has descended to the level of the tiger in the jungle.

There can be no manner of doubt that the personality of man would be rapidly developed were it not for the egotistic forces of economic competition forever assailing him. It is for Socialism to remove those adverse influences which have been accumulating under Capitalism to allow for a greater expansion in the spiritual life of man.

We are far too busy passing from one grey street to another grey street to add up figures or to swallow patent medicines to think that life can be lived nobly, burningly and brightly, for great ends and in great passions. We have been so absorbed in trying to gain a livelihood that we have forgotten how to live.

It is the aim of the Socialist to remove the root causes of economic oppression, and by so doing, to emancipate man from the galling slavery of material tyranny. He realises that so long as man must strug-

gle for a crust of bread, just so long will the soul of man lack adequate expression.

The action and re-action of material conditions upon mind is patent to all. There can be no question that slums, bad food, long hours of labor, and all those conditions of life and of labor which obtain today stunt the bodies and dwarf the minds of the overwhelming mass of the population. And there can also be no manner of doubt that these wretched conditions which are productive of such evil results are themselves the bitter fruits of the private ownership of land and of capital. Crime and insanity, the low (almost bestial) morality which characterizes modern life in the main—these spiritual blots upon our social life are the inevitable products of that system of wealth production and distribution known as Capitalism. Until Capitalism is abolished, the soul of man can never be free to function.

That is the duty of the scientific Socialist. Having analysed the economic structure of society and having studied the experiences of past times, he knows that there can be no material progress towards human freedom, no striking advance in the mental emancipation of human-kind so long as the essentials of wealth production are in the hands of a privileged class.

With the birth of the Socialist Commonwealth the struggle for individual existence disappears. Then, for the first time, man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and the control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of Nature, because he has now become the master of his own social organization. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of Nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organization, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by necessity and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history, pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously make his own history—only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him.

"It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."

That is the reply of the scientific Socialist to Rudolf Eucken and his followers. Socialism does deal with the soul of man, does strive to re-mould the intellectual and moral life of the people. It does this, not by means of preaching an impossible idealistic morality, but by going to the root-causes of economic antagonisms, and by removing those causes, emancipating mankind from the galling servitude of economic necessity.

Next Article: "Social Control."

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