

Materialist Conception of History

FOR BEGINNERS

LESSON V.

WE concluded our last lesson to take it up this week under the divisions made by Lewis Morgan in his "Ancient Society."

1st.—Lower Status of Barbarism.

This period commenced with the infancy of the human race, and may be said to have ended with the acquisition of a fish subsistence and of a knowledge of the use of fire to cook their fish. Man was then living in his original restricted habitat which must have been a warm climate because his natural subsistence was wild fruits and roots, and in a future lesson we will find that all the earlier civilizations arose where this virgin fertility of the soil was the prominent factor in early human development.

2nd.—Middle Status of Savagery.

It commenced with the acquisition of a fish subsistence and a knowledge of the use of fire, to the invention of the bow and arrow. Cultivation at this period was unknown, and until the invention of the bow and arrow hunting was too precarious. The fish diet gave man more independence of climatic conditions and the soil's fertility, enabling man to spread over a greater portion of the earth, following seashores, rivers, lakes and streams, leaving the original habitat.

3rd.—Upper Status of Savagery.

It commenced with the invention of the bow and arrow and ended with the invention of the art of pottery. The bow and arrow made hunting safer, and man again was able to enlarge his subsistence and spread over a greater surface of the globe through his increased food supply obtained from hunting.

4th.—Lower Status of Barbarism: From the production of the art of pottery which is the most effective test that can be selected to fix a boundary line between savagery and barbarism, and all tribes that never attained the art of pottery are classed as savages, whether by original invention or adoption. In finding this lower status of barbarism's termination and the commencement of Middle Status of Barbarism, Morgan states that a difficulty is encountered in the unequal endowments of the two hemispheres which began to influence human affairs after the period of savagery had passed. He says it may be met by the adoption of equivalents.

In the Eastern hemisphere domestication of animals, in the Western hemisphere the cultivation of maize and plants by irrigation and the use of stone in house building, have been selected as sufficient evidence of progress, to work a transition out of lower barbarism to middle barbarism.

It leaves in lower barbarism those tribes that made pottery but were without cultivation of maize and plants in the west, and domestication of animals in the East.

5th.—Middle Status of Barbarism: Commenced with the domestication of animals in the East and cultivation of maize in the west, terminating with the invention of smelting iron.

Upper Status of Barbarism: Commenced with this discovery of iron, and ended with the phonetic alphabet and the use of writing in literary composition. Here civilization begins.

7th.—Status of Civilization: From the invention of the phonetic alphabet with the use of writing, up to the present time.

The important fact that mankind commenced at the bottom of the scale and worked up, is revealed in an expressive manner by the successful acts of enlarging the subsistence through the development of his tools, enabling him to fish and hunt and cultivate, etc. Upon the development of this skill has depended man's supremacy over the earth, dominating every living creature. Without enlarging his subsistence, mankind could not have propagated themselves into other areas not possessing the same kinds of subsistence.

1.—While mankind lived on natural subsistence,

upon fruits and roots on a restricted habitat, they were in a strictly primitive stage. Neither art or institutions in this period.

2.—In fish subsistence must be recognized the first artificial food, because it was not fully available without cooking. Fire was likely first utilized for the cooking of fish, and was a great discovery.

Engels says:

"The discovery of the transformation of mechanical motion into heat, the generation of fire from friction developed to the transformation of heat into mechanical motion the steam engine. In spite of the tremendous revolution in the direction of freedom which the steam engine has produced in society, there is no question about it that the production of fire from friction still surpasses it as an agent in the liberation of humanity, because the production of fire from friction for the first time gave man power over the forces of nature and separated him for ever from the animals. The history of man can be regarded as extending from the period of the practical discovery of the transformation of mechanical movement into heat, to that of the transformation of heat into mechanical action."

Fish was universal in distribution and was of unlimited supply; it was the only kind of food at all times attainable. Man became independent of climate and locality; he migrated from his original habitat. He was also able to bake the roots and preserve them.

3.—the remarkable invention of the bow and arrow gave the first deadly weapon for the hunt; gave a powerful influence upwards in human progress, and stands in an analogous relation to the period of slavery, as did the iron sword to the period of barbarism, or firearms to the period of civilization.

From the precarious nature of man's food supply outside of fish areas, cannibalism became the dire resort of mankind. The ancient universality of this practice is being gradually demonstrated.

3.—The cultivation of the soil was developed in the Western Hemisphere as a consequence of the unequal endowments of the two hemispheres, the eastern possessing all the animals adapted to domestication, save one, and a majority of the cereals; while the western had only one cereal fit for cultivation and that the best. It tended to prolong the older period of Barbarism in the Eastern Hemisphere and shorten it in the Western. But when the most advanced tribes in the Eastern Hemisphere had domesticated animals which gave them meat and milk, their condition, without a knowledge of the cereals, was much superior to the American aborigines in the corresponding period with maize and plants but without domestic animals.

This domestication is believed to have developed private property owing to the pastures being eaten up and the men attending the flocks going afar in search of pastures new. The domestication is believed to have developed in the Eastern Hemisphere before cultivation, because various languages have common terms for animals but not for the cultivated plants and cereals. Agriculture is believed to have developed in the Eastern Hemisphere more through the need of feed for the domesticated animals than for the needs of man himself.

This progress of the human race, when halted, proceeded further whenever a discovery towards the production of food was obtained.

4.—Meat and milk subsistence from the domesticated animals provided a permanent subsistence, and was the means whereby the Aryan and Semitic races developed a higher type of man than was found in the Western Hemisphere, where the absence of animals adapted for domestication obtained, unless in the case of the llama.

5.—Unlimited subsistence, through field cultivation with the working of domesticated animals, and the development of crude ploughs through the discovery of the native metals, alloyed copper with tin, producing bronze, and the furnishing of iron tools capable of holding a point or an edge, was a great

event in human experience which formed the basis of civilization. The want of iron tools arrested the progress of mankind. They would have remained in barbarism to the present hour had they failed to bridge this chasm.

Lewis H. Morgan points out that mankind has passed through five different forms of marriage as a result of his change of methods of obtaining a living.

1.—Consanguine Family.

The Matriarchate marriage form consists of a family relationship living together in the marriage relation called the consanguine family, or first form or marriage. Sir John Lubbock was among the first to detect the evidences of group marriages in his "Origin of Civilization." With the invention of the bow and arrow, hunting giving more food, the family which previously took no chances to feed strangers with its limited food supply was able to disregard the customs of their ancestors and marry outside of the family.

Therefore develops, 2. Punatuan Family.

A group of women who may or may not be sisters, is married to a group of men who may or may not be brothers. Even this family breaks up into smaller groups. A man went to the home of the wife and the children belonged to the wife's gens. This custom of marrying outside of the gens is called exogamy; later it became the rule.

Ward says in "Pure Sociology," p. 193-200: 568: "No one was allowed to marry inside of the gens."

3.—A higher developed form of marriage was the Syndyasmian. It was a pairing family, several of them living in communal houses all-partitioned off. The fact of them living in this manner is a proof of the feebleness of the family organization to face alone the hardships of life. The relation of the pair continued only at their pleasure. The husband could put away his wife at pleasure and take another wife, and his wife could do so with equal rights.

4.—Patriarchal family marriage allowed one man to marry many wives, followed in general by the seclusion of wives.

5.—Monogamian Family is founded on marriage between single pairs, with exclusive habitation.

This form of marriage, which exists today, was the outcome of private property. The men folks, taken away from the tribal community with the need of pastures new for the domesticated animals, inaugurated the private ownership of the domesticated animals by those who attended them.

The descent of the children, who previously were named after the mother, was changed to the descent of the man.

This seclusive pairing family, which made it possible to trace descent in the male line and hand down the personal and economic interests of man through the development of private property, now demanded this form of marriage to enable him to trace his own offspring. This private property, developed out of land and animals, accomplished monogamic marriage.

The family, instead of being the basis of the State, we find has no power over the State, but is a creature of the State. The family became a social institution first and a moral institution afterwards. The State prescribes the forms in which families may be legally established, and determines the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the offspring, and establishes laws of inheritance.

The State can change the laws and precepts of marriage without affecting its own existence and general powers, but the economic conditions have a destructive influence on the family.

With the lack of employment for instance, and the drifting of young men into the cities, with a steady decrease in the number of marriages, our industrialism has, through economic necessity, pro-

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