

II

It may be with some reason pleaded that the defects of modern democracy spring from the conditions under which it emerged as a historical fact. It has appeared with an aspect altogether too negative, as though the abolition of monarchy or aristocracy or any form of privilege were sufficient to bring it to birth. The democratic principle has implications which are not exhausted with the destruction of autocracy or aristocracy or even with the formal affirmation of popular sovereignty and the institution of a universal and equal franchise. Historically, democracy is the product, direct or indirect, of popular risings against political privilege whether vested in a person or in a class. Probably we should have to seek a still anterior cause in the power of economic exploitation which political power confers upon him who holds it. The mainspring of revolution is the sense of disinheritance rendered intolerable by injustice and exploitation and the consequent demand of the disinherited class for its appointed share in the common human inheritance of light and life. But the tragedy of revolution (despite the conventional historical judgment) is that it has never gone far enough. The records of revolution are filled chiefly with its negative and destructive performances because its impulse, not having been sustained by an adequate social vision, ran out before it completed its work or before it