

to year to the production of such goods as meet the needs of the moment—from books or newspapers of such and such a kind, down to ribbons of such and such a price, colour and quality, the case is the same again. In all these cases we have labour of a given amount and kind, which produces what is wanted instead of what is not wanted, which produces much wealth instead of little, because it is directed by faculties which, whoever possesses and exercises them, are specifically different from those involved in labour itself.

They are specifically different in a way which we may now express with precision, aided herein by a reference to Ruskin's excellent analysis of skill. All labour, even the rudest and simplest, involves, as Ruskin rightly recognises, some simple exercise of a human mind directing it. Labour rises in quality, and acquires the character of skill, in proportion as the mind which thus directs the hand evinces qualities which are above the normal minimum, whether these consist in nothing more than a somewhat exceptional quickness, or comprise, as they do at times, all the potency of artistic genius. But they are essentially—to quote once more Ruskin's language—incommunicable. Their action ends with the task on which the man possessing them is engaged. Skill, in short, is the mind of one man directing his own labour. The directive faculties which we are now specially considering are the mind of one man directing the labour of others.

The moment we realise the nature of this distinction, we find the keystone that is missing in Ruskin's arch. The fact on which I have just been insisting is recognised by Ruskin himself, but his faulty methods of analysis deprive him of all power of expressing it. It is, he admits, difficult to set any limit to the "power of mere thought," regarded as a productive agency. But, insisting as he does on identifying all such thought with "skill," he is unable to justify this admission in any terms of his own theory. If such thought ends, as he says it does, "in accelerating the manual labour" of the thinker, the limits of its productivity are so narrow as to be practically