

# Human Nature

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If one is intransigent enough to follow the capitalist-minded one through the distraction of "divide-up," "the reward of genius," and the "rights of individual initiative," he will finally come upon the wicket that opens into that great realm—human nature.

To the mind stimulated by capitalist formulae, Socialism is Utopia, incapable of realization by weak and unstable humanity; a fool's paradise, continually voided by the "natural" perversities of the "old Adam." To "sin" is innate in "human nature," says the illusioned wisdom of individual idealism. The erring heart of man must be regenerated before the conditions of life can ever be exalted; and the inordinate greed of desire abrogated before happiness and contentment can reign in the pulsing world of reality. We agree—with qualifications.

There is a proverb that "human nature is human nature." No doubt. But it is something more. It is no constant of creation. It is a product of human gregariousness. It is a result of time and age experience; and it reaches down in kinship to the very roots of life. It is not merely an expression of human society—a vague negative of generality. It is a concrete manifest of a definite character of society. Society is grouped together according to its needs and interests. Those needs and interests determine the nature of the organization, and the nature of the individual man is the reflex of the time-group to which he belongs.

In political society there are two economic classes, the master and owner—the slave and worker; and because of that primary division there are innumerable variations of class distinction. And also because of that first division, there is a general ideation, and a general nature permeating through the whole social mass. It is "wrong to steal" because political society has differentiated between "thine and mine"; he who steals becomes degraded, because he suffers the "base" instincts of the fallen man to dominate him, and subvert the morality of political civilization. It is wrong to undermine the foundations of class society, because it threatens the supremacy, of privilege; the guilty one is seditious because the "inherent" evil of "human nature" overcame the nobler concepts of property. It is wrong to advocate "free love," i.e., the mutual choice of individual man and woman, freed from all economical compulsion; because it saps the security of the bourgeois state; and the audacious one becomes a particularly conspicuous object of depravity. That is general mass ethic conditioned by interests, and upon it is based "human nature," conditioned by time progress.

Certainly it is wrong to steal—in a society which abhors theft. It is certainly uncomely to invalidate class—in a society of privilege. Certainly immoral to argue economic freedom to the bourgeois state. But, it is a mind characteristic of the time which cannot see that political society is a society of thieves; and that cannot visualize the inherent immorality of a society that imprisons one for taking a loaf and honors another for "acquiring" a railroad. It is a mind steeped in the prejudice of class concepts which is unable to distinguish between owner and master, worker and slave; and whose concept of freedom is the ruling class "right of opportunity." And it is a mind disturbed by flickering appearance, perverted by the sophistries of idealism, and rosetted with mythical divinities, which is incapable of mastering the fundamental difference—and the inner meaning of its implications—between the ideal love of economic freedom, and the subsidized "romance" of bourgeois convenience.

Time was when the conditions of society were not the conditions of capital. For thousands upon thousands of years Gentile custom held sway over humankind. The ethic of human kind was then the ethic generated by Gentile conditions, and the human nature of mortal man was fructified by the conditions of Gentile organization. The means of life were then the common possession of the primitive commune. These means were the simple resource, the crude appliance, and restricted experience of un-

tutored peoples. The standards of life were precarious; the mode of existence humble; the hazards of chance great. Yet the kinship of the group developed a fraternity which has not since been equalled, and will not again exist until society is reorganized on the comprehensive volitions of the civilized commune. There was an equality of relationship which finds no place, and could fill no function, in the unlovely standards of bourgeois success. Gentile society had an ordered, rational of reason which was submerged in the political exigencies of organized priestcraft. And it had a dignity of character, a spirit of equality, and a bond of communion which became atrophied with the advent of the military marauder and the pedatory merchant. To steal, to trade, to own, had no significance; for all that was free to the needs of all. The only privilege that existed was the natural birthright of kindred; and the fundamental passions of humanity were satisfied without the fearful licentiousness of the capitalist world.

Ancient society, with its meagre resource and limited production, with its laws of kin and maternal descent, developed an ethic consonant with its need and interest, and its human nature its time ethic. No full clansman would lie or cheat a brother clansman; but he practised both to a stranger. Within the tribe human nature was kindness and help; to enemies it was malignant and cruel. Save for natural calamities, hunger and want and destitution were unknown, and human nature would have revolted at the idea of individual ownership of the means of life, hoarding wealth, or storing common necessities for the sole use of a particular class. The sophisticated missionaries of political lands were shocked at the sexual relations (what they were wont to call "irregularities") of the "heathen" tribes. But the tribal laws of marriage were sacred and inviolate, and seldom broken, a state to which the humanity of capitalism can lay no claim whatsoever. Even in the realm of religion—mythical as all religions are—it was a worship "in spirit and in truth," reverence for a deified ancestor. Not at all the conventional hypocrisy of mercantile Christianity. But the rugged human nature of capitalist society is equal to almost any burden of imposition.

Human nature is a product of the evolutionary process, and like everything in that process it is adapted to changing environments. Surely there is abundant evidence of that. The human natures of the East and the West are incomprehensible to each other. To the Westerner, the Chinaman is a "yellow devil," to the Chinaman, the Westerner is a white variation of the same order. The human nature of commercialism scorns that dogma and all cruelty for its superstitious dogma, the human nature of commercialism scorns that dogma and all its works, but is equally hardened in its own field. To the Hindu the cow is sacred; to the Christian it is a form of food. To the modern man, his wife is inviolate; the Greek offered her to his guest. The South Sea Islander cherishes the skull of his father in his hut; we are content with photographs. Some tribes ceremonially eat their dead, we make the solemnity of death a picnic. An Iroquois Indian would not betray a comrade; political times betray even their gods. An Australian aborigine can dine on an antique whale; we—would rather it were canned. Human nature always revolts at the unaccustomed; never at the repulsive. Always it condones its own usage; never an abstract ideal.

Human nature is not a thing—like a wooden leg or a glass eye. Like digestion or respiration, it is a concrete term for a temperamental function; an expression of the manifest of general environment on particular constitution. Human nature is neither kind nor callous, good nor evil, idealist nor pervert. It is all, or any of those things, according to its immediate circumstances. And its immediate circumstances rest squarely on the fundamentals of life necessity; on self-preservation, food and reproduction. Self-preservation has united man, and most animals, into societies; the search for food has compelled and maintained common endeavor; and the laws of reproduction in association have determined social con-

duct. Through the countless complexities of continual change; through the interactions of ever varying necessities, and the interplay of their mutual reactions, these three have imposed on social man his nature of virtue or vice; his impulse of generosity or greed; his strength or his weakness; his ambition or his unadaptiveness; and the potentials of the ignoble or wonderful aspirations of the ideal. They are the pulsing theme of sentience; the red threading of reality round which, through which, and on which, life harps her infinite variety of factual existence. And according to the circumstantial vicissitudes of the transient age, and the social complex of man, they flash through the human soul, like the coruscating heavens, lifting it on the wings of sublimity, or dulling it on the deadness of stone.

There are all kinds of human nature in the same society—as there are all kinds of men. Because nature never fashions two things alike. Because in the incessant play of change and necessity, life pivots on the laws of adaptation. Because growth, though it spreads (seemingly) in all directions, is impelled by the need of the passing moment into particular channels—and the cycle, ever growing more complex, starts afresh with the self-same laws and the self-same material, but from a new point of departure. There is an infinite scope and scale of variation, and the same outward environment, acting—and reacting—on a different inner temperament, provokes an unending diversity and pattern of human response. The same cause produced the human races, but local detail differentiated in character and color. A common necessity created God, but different climes clothed him with different attributes. A common motive influences human association, but differing interests checker the web of its destiny. The same cause that drove man to his mate, through change of time has diversified its satisfaction. And the same force that urged the haunted man of the wild in quest of physical and social satisfaction compels a continual modification in the conquest of desire, i.e., its attainment.

But precisely the same principle that carried man from the primitive commune to servitude is steadily impelling him from servitude in the higher commune of the social commonwealth. The same necessity that harnessed natural passion with political monogamy is now breaking its long slavery and driving on to the purification of mutual communion. And the same spirit of invention and research which modified the first social industry is again facing man with the need of further centralization of socialized effort. Coming face to face with this necessity, the mind shall see a new light; the beast find a new nature. In the grim hour of necessity we shall discover the regenerating ideal; shall awaken to the conceptual union of matter and spirit; and shall scourge the money changers from the temple courts of humanity. For in the social administration of life's necessities there will be no place for greed, for the ethic of gain shall have disappeared. There can be no burden of privilege, and consequently none of its sordid excess. And the mystery of false desire shall lose its unimaginative forwardness, in the wonder and beauty of natural satisfaction.

Let us have a society where the fear of authority and the spectre of "artificial famine" are not; and the human nature of capitalist exploitation will shed its character of degradation. "as the fig tree sheddeth her leaves." Let us have a society where political devices no longer blight and burden human aspirations and efforts, and man shall develop a new nature as surely as a change of climate induces a new flora. Let us have a society where class and privilege cannot enter; and that society shall blossom like a fertile land. Let us have a society economically free, and the natural passions of humanity shall be ennobled with the new beauty of understanding. Let us have a society whose birth-right is knowledge, and the human mind shall be garlanded and its craven happiness have vanished away; and man shall go, mated with the sweetest happiness. Let us have a world where truth is the final test of things, and the human nature of that world must be fashioned in the image of its creator. R.