

Since, then, the exceptionally skilled labour of individuals is not the only, or even the main agency which co-operates with average labour in the production of modern wealth, we must in order to discover what the main agency is, seek for some analysis of the matter other than that of Ruskin. Let us turn to Adam Smith. He throws a new, though a very incomplete light on the question. The cause, he says, which in all progressive communities enhances the productive power of the individual labourer is not the development by a few of skill that is above the average, but an increase of skill amongst all by the fact that labour becomes divided, so that each man gives all his talents to the doing of some one thing.

Here we have an explanation which, unlike that of Ruskin, does really explain the increased efficiency of average manual labour up to a certain point. We have labour divided in its application, but not (we may assume) requiring different degrees of capacity. But such simple division of labour as that which is here in question, carries us a very short way in the history of industrial progress, and is little more than the starting-point of production as it exists to-day. And even here we see, undeveloped but waiting to develop themselves, two factors other than the mere division of equal labour. One of these is machinery; the other is the business of actively directing and co-ordinating the increasing variety of efforts into which average labour divides itself.

So long as machinery exists only in its early and very simple forms, such as that of the potter's wheel, the devising and constructing of it is not specifically referable to any faculties which we can distinguish from those of the average labourer. But in proportion as machines become complicated, and embody, as they do in their more modern developments, concentrated ingenuity, and the application of abstruse knowledge, the situation changes; and we are able to identify the faculties to which they are due, as faculties residing in particular and exceptional men only. The same thing holds good of the faculties by which labour is co-ordinated and directed.