

Guild Socialism and the State

Social Theory, by G. D. H. Cole. New York: F. A. Stokes Co.

GUILD socialism has hitherto lacked a reasoned theory of social organization. In this book Mr. Cole makes a brave and wonderfully successful effort to grapple with its difficulties. It is no light task to crowd into so small a space what is, broadly speaking, a survey of liberty in terms of institutions; but whatever the unstated implications of Mr. Cole's view, no one will rise from the perusal of this book without a sense that the ground has been cleared for action and that we know with real precision in what fashion the political philosophy of guild socialism differs from all previous views. The task is performed with a precision and a clarity that deserve high praise.

The real purpose that Mr. Cole has in view is to render unnecessary the sovereign and omniscient state. It is for him an instrument of tyranny because the very vastness of its effort will render insignificant not merely the practice but even more the purpose of all other associations. The state is regarded as merely one of a whole series of groups, trade unions, churches, and the like, of which society is composed. None of these groups derives its validity from the state; and none of them can be free if the state is to set the terms upon which its life is to be lived. What Mr. Cole is therefore anxious to discover is a system of co-ordinate autonomies through which, ultimately, the necessary social synthesis may be derived. He is in search, that is to say, of liberty, and he finds liberty in the power possessed by each group of men to perform its given function. He rejects parliamentary government on the adequate ground that a delegation of inclusive power is destructive of true representation. What he would do is to divide life into its various functions, to give to each its system of government, and then by co-ordination of these bodies into some form of joint congress to have an ultimately unifying factor into which the purposes of all may enter.

The head and center of debate is the problem of what that institution, which at present we term the state, is to do. In Mr. Cole's view the state is that form of association in which men meet upon the ground of identity instead of difference. In the state they are essentially citizens, and it is in the hinterland surrounding their specialized functions as engineers or miners or doctors that the state is to perform its task. Defence, justice, education, it is with tasks such as these that the state would concern itself. Or, in economic terms, the state represents the citizen as consumer, as a man needing and enjoying certain goods and services, where the guild represents him as producer. The state, that is to say, would concern itself with seeing that New York got its coal; but the life of the miner would not be internally regulated by its authority. For if the state had that task of co-ordination, it would, ultimately, become again sovereign, which is the purpose that Mr. Cole is eager to avoid. The central arbitrating body will be not merely the state, but a council of functional authorities in which the state would be only one element.

Mr. Cole would doubtless be the first to admit that he has left many questions unanswered; and it will probably best indicate the kind of problem that he raises if I suggest in outline the type of difficulty that occurs to me. Mainly it arises upon the frontier of control, and I do not think it beyond solution. But I do not think either that Mr. Cole has dealt with it, or that his confrères in the National

Guilds movement have any real conception of its importance. The heart of the problem is really a delimitation of areas. Mr. Cole conceives the state as representing the interest of consumers and it must therefore, as Mr. Cole admits, control both income and prices. But, surely, if the state, to take an obvious instance, is to control the price of coal, however great the mechanism of conference we provide, the state is, at a fundamental point, within the heart of the miners' guild; and I would suggest therein that the type of organization towards which that fact looks forward is nearer the solution of the Sankey report than it is to that of Mr. Cole himself. For to the will of the state the miners' guild would have to give an attention so complete as to make it broadly all powerful. If disagreement ensued, reference, I suppose, would be had to Mr. Cole's Joint Congress. In that assembly I find it difficult to understand how the state is, on the one hand fairly represented as against the combined interest of producers, or, even if its demand be successful, is to get its will obeyed if the miners prove recalcitrant. Will the Joint Congress order the army to occupy the mines? But Mr. Cole knows as well as I do that soldiers cannot mine coal, and if we are to go without coal, modern experience of the great industry does not help us to feel subdued. Or does Mr. Cole conceive that the corollary of functional federalism is the prohibition of strikes in industries of public importance? To that argument there are at least two replies. Such limitation really creates a sovereign body to enforce the prohibition, and when the disagreement goes to the heart of a principle no prohibition in the world will be effective as against the will to strike.

There is, in fact, an answer to all these questions. But their statement is important because they bring into prominence the defective aspects of guild socialist theory. What its exponents have thus far failed to explore is its psychological background, on the one hand, and its relation to jurisprudence upon the other. Juristically, indeed, guild socialism, at the moment has no foundation whatever. It is obviously groping towards a pluralistic conception of sovereignty; but it has still to meet the theory of Austin at its root and show by what precise scheme it proposes to replace it. And that is the more important because any social philosophy which depends, as Mr. Cole's depends, upon a careful division of function will need a series of written constitutions and a far more prominent judiciary than is today at our disposal for their interpretation. In a society such as Mr. Cole depicts, that is to say, much, if not most, will turn upon the power of judicial review; and it is important to know the mechanism whereby Mr. Cole proposes to make effective the decisions of the Courts. Here again, one seems driven back upon a state more unified in substance than his theory permits; though, here also, the difficulty is more formal than practical. For it is obvious that the foundation of respect for the judiciary must, in Mr. Cole's system, lie in the manner in which the judiciary is appointed. In that aspect the British Coal Commission has taught us an administrative lesson we should ceaselessly remember.

The psychological problem implicit in Mr. Cole's philosophy is not, I think, at all fairly met anywhere in his book. Mr. Cole—it is a noble fault—always writes as though every member of the community will be as interested as he himself is in the process of government. He assumes at once a far greater identity of nature than is the actual case with any society at the same time as he insists upon a far greater interchange of function. I do

not doubt that there is no greater social wastage than that which is due to our neglect of the immense body of experience which the working-class possesses. But I think that the process of making experience articulate and the further process of translating it into legislative terms are far more difficult than Mr. Cole seems to be aware of. I cannot avoid the feeling that the democracy of the future is bound to be not an undifferentiated mass of citizens but a rather carefully stratified structure in which the critical point will be the important administrative positions. And at that point I feel fairly certain that the kind of psychology which will govern our system of organization is to be found not in the literature of guild socialism but in the very careful analysis presented to the Coal Commission by Lord Haldane. Responsibility, in a word, will involve power; and that power must, to be effective, gather about itself safeguards against a hasty decision on the part of those who delegate it. A democracy will always need leaders and it will always have to trust those leaders. Education will do much to make the test of their fitness more adequate than it is today. But it would be idle to expect that in any community the vast majority of citizens can be made to follow the technical details of administration; and it would be vicious to destroy the importance of continuity by a process of constant change or easy dismissal in the interest of freedom. Anyone who has seen the ideals of Jacksonian democracy at work will realize how imperative it is not to prolong the hold of its misguided ideals longer than is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Cole's book is so stimulating that in a later edition I hope he will remove one unnecessary confusion. To tilt at Dr. Bosanquet is admirable; but it is impossible to accept Rousseau's general will, on the one hand, and reject the general idealist philosophy upon the other. Rousseau's general will, as I have tried elsewhere to show, is the root of some of the most mischievous misunderstanding in the history of political ideas. It is little more than a pious aspiration that the right should prevail; and when it is translated into the practical terms of political procedure it comes to mean little more than majority-rule. The greatness of Rousseau does not consist in the particular solution of the problem of freedom that he proposed, but rather in his unerring perception that it consists in discovering the relation of individuality to organization. Hobbes, at bottom, destroyed individuality that organization might be preserved. Locke ultimately was willing to sacrifice the continuum of social life to purely abstract individual right. But Rousseau perceived that the root of the problem is in their conjunction; and it has been the continuous effort of social philosophy since his time to answer the questions that he posed.

H. J. L.

Kipling's Pet Panic

Letters of Travel, by Rudyard Kipling. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.

Tales of My Native Town, by Gabriele D'Annunzio. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.

SOMEWHERE in the works of Mr. Rudyard Kipling—I think it is in *The Light That Failed*—there is a passage which tells how, for every man alive, however brave he be, the world holds one terror that can beat his spirit to its knees. To one man it may be the dark, shining, swaying face of deep waters; to another it may be the

flash of cold steel; and a third the darkness may turn to a child. Mr. Rudyard Kipling also is not without his own pet panic. He is afraid of white men and the ways of white men. He is afraid of them to the point when control breaks down and the lips are parted by the scream of an ancestral voice that has nothing to do with the civilized self. And this fear makes an ugly and uncharacteristic thing of his new book *Letters of Travel*.

It begins, tantalizingly enough, with a series of letters describing the United States and Japan which were written by the authentic Kipling who was young. He it is indeed who tells us how the Japanese baby played in the fishing-boat, and how at Kamakura one may see "the ancient, orderly gardens with their clipped trees, shorn turf, and silent ponds smoking in the mist that the hot sun soaks up after rain, and the green bronze image of the Teacher of the Law wavering there as it half seems through incense clouds." It is the saddest thing in all literature—no early death can match its tragedy, for there there is no wilful abrogation of the spirit's own high quality—that this man who was a genius because he was younger than anybody else who ever lived and had beyond the lot of ordinary men youth's interested eyes and habit of forcible exclamation at the world's wonders, should abandon himself to the desire to be old; that he should hunger and thirst after senility, with its testiness and gouty prejudice and drawing down of the corner of its mouth at the way life goes, as if it were righteousness; and that his prayer should be completely granted.

In the larger part of this book, which was written after the onset of this voluntary old age, there is nothing to disguise the extent to which he is driven by this crazy fear. When he visited Canada in 1907 he may have taken with him the same pair of eyes that he took to Japan in 1892, but he let them see very little. The Great Lakes they saw, and that jade green lake high up in the Rockies which colored its reflections to its own tint and magically imaged pale green snows. But for the rest he was too busy with what white men have brought into the country of the organization which is characteristic of them. The Western world has not, in spite of the efforts of many strong men of the type approved by Mr. Kipling, been wholly unaffected by the spreading of that "moral rot" which began in Judaea two thousand years ago. That gospel of "softness" has left its mark in a general respect for individual freedom. It has to be so. There is no man so unworthy that he deserves to be a slave, for all men have immortal souls. There is no man so worthy that he can be trusted to own slaves, for all men are miserable sinners. The recognition of those hard facts—the ruins of the empires that depended on a slave-class show how hard they are—has impelled the Western world to the invention of certain social devices designed toward the suppression of slavery in any form. They are clumsy enough, but no one complains of the clumsiness of piles built hastily under the buckling structure. No one but Mr. Kipling. He weeps and will not be consoled because the common men of Canada are so wilfully different from the seething millions, hardly named, of the Indian proletariat, forever sweating in the fields and factories, deterred from any hateful movement towards prosperity and the attainment of individual freedom by perpetual dependence on the moneylender and the assaults of famine and plague. He rages at Canadian labor because it will not hand itself over unorganized to these Canadian capitalists of which we have had surprising experience in this country; apparently feeling, in his en-