

Human Nature and Some Social Institutions

Our Social Heritage, by Graham Wallas. New Haven: Yale University Press.

MOST social philosophers, whether they deal with the concepts of their profession only, or with specific historical, institutional or personal material, take the stuff and function of the social milieu for granted, and discuss only the distribution and ordination of its component parts. Is society for the individual or the individual for society, or each for the other, and how? This is their perennial question, and whether they answer it in terms of a revolutionary philosophy like the Marxist, or of a meliorist philosophy like that of the British Liberal (see, for example, Sir Herbert Samuel's *Liberalism, Its Principles and Proposals*) or a reactionary philosophy like Hegel's or Herbert Hoover's, all they do is to reshuffle the cards, and to make new patterns of the same social materials. It occurs to them only in rare instances to inquire whether the social milieu is good for man; consequently, whatever their party or program, they all found their thinking upon the same assumption—that society itself is an unchallengeable good, and that only its arrangement can be in question. And by society itself they tacitly and practically mean the society of their own day and generation.

On the rare occasions when this implicit dogma of the social philosophers has been challenged, the challenge has usually taken the form of an analysis of the influence of the institutions and ideals of society on an imputed human nature, and a repudiation of the system and all its works. Such a challenge has been conspicuously made by Nietzsche, who found civilization identical with decadence and society with degeneration; by Mr. Edward Carpenter who sees it as a disease requiring a cure; and by Mr. Graham Wallas.

Mr. Wallas differs so radically from the other two in his description of the social milieu and its implications, however, that I do not doubt that he would feel himself in bad company to be associated with them at all. And, so far as his dominant dispositions go, he would be justified. He finds, like them, a radical disharmony between original human nature and the social milieu—particularly that which has come into existence in the last hundred years and more. He finds like them a deterioration in animal self-sufficiency and strength. He finds a deterioration to the degree that the human individual has become a parasite upon his "social heritage" and could not survive without it, yet he is not at ease within it. Instead, however, of repudiating the social heritage, like Nietzsche and Edward Carpenter, Mr. Wallas would conserve it, and readjust it to human nature. "Each generation, if it is to live happily and harmoniously, or even is to avoid acute suffering, must adapt to its present needs the social heritage which it received from the preceding generation." When such an adaptation is involved in "a wide and conscious effort . . . to survey the whole field of our social heritage, and to bring the old into systematic relation with the new," the enterprise is called "reconstruction." And it is as an item in this enterprise that Mr. Wallas offers the present book. It is an item also in another sense. Its fundamental theses were laid down in *The Great Society*. The argument of *Our Social Heritage* is to a considerable degree recapitulation, elaboration, reemphasis or withdrawal of the theses in the earlier book. Thus the psychological doctrines are largely recapitulation, the arguments against Guild Social-

ism and professionalism are elaboration and reemphasis; the discussion of science is withdrawal. Genuinely fresh material appears in the discussion of the nation, of world co-operation, of constitutional monarchy and of the Church. But new or old, the argument proceeds upon the assumption that the survival of man is dependent, like that of a parasite, upon the survival of his social heritage; that this consists of a collection of devices, inventions, stratagems, which are unharmonious with his original nature, and which consequently must be reshaped toward harmony. The body of the book is an analysis of several existing and proposed social devices—mostly in Great Britain.

That the assumptions are mutually contradictory will not trouble a reader accustomed to social philosophy.

II

By the *Great Society* Mr. Wallas means that type of human organization which came into existence with the railroad, the newspaper and the automatic machine. It is "great" in contrast to the little societies that existed when the unit of population was the agricultural worker, and communities could subsist on what they produced at home. The *Great Society* is modern society, industrial society, with its enormous aggregation of workers, and the far-flung interdependence of its parts. It is a society whose agencies can and must operate continuously. Man, however, is not organized so to work. By nature, he works intermittently, whether with brain or brawn. Consequently, man under civilization suffers from fatigue, which is a universal sign of disharmony, and which, directly or indirectly, he tries to evade. The devices of evasion may vary from ca'canny to legislation, in manual labor, and from logic to statistics and emotional play in mental work. An adequate educational system would aim to diminish or abolish fatigue and facilitate sustained effort by a technique of conscious control which would replace impulse with purpose. Such a system would be a "process by which human beings so acquire the knowledge and habits which constitute civilization as to be fitted to live well both individually and in cooperation."

For this cooperation there is a basis in original nature, but not a wide one. Natural man is only loosely and intermittently gregarious. His spontaneous mode of acting with his fellows is a "disorderly process of simultaneous clamor and action," wasteful, but adaptive. In it, thought and action are not differentiated, and the process of thought, when it occurs at all, occurs in isolation. Cooperation in thought becomes possible only through the use of inherited devices of the whole technique of communication. It requires self-control and conscious repression, and hence generates fatigue, and a tendency to revert to the primitive instinctive process which can only be obviated by a clear understanding of the functions and status of each member of the group.

But while, in the group, the instinctive process is close enough to the circumstances of its situation not to do any very great harm, in the nation it is remote. The senses and instincts respond directly to a very limited portion of the national aggregate of men, country and institutions. The rest is not fact, but idea, subject to all kinds of manipulation by interested parties. To form and keep a correct idea it is necessary to get free of all prepossessions, then to realize "the facts of the human type, of the differences between individual human beings, and of the quantitative relation between the grades and kinds of difference." Continuous cooperation of the varieties that constitute the type in the modern industrial state is possible only through con-

scious consent. Such consent can ultimately come from "economic and social equality," better understanding of the money economy, and a positive liking, by each man, for his job. The latter can come about solely through an adjustment of a man's nature, nurture and present way of living to one another. Such an adjustment can be achieved only in a social organization and through an educational system that envisages the qualitative differences between men on the principle: "from each according to his powers: to each according to his needs."

The devices which are at present under scrutiny as likely to secure these ends are the territorial state and the vocational state. The vocational state is that proposed by the Guild Socialists. Although it rests its case upon the idea of the division of labor, the very character of the guild type of association is such as to impose uniformity of standards, habits, and methods upon its members, to make them narrow, resistant to change, resentful of innovation and invention, monopolistic, antagonistic to the necessary accumulation of capital for new enterprises, and opposed to the "integration of labor" which is the opposite of "division" and on which variety and zest in industrial work depend. The mediaeval guilds failed to survive; the modern trades-unions functioned only in their own interest, both during and after the war. It was the "political organization," not the vocational, which effected the necessary "dilution" of industry and pressed forward in the work of reconstruction. Indeed, what the behavior of guilds would be like may be very clearly observed in the behavior of such surviving guilds as those of the lawyers, and the doctors, and the military and such guild-like professional associations as that of the teachers. They are all tradition and precedent-bound, anti-progressive, monopolistic. The lawyers—with their associations of barristers and solicitors—are the worst. The military are the most dangerous, the officers being "intensely class conscious members of one social class and one political party": the "feeling of the army" has become a problem in public policy, to the degree that the control of the army has become an issue for the very existence of democracy.

The same thing, in a lesser degree, is true of the monarchy and of the Church. The monarchy is usually justified and accounted for as a symbol of government without its power, as a device for concentrating and centralizing loyalty as only a living person can. The king "commands allegiance without impinging on government." In point of fact, however, this isn't so. Royal personages—Victoria, for example, or Edward—actively interfere in government and give their opinions weight. Where their sympathies are involved they might conceivably violate the convention not to veto legislation and not to retain a ministry without a majority in the House of Commons. As the army is trained to feel itself entirely "on his majesty's service," its refusal—as during the home-rule controversy in 1913—to carry out the behest of a parliamentary government, might make it an instrument in the hands of royalty against the people. The king as a person is thus a danger, as a symbol he is a clumsy device, which obscures rather than reveals the political relations for which it stands. An alternative ought to be invented.

The Church, also, may become an enemy of the free state. During the war, it showed itself on the whole acquiescent in the national mood and attitude, regardless of whether it was right or wrong. It played for its own interests, rather than the good of mankind, so that it did what was expedient, not what was good. The reason is, that it

has no "world-outlook." It has suspended intellect in favor of sacramentalism. It seeks its justification in the instinctive, the primitive, the subconscious. It is unattached to any general ethical scheme, so that it naturally plays for its own advantage as a vested interest. This means that it would in England seek to control education and oppose loyalty to democracy by loyalty to the church itself or to the nation narrowly conceived. The professionalism of its members would be unutterable. As it is likely to be dis-endowed and removed from control by the state, it is destined to fall into the hands of an ignorant fanaticism against which the antidote is clear thought and frank speech on religious questions by individuals. Christianity is passing: its social functions may be served by "something like the philosophies of Zeno and Epicurus in the Roman Empire," while great mass emotions may get expressed through secular means. "The special task of our generation might be so to work and think as to hand on . . . the heritage of a world-outlook deeper and wider and more helpful than that of modern Christendom."

III

To Americans the devices so far studied and weighed can have only a remote interest. They do not present what William James used to call momentous and immediate options, requiring fatal decisions. The pertinent institutions of American life—industry, agriculture, government, the churches and public education, offer a far different pattern, and involve men and women in too different manners and problems of association. In spite of many allusions to the United States, Mr. Wallas's concrete considerations are very largely irrelevant. That they might bear critically upon our relations with Great Britain there is reason to believe. But how, and with what effect is an unhelpful speculative matter which only the event could determine. Much more pertinent and momentous are the reflections on Liberty, Right, Honor, Independence and Free Will, which the social devices and proposals that come under Mr. Wallas's review safeguard, threaten, or modify; the dogma of "the good life" which he postulates as the objective of social control. These constitute, far more completely than the notion of the parasitical relation between the individual and his social heritage, the criteria of the judgment Mr. Wallas passes on the institutions, proposals and counter-proposals current in Britain.

Liberty remains to Mr. Wallas a state of consciousness. But he supplements the definition in *The Great Society* by some psychological animadversions on liberty as a historical political principle. As such, it is a negative rather than a positive principle. It aims at the removal of obstructions to the spontaneous expression of men's natures, rather than at that expression, and the removal of obstruction of a special kind—namely obstruction originating not in mere circumstances but in one's fellows, and operating in a manner inconsistent with normal human relationship based on instincts. It then gives rise to a feeling of "unfreedom," and becomes an issue of social liberty. In the gratification of the cooperative instincts which regulate common decision and common action, mutually limiting as they must be, freedom of speech will be sufficient to keep the feeling of unfreedom from arising, provided that the instincts of cooperation are in action, that the action does not fatigue, and that the non-cooperative instincts are not too long kept unsatisfied. Human nature being what it is, the complete absence of "unfreedom" is neither normal nor desirable. If we are to "live the good life" we must submit to our

social heritage and undergo education. The absence of social control, "laissez faire," may be the very enemy of liberty. Liberty is not only opportunity to exercise our faculties, but "conscious and organized will to do so."

This will gets specification in the correlated ideas of natural right, honor, and independence. All three are postulated upon human obstruction to instincts such as sex, property, family affection, leadership and following. A right is the removal of a feeling of being "wronged," just as liberty is the removal of "unfreedom." Yet what is naturally right may often not be socially good: some instincts inevitably require repression and redirection. The idea of honor is also bound up with these considerations. It comes into play in terms of a feeling of degradation by one's fellows, a feeling of obstruction and wrong for which there is no redress and no revenge. It is a double-edged principle and may intensify as well as mitigate disharmony. Its operation should be made to conduce to "the good life." The conception of "independence" as freedom from nefarious influences has, as social dynamic, a positive content which right, honor and liberty do not possess. For although it encourages some instincts, it requires the obstruction of others. The instincts it encourages are those engaged on the subject-matter in hand. Those it obstructs are those whose activity is evoked to divert the first from their proper interest, whatever it be,—veracity in the newspaper man, judgment in the judge, administrator or legislator.

Ultimately, freedom and personal worth are implicated in the sense of personal responsibility and personal initiative on which democracy depends. This sense meets, however, a constant challenge and a dangerous enemy in the basic postulate of science, the postulate, namely, that the same effects always follow the same cause. "But it is a serious misfortune for mankind that the idea of causation in conduct leads straight to the old dilemma of necessity and free-will. When a man thinks of the whole universe as a finite interrelated unity he willingly submits to the conception of universal necessity; but when he thinks of his own behavior, or that of his neighbors, as facts separable from the rest of the universe, he often finds himself possessed with a passionate conviction that the human will is somehow "free"; that the issues of his own struggles against temptation or his own choice of means and ends are not predetermined; and that his neighbors, when they do things for which he blames or praises them, could have acted differently." The way out of the dilemma, Mr. Wallas opines, may ultimately be the idea "that everything that happens is both free and caused," that the world is all alive, "that freedom and causation are two sides of one shield." Thus he could both have his cake and eat it. Meanwhile, determinist philosophy and psychology have led to an oversimplification of human motives, and the erection of the current psychological shibboleth into a standard in conformity with which men consciously try to mold their natures. "The statesman or manufacturer was apt to act on the half-conscious assumption that economic 'laws' were rules of conduct which the economist commanded . . . mankind to obey; but which any man was free at his own risk to disobey. A hard-hearted manufacturer, therefore, deliberately attempted to inhibit his own feelings of pity, and justified himself for brutal exploitation of women and children by saying that he was 'obeying the laws of political economy'; while a kind-hearted statesman pleaded for a policy of mercy with the feeling that he was a rebel against law." Darwinism and "scientific determinism" both have

led to an immoral acquiescence in the status quo, and a separation of human motive into "scientific" and non-scientific, which has a paralyzing effect on that initiative on which progress depends.

IV

What weight may be placed on the general conceptions of Our Social Heritage and the policies that are approved or condemned by means of them? The answer to this question will depend in part on the purpose of the book, in part on the degree of agreement or dissent Mr. Wallas's preconceptions evoke. Mr. Wallas, in an aside regarding constitutional monarchy, indicates that the meaning of his work lies in "the effort to make our working conception of the world resemble as near as may be the facts." But in social life, in the relationships between individuals and groups, what are "the facts?" They are not the fixed and unalterable entities which the physical sciences operate with. They are a stream of constantly changing relationships of personal lives which are themselves congeries of relationships in constant flux, and in which a fact is not a preexisting thing to which a conception may conform, but an eventual thing which a conception may create or determine. In spite of much up-to-the-minute psychologism, and the garnering of the American laboratories and the British closets, Mr. Wallas's conception of human nature and human institutions remains for all practical purposes static. His "drives" and "dispositions" and "instincts," empirically inferred and actually handled though they often are, remain hardly anything more than the contemporary restatement of the mediaeval faculty psychology which has received so great a vogue through the work of McDougall, and whose radically atomic and immutable architecture is disguised by a terminological contagion from biology. It disregards the compensatory and expressive role of systems of art, religion and philosophy, and the complicated relations of ideas to experiences. The extraordinary intellectual elisions involved in the idea of the parasitic relation between the individual and his "social heritage" derive from this staticism. Man is as parasitic to earth and air as to his social heritage. Only through assuming the absolute independence of the heritage can the parasitic dependence of the individual be postulated; and then only for an instant, since, if the argument is to proceed, it can proceed only by the tacit counter-assumption that the "heritage" is parasitic to the individual, so that it can be altered by him, and made adaptable to his original nature. As a matter of fact, the relationship is on the whole symmetrical: the social milieu which is the creation—if you will, the secretion—of the individuals who compose society, and those individuals, develop, degenerate, and otherwise vary, together. And whether any phase of the process is to be regarded as development or as degeneration depends on a standard arbitrarily chosen.

Thus, Mr. Wallas, no less than the social theorists he complains of, has been seduced by Darwinistic determinism. No less than they he commits oversimplification in his treatment of the various situations which cause him concern. Take for example his discussion of the nation as fact and idea, and his animadversions on guild socialism. In view of the character and content of nationalist effort throughout the nineteenth century, in view of its emphasis on social imponderables—on language, literature, culture, and its quite fanatical motivation by these instruments and expressions, in view of their influence on the ponderable and economic developments of the Great Society, the absence of all ref-

erence to them in a formulation of "the nation as idea and fact" implies a conspicuous over-simplification of motive in the direction of economic determinism. So also, the consideration of guild socialism in terms of the mediaeval past and the trades-union present. It abstracts both from their setting. It ignores "the social heritage" in which the mediaeval guild was only one element, and with which it had to establish adjustment. It ignores the primary and significant purpose of the trades-union as an insurance of the workingman against the exploitation of the employer, and the significant change in direction and function which the very idea of guild socialism is a symptom of. It fails to recognize that the trades-unions behave as they behave in relation to a community which behaves as it behaves, and that alteration in conduct can come only through mutual adjustment, in which responsibility comes with freedom, not suspicion or coercion.

Indeed, the strictures upon the program of the Guild Socialists illustrate better than anything else Mr. Wallas's intrinsically static habit of mind. They disregard precisely those formulations of Liberty, Rights, Honor and Independence which are the conceptual criteria of the value of institutional devices for "the good life." The type of "obstructions" which gives the trades-union member his sense of "unfreedom," wrong, and dishonor is not even mentioned in the defense of the territorial state which permits them against the idea of a vocational one which would remove them. Yet if those obstructions were removed, exactly the situation might obtain which would justify the claims of Mr. Cole and his comrades. A similar commentary would apply to the discussion of the Church and "world cooperation," but these two examples are enough. For a libertarian Mr. Wallas argues very interestingly with inert categories and because he argues with inert categories, argues foregone conclusions. The fact is, that without deterministic assumptions there could be no argument whatsoever. These assumptions do not however imply what Mr. Wallas thinks they imply. He thinks that they imply inert repetition; the same cause always has the same effect. But they do not. They imply continuity, cumulativeness, addition, growth, without which "evolution" would have no meaning. They imply that in the concrete situations of industry, politics, religion, or what not, there are no sameness; that there are only individuals and particulars whose specific variations are functions of time, place and circumstance. These specific variations may be the effect of intelligence which envisages and directs the situation, determining into what next pattern it shall fall. Freedom is thus possible only through determinism. It is so possible whether the world be regarded as finite—Mr. Wallas states, without argument, the curious and novel doctrine that determinism implies a finite universe—or infinite. That thinkers tend to oversimplify human motives has nothing to do with science or determinism. Oversimplification was as characteristic of Plato and Aristotle, of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, of Hume and Hegel, as of Ricardo and Marx. For this reason the warning against it is always well-taken. But thinking can proceed only by simplification, and the defense against it is an experimentalist attitude, not a complication of tools. This itself involves that freedom through determination in which social progress registers itself. What its bearing on "the good life" is cannot be said, for, though Mr. Wallas repeatedly invokes "the good life" as an unchanging objective of conduct, he invokes it as a simple abstraction, nowhere giving it the character, content and direction which would make it real.

H. M. KALLEN.

Confessions of Peace Makers

What Really Happened at Paris, by American Delegates. Edited by Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour. New York: Charles Scribners Sons.

WHAT did really happen at Paris is something no one will look for within the covers of a book, when the corpus delicti of Europe lies grisly before his eyes. But how it happened and why is something everybody possessed of historical curiosity will want to know as much about as possible. And the gentlemen who give testimony in this volume are in a position to tell much. Their number includes Mr. House, the Silent, who fought valiantly for the principle of "open covenants openly arrived at;" Clive Day, chief of the Balkan Division, who thinks openly arriving at covenants might have produced another war; Charles Homer Haskins, who helped to bound Germany, who stands up manfully spitting a little red blood at "those who pity Germany on account of the Fourteen Points;" Robert Howard Lord, whose ambition in life was to give Poland whatever she wanted; Charles Seymour, who helped in the receivership for the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Douglas Nelson Johnson, who furnished expert data on Fiume; Manley Hudson, legal adviser of the American Commission, who interested himself in the rights of minorities; Thomas Lamont and Allyn A. Young, who helped make the reparations and economic clauses; Gompers on Labor and Hoover on Economic Administration; General Bliss on Disarmament and David Hunter Miller on the League. All these and others gave their frankest views before the Public Forum of the Philadelphia Academy of Music, and now publish them in this volume. And the net effect is that of such a commemorative volume as might be prepared by those who have collaborated in any great and successful work. These men pronounce their work, with a few reservations, good.

The point most insistently dwelt upon is that the Peace Treaty was not the work of four supermen or submen, but the collective performance of a large number of specially qualified experts. The Four decided, but their decisions in most cases merely gave binding force to the agreements made by the special commissions. On important points the Big Four might revise the work of the special commissions, or even substitute a quite different solution. Thus the special commission of which Mr. Lord was a member would have given Danzig and Upper Silesia to Germany, an arrangement torn up by the Big Four at the instance of Lloyd George, who, Mr. Lord hints, was afraid that British commercial interests in the Baltic would be prejudiced by such a solution. The Big Four gave the Germans of the Tyrol to Italy without depending on expert reports, and settled the deadlock on reparations on the wrong side and nearly broke down in settling the Adriatic dispute on the right side. If we fix our attention on the number of issues settled, the collective experts wrote most of the Treaty; if we fix our attention on the crucial issues alone, they were settled chiefly by the Big Four. And if another war breaks out to revise the settlement, history will hardly go beyond the Big Four in its fixing of responsibility.

Yet that is perhaps to minimize too much the importance of the work done by the men who speak in this volume. There is evidence enough in these papers that the work of the different commissions must have been very uneven; that in some instances the case that went before the Big Four was so clear that it could hardly be overturned and