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## TOLSTOY'S THEORY OF SOCIAL REFORM. I

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### ABSTRACT

The system which underlies Tolstoy's doctrine of social reform is one of literary rather than of strictly sociological and logical order. This literary mode of exposition often beguiles him into errors of discursiveness and futile detail. The basic principles as represented in his works of social reform are: (1) law, (2) money, and (3) property. Law is recognized by him only when it is written in the hearts of men, not in the books. Rejecting written law and accepting divine law as recommended by Christ, he emphasizes the teaching of non-resistance. Money, in Tolstoy's opinion, is a medium of oppression and enslavement of men, not a medium of exchange, as chrematistics teaches us. He does not take into consideration those innumerable advantages which a circulating medium renders to the community and particularly to the commercial world. He absolutely repudiates the theory that in all production only three factors take part: land, capital, and labor. His disconcerting controversy on the catallactic theory of money contains nothing fundamentally new in the categories of economics, but the manner is odd in which he couches the notion of capital, labor, and distribution of wealth.

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### INTRODUCTION

If we use the term "social reform" in its broad sense to describe those larger changes in the structure of society which aim directly at some general improvement of human life, we shall find that social reformers come to this work by widely different paths. Some have the capacity to invent novel ideas, to develop and proclaim them, but they have not the capacity to realize them. Others are practical men who ignore or decry without examination anything

that does not, at the first glance, appear eminently practical. A critic of modern society who has proved himself capable of entertaining more than one original idea sometimes is far from obtaining immunity from the common fate. His new ideas frequently meet a stubborn resistance from common sense, and they generally arrive at success maimed, mangled, and distorted.

## I

Leo Tolstoy, of whose long life's work no one would now speak without respect, has discovered many faults in the social system, of which those who are most preoccupied with it would never have dreamed, or suggested equally undreamed-of remedies. But he has mixed fads with genuine ideas, and he is discredited as a dreamer by practical men of the world. The common criterion of a reform is its qualification for figuring in a political platform. One that is suited neither to become a party cry nor to make the program of some new association is commonly considered utopian or absurd.

Such a "utopian" reformer was Tolstoy. He spoke of himself as a Christian anarchist,<sup>1</sup> and the making of party machinery was always repellent to his instinct of political order. His mind had no natural affinity for official politics, and he early developed a rough intuitive philosophy of his own, grounded primarily in natural spirituality. As a boy of nineteen, under the influence of the radical philosophers, Rousseau, Voltaire, and other French thinkers, Tolstoy decided to leave the studies at University of Kazan without final examination and to return to his village, Yasnaya Polyana. His purpose was to devote himself to a rural life—"to work for simple, impressionable, uncorrupted people; to give them pleasure, education, and to correct their faults, which arise from ignorance and superstition; to develop their morals; to induce them to love the right." All this is a full program of social reform for improving the condition of Russian serfs! But after a few months, spent among the *muzhiks*, our young reformer becomes disheartened as to his plans. He is now "convinced that one cannot live by theorizing and philosophizing, but must live positively, i.e., must be a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. H. Schmitt, *Leo Tolstoi und seine Bedeutung für unsere Kultur* (Leipzig, 1901), chap. ii, p. 79.

practical man."<sup>2</sup> He again enters the university (at this time of Petersburg) with a firm decision to take his degree and to enter the civil service. Again and again he fails to pass a satisfactory examination, and finally abandons the attempt, because he "does not need a university degree to be a good farmer."

For a better understanding and for more serviceable classification of Tolstoy's works we will divide his public activity into two periods. The first includes his purely literary work and lasts till 1880. In this period he is farmer and landlord, soldier and patriot, traveler and novelist. He publishes war-stories, sketches, and novels—*Domestic Happiness*, *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*. The close of his fiftieth year brings a growing sense of inward struggle. He has "gone out into the wilderness," and engaged in a terrible conflict with those specters of the mind which have always arisen to tempt prophets from their way. We have no such record of this spiritual conflict as Rousseau has given us of his valley-struggle, but the *My Confession* of Tolstoy was, if less boisterously triumphant, more positive and definite in character than his precursor's. After the year 1880, Tolstoy's legal and economic theories were visibly quickening in his mind. A series of publications written in that second period formed the embryo of his religious, moral, and social philosophy. Of this period are treaties with biblical titles: *What Shall We Do Then* (1886); *Walk in the Light While There Is Light* (1887); *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1893); *God or Mammon* (1895). Of this period is his famous story *The Kreuzer Sonata* (1890) dealing with the sexual problem, and his tractates: *The Slavery of Our Times* (1900) and *The End of the Age* (1906), treating of labor problems and politics in general.

These remarks may somewhat explain the nature of the change which took place in Tolstoy's life in the period after 1880. He did not abandon any of the interests which had occupied him in earlier years. He still figures as an art critic, littérateur, and philosopher. But his intellectual and emotional center of gravity is shifted, with an alteration in his sense of practical morality. All his future work

<sup>2</sup> From a letter to his brother, Sergius Tolstoy, quoted by A. Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, Vol. I (7th ed., London, 1917), chap. ii, p. 49.

really consists of the application of this morality. He endeavors to reform his own life; he renounces everything superfluous—wine, tobacco, meat—and spends his time in productive work for the general welfare.<sup>3</sup> Life is for him an absurd contradiction, and to paralyze this contradiction there is only one way of salvation: to renounce material pleasures, to be reborn, and to adopt love as the principle of life. Love, not in the sense of a physical preference for one above another, but a love which has as its dominating impulse the welfare of others and loving service to them rather than personal happiness as its chief end. Such love solves all the contradictions of life.<sup>4</sup>

Turning his attention to human intemperances and excesses, Tolstoy goes so far as to adopt asceticism as a code, and he urges others to follow his teaching. On this question he wrote several essays including the much-talked-of *Kreuzer Sonata*. He thinks that there are three possible relationships between the sexes: fornication, married life, and celibacy. The most important of these is celibacy. This institution was the ideal of Christianity. Christ himself never married, neither did his disciples, and he never instituted marriage.<sup>5</sup> Our reformer desired to imitate Christ in everything, although it was too late for him: he had already thirteen children, and what is most curious, one of the youngest was born three years after the publication of that extravagant story! Indeed, to preach celibacy under such circumstances requires courage, even the courage of a Tolstoy! But sincerity is a high virtue; and there is something pathetic in the confession which reads: "In speaking of the manner in which the married pair ought to live, I not only do not hint at having lived or living myself as I ought to, but, on the contrary, I know from my own hard knocks how I ought to have lived only because I have not lived properly."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. I. Birkyukov, *L. N. Tolstoy. Biografiya* (Berlin, 1921), Tom II, Glava xxv–xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Tom III, Glava i. Entire theory on this subject Tolstoy amplified in his work *On Life*, and in his scattered thoughts *On the Meaning of Life* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVI, 1904).

<sup>5</sup> *On the Relation between the Sexes* (The Complete Works, Wiener's ed., XVIII [1904], 467).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 469.

And yet Tolstoy did not believe in celibate life at one time. In *My Religion*, published five years before the appearance of *Kreuzer Sonata* and *Relations between the Sexes*, he wholly adopted the teaching of St. Paul, who said that "husband and wife, having once been united, should not put one another away, and should satisfy one another in the sexual relation."<sup>7</sup> Obviously this is a contradiction of his later pessimistic doctrine of abolishing marriage. But he explains to one of his disciples these apparently conflicting views in these words: "All depends on the plane in which a man finds himself—if he feels he must marry, let him do so; but, if he is capable of living the celibate life, marriage is a fall, a sin."<sup>8</sup>

Tolstoy's uncharitable critics have said that here we have an instance of a man who in his youth had sown wild oats and in his old age had suddenly become a soured, melancholy ascetic, and, in a sense, vindictive. But Tolstoy's gospel of the marriage problem has only one intention. He wished to show people the consequences of sexual excesses, jealousy, impure thoughts and actions; and the dreadful results of lust, vice, and luxury. He protested with utter frankness against all the institutions and customs of modern artificial society which make it hard for young men and women to live pure and honest lives. He protested against moral uncomeliness, against immodest dress, immodest dances, immodest entertainments, and indecent placards that cover our billboards and assail the eyes of the young and innocent, when the mind and the heart are most susceptible.

In devoting his pen to the fight against riches and luxury, against a complicated industrial system and so-called "high society," Tolstoy is ruthless. In a social satire, *The Fruits of Enlightenment* (1889), he ridicules the indolence of Russian aristocracy. He satirizes the empty, useless, and expensive pastimes of the "cultured" classes, as compared with the serious interests of the agricultural peasantry. In the *Letters on the Famine* he finds that the masses are not poor because they are lazy and drunken or because they have not yet had time to adopt the culture of the present. The masses are poor because we are too rich. The masses are hungry

<sup>7</sup> *My Religion* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVI, 1904), chap. vi, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by T. S. Knowlson, *Leo Tolstoy* (London, 1904), chap. v, p. 125.

because we are too well fed.<sup>9</sup> We buy our comforts and our luxury at the price of the sufferings of the working people.<sup>10</sup> The education of upper classes has only one end, to be able to work in the future as little as possible and enjoy the benefits of life as much as possible.<sup>11</sup> Our whole society, according to Tolstoy, is divided into two classes, rich and poor, exploiters and exploited.<sup>12</sup> First are the idle and leisurely, who, though doing no work, calmly absorb other men's labors which are necessary to life. Second are the industrious and laborious, who, though doing all agricultural and other species of work, are compelled to labor for other people, and have nothing for themselves. They are enslaved and oppressed by the rich because they have no land, no means of production, and no money. From them are demanded taxes, both direct and indirect, and they are not able to pay them unless they work for others, selling their labor and their freedom.<sup>13</sup> In our author's opinion the true cause of poverty is the accumulation of riches in the hands of those who do not produce, and are concentrated in the cities in order to enjoy and defend themselves. And the poor man comes to feed upon the snare of easy gain: by peddling, begging, swindling, or in the service of immorality.<sup>14</sup>

## II

Now we come to the question, What is the way out? How shall we unravel the labor problems? Do solutions of these inquiries lie in the programs of the Liberals, of the Socialists, or some other political party? No! Tolstoy expresses his indignation and con-

<sup>9</sup> *Letters on the Famine* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XIX, 1905), sec. v, p. 237.

<sup>10</sup> *Articles and Reports on the Famine, ibid.*, pp. 319-22.

<sup>11</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. ix, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> How modern was Tolstoy in this division we see from the fact that a contemporary Labor Party in Belgium has in its political program the same division of social classes. It is said there that "all the Belgians are divided into two classes—those who are rich and have rights, and those who are poor and have burdens" (quoted by Dr. S. P. Orth in *Socialism and Democracy in Europe* [New York, 1913], chap. vi, sec. 2, p. 124).

<sup>13</sup> *The Slavery of Our Times* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XXIV, 1905), chap. ix, pp. 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xiii, pp. 73-74.

tempt for all political parties, because they are the amalgamations of all possible lies: the lies of liberty, the lies of progress, science, culture, and civilization. Liberalism, in his eyes, is a phantasmagoria. It solves neither educational nor labor problems.<sup>15</sup> Socialism, also, cannot help us. Socialists imagine that they are the champions of liberty and preach their socialistic theories.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile these theories are similar to women's fashions, which soon pass from the drawing-room to the servants' hall.<sup>17</sup> The object of socialism is the satisfaction of the lowest needs of man: his material well-being; and it cannot attain even this end, by the means it recommends.<sup>18</sup> With his theory of social reform Tolstoy influenced the revolutionary movement in Russia; but his condemnation of socialism was not favorably received by the great Russian novelist and socialist, Maxim Gorky, who represented Tolstoy as a man who had become the slave of his theory. "For a long time," remarks Gorky, "he has isolated himself from the life of Russia, and he no longer listens to the voice of the people; he hovers over Russia at too great a height."<sup>19</sup> In one of his books Gorky characterizes Tolstoy as a mystic, who embodies in his great soul all the defects of his nation. "His misty preaching of non-activity, of non-resistance to evil," he says, "is all the unhealthy ferment of the old Russian blood, envenomed by Mongolian fatalism . . . what is called Tolstoy's anarchism, essentially and fundamentally, expresses our Slav anti-stateism, which again is really a national characteristic and desire, ingrained in our flesh from old times, to scatter nomadically . . . all his preaching is a reaction from the past, an atavism which we had already begun to shake off and overcome."<sup>20</sup> The Russian Social Democrats, with Gorky, do not

<sup>15</sup> See *Letter to the Liberals* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XXII, 1904), p. 529.

<sup>16</sup> *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XX, 1905), chap. ix, p. 222.

<sup>17</sup> Cited by R. Rolland in his book *Tolstoy* (1911), chap. xvi, p. 264.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>19</sup> M. Gorky, *Reminiscences of L. N. Tolstoy* (New York, 1920), chap. xvi, p. 271.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.



attach great weight to Tolstoy's theories because they are too full of fatalism and Christianity.<sup>21</sup> But, unluckily for the Christian teachers, they are also too full of socialism and anarchism, and therefore admitted by neither.

The manner in which Tolstoy approaches the labor question is as follows. He suggests that the working day of a sane man should contain four elements—work giving general play to the muscles, work of a routine mental order, work giving special exercise to wrist and eye in some skilled handicraft, and intellectual work of a graver order. Such provision is necessary for full realization of human life. Not a few of the wisest and greatest workers in all ages have practiced such a habit of life.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand Tolstoy expounds the liberal interpretation of Christ's words and recommends the workingmen to resist not evil by violence, to pay no taxes, to enter no military, or civil, service. The laboring classes, claims Tolstoy, need no parliaments. Their representatives know nothing of the people. The people cannot express their will; they cannot express it, firstly, because there does not and cannot exist such a universal will of a nation of many millions; and secondly, because even if such a universal will of the whole people did exist, a majority of votes could never express it, and they do not themselves know nor can know what they require.<sup>23</sup> The politicians, who are elected to represent people, do not legislate and administrate for the general good. They look to maintain themselves in power; they look for their own interests. A complicated parliamentary system is a new species of fraud which roots peoples more firmly in their servility. It is a new piece of imposture. Workmen have nothing to expect from parliament; still less from that "artificial combination called the state"<sup>24</sup> and founded upon violence, in order that they might for their own profit despoil and enslave the rest of humanity. If laborers want to escape this army of evil, Tolstoy urges that they refuse to join it.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. L. I. Akselrod, *Lev Tolstoy i Socialdemokratiya* (1906), pp. 5–6.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. A. Hobson, *The Social Problem* (London, 1901), chap. xiv, p. 237.

<sup>23</sup> "The End of the Age," sec. v (*Fortnightly Review*, LXXXV [1906], 13).

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, sec. xii (*ibid.*, p. 227).

They ought to refuse to share in the exploitation of humanity. They must refuse to serve the state, church, government, and other accomplices. But this is not sufficient. One "must not lie" nor be afraid of the truth. One "must repent," and uproot the pride that is implanted by our false education. Finally, one must work with one's hands. "Thou shalt win thy bread in the sweat of thy brow" is the first commandment and the most essential. Renounce all written laws. Strive to re-establish the union of man with man, nation with nation. This is, in the main, the solution of the labor question. And at the same time this is the solution offered by true Christianity. So Tolstoy instructs his disciples and his people.

We can see nothing original in these theories on labor problems, on church, state, and government. These theories are as old as the human civilization. In the Middle Ages and later we find many social-religious sects which also rejected every form of authority. Let us recall the Amalricians, a degenerate sect of the Beghards, who called themselves "brothers and sisters of the Free Spirit"; also Adamites, Anabaptists, and "Free Brothers." In the eighteenth century William Godwin demanded the abolition of every form of government, of marriage, private property, and state.<sup>25</sup> Certain religious sects interpreted Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in its native form as delineated by its Author, and preached the doctrine of non-resistance. This is exactly the same doctrine which Tolstoy commends. His ideas are not novel, they are only remarkable through negation.<sup>26</sup> As a passive anarchist he negates the magistrates, courts, collectors of rates and taxes, policemen, and a host of other bodies and officials. This teaching is chiefly framed in his social tract, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, a meaty book which may be considered as a diapason of Tolstoy's doctrine of non-aggression and non-resistance.

But as we already mentioned, Tolstoy is not only the interpreter of Christianity as taught by Christ, he is not only artist and littérateur—he is all that, and he is still a social reformer, a social

<sup>25</sup> See the article "Anarchismus" by G. Adler in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, I (Jena, 1909), 444–69.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Marie de Manacéine, *L'Anarchie Passive et le Compté Léon Tolstoï* (Paris, 1895), chap. vi, p. 38.

teacher of his age. He treats of many economic questions, not as a system-maker, but as a brilliant thinker, speaking the brilliant and incisive language of his admirable novels. It is beyond doubt that he did not attain complete success, either in his delineation of the social ideal or in his estimate of particular measures and movements of progress. And yet it may be justly said he had done more than any other writer on reform to compel people to realize the nature of the social problem. With his renewed gospel of non-resistance, deduced from the teaching of the Christ, Tolstoy created the doctrine of Christian anarchism, a new term in the categories of economic and political science. In his theory of social reform he commonly takes the anarchist's position, criticizing succinctly all wars, and all aggressive and military governments which make wars.

To my mind Tolstoy's theories of *law*, *money*, and *property* are most significant. In this study I take his considerations on these topics as a basis of his teaching, and I will discuss them in the following chapters.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF LAW

##### I

An important subject-matter of which Tolstoy treats in his social writings is law. His doctrine of law greatly differs from the teaching of Plato,<sup>27</sup> Aristotle,<sup>28</sup> Montesquieu,<sup>29</sup> Grotius,<sup>30</sup> Hobbes,<sup>31</sup> and of modern jurists as Bentham,<sup>32</sup> Austin,<sup>33</sup> Jellinek,<sup>34</sup> Jhering,<sup>35</sup> and N. M. Korkunov.<sup>36</sup> He recognizes only divine laws, but not the human, which often represent a mass of enactments, ordinances, forms and formulas of every kind, all mingled in grotesque and in-

<sup>27</sup> *Laws*, The Dialogues of Plato, English, by B. Jowett, Vol. V (London, 1892).

<sup>28</sup> *Politica*, Books I-IV, English, by B. Jowett (Oxford, 1921).

<sup>29</sup> *De l'Esprit des Lois*, English, by T. Nugent (London, 1905-6).

<sup>30</sup> *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, English, by A. C. Campbell (New York, 1903).

<sup>31</sup> *Leviathan*. The English Works of T. Hobbes, Vol. III (London, 1839).

<sup>32</sup> *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, Vols. I-II (Edinburgh, 1843).

<sup>33</sup> *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Vols. I-II (London, 1911).

<sup>34</sup> *Das Recht des Modernen Staates* (Berlin, 1905).

<sup>35</sup> *Der Kampf ums Recht* (Wien, 1900); *Der Zweck im Recht* (1893-98).

<sup>36</sup> *General Theory of Law*, English, by W. G. Hastings (Boston, 1909).

explicable chaos. No mind can penetrate and reduce these laws to order, or separate the accidental from the permanent, the obsolete from the active, and the essential from the unessential.

“The human or the written laws are not just; they are capricious and artificial; Jesus Christ nullifies them, and confirms only the eternal laws.”<sup>37</sup> Recognizing the eternal laws, Tolstoy does not acknowledge the canonical, because these are false, full of contradictions and sophisms, just as the secular laws are. By eternal laws he means laws written in the hearts of men, not prescribed by any authority, sovereign, or legislature. “Since all men are brothers and equal among themselves, everybody must act toward others as he wishes that others should toward him.”<sup>38</sup> In that case the worldly laws are not necessary. This may be true. But if people do not think they are brothers, and equal, and if they are really *homo homini deus, et homo homini lupus*, as Hobbes explains it,<sup>39</sup> what must they do to protect each other? In Tolstoy’s *Works*, it is difficult to find an answer to this question. Our reformer takes it a priori, as Rousseau does,<sup>40</sup> that man is born good by nature, but society, with its written laws and other institutions, makes him corrupt and wicked. He does not think, as Machiavelli, that “Men are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowards and covetous.”<sup>41</sup>

The great thinkers, Plato, Aristotle, Montesquieu, and Hobbes, treated man somewhat as a kind of animal, swayed by passion, pleasure, and pain. Under such psychological conditions he is bent to do evil to his fellow-men. This applies not only to the common people, but to their rulers also. When wickedness and violence have to be exposed, the injured to be justified, order to be restored, and his due to be given to each, is not a powerful exercise of authority, inspired by order for justice and for the welfare of the people, most necessary of all things? If kings, capitalists, and legislators are inclined by their nature, by ambition, pride, or idleness,

<sup>37</sup> *My Religion* (Wiener’s ed., Vol. XVI, 1904), chap. v, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> *What Is Religion?* (Wiener’s ed., Vol. XXIV, 1905), chap. xi, p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> *De Cive, Opera Philosophica*, II (London, 1839), 135.

<sup>40</sup> In his *Emile* and *Social Contract*.

<sup>41</sup> *The Prince*, chap. xvii.

to do wrong, how can we bridle their power and despotism? Is not law the means? "In the state of nature," says Montesquieu, "all men are born equal; but they cannot continue in this equality; society makes them lose it and they recover it only by the protection of laws."<sup>42</sup> In the science of jurisprudence the necessity of positive laws is sufficiently explained. Their object is to protect the interests of society in application to property and conduct. If they are perverse and cross the interests of society they lose their authority and men are right to change them. It is proved that civilized society never was without some kind of laws. If they were not in the form in which we possess them today (*lex scripta*), they were in the form of general customs (*lex non scripta*). Did not the ancient nations have the laws written on Egyptian papyri or on some other materials? Who does not know today the celebrated *Code of Hammurabi* dating from 2285 B.C.? Who does not recall the laws of Manu, the first Indian legislator, or the laws of Confucius, Moses, Lycurgus, Draco, Solon, and Justinian? Tolstoy starts from the point of view that all these ancient laws were imposed upon the people, especially the laws of Moses, and that present enactments are also imposed on people by force, therefore men ought not to recognize them. Our author continues:

It was all very well, for a Jew to submit to his laws, when he had no doubt but that they were written by God's finger; or for a Roman, when he thought that the nymph Egeria had written his laws; or even when they believed that the kings who gave the laws were anointed of the Lord, or even that the legislative bodies had a desire to find the best laws, and were able to do so. But we know how laws are made; we have all been behind the scenes; we all know that laws are the results of greed, deception, the struggle of parties—that in them there is and there can be no true justice.<sup>43</sup>

It is superfluous to prove that in human laws there cannot be perfect justice, but that present-day society can exist without them is a question open to dispute. One does not have to look far to discover that this civilization after thousands of years of struggle and progress, continues to be, at best, a very thin veneer over primal impulses, desires, greeds, and passions. Dispense with the police

<sup>42</sup> *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Liv. VIII, chap. iii.

<sup>43</sup> *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XX), chap. v, p. 125.

forces today in the most Christian among the cities in the world, and crime, wreck, confusion, utter license would dominate them within twenty-four hours. Disband the armies of the world today, and tomorrow enters King Chaos. The platitudes of Tolstoy and other pacifists take no note of that human animalism which never yet has been conquered, scarcely subdued.

Only in an ideal "state of nature" can people live without laws and without legal institutions. Only in such a state rules perfect and absolute freedom. Everybody could do as he pleases, because everybody is by nature good and happy. But, unfortunately, such a "golden age" and "state of nature" are only fictions of the poets and philosophers.<sup>44</sup> Modern sciences, archaeology and anthropology, deny this hypothesis and say that such a *primaevus naturae status* virtually never existed. If anything existed in remote times, concerning men, it was a state of society, and not a "state of nature." The essential characteristic of human beings is, then, progress, and not regress.<sup>45</sup>

## II

Speaking on the subject of laws and other worldly institutions related to them, courts, legislatures, police, and army, Tolstoy is a great idealist. This interpretation of positive laws is not positive, it is not scientific. When one reads his artistic explanations of laws, he might "long to walk on all fours." However, to comprehend justly the great Slavic radical we must know that he lived in an autocratic state, in a *tsardom*, in which all laws were sanctioned and executed at that time by the emperor and his priests, partisans, and many bureaucratic servitors, so-called *chinovniki*, whose power consisted of club and rod. Surrounded by a nihilistic literature on the one hand, and on the other by the venal and sordid function-

<sup>44</sup> David Hume—quoted by James Bonar in *Philosophy and Political Economy* (London, 1922), chap. vi, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> "Society is impossible without some government," says Professor Ward, "and is more perfect, the more law and order are assured and stable" (*Naturalism and Agnosticism*, by James Ward, II [London, 1906], 248). See also: J. Bentham, *A Fragment on Government* (The Works of J. Bentham [Edinburgh, 1843], Vol. I, chap. i, pp. 261 f.).

aries, he was compelled by his generous spirit to write in this manner, and to deny the written laws.

Instead of written law Tolstoy substitutes the supreme law of love, fraternity, and equal opportunity. These principles are expressed in Jesus' teaching, in the ideal teaching of Jesus, which is quite different from the Christianity of the dark ages. In many of his eloquent treatises we see that he was trying to interpret the doctrine of the great Nazarene idealistically and impartially, without any theological prejudice. Tolstoy was an independent man. He wrote what he felt, caring not what clergy might say of his social theories. His knowledge of many juridical systems and technicalities of law is not complete and perfect, indeed. But he was a righteous man, and always sacrificed the formalities to the essential things of moral laws. To him laws are written in reason and heart, not in books.

His critics say that such negation of written laws and idealistic doctrine, "Return to Nature," would lead men into a state of barbarism. They say that according to Tolstoy's and Rousseau's teaching, man would live like the beast in the forest or the fish in the water. This criticism is not valid. When Tolstoy denies written codes and Russian judicial institutions he premises the higher moral and intellectual development of nation and society in all. He sees the ignorance and immorality of many people, but they must not be blamed on account of these weaknesses. It is not their fault that they are such men. We rather must condemn our erroneous educational system, and our political machinery, whose fault it is that they are not better instructed and educated.

This doctrine of Tolstoy could be indorsed even by Hobbes, who, we know, was in favor of conservative rule, and one of the most vigorous supporters of monarchical principles in the seventeenth century. In his *Leviathan* (Part II, chap. xxx) Hobbes says: "The punishment of the leaders and teachers in a commotion, not the poor seduced people, when they are punished, can profit the commonwealth by their example; to be severe to the people is to punish that ignorance, which may in great part be imputed to the sovereign whose fault it was that they were no better in-

structed." When Hobbes, the "grand hedonist" and "propagator of despotism" speaks so compassionately of the people, what remains for Tolstoy, the "greatest altruist" and "propagator of fraternity" to speak of them?

Tolstoy's ultra-radical theories could not be explicable in a state with a republican or democratic form of government. But in Russia, where *Duma* and *Zemstvos* (county councils) were in his time sheer perversions of the legislative will of the people; where constitutional government, in fact, was a bitter mockery; and where a monarchical system, through its inefficiency and corruption, was a real terror for the majority of the nation—in such a state Tolstoy's teaching on law is quite explicable, if not excusable.

#### THE THEORY OF MONEY

##### I

Assuming that our society may exist without positive laws, it can also exist without money. The Russian reformer, Tolstoy, is consistent with his doctrine of social reform.<sup>46</sup> According to him enacted law is violence, private property is evil, and subsequently, "Money as a centre around which economic science clusters"<sup>47</sup> cannot be anything else but a medium of oppression.<sup>48</sup> Describing the economic nature and offices performed by money, he dissents widely from the politico-economists and disapproves of their teachings on the same subject-matter.

At the outset of the seventeenth chapter of his notable work, *What Shall We Do Then*, Tolstoy inquires, What is money? And further on he proceeds:

I have met educated people who asserted that money represents the labor of him who possesses it. I must confess that formerly I, in some obscure manner, shared this opinion. But I had to go to the bottom of what money was,

<sup>46</sup> "If Tolstoy's teaching is not systematic, two facts may be urged in extenuation: his doctrines, so far as he expounds them are consistent in themselves," says T. S. Knowlson in his biographical and critical study on *Leo Tolstoy* (London, 1904), chap. vii, p. 143.

<sup>47</sup> See James W. Harper, *Money and Social Problem* (London, 1896), chap. v, sec. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xix, p. 127.



and so to find this out, I turned to science. Science says that there is nothing unjust and prejudicial about money, that money is a natural condition of social life—necessary: (1) for convenience of exchange; (2) for the establishment of measures of value; (3) for saving; and (4) for payments.<sup>49</sup>

Are these theories true? According to the teaching of economics they are; according to Tolstoy they are not. Many writers, even those of the earliest time, argued that money is a medium of exchange.<sup>50</sup> The founders of classical economics, Smith,<sup>51</sup> Ricardo,<sup>52</sup> Mill,<sup>53</sup> Carey,<sup>54</sup> socialist reformers, Lasalle<sup>55</sup> and Marx,<sup>56</sup> all agree in the main that money is an exchangeable commodity by means of which people measure the value of other commodities. Irving Fisher shortly and precisely defines money as *What is generally acceptable in exchange for goods*.<sup>57</sup> More acute determination of the nature of money is given by David Kinley in his elaborate study on *Money*.<sup>58</sup> According to this author no definition of medium of exchange can be framed on the basis of the material of which it is made, but on the basis of its services, and its essential services are threefold:

*First*, money is sometimes used to describe all media of exchange—gold, silver, paper, checks, bank drafts or the deposits which they represent, commercial bills of exchange, and even corporation stocks. These things all effect exchanges; in a way they all relieve the difficulties of barter. But this definition, however, is

<sup>49</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xvii, p. 100.

<sup>50</sup> Cf., for instance, Plato, *Laws*, chap. xi, and Aristotle's *Politics*, Book I, chap. ix; *Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle, Book V, chap. v. Roman authors defined money as a "just" medium and measure of commutable things" *Moneta est justum medium et mensura rerum commutabilium*, quoted in H. C. Black, *A Law Dictionary* (2d ed., 1910), p. 789.

<sup>51</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, Book II, chap. ii.

<sup>52</sup> *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, chap. xxi, sec. 100.

<sup>53</sup> *Principles of Political Economy*, Book III, chap. vii.

<sup>54</sup> *Principles of Social Science*, Vol. II, chap. xxx.

<sup>55</sup> *What Is Capital?* English, by F. Keddell (New York, 1900), chap. iii.

<sup>56</sup> *Capital*, English ed., Vol. I, Part I, chap. iii.

<sup>57</sup> *The Purchasing Power of Money* (New York, 1920), chap. ii, sec. 1.

<sup>58</sup> D. Kinley, *Money, a Study of the Theory of the Medium of Exchange* (New York, 1909), chap. v, 6.

too inclusive, Professor Kinley contends. It is inclusive because all mentioned articles do not attain the character of media of exchange because there is a demand for them for that purpose primarily. The medium of exchange includes money, but its content is greater than that of money. All money can be a medium of exchange, but every medium of exchange is not money.<sup>59</sup>

*Second*, at the other extreme is a set of definitions which would restrict money to what may be called commodity money. They who hold this view insist that money is an article of direct utility, with specific value based on its direct services for consumption. They hold that it must have value due to a demand for other than a monetary system. The implication is that in the absence of this other demand the article would not have any value, and therefore could not properly serve as a measure of value. This view of the nature of money is definite and clear-cut, but it is not correct because the article has value if there is a demand for it, whatever the reason for that demand.

*Third*, between these two extremes fluctuates the view that all media of exchange and payment, whose acceptance the law requires in discharge of debts, may properly be called money. This definition confines to standard money, or inconvertible paper, if it were legal tender. Both kinds of money circulate without reference to the possibility of recovering their value from the payer if they should fail to pass, and their value as money depends entirely on the fact that they are generally acceptable in exchange.<sup>60</sup>

Taking now in view these three standpoints of the nature of money, we could define it in these words: *Legal tender, inconvertible paper, and all commodities which are used as general circulating and paying media are properly called money.*

<sup>59</sup> Some excellent hints as to the money-commodity, compare Horace White, *Money and Banking* (Boston, 1914), Book I, chap. i.

<sup>60</sup> For valuable suggestions on standard money, see W. A. Scott, *Money and Banking*, chap. i, sec. 1; J. L. Laughlin, *The Principles of Money*, chap. iii; J. B. Clark, "The Ultimate Standard of Value," in *Yale Review*, I (November, 1892), 258-74. The same subject is well treated by C. Manger in an article entitled "Geld" in the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, Vol. IV (1909), and L. Nasse, "Das Geld und Münzwesen" in G. Schönberg, *Handbuch der Politischen Ökonomie*, Vol. I (1896).

This is one of the most typical definitions, including nearly all others supported by current political economy. Tolstoy, as always, disagrees with the teaching of economics and he simply says that money is a new and terrible form of slavery. His full definition is as follows: Money is a conventional token which gives the right, or, more correctly, the possibility, to exploit the labor of other people. To explain this inadequate definition of money more appropriately and in its fuller extent, it is necessary to turn our attention to the functions of money as they are enunciated by Leo Tolstoy.

One of many other functions which money performs, according to Tolstoy, is the representation of labor. There exists a common opinion that money represents wealth, but money is the product of labor, and so money represents labor.<sup>61</sup> This opinion, says Tolstoy sneeringly, is as correct as that other opinion, that every political organization is the result of a pact (*contrat social*). Yes, money represents labor,<sup>62</sup> there is no doubt about that, but whose—labor of the owner of the money, or of other people? In that rude stage of society, Tolstoy goes on, when people voluntarily bartered the fruits of their products, or exchanged them through the medium of money, substantially, money represented their individual labor. That is incontestably a fact, and this was true only until, in the society where this exchange took place, appeared the violence of one man to another in any form: war, slavery, and defense of one's labor against others. But as soon as any violence was exerted in society, the money at once lost for the owner its significance as a representative of labor, and became a right which was not based on labor, but on violence.<sup>63</sup>

The second function of money is the representation of the standard value. Catallactics admits this function of money. Tolstoy himself should recognize it in an ideal state of society, in a society where extortion has not made its appearance.<sup>64</sup> If people exchanged directly commodity for commodity; if they themselves determined the standards of values by sheep, furs, hides, and

<sup>61</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xxi, p. 158.

<sup>62</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>63</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xxi, p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xxi, p. 159.

shells,<sup>65</sup> then one could speak of money as an instrument of exchange, as an ideal standard of value in an ideal state of society. But in such a society there would be no money as such, as a common standard of values, since it has not existed and cannot exist.<sup>66</sup> The standard value of money is determined by law and government, and these institutions are based chiefly on deceit,<sup>67</sup> or represent organized force.<sup>68</sup> What in recent time receives a value is not what is more convenient for exchange, but what is demanded by the government. If gold is demanded, gold will be a common denominator; if knuckle-bones are demanded, knuckle-bones will have value.<sup>69</sup> If this were not so, why has the issue of this medium of exchange always been the prerogative of the government? In such a state of society in which we live the standard of values ceases to have any significance, because the standard of value of all articles depends on the arbitrary will of the oppressor.<sup>70</sup> By this reason we could speak only of arbitrary and conventional value of money, not of its intrinsic, nor of its standard, value.

Passing now to the third function of money enumerated by Tolstoy, we see that he attributes to it a new contingent service which is not mentioned as such in any political economy. In modern civilized society, he says, all the governments are in extreme need for money, and always in insolvable debt.<sup>71</sup> Therefore they issue monetary tokens in the different countries.<sup>72</sup> These tokens—legal tender, inconvertible paper, coin, bills, and other governmental fiats—are distributed among the people in order that later they can be collected as direct, indirect, and land taxes. The debts of the present monetary state grow from year to year in a terrifying progression. Even so grow the budgets.<sup>73</sup> A state which should not

<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xviii, p. 122.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xix, p. 126.

<sup>67</sup> *Extracts from Unpublished Diaries*, Complete Works (Wiener's ed., Vol. XXIII, 1904), p. 538.

<sup>68</sup> *The Slavery of Our Times* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XXIV, 1905), p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xviii, p. 122.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xix, p. 127.

<sup>71</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xviii, p. 121.

<sup>72</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xx, p. 144.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xviii, p. 121.

levy taxes for a comparatively short time would go to bankruptcy. The taxes and imposts required from people may be paid in form of cattle, corn, furs, skins, and other natural products, but this "natural economy" is never practiced in a civilized state. Governments force people to pay those taxes usually in "hard" or "soft" cash, because this kind of money best suits the purposes of rewarding the military and civil officials, of maintaining the clergy, the courts, the construction of prisons, fortresses, cannon,<sup>74</sup> and supporting those men who aid in the seizure of the money from the people.<sup>75</sup> So we have the third function of money as the third method of enslavement,<sup>76</sup> by means of tribute and taxes.<sup>77</sup> In modern times, since the discovery of America and the development of trade and the influx of gold, which is accepted as the universal money standard, the monetary tribute becomes, with the enforcement of the political power, the chief instrument of the enslavement of men,<sup>78</sup> and upon it all the economic relations of men are based.<sup>79</sup>

## II

Discussing money, Tolstoy cannot separate the economic question from the political. To him it appears inevitable that money performs a social service equivalent to the instrument of extortion. He does not take into consideration those innumerable advantages which a circulating medium renders to the community and particularly to the commercial world, facilitating the transfer as well as

<sup>74</sup> *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XX, 1905), chap. ix, p. 237.

<sup>75</sup> *The Slavery of Our Times* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XXIV, 1905), chap. x, p. 41.

<sup>76</sup> The first method of the enslavement of men is by means of personal violence, according to Tolstoy, and second is by depriving people of their land. (Cf. *What Shall We Do Then*, chap. xx, pp. 142-43.)

<sup>77</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xx, p. 144.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xviii, p. 111.

<sup>79</sup> For the sound discussion on function of money, which is avowedly opposite to Tolstoy's theory, see W. S. Jevons, *Money and the Mechanism of Exchange*, chap. iii; J. L. Laughlin, *The Principles of Money*, chap. i; F. A. Walker, *Money* (1891), chap. i; and W. F. Spalding, *The Function of Money* (London, 1921), chaps. i-iii. For a different and sounder interpretation of taxes and taxation, see *Introduction to Public Finance*, by Professor C. C. Plehn (4th ed., New York, 1920); *Essays in Taxation*, by Professor E. R. A. Seligman (9th ed., New York, 1921); and *The Fundamental Principles of Taxation* by Sir Josiah Stamp (London, 1921).

the aggregation of capital. Chrematistics teaches us that money is the most general form of capital, capital in the fluid state, so that it can be immediately turned to new enterprises and transferred for investment to distant places. On the other hand, capital in the form of money is the most convenient vehicle of production and distribution of wealth. Tolstoy, as a medieval canonist, regards capital and wealth as shameful and criminal things. He absolutely repudiates the theory that in all production only three factors take part: land, capital, and labor. His disconcerting controversy in these matters contains nothing fundamentally new in political economy, but it is an odd manner in which he couches the notion of money in relation to production.

It seems strange, Tolstoy's theory runs, that economists do not recognize the natural objects in production of wealth. The power of the sun, water, food, air, and social security are the requisites of production as much as the land or capital. Education, knowledge, and ability to speak are certain agents of production. I could fill a whole volume, says Tolstoy, with such omitted factors, and put them at the basis of science.<sup>80</sup> The division into three factors of production is not proper to men. It is improper, arbitrary, and senseless. It does not lie in the essence of things themselves.

By its division of the factors of production, proceeds our author, science affirms that the natural condition of the laborer is that unnatural condition in which he is, viz., that he is a slave. This division, which is accepted by science only in order to justify the existing evil, which is placed by it at the basis of all its investigations, has had this effect, that science tries in vain to give explanations of existing phenomena, and denying the simplest answers to questions that present themselves, it gives answers which are devoid of content. The question of economic science is as follows: What is the cause of the fact that some men, who have land and capital, are able to enslave those who have not land and no capital? The answer which presents itself to common sense is this, that it is due to the money, which has the power of enslaving people. This is not due to the property of money, but because some have land and capital, and others have not. We ask

<sup>80</sup> *What Shall We Do Then* (Wiener's ed., Vol. XVII, 1904), chap. xvii, p. 102.

why people who have land and capital enslave those who have none, and we are told: because they have land and capital. But that is precisely what we want to know. The privation of the land and of the tools of labor is that very enslavement. The answer is like this: *Facit dormire quia habet virtutem dormitivam*. To simple people it is indubitable that the nearest cause of the enslavement of one class of men by another is money.<sup>81</sup> They know that it is possible to cause more trouble with a ruble than with a club; it is only political economy that does not want to know it.<sup>82</sup>

These theories on money respecting production do not appear of such nature that they could be applied in other countries besides Russia. The Russian enlightened feudalism of the nineteenth century gave Tolstoy excellent material and a good reason to attack it with all his strength, and he was right. But his assault on political economy for its "omission" to treat the natural objects in production of wealth are not justifiable, and cannot be admitted. In the first place, any better political economy does not consider these objects at length, because nobody lays claims on them, as Tolstoy himself avowed this fact. The gifts of nature cannot be appropriated by anyone. They are inexhaustible and unlimited as compared with the wants of men. Therefore they never have a direct value to be taken as factors of production.<sup>83</sup>

In modern industrial society the essential factors of production, among the others, are money and wealth. Wealth is usually regarded as the object of consumption, as an agent of production.<sup>84</sup> The idea of wealth, however, is often confounded with the idea of money. John S. Mill has justly remarked that most people regard money as wealth, because by that means they provide almost all their necessities. In the same sense is the assertion of the French economist, Charles Gide, when he noted that in all times and in all places, except among savages, money has occupied an exceptional

<sup>81</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. xvii, p. 109.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xviii, p. 124.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. W. Roscher, *System der Volkswirtschaft*, Bd. I (1918), Kap. i, sec. 31, pp. 86-87.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, Book IV (London, 1907), chap. vii, sec. 1, p. 220.

place in the thoughts and desires of men. People regard it, if not as the only wealth, at any rate as by far the most important form of wealth. They appear to measure the value of all other wealth by the quantity of money that can be obtained in exchange for it. *Être riche, c'est avoir soit de l'argent, soit les moyens de s'en procurer.*<sup>85</sup>

Tolstoy, of course, has no clear distinction, either of wealth or of money. He confused these notions, as did many authors before and after him. To define wealth exactly is verily a difficult task; and to dwell upon it impartially is perhaps still more difficult. There are two theories in "plutology" regarding the definition of wealth: first, that wealth is all exchangeable and valuable commodities; and second, that it is power. Representatives of the first theory are Henry Fawcet and John S. Mill; of the second, Hobbes and Carey. Tolstoy is nearer to those theorizers who teach that wealth is power than to those who define it as commodities. Yet, we should err gravely if we assumed that between Tolstoy's interpretation of wealth and that of other economists exists any conformity. For instance, Carey defines wealth as the power to command nature. Tolstoy defines it as the power to command other people who have neither wealth nor "the signs" of wealth. "Only in the Pentateuch wealth is the highest good and reward."<sup>86</sup> In everyday life wealth is evil, deception, and cause of enslavement. To be honest and at the same time to work for Mammon is something quite impossible.<sup>87</sup> This ethical principle may be true. But our theorist forgets that questions of what people ought to do, and questions of what it will profit men and nations to do, belong to different categories of science. He forgets that ethical ideas should not be read into the conceptions of wealth and money when they are employed in their everyday sense. Professor S. J. Chapman<sup>88</sup> justly says, "If our aim is to vindicate what people ought to want

<sup>85</sup> *Cours d'Économie Politique* (Paris, 1913), chap. iii, p. 340.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *The Four Gospels*, Harmonized and Translated (Wiener's ed., Vol. XIV, 1904), chap. ii, p. 109.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>88</sup> *Political Economy* (London, 1912), chap. ii, p. 60.



instead of what they do want, we had better speak of ethical wealth and ethical value.”

Tolstoy was very near to those reform writers who taught that political economy must be regarded as a part of moral philosophy. But he was not the first social reformer who has introduced the moral elements into the study of economic phenomena. As it is known, Aristotle's interpretations of money are in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. The political economy of Plato and Xenophon rests on moral bases.<sup>89</sup> Medieval scholastics and theologians raised many problems which were in connection with the searching inquiry as to what constitutes a *just price*, and this inquiry belonged to the ethics of political economy.<sup>90</sup> Adam Smith and John S. Mill adopted the double rôle, to be economists and at the same time ethical teachers. The French economists Rossi, De Laveley, and Le Play introduced the ethical principle into the science of wealth as well.

There are several such examples of “ethical interpretation” of economics among the most illustrious thinkers. They may be excused for their disagreements only on the ground that they lived in times when social science was in its infancy, when scientific ideas were not divided into definite spheres. Good, gentle Tolstoy may also be pardoned for his “blunders of expression” because he made them in his fanatic love of truth, and “truth, although it is truth, does not always seem true,” says a French proverb. To treat the delicate and intricate complexity of money and wealth, and never mislead, one should be a higher-man, a superman. But supermen are not yet born in this pitiful world of moans, as Nietzsche once fitly objected.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Cf. J. A. Blanqui, *Histoire de l'Economie Politique en Europe*, chap. iii. Cf. also Henri J. L. Baudrillart, *Des Rapports de l'Economie Politique et de la Morale*, Lec. II (Paris, 1883).

<sup>90</sup> See J. N. Keynes, *The Scope and Method of Political Economy* (3d ed., London, 1904), chap. ii, sec. 5.

<sup>91</sup> For a comparative study of Tolstoy and Nietzsche, as two opposite poles of nineteenth-century thought, see the brilliant article of Professor F. H. Giddings, “The Gospel of Non-Resistance,” *Democracy and Empire* (New York, 1912), chap. xx, pp. 341-57.

[To be concluded]