

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Threefold Commonwealth* by Rudolph Steiner and E. Bowen-Wedgewood

Review by: John Maurice Clark

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Huggin's *Labor and Democracy*. The discussion proceeds without any evidence of a knowledge of the experience with compulsory arbitration elsewhere. The work of the Industrial Court is not examined critically. Evidently the manuscript was prepared before the coal strike and the state primaries of last summer. A scientific, unbiased study of compulsory arbitration in Kansas remains to be made.

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The Threefold Commonwealth. By DR. RUDOLPH STEINER. Translated by E. BOWEN-WEDGEWOOD. London and New York: The Threefold Commonwealth Publishing Association, 1922. Pp. v+206.

This volume is the work of a philosophical writer, carrying his philosophic gifts into the field of social diagnosis and prescription. The fundamental idea of the book is that societies should be organized into three independent and co-ordinate branches, so that each citizen would be virtually a member of three organized communities. The sphere of these communities is variously defined. One is the group that arbitrates questions of "rights" and presumably corresponds most nearly to our present political state. One is economic, and one is called "spiritual," although at one point it is defined as the realm of purely private, personal interests as distinct from social interests. It includes the educational system. One noticeable fact is that the military aspect of the political community is completely ignored, except for the general statement that wars are due to an improper combination of functions that should be divided among the three branches of society. The three arms of social organization would not necessarily have the same geographical boundaries.

This differentiated community is contrasted with the idea of a unified community which is said to prevail in existing nations. However, when it comes to concrete cases, the examples which the author chooses are taken from the Austrian and German national organization, and an Englishman or an American would hardly agree that these things could be said of his own civilization. In fact, if Dr. Steiner's principle be taken merely as an ideal defining the spirit in which institutions are developed, it might almost seem that he is preaching the Anglo-Saxon ideal to the German people. The independence of press, church, and higher institutions of learning is certainly a recognized

ideal with us, and sets up to some extent an independent community of the mind. And the function of the state in relation to industry is supposed to be the arbitration and protection of human rights, rather than the direct control of the production of communities—precisely the distinction that Dr. Steiner makes. However, Anglo-Saxon Industrialism would not satisfy Dr. Steiner's requirements, for our economic, intellectual and spiritual communities are not organized, and their functions are not divided as he divides them, for he demands that wages and labor conditions be not fixed by economic forces, but adjudicated as a matter of "right."

When we turn to practical details, the question at once becomes more difficult. These three communities are supposed to be autonomous or completely independent of each other, and yet Dr. Steiner's principle would require them to co-operate more closely than they do at the present time and would make them in fact more dependent on each other. The organization which protects rights would fix wages, hours, and conditions of labor, and economic enterprise would make all its arrangements subject to these predetermining conditions. And yet Dr. Steiner claims that the political community would be purer than it is now because, being independent of economic processes, it would not be subject to economic pressures. It is not easy to see how these two propositions hang together. Furthermore, the community of "rights" would delegate to the spiritual community the judicial function, the disposal of intestate properties and a share in the control of labor conditions, which would bring the "spiritual" community into the realm of economic pressures in a way that might well make an American educator gasp. As for the financing of education, it would apparently be more nearly on a commercial basis than at present. How this would contribute to making education completely independent of all economic pressures is a little difficult to imagine.

Dr. Steiner has an abstract mind. One might almost say that he visualizes the concrete results of his proposals only when convenient. In particular, his ideas of how political, economic, mental, and spiritual life will be purified rest on his abstract ideal of the complete separation of these communities rather than on the concrete machinery whereby they would necessarily have to work together. From one point of view, the author's knack of making his most detailed statements in terms of abstractions is a rare and enviable gift. It is a tool whereby, when one has a sound idea, but has not fully visualized the concrete details of it, one can still give an impression of having done so. Prob-

ably this is unfair to the author, as he has a second volume in process of translation, which is to explain more fully the meaning of the first.

The fundamental idea of the book seems sound and the world is working, as Dr. Steiner says, in that general direction. In particular, the discussion of the spiritual state of labor is the most convincing thing in the book. If the reviewer might make one general constructive suggestion, it would be to the effect that Dr. Steiner's proposal takes too much away from the economic community. He confines it within the limits where economic selfishness might conceivably operate safely, handing over other matters to the spiritual and political communities, and thus effectually depriving the economic community of the autonomy which it is supposed to have. Is it not necessary rather for the economic community to develop organs within itself for handling these matters and for giving effect to the general judgment as to rights and duties, of which the other communities may be the authoritative source? It seems to the reviewer that a reasonable degree of autonomy can only be developed in this way, by making the business world into a community which itself enforces some important community interests. The state and the spiritual community could be represented on these bodies and could deal with them, using co-operation, discussion, pressure, and, as rarely as possible, coercion.

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Modern Italy—Its Intellectual, Cultural, and Financial Aspects.

By TOMMASO TITTONI. New York: Macmillan Co., 1922.

Pp. 236.

This volume consists of lectures delivered by Senator Tittoni before the Institute of Politics at Williamstown in the summer of 1922. The Senator who describes himself as "a statesman with literary friends and tastes," presents a résumé of the chief Italian contributions to modern art and science, and also a discussion of some of the Italian problems of labor legislation, raw materials, and the public finance. The final lecture deals with the problem of emigration.

The first four lectures of this volume give in brief compass the best available sketch of recent Italian development in the field of arts, letters, and science, and for this reason constitute a very useful finding list for students of modern Italian culture. Names like those of Croce, Ferri, Ferrero, Pareto, and Loria are, of course, generally known; but Senator Tittoni, with great conciseness and clearness has outlined a whole field of intellectual activity, not commonly