

CHAPTER V

THE ETHICS OF DISTRIBUTION

THE only means by which the State can assure the greatest aggregate sum of happiness to its members we found to be the observance of justice, *i.e.* securing to all equal opportunities for the exercise of their faculties. In order that any one of them may exercise his faculties, he must satisfy the primary necessity of life, nutrition. In order that all may obtain food, some or all must exercise faculties in the production of food. The question arises, to whom rightfully belongs the food and other desirable things, which any member of a society has produced by the exercise of his faculties?

Socialism, as already shown, replies, that the wealth produced by any and all the members of the State belongs to the State. The reasons by which this view is supported have been quoted verbatim.¹ Before dealing with them, our independent inquiry into the ethics of the relations between State and citizens must be carried a step further than has so far been done.

From the sociological standpoint, ethics are a definite account of the forms of conduct which are fitted to the social state, *i.e.* which will enable each member to live the fullest and longest life, while rearing a due number of offspring. Differing from mere aggregations of animals, and even from those earliest human groups in which the purpose of contiguity is mainly mutual defence against external aggression, the social state implies effectual co-operation in defence against external and internal aggression, as well

¹ Part I. chap. v. p. 41.

as in industrial activities. In the more highly developed social state, this latter object, industrial co-operation, is both more important and more continuous than defensive co-operation. The prosperity of any society, therefore, mainly depends on the extent to which the conditions for effectual co-operation, and especially industrial co-operation, are fulfilled. If these conditions are observed to a due extent, those individuals whose nature is most disposed to effectual co-operation will, on an average, live longer and leave greater progeny having similar tendencies. The whole society, thus brought into an ever better adaptation to the conditions of social life, will not only experience the greatest sum of aggregate happiness, but will also supplant other societies in which the conditions for effectual co-operation are less favourable.

In order that the sentiments which make for social conduct may develop, each member of the State must reap more good than evil from social union. The loss from internal aggression, individual and social, must be less than the gain from industrial co-operation and from reduction of external aggression. The increase of egotistic satisfactions yielded by the social state is, therefore, obtainable only by an altruism which, to some extent, recognises the claims of others. Where this altruism is developed so little that fear of retaliation is the only restraint, the gain from social union is comparatively small. Not only are aggressions frequent and extensive, causing great loss, but the gains from co-operation are small, because co-operation is limited in intensity and extensity by such aggressions. The gain increases in both directions as this pro-altruistic sentiment develops in the direction of the altruistic conception of equal rights, *i.e.* as the recognition of the equal rights of others becomes voluntary and general. It is greatest where the conditions are such that each can satisfy all his needs and rear a due number of offspring, not only without hindering others, but while aiding them in doing the like. What then is the conduct from which evolve the sentiments producing this highest development of social life? The following exposition will furnish the answer to this question.

The evolution of every species of higher animals is dominated by two laws, one egotistic, the other altruistic. The latter is, that during immaturity of the individual the benefits which it receives must be inversely proportioned to its capacity; for the continuance of the species depends upon a due number of offspring being reared. During infancy the life of all young animals is dependent not on their own efforts, but upon parental care. During gestation the embryo derives its nutrition gratuitously from the system of the mother. After birth, the greater or less helplessness of the young animal requires the gratuitous supply of food and defence against enemies by either or both parents; the rendering of these services becoming less and less necessary as, with the approach of maturity, the animal becomes better able to help itself. Other things being equal, therefore, that species will become most numerous and will supplant allied species in which the parental sentiment, compelling services being rendered inversely to the capacity of the offspring, is most highly developed, and similarly, within the species, the offspring of those possessing this sentiment to a higher degree will supplant the offspring of others.

The human offspring is helpless and dependent for a longer period than that of any other species, and the parental sentiment and emotions are proportionately more highly developed. In the higher races of men, the love and protecting guardianship of the parents follow their children even beyond the parental home, fostering the growth of the allied emotions which cause children to return the parental love and its gifts when in their turn parents grow into advancing helplessness. The law, therefore, applies in every respect to the human species as well. In early infancy the care bestowed must be incessant on account of the absolute incapacity of the human baby. As the child grows older, services previously rendered by mother or nurse may now be assumed by the child itself; as the young men or women approach maturity and become able, through the performance of services, to obtain their own sustenance, the gratuitous provision of sustenance by parents is curtailed and ultimately withdrawn. Here also,

benefits conferred are inversely proportioned to capacity, and those parents on an average will rear the greatest number of similarly disposed children, in whom the sentiments which prompt to this parental sacrifice are strongest; and those societies will outnumber and displace others in which these sentiments are most generally and strongly developed. Those parents in whom the sentiments prompting to sacrifices for the benefit of children are weakest, will, other things being equal, rear the fewest children; their progeny, possessing similar natures, being ultimately displaced by that of parents in whom the parental emotions are more highly developed.

Self-sacrificing parental love is the first of the emotions which prompt to altruistic acts. The sympathy which it engenders, extending to wife, brothers, sisters, and parents, widens into sympathy with the clan, the tribe, and the nation, and blossoming at last into that general feeling of beneficence which, counting all mankind as kin, prompts generally to beneficent acts. This social altruism, however, lacking certain elements of parental altruism, never can attain the same intensity. Yet that it may generally attain a high level; that ministering to others' happiness may become an indispensable condition of self-happiness; and that the happiness thus derived may be more intense and may be preferred to happiness derived from egotistic acts, may be seen in ever-multiplying instances of men and women who thus secure their happiness. Such voluntary beneficence, however, cannot be carried permanently to an undue extent. For the more generally sympathetic being, on an average, those in whom the parental emotions are also most highly developed, will not tax their resources for the benefit of others beyond the limit which allows a better bringing-up being given to their own children than to those of others.

The other law is, that after maturity has been attained, benefit must be proportioned to capacity; capacity being measured by fitness for the conditions of life. On no other plan could the evolution of higher types of life from lower types have taken place, than that among adults the well-fitted shall profit by their fitness, and that the ill-

fitted shall suffer through their unfitness. To see the absolute truth of this proposition, it needs but to imagine a species in which benefits were proportioned to inefficiency. In such case inferior would habitually survive superior and leave a greater number of progeny of like unfitness. A gradual retrogression would result, until the species, becoming less and less adjusted to the conditions under which the lives of its members must be carried on, would be exposed to universal suffering, ending in extinction.

When, on the other hand, the more efficient experience the benefit of their efficiency, and the less efficient suffer the penalty of their inefficiency, the progeny of the more efficient, inheriting more or less of this better adaptation, will gradually displace that of the less efficient. The species as a whole will gradually become better adjusted to the conditions under which the lives of its members must be carried on, and an increase in the aggregate sum of happiness must result, as well as the tendency to still further change with changing conditions, on which depends the evolution of higher types.

The survival of the fittest thus ensures that the faculties of every species tend to adjust themselves to the conditions under which the lives of its members must be carried on. It must be the same with men; with faculties which are termed moral as well as with those which are termed physical. From the earliest times, societies composed of men whose feelings and conceptions were congruous with the conditions to which they were exposed, must, other things being equal, have multiplied faster, and must have displaced those whose feelings and conceptions were incongruous with their conditions. Congruity, more or less, of individual nature to the conditions of social life, therefore, is the essential condition of human existence in the social state, and that society will experience the greatest aggregate sum of happiness and will survive all others, the average nature of the members of which is most congruous with the conditions of social life. In order that this highest average congruity may result, those whose nature is more congruous must, on an aver-

age, survive those whose nature is less congruous, and the former must rear a greater number of similarly adapted children than the latter. In no other way can this gradual adjustment and ultimate complete adaptation be achieved. Not only the present, but still more the future happiness of mankind, therefore, depends upon compliance with the law, that every adult shall experience the consequences of his own conduct; that the more efficient shall reap the advantage of their efficiency, and that the less efficient shall suffer the disadvantages of their inefficiency.

The laws governing the distribution of wealth in the social state, therefore, are, first, that all individuals shall enjoy full and equal opportunities for the exercise of their faculties in the production of wealth; second, that each of them shall possess all the wealth which the exercise of his faculties may produce from such equal opportunity. Not equality of wealth, as Socialism posits, but equality of opportunity and inequality of resulting wealth is thus the social condition which justice imposes.

The law here set forth may seem repulsive to persons who, much affected by suffering which they actually witness, are indifferent to all other suffering. Nevertheless does the highest altruism demand conformity of general conduct with its dictates. Private beneficence may advantageously smooth its hard edges; may in many ways soften the inevitable suffering of the inefficient, the less efficient, as well as of the more efficient when occasionally overtaken by misfortune. But a general departure from the law would be unethical in the highest sense. For a people which in its corporate capacity abolishes the natural relation between efficiency and reward could not possibly survive. Either it will expose itself to the miseries and unhappiness of slow decay, or it will be conquered and absorbed by a people which has not undermined its efficiency by the policy of fostering the survival of its inferior at the expense of that of its superior members.

Suffering is the inevitable concomitant of man's as yet imperfect adjustment to the social state, and the only means by which a more perfect adjustment and consequent

increase of happiness can be achieved. If mal-adjustment were not productive of unhappiness, or if it produced happiness, man's nature could not evolve into greater congruity with the requirements of social life.

Moreover, incapacity causes unhappiness to the incapable, directly through overtaxing deficient faculties, and indirectly through non-fulfilment of certain conditions of welfare. Conversely, capacity brings corresponding happiness to the capable, directly through easy and complete performance of tasks, and indirectly through the fulfilment of conditions necessary to welfare. Not only self-happiness, but other-happiness as well, is furthered by capacity and hindered by incapacity. The healthy, capable man, overflowing with joyful energy, spreads happiness around him through sympathy with his mental state. Finding self-maintenance easy, he can still further add to others' happiness by altruistic acts. The incapable man, on the other hand, whose faculties are overtaxed and whose spirits are depressed by non-success, becomes a source of depression to all around him, and is less capable of furthering others' happiness by altruistic acts.

In the social state all members suffer from the incapacity and profit through the capacity of any of them. Deficiency of labouring power, physical and mental, results in a smaller aggregate of produce and in a consequent reduction of the share available for each. Exceptional labouring power, especially mental power, on the other hand, increases the aggregate produce, not only by the additional production of the more capable, but by increasing the productive power of less capable members as well. Organisation, inventions, discoveries, are all the work of the more capable, but add to the productive power of many.

Other defects of some individuals similarly reduce the productiveness of the labour of many. Selfishness produces friction; dishonesty entails the waste of labour in supervision and other precautionary employments; both defects thus reducing the aggregate produce of the general labour.

In addition to the negative evils caused by incapacity,

there arise positive evils as well. Paupers, hospital patients, and lunatics must be maintained, who consume without producing, as also the widows and orphans of those who, through weakness of constitution or intemperate habits, die early. Without further prosecution of this argument, it will be apparent, that the happiness of every member of the social body is raised by increase in average capacity, intelligence, and conscientiousness, and that every reduction in the average of these qualities lowers the happiness of all.

One further result of selfishness, however, may yet be alluded to. The selfish person, missing the pleasures derived from altruistic emotions and actions, fails to experience the greatest and most enduring happiness, while suffering positive unhappiness when, during his more advanced years, selfish pleasures pall. On the other hand, those whom altruistic sentiments prompt to corresponding acts, thence derive positive happiness, while escaping much unhappiness. That others' happiness is likewise furthered by those possessing altruistic natures and hindered by those possessing selfish natures, needs no proof.

It follows that the aggregate sum of happiness in the social state is dependent upon the aggregate adjustment of the society to the condition imposed by that state. These causes, however, extend beyond any one generation. Parents having vivacious minds and vigorous bodies are likely to transmit like sources of happiness to their offspring, while unhappiness is entailed upon the progeny of parents having feeble minds and impaired physical constitutions. The emotional organisation which prompts to altruistic acts is similarly transmitted from parents to offspring, and with it the happiness to which it gives rise. Likewise selfish, licentious, and dishonest parents are likely to transmit similar natures to their progeny. Future generations, therefore, are largely dependent for their happiness upon conditions transmitted from the present generation. Hence, social acts which further the multiplication of those less adapted to the social state lessen the aggregate of present and future happiness; social acts which, in due degree, further the multiplication

of the better adapted increase the aggregate of present and future happiness. The former, therefore, are unethical, the latter ethical ; and the law that adults take the consequences of their own nature and that their progeny, inheriting, on an average, like natures, also take such consequences, tends to raise the aggregate sum of happiness by furthering the multiplication of those capable of experiencing and conferring most happiness, and hindering the multiplication of those less capable of experiencing and conferring happiness.

One more consideration must be alluded to. If it is admitted that men's nature is changeable under changing conditions, every proposal affecting social conditions must be examined with regard to its tendency to further or hinder progress towards the highest social conditions, and the correlative development of the highest human nature. Social conditions which, exempting men from the consequences of their own acts, withdraw the stimulus which the knowledge of such consequences supplies, must hinder the evolution of men's nature in the direction of this final goal. Disassociating reward from service rendered, they hinder the growth of the sentiment of justice, which, contrariwise, is furthered by the daily association of reward with service arising from free contract. Inflicting injustice upon some, in order that undeserved benefits may be given to others, it hinders the development of altruistic sentiments in both directions. The development of mankind towards the highest physical, mental, and moral condition is, therefore, dependent in two ways upon the State abstaining from any general interference with the law, that every adult shall reap the consequences of his own acts : first, because the action of this law furthers the modification of men's nature in this, the highest direction ; second, because it ensures the multiplication of those possessing such modifications, ultimately making the latter permanent and general acquisitions.

The faculties and emotions which make for efficiency in the social state, while partly identical, are partly different from those which make for efficiency in the sub-human and savage states. Parental and marital affections and

the sacrifices to which they prompt, alike in kind though differing in degree, make for efficiency in both states. Such traces of the sentiments of justice and beneficence as may be observed among higher animals, add to their efficiency, while in the social state these same sentiments highly developed are an essential condition of efficiency. For co-operation is furthered not only by the disapproval of aggression which the sentiment of justice implies, but also by assistance being voluntarily rendered without the expectation of an equivalent.

The greatest difference, however, arises from the fact that while animals, and to some extent savage men as well, are restricted to such food as nature produces spontaneously, man in the social state produces his own food and other means for the satisfaction of desires, and produces them co-operatively. This co-operation in satisfying desire, whether it consists of the division or combination of labour, co-ordinates efficiency with service. Whoever produces anything which enters the circle of exchanges renders a service to all other men, making it easier for all to satisfy their desires, not only the desires for this particular thing, but for all things. The efficiency of any individual for the social state, therefore, largely depends upon his possession of faculties enabling him to render services to others through the effort to sustain himself, and upon the emotions which prompt him to render such services adequately. Capacity, industry, honesty, enabling and prompting their possessors to direct their self-sustaining labours towards rendering greater services to others than are rendered by those who are less capable, less industrious, and less honest, must be accompanied by greater rewards than those others receive, if the whole community is ultimately to become more honest, capable, and industrious. The self-sustaining faculties and emotions purely egotistic in the sub-human and savage state, thus become partly altruistic in the social state. In the former they enable their possessor to survive and leave progeny at the expense of others; in the latter they enable him to do so while aiding others. Nature is "red in tooth and claw" below the social state; within that state she com-

pels men to achieve the advantage of self by conferring advantages upon all others.

These considerations leave no doubt as to what is the clear and imperative duty of the State with regard to the distribution of wealth. For they show that any action of the State in the direction of equal distribution, demanded by Socialism, would be socially deleterious, because it deprives the more efficient members of the State of their due reward, in order to hand it over to the less efficient. Constituting non-compliance with one of the natural laws in obedience to which all life has evolved, the law that adults take the consequences of their own natures and acts, it inflicts upon society the penalties which such disobedience inevitably entails. Gradual adjustment to the necessary conditions of social life being prevented by the survival of the less efficient and less congruous, progress towards a higher social state and towards a higher type of human nature ceases. The suffering entailed by existing mal-adjustment is perpetuated and the attainment of a greater sum of aggregate happiness is prevented, with the ultimate result, that a society thus made stationary, if not retrogressive, must be supplanted by societies in which conditions favourable to further evolution are maintained.

The reluctance to accept these conclusions arises largely from existing interferences of the State with the law that every adult shall reap the consequences of his own acts, through the creation of legal privileges, especially private ownership of land, and the consequent absence of equal opportunities for all. The monopoly of opportunities by a few, rendering nugatory the efforts of many whose natures are better adapted to the conditions of social life, prevents them from leaving a due number of children; while the owners of these opportunities, though they may be less adapted, are by their possession enabled to rear a larger number. Further, the acquisition of special privileges is furthered by unsocial qualities, such as cunning, dishonesty, and greed, while their possession and inheritance confer reward without service or adequate service rendered, and thus still further disturb the natural relation.

Under existing conditions, therefore, reward being largely severed from service rendered, the survival of the socially fittest is disturbed, and many, socially less fit than others, nevertheless survive, and leave a greater number of descendants. These facts, however, so far from contradicting the general theory and the conclusions based thereon, tend to their confirmation.

Moreover, the disappearance of the less fit from existing societies is nevertheless proceeding at a comparatively rapid rate. Public opinion, tending ever to become more healthy and exacting of compliance with higher ethical standards, represses unsocial conduct. Discourtesy, dishonesty, untruthfulness, laziness, cruelty, sexual misconduct, and drunkenness are visited with strong social disapproval; while courtesy, truthfulness, honesty, mercy, beneficence, application, and self-restraint excite more and more approbation. As a consequence, unsocial conduct is discouraged and social conduct encouraged; social sentiments are strengthened, and unsocial sentiments weakened. Hence heredity is modified by practice; the unsocial sentiments are weakened in their possessors, who transmit more adapted natures to their children than they themselves inherited, causing the gradual disappearance of such unsocial natures in a few generations.

On the other hand, those whose unsocial tendencies are too strong to be repressed by the general sentiment, tend to die out. The self-indulgent, the drunkard, and the profligate, as well as the criminal classes, leave few children. Though many children are born to many of them, they mostly die in infancy or adolescence, partly through want of due parental solicitude, partly through the inheritance of enfeebled constitutions. The surviving children, inheriting like tendencies, also leave few children, and in a few generations the strain has ceased to exist.

Under conditions of social justice, when no legal monopoly-rights exist, the disappearance of the unadapted, however, would be far more rapid. Reward being apportioned to service rendered, the artificial disturbance of the survival of the fittest would terminate. Qualities which now, by the acquisition of legal mono-

polies, lead to the acquisition of fortunes and power, would not benefit their possessors, and would therefore tend to disappear. The comparative equality of possessions, and disappearance of involuntary poverty, creating a more homogeneous society, would add to the force of public opinion, and make that opinion still more exacting of ethical conduct. At the same time the temptation to unethical conduct, arising on the one hand from excessive riches, on the other from poverty, especially from poverty in city slums, would be materially lessened by the scarcity of either condition. All these forces would unite to the modification of inherited tendencies in the direction of gradual and better adaptation to the conditions of social life. The remainder—individuals endowed with such unsocial natures that these influences would fail to modify them—would be comparatively few, and their disappearance would, therefore, be still more rapid. The more efficient would still receive the reward of their greater efficiency, and the less efficient would still suffer for their inefficiency. But as the differences in efficiency would be lessened by raising the social efficiency of the great majority, the suffering would be comparatively slight, and the time would be materially hastened when, all mankind being approximately adapted to the requirements of social life, unsocial conduct and consequent suffering would disappear.

The foregoing examination shows that the distributive proposal of Socialism is in the highest degree unethical and disastrous to the present and future wellbeing of mankind. An examination, in the light of evolutionary experience, of the reasons by which the exponents of Socialism support this proposal, shows them to be as futile as they are crude. These reasons will now be dealt with in the sequence in which they have been enumerated in Part I. chap. iv.

The first of these is the allegation, that under the far-reaching co-operative processes of to-day, it is impossible for competition to ensure to every co-operator a reward commensurate with the services rendered by him.

It is true that, under existing conditions, competition fails to assure to each co-operator in the co-operative

system of production a reward accurately proportioned to the services rendered by him. This failure, however, obviously does not justify a proposal which aims at the absolute severance of reward from service rendered. On the contrary, it imposes upon society the duty to remove those interferences with the action of competition which, causing it to be one-sided, prevent its tendency to proportion reward to service coming into full play. What these interferences are, has been pointed out in Part II.

The second line of reasoning is based on the conception, that "the special ability or energy with which some persons are born" is the result of ancestral evolution, and, therefore, a social product which, as such, belongs to society as a whole.

Not only the special energy and ability of some, but all the faculties and emotions of every individual, are the result of ancestral evolution. The claim, founded on this consideration, that the results of the exercise of special ability and energy, the so-called "rent of ability," belong to society, overlooks several important facts. The first of these, elaborated above, is, that by delaying, if not preventing, the rearing of a more numerous progeny by those possessing special ability and energy, it is detrimental to the further evolution of all members of society in this direction. The other is, that special ability and energy as such produce no results, not even any "rent of ability." In order that such results may be produced, these qualities must be used productively. When so used they not only benefit their possessors, but, under just conditions, all other individuals as well. The aggregate sum of happiness, therefore, is increased in two ways by the exercise of special ability and energy: first, in the greater happiness which their exercise brings to their possessors; second, in the greater means to happiness which it places within the reach of all others as well. The incentive to the exercise of these qualities is the special reward which it brings to their possessors. If that reward is withdrawn, as by equal distribution it would be withdrawn; if it is made as well to be inferior as to be superior, the exercise of special ability and energy will be discouraged, and the happiness

not only of their possessors, but of all other men as well, will be diminished.

Moreover, to compare the increased reward derived from the exercise of special ability with the so-called "unearned increment" of rent is merely another proof of the radically defective analysis of economic facts habitual to socialists. For while an increase of rent comes to the owners of land without any service rendered by them, and as a deduction from the total result of the social product; any increase in reward derived through the exercise of special ability is dependent, under natural conditions, upon additional service rendered by the possessors of special ability, which service adds more to the social fund than the reward amounts to which those who render it can possibly receive.

The third argument is, that the reward which any one receives "depends entirely upon the desires and needs of others for his services"; the value of the services, being thus a social product, belongs not to him who renders the services, but the society.

It is undoubtedly true that the power of every individual to supply his wants in the co-operative industrial society depends mainly on the desire of others for his services. But the conclusion to which this fact points is not that he must be deprived of the reward which these others are willing to give him for his services. On the contrary, as the satisfaction of their desires for his services enhances their happiness, he who renders these services is entitled to a reward commensurate with the happiness which he confers. It is the expectation of this reward which stimulates his efforts to render services, *i.e.* to confer happiness; and it is this reward which, enabling him who renders greater services than others to rear a greater number of offspring, will ultimately increase the services rendered by all. To deny a greater reward than the average to him who confers more than the average amount of happiness by his services, in order to increase the reward of him who confers less than the average amount of happiness by his services, must, therefore, reduce the aggregate sum of present and future happiness.

The fourth and last line of argument is that adopted by Mr. Edward Bellamy, and consists of the following reasoning : Society as such enormously increases the productive capacity of every man, and, therefore, all the produce of every man's labour, and not merely the addition due to his participation in social advantages, belongs to society and not to the producer.

The way in which this apparently illogical contention is arrived at is shown in the following quotation :—

“ This analysis of the product of industry must needs stand to minimise the importance of the personal equation of performance as between individual workers. If the modern man, by aid of the social machinery, can produce fifty dollars' worth of product where he could produce not over a quarter of a dollar's worth without Society, then forty-nine dollars and three-quarters out of every fifty dollars must be credited to the social fund to be equally distributed. The industrial efficiency of two men working without Society might have differed as two to one—that is, while one man was able to produce a full quarter-dollar's worth of work a day, the other could produce only twelve and a half cents' worth. This was a great difference under those circumstances, but twelve and a half cents is so slight a proportion of fifty dollars as not to be worth mentioning. That is to say, the difference in individual endowments between the two men would remain the same, but that difference would be reduced to relative unimportance by the prodigious equal addition made to the product of both alike by the social organism.”¹

The fallacy in this reasoning is so clear that he who runs can read it. The existence of the social organism increases, according to the hypothesis, the value of one man's work from twenty-five cents to fifty dollars. Does it necessarily increase to fifty dollars also the value of the work of him who only produces half as much? If, for instance, one man makes one pair of boots a day, while another man produces two pair of boots in the same time, does the social organism increase the value of the one pair of boots to exactly the level of that of the two pair of

¹ *Equality*, p. 81.

boots? If not—and it will be admitted it does not; that, on the contrary, the two pair of boots are worth exactly twice as much as the one pair under any given social conditions—it follows that the social organism does not make an “equal addition to the product of both alike.” In the given case, therefore, Society increases the value of the one man’s work from twelve and one-half cents to twenty-five dollars, and the value of the other man’s work from twenty-five cents to fifty dollars. By appropriating the product of the labour of both, Society, therefore, does not extend approximately the same treatment to both of them, but the inequality of treatment thus meted out is of immense importance.

For it is clear that neither the one pair nor the two pair of boots would have had any existence but for the use which each of these men made of the social organism by the exercise of their labour. Not to the social organism, therefore, but to the exercise of their respective abilities, must the existence of the boots be attributed. The social organism is merely an opportunity which all must use for the fructification of their efforts. The extent to which each does use it depends upon his own capacity and sentiments. The greater use any one makes of this opportunity, the greater is the service which he renders to Society. For Society to appropriate the result of the use which any one makes of social opportunities is therefore unjust and unwise. All that Society may and must do is, to see that these social opportunities are equally open to all, leaving to each the full reward which his use of such opportunities may bring to him.

Moreover, the statement that Society is the only heir to the inheritance of intellect and discovery, is only true with regard to one of its parts. Intellect is a personal attribute as much as speed, imagination, muscular strength, or a good digestion. Like intellect, all these faculties are the result of the ancestral struggle for existence and consequent better adjustment to the conditions of life. If intellect is a social inheritance, all these other attributes, a good digestion included, are also social inheritances. Yet, like intellect, these faculties cannot be exercised by Society,

but by their individual possessors alone. They, therefore, are not social inheritances, in the only sense which such a statement conveys, that they are common possessions to which all are equally entitled. They are, on the contrary, individual inheritances to which the individual alone can claim a right, and which no one but the individual who has inherited them can use.

If, on the other hand, the idea intended to be conveyed is that the result of the exercise of intellect is a social inheritance, the idea is negatived by the same considerations which were found to invalidate the similar claim made with regard to the result of ability and energy.

It is, however, different with discoveries. Discoveries, inventions, and additions to knowledge are only temporarily individual possessions, and ultimately become social possessions and a social inheritance. The individual making a discovery or invention, or acquiring a new knowledge, does so by utilising antecedent discoveries and knowledge, the accumulated product of all past generations. We all stand on the shoulders of our predecessors; can reach higher than they could reach, because the knowledge transmitted to us by them places us on a higher level. This accumulated and transmitted knowledge, however, is an opportunity open to all. The individual who, using this common opportunity, makes a further discovery or invention, or acquires additional knowledge, assumes no greater freedom than any other possesses. The new discovery, arising from the exercise of his individual faculty upon an opportunity equally open to all, is the exclusive and individual possession of the discoverer by the law that every one shall experience the results of his own acts. If he chooses to communicate the discovery, invention, or new knowledge to others, he is free to impose the terms on which he will do so, and any use of the discovery, invention, or knowledge by others, contrary to such terms, is a breach of contract, an undue interference with the law of equal freedom.

But just as all material products of labour ultimately merge again in the general stock of matter, so all new discoveries, inventions, and knowledge ultimately merge

in the general fund of knowledge. The individual having made the discovery or invention, or acquired the new knowledge, must die, and with him would die the result of his exertion unless it were adopted and preserved by other men of the same generation and of succeeding generations. The accumulation of discoveries and inventions, the fund of knowledge which any society possesses, is transmitted not by particular individuals to their descendants, but by previous generations to the present one, which in its turn will transmit it, enriched and enlarged by the efforts of its members, to future generations. This fund, therefore, is a true social or common inheritance. As such all are equally entitled to use it in the only way in which it can be used, viz. acquiring it or as much of it as they will or can by their own efforts as one of the common opportunities for the maintenance of life and the achievement of happiness. For this common opportunity cannot be monopolised as other common opportunities can, in the way that its acquisition by one will prevent others from acquiring an equal share. On the contrary, the more knowledge is acquired by any man, and the greater the number of men who acquire the fullest knowledge, the easier becomes the acquisition of like knowledge by others. In every case, however, the acquisition of knowledge can be achieved by individual effort alone. While, therefore, knowledge is a social inheritance and possession, yet all men cannot be entitled to equal knowledge, nor can knowledge be distributed among them unequally. What all are entitled to, what it is the duty of the State to bring about, is that all have an equal opportunity for the acquisition of as much knowledge as any of them may desire or can absorb.

Again it must be pointed out that the right of each to an equal opportunity with all others for acquiring knowledge does not involve any common right in the products, not even the material ones, which the acquisition of superior knowledge enables its possessors to produce. For knowledge, like intellect, ability, and energy, produces nothing; the application of knowledge alone leads to material results. The product resulting from the appli-

cation of superior knowledge, therefore, is in all respects subject to the same considerations as the product resulting from the exercise of superior intellect, ability, and energy; it is an individual possession to which Society can urge no claims.

With the exception of the first, all the reasons adduced in favour of social possession and equal distribution of labour-products suffer from the same defect. They all confuse the right of equal possession of desired things with the right of equal opportunities to produce desired things. The former is a spurious right, disregarding the essential conditions of life; the other is a true right, emanating from and congruous with the essential conditions of life. Ethics, therefore, utter the same condemnation of the distributive proposals of Socialism as we found Economics to do, *i.e.* that they are opposed to and destructive of the highest interests of mankind. Ethics as well as Economics show that there is only one true and beneficial system of distribution: the one which, founded on justice, leaves in the possession of every individual all the produce which the exercise of his faculties brings forth, or which others freely surrender to him as a gift or in return for services rendered to them, always provided that no one is granted a greater share than others in the common opportunities to produce or render services without his making full compensation to these others for any loss of opportunity which they may suffer in consequence.