

CHAPTER II

THE UNCONSCIOUS DISCHARGE OF SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

THE separate and unlike structures of the social organism, like those of all other organisms, discharge separate, unlike, and interdependent functions. The due performance of its function by one structure is conditioned by the due performance of their respective functions by other structures. Thus, that the manufacturing groups may produce, a due supply of raw material and food must be supplied to them by the extracting groups, which process is dependent upon the supply by the manufacturing groups of machines, tools, various prepared materials, clothing, and like necessities. This, as well as all the other interchanges, cannot be carried out without the due discharge of their functions by the transporting and exchanging groups, which, again, is dependent upon their being supplied with food, clothing, and other necessities by the extracting and manufacturing groups.

The interdependence of functions here indicated pervades the whole social organism in endless ramifications, and, stretching beyond national limits, combines all the nations of the earth into one larger social organism. Growing in extensity, it also grows in intensity. For, as structures multiply, each becomes more specialised with regard to the function which it discharges, and increased specialisation renders the discharge of other than the habitual function more difficult and ultimately impossible. The due discharge of any function thus becomes more and more dependent upon the due discharge of all other functions. Should any function remain undischarged, the

life of the social organism is rendered less full and may even be extinguished. The reciprocal aid resulting from the due discharge of mutually dependent functions by the several structures is co-operation in its highest form.

All increase in the power of man over that with which nature endows the individual comes from the co-operation of individuals, from the co-ordination of their efforts towards a common end. The co-ordination of efforts may, however, take place consciously or unconsciously.

Where there is no differentiation of structures there is little interdependence and co-operation. Among savage tribes co-operation is consequently mainly confined to the activities involved in war and hunting. The activities co-ordinated for these purposes in order to be effective must be guided by the will of one man towards a pre-meditated end. The immediate object aimed at being the benefit of the tribe as a whole and not that of any particular individual, participation in this form of co-operation becomes compulsory. This trait of compulsion is an inherent necessity of all co-operation which is consciously directed towards public ends, *i.e.* of all co-operation directed by governmental agencies. The organisation and regulation of an army displays it most clearly. Not only must the State, if necessary, be able to enforce the participation of all fit individuals in military activities, but the army must be so organised that the will of the supreme commander makes itself felt throughout all ranks. Implicit obedience to the orders of superiors being an indispensable condition of efficiency, individual volition must be disregarded, and abstention from co-operation must entail punishment. Similar compulsion distinguishes the organisation spreading through the whole body of society, which either enforces actions deemed necessary for the wellbeing of society or inhibits actions deemed detrimental to the wellbeing of society.

Closely akin to this socially organised co-operation is that kind of industrial co-operation which by a similar combination of individual efforts aims at the accomplishment of tasks which exceed the physical power of the individual. Whether the result aimed at is the simple one of moving an object too heavy for the physical power of

any one of the co-operators, or whether it is the infinitely more complicated one of altering the course of a sailing vessel, this kind of industrial co-operation involves the subjection of many wills to one will in the conscious achievement of a common and premeditated object.

All co-operation which consists in the combination of efforts, therefore, has the following traits:—(1) The common object and not the individual benefit of the co-operators is consciously and immediately aimed at.

(2) Efficiency requires the subjection of the individual volitions of the many to the will of a regulative agency.

(3) Except in its simplest forms such co-operation is compulsory also in the sense that those who engage in it are not free to abandon it when and where they please.

(4) It neglects to utilise the mental power of the regulated many, and utilises their physical power alone under the mental direction of the regulators.

While this form of co-operation has its social uses in securing certain limited results, it fails to secure others which involve a longer series of more delicate and complicated conjoint actions. Whenever, in the course of social growth, individuals find their wants better satisfied by exchanging goods which they can make best, or services which they can perform best, for other goods or services in the making and rendering of which they are less skilled, or for which they are less suitably circumstanced, there arises a different kind of co-operation which consists of the separation of efforts. This separation of efforts enables one individual to perform for many individuals tasks, each of which does not require the full power of an individual. When, for instance, one specially skilled in the making of weapons confines his efforts to the object of making weapons for many, he relieves these others of a task which does not require the full power of each of them. Lacking the special aptitude of the one, and still more the added skill which constant repetition of a given action evolves, the many find it advantageous to obtain weapons from the one. Confining themselves to pursuits for which they possess special aptitudes, they also acquire additional skill by repetition, and, exchanging part of the produce of

their skilled labour for part of the produce of the skilled labour of the weapon-maker, the desires of all are satisfied more skilfully, *i.e.* the desires of all of them are satisfied with less exertion, or an increased number of desires can be satisfied without increase of exertion.

The advantages thus derived from co-operation through the separation of efforts cause the gradual evolution of the social organism from the state of few and vague structures to the elaborate structural and functional differentiation dependent upon reciprocal aid which distinguishes civilised societies. That one group of individuals can devote all their labour to the production of watch-springs is made possible, primarily, by the fact that other groups devote their respective labour to the production of some other component part of watches, and that still other groups devote their labour to combining the several parts into complete watches. Ultimately, however, the performance of this social function by the composite group of watchmakers depends upon the due performance of other social functions by other groups similarly or still more elaborately compounded. Food must be produced by some groups, clothing by others, furniture and buildings by still others; books must be written and printed by the co-operation of several other groups; multitudinous groups forming the transporting and exchanging system must perform their several functions, as well as many others too numerous to mention. These many groups are themselves interdependent, the performance of the function of each of them being conditioned by the performance of their respective functions by all other groups. Moreover, this simultaneous co-operation of many groups is accompanied by a successive co-operation. For each consumption-good is the ultimate result of the successive co-operation of groups, each devoting its efforts to the production of an intermediate good, as in order that bread may appear there are successively produced iron, agricultural machinery, wheat, milling machinery, flour, and baking appliances.

This co-operation, consisting of the separation of efforts in time and space, is distinguished in other respects from the kind of co-operation which consists of the combination

of efforts. The latter consciously and directly aims at the attainment of a common benefit, leaving individual benefits to result indirectly from the attainment of the common benefit. The former consciously and directly aims at the attainment of individual benefits, leaving the common benefit to result indirectly from the attainment of individual benefits. Every one of the innumerable millions who participate in this co-operation has no other object in view than the satisfaction of his own desires and those of his immediate dependents, the maintenance of his and their lives. Yet it is impossible for any of them to attain this object without contributing to a corresponding extent to the satisfaction of others' desires and the maintenance of their lives. Each of them thus consciously aims at the attainment of an individual and proximate object, and in the measure of its attainment he unconsciously contributes to that of a social and ultimate object.

Moreover, because the individual and not the common object is immediately aimed at, there is here an absence of the regulation and compulsion which were found to be essential conditions of the co-operation which aims directly at common objects. For the object of each co-operator being the satisfaction of his desires with the least exertion, his attainment of this object being dependent upon the extent to which his efforts enable others to satisfy their desires in like manner, it follows that the social object, the satisfaction of the desires of all with the least exertion, is attained automatically.

Yet another difference must be pointed out. The co-operation which consists of the combination of efforts more or less fails to utilise the mental power of all but those who form the regulative agency. Obedience to orders required of the regulated precludes the use or full use of their mental power, and claims only the conjunction of their physical efforts towards the achievement of the common task. The reason may be found in the fact, that while the physical power of a group of men, intelligently directed, is equal to the sum of the physical powers of all of them, their mental powers cannot be so compounded. Ten men pulling at a rope can draw ten

times as much as one man ; but ten men cannot reason ten times as well as one man. Their reasoning power, therefore, can only be utilised if each of them works at a separate task ; it must be neglected when they combine their efforts towards the accomplishment of a common task. The combination of the physical efforts of a group of men under the mental direction of one, therefore, necessarily involves the neglect of the intelligence of all but one man. As far as the object in view is concerned, the rest might be devoid of any greater intelligence than is required for the understanding of the commands of the one man.

The unconscious co-operation which consists of the separation of efforts, however, utilises both the physical and mental powers of all the co-operators. Each chooses his own occupation, and within this occupation brings his mental as well as physical power to bear upon his individual task. It is true that each sub-group exhibits to some extent the relation of regulator and regulated, of the captain and the privates of industry, and that the former alone determines the immediate objective of the common efforts of the sub-group. This regulation, however, is far different from that previously considered. For as the co-operation results from separation of efforts, each regulated co-operator has still to use his mental power in the accomplishment of his separate task, while the regulator uses his intelligence in the co-ordination of their several tasks. Moreover, no superior authority co-ordinates the labour of the several sub-groups which co-operate unconsciously towards the achievement of the ultimate social object. Hence, while conscious co-operation utilises only an insignificant part of the intelligence of the co-operators, unconscious co-operation utilises the whole sum of their individual intelligences. The latter, therefore, is a higher and more efficient form of co-operation, and its product must be superior to that of the former. It consists of the unconscious, voluntary, and reciprocal discharge of social functions by individuals and groups of individuals, all of whom, in the conscious pursuit of their individual ends, conjoin their mental and physical powers in unconsciously

maintaining the life of the social organism with the least exertion on the part of all.

The essential difference between these two kinds of co-operation may be most fully perceived when the method of provisioning an army is contrasted with that of provisioning a great city. In the former case the head of the Commissariat Department decides upon the kinds, quantities, and qualities of the necessary supplies, as well as upon the delivery of stated quantities at given times and places. His orders are transmitted to a set of officials, each of whom takes control of the execution of a part of them by transmitting corresponding commands to other and carefully graded sets of officials. A closely graded and extensive regulating mechanism is thus consciously set in motion by one man, and more or less successfully accomplishes the purpose which he preconceived.

The task of supplying a great city with all its innumerable daily requirements is accomplished without such preconception, regulation, and direction. Wholesale merchants, each dealing with a few kinds and qualities of goods, and with only a small part of the required quantity of these, without concert among themselves, each consciously intent, not on the ultimate object, the supply of the city, but only on the immediate object, the earning of his own living, set in motion the machinery which brings the daily supplies. From the stores thus collected retail merchants purchase their supplies; each again being more or less ignorant of what his fellows are doing, and intent only on his own advantage through the satisfaction of some of the desires of his clients. Yet, though there is no conscious direction and no compulsory regulation, though the ultimate purpose which all these agencies subserve is not consciously before the mind of any one of them, the wants of a great city are satisfied with unfailing regularity, while the provisioning of an army is rarely a complete success, and frequently a more or less startling failure.

Nevertheless, the latter task is far less complicated and difficult than the former. For an army is mainly com-

posed of males in the prime of life, and no attempt is made to supply more than is absolutely necessary to keep them in health and strength. The variety of goods with which the commissariat of an army deals is, therefore, exceedingly limited, while the quantity required of each is known, and the task to be performed is correspondingly simplified.

The inhabitants of a large city comprise on the other hand individuals of all ages, of both sexes, and of infinite variety of condition. The variety of goods to be supplied is, therefore, infinite in kind and quality, and the amount required of each kind and quality of goods varies almost from day to day. The task which unconscious co-operation fulfils with unflinching regularity is, therefore, infinitely more complex than that which conscious co-operation rarely succeeds in fulfilling.

Nor is the success of the one and the comparative failure of the other a mere accident which might be avoided by better organisation. For the more important and regularly recurring functions of all organisms are discharged unconsciously, while less important and irregularly recurring functions only are consciously discharged. Animal organisms direct consciously only such activities as their rate of motion and alimentation, while the more important activities, as respiration, circulation of the blood, digestion, and others, are discharged unconsciously. No amount of training could enable any man to efficiently discharge such functions consciously; the wisest and most careful of men could not escape premature death if he had to consciously direct these processes.

Likewise, a social organism can efficiently undertake the regulation of certain functions of minor importance or irregular occurrence. But the most important of all social functions, the satisfaction of the constantly recurring and innumerable wants of its component units, cannot be safely withdrawn from the department of unconscious activities and placed under the conscious direction of the social organism itself. For just as even a temporary interruption of the respiratory process or the circulation of the blood is fatal to the animal organism, so

even a temporary interruption of the process by which a social organism is supplied with the means of satisfying its wants would be destructive of its life. Such interruption is difficult, nay, almost impossible, where the supplies originate in innumerable, self-directed, and independent groups; it is comparatively easy when supplies originate in the mandate of a centralised agency. Apart, however, from this consideration, the co-operative process is so intricate and involved, so far surpasses the power of control of any individual or set of individuals, that it cannot be efficiently directed by them even under ordinary circumstances.

Consider what is involved. A nation wants vegetable and animal food, clothing, furniture, houses, literature, artistic enjoyments and amusements, wants teaching, healing, and many mental stimuli. The wants comprised under each of these heads are of infinite variety and varying quantity, and are largely dependent for their satisfaction upon the uncertain response of nature to man's efforts. The central agency regulating the co-operative mechanism must nevertheless predetermine the kinds, qualities, and quantities of goods, and services which may be required at a given future time, and must so direct production that all of them may be supplied. Many processes of production involve the lapse of years between their initiation and completion. The directing agency must, therefore, be able to successfully estimate the requirements of distant years in order to determine the amount of labour which shall be devoted to the present initiation of their production.

Besides this productive process, that of distribution has to be carried out. The kinds, qualities, and quantities of goods required at any point in the national territory have to be determined beforehand, their transport to such points must be accomplished, and they must there be distributed in such equitable manner as has been decided upon. Among other difficulties, insuperable in the absence of the competitive process, that of determining the value of every kind and quality of goods at a given time has to be overcome.

Nor is even this all. For the production and distribution of all these requisites of infinite variety, millions of men and women similarly varying in character and aptitudes must each be allotted his or her appointed task, and must be superintended in, and if necessary compelled to, the performance of their respective functions. This selection, regulation, and compulsion must be exercised by the central agency through innumerable subordinate agencies, the component units of which are mostly unseen by and unknown to the central agency. Even if each unit entering into the composition of the regulated body and of the regulative machinery were actuated solely by the desire to efficiently perform his or her task, efficient regulation of the co-operation of all of them would transcend the power of any man or body of men. But when every unit is actuated by many and frequently conflicting motives, when many, if not most, are actuated by desires the satisfaction of which conflicts with the efficient performance of the task allotted to them, as will and must be the case, efficient regulation from without is so obviously hopeless, that it is difficult to understand the frame of mind which can contemplate its possibility.

As the task of consciously organising and performing the industrial functions of a society is beyond the power of any man or body of men, so it is equally impossible to consciously organise the performance of the scientific, artistic, and literary functions. Science has conquered so wide a field that no one mind can grasp a tithe of its volume. The individual scientist, restricted to the cultivation of a small part of the scientific area, can only do so to advantage if its selection is left to his individual predilection and predisposition. He may then advance human knowledge by contributing a mite, which, in due time, will swell the general stock. If, however, a regulative agency organises science, as under Socialism it must, individual aptitude cannot be considered. The future scientist must be selected at a comparatively early age, and must be ordered to fit himself for such branch or branches as, to the selectors, seem most in need of recruits. Should the regulative agency be of opinion that the number of

investigators in one branch is excessive while in another it is deficient, some must be transferred. By accident some men may do the work for which they possess special aptitude ; as a rule they will be compelled to neglect the researches for which they are specially fitted and engage in others for which they are less fitted or unfitted. Stagnation and retrogression, therefore, must take the place of the active progress in all branches of science which distinguishes our period. For in science, and still more in art and literature, Hegel's dictum is supremely true : "Subjective volition, passion, it is that sets men in activity ; men will not interest themselves in anything unless their individuality is gratified by its attainment."

Art and literature, though giving the most complete expression to national sentiments, are nevertheless still more dependent upon the fullest freedom of the individual to express himself or herself. To consciously select the youths who shall be trained as artists and writers, to afterwards prescribe to each of them the particular branch of art and literature which he or she shall cultivate, is a task which, even if it could be accomplished, would kill all art and literature.

Moreover, while the task of consciously directing the performance of these social functions vastly transcends the power of the best and wisest of men, experience proves that those who would be entrusted with it would be neither the best nor the wisest of the men available. Democracies have produced men of great ability and of conspicuous honour to deal with great questions of State. But where democratic governments have undertaken the conduct of industrial functions, the task has generally fallen into unreliable and incompetent hands. Universal experience proves that the more detailed governmental functions become, the more they deal with industrial matters, the less lofty is the type of politician. Abuse of power, neglect of duty, favouritism and jobbery have been the almost universal accompaniment of industrial politics. Yet the temptations in the way of the conductors of national industries are so great and numerous, the task is so complicated, that even greater and loftier

qualities are required by them than by those who conduct the wider affairs of the State.

In the Australian colonies governments have for many years exercised industrial functions which cannot with safety or justice be left to the conduct of individuals without due compensation. Railways, telegraphs, telephones, the postal service, the supply of gas and water, as well as other functions, have been and are performed by governmental agencies. Yet there is universal discontent with the management of these comparatively simple industrial undertakings, a discontent in the expression of which the journalistic and political advocates of the conduct of all industries by the State have been and are loudest.

The foremost aim of Socialism is to substitute this conscious discharge of social functions for their unconscious discharge; to supersede the world-wide voluntary and undirected industrial co-operation by a compulsory and regulated co-operation under the direction of the State. The foregoing exposition proves that the co-operation at which Socialism aims is inferior in type and less efficient than that which it desires to displace, and that the success of the endeavour would enormously reduce the opportunities of happiness. Before contemplating in greater detail the social results which the establishment of the industrial system of Socialism must produce, it is necessary to examine the form which its organisation must assume.