

## CHAPTER IX

### MAN AND SOCIETY

#### THE DESTINY OF MAN

There is one certain matter that has been overlooked by our recorders, and that is how rapidly we have travelled from the hopeful conditions which inspired the men of two generations ago. What were these hopeful conditions? To read Sidgwick, Kidd, Spencer, and their contemporaries, in which ideas were put forth on improving the lot of man, seems like delving into the literature of the Middle Ages. The one thing that strikes the reader of their works now is that there was then some hope of reform. And what have we today? From serious thinkers nothing but despair. That hope is gone—the hope that animated the deep thinkers of the nineteenth century. Why is it gone? Because the very hindrances and obstacles to the betterment of man have been increased by modern governments. The names of the men mentioned above stand for three separate conceptions of the destiny of man. Sidgwick regarded man as a unit that might be improved and, through his improvement, society would prosper. Spencer, on the other hand, believed that if the State would only leave him alone, he would improve himself. The position taken by Spencer was that “living units do not and cannot lose individual consciousness since the community as a whole has no corporate consciousness.” In another place he says, “The welfare of the citizens cannot rightly be sacrificed to some supposed benefit

of the State. . . . The State is to be maintained solely for the benefit of citizens."

#### SUBORDINATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Kidd took another view, which is summed up in the following:

"It was pointed out that if the principle which Spencer rightly recognized in modern society as rendering the life of the individual no longer subservient to the corporate life of the State was to be accepted as a principle of progress distinguishing modern civilization from that of the Greek period, it would be necessary for the sociologist to exhibit it not as indicating the larger independence of the individual, but as a principle identified with the increasing subordination of the individual to a more organic type of society. Here, therefore, this result is in process of accomplishment. The intervening process in history—including the whole modern movement towards liberty and enfranchisement, towards equality of conditions, towards equality of political rights, and towards equality of economic opportunities—is presented as a process of development towards a more advanced and organic stage of social subordination than has ever prevailed in the world before. In this light, also, it may be observed how the claim of sociology to be the most advanced of all the theoretical sciences is justified."

The accomplishment, sad to relate, was only in Kidd's mind, for when he was writing *The Principles of Western Civilization*, from which this excerpt is taken, the nations of Europe were arming for the World War. And it was because the State had absorbed the man, and had become almost omnipotent, that it was possible to wage that war. Who was right—Kidd or Spencer?

Man as an individual has ceased to exist in the countries of the West. The State is gorged with man! It is seldom one comes across a line in the ponderous works written by our recorders concerning the vision of Spencer. With all his faults, it cannot be denied that he saw further than the sociologists of his time. It may very well be that in the years to come some one looking back on the ruin of our civilization may light upon the following prophetic note in Spencer's works:

"Our social edifice may be constructed with all possible labour and ingenuity, and be strongly clamped together with cunningly devised enactments; but if there be no rectitude in its component parts, if it is not built on upright principles, it will assuredly tumble to pieces."

The tumbling process has been going on now for several decades. And Spencer wrote a long time before we ever heard the name of Spengler!

#### SOCIOLOGY'S COLLAPSE

The futility of the work of sociologists should be clearly understood by now. No serious-minded student can delve into their works, since the days of Comte, and get the slightest encouragement from their findings. Indeed, it is very difficult to understand why there are any sociologists left. The boast of Benjamin Kidd, in the last sentence quoted above from his book *The Principles of Western Civilization*, reads like a cruel joke. There is no doubt that data-collecting has had a great deal to do with the survival of sociology. There is no end to the business of compiling tables, fashioning charts, and recording cyclic depressions. There is one thing the sociologist has always forgotten in this business of data-collecting, and that is that humanity is not

an industry. None of the ideas or conceptions they hold are applicable to masses of men and women. They are individuals—each man, each woman, is an individual—and no matter how the sociologists strive, along with the bureaucracy, to shape them into an homogeneous mass, they must fail because of the infinite variety of likes and dislikes of the herd. The methods of the ranch, herding the cattle together and putting them in a corral, are not applicable to creatures who invented the corral for cattle. If the sociologist had ever taken the trouble to look a little closer into family life, to say nothing of small town life, he would have thrown up his hands in despair. The merging process has never been a complete success, even with regard to marriage. If he had gone to the trouble of asking fathers and mothers to confess honestly whether they have thought they were successful in controlling and directing the lives of their children before they left the home, he would have had quite sufficient evidence to assure him that nothing could be done with the mass. It is curious: this notion that there may be some way of treating what is called humanity as if it were a flock of sheep. Spencer says, "The corporate life in society must be subservient to the lives of the parts, instead of the lives of the parts being subservient to the corporate life."

#### THE POLITICIAN AND THE UNIVERSE

Now why do the sociologists persist in their attempts to redeem the mass before they give their attention to the primary question of redeeming the politicians, who make the mass what it is? At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sir Thomas More, who was no mean politician, declared to the government of his day, "If you do not want cut-throats, thieves and beggars, cease making laws that make cut-throats, thieves and beg-

gars." The mass is what the government makes it, and no sociologist of my acquaintance has yet appreciated this fact. All seem to be afflicted with the idea that the mass of people really desires to be what the sociologists wish it to be. And yet, holding this idea, the sociologists butt their heads against the mass of humanity that does not want to be saved from its own undoing. There never was such a preposterous business! And the most farcical thing about it all is that the sociologists have the temerity to call their business a science.

Look back again a few pages at what Benjamin Kidd wrote a few years before the Great War broke out. He was wrong on every count, save perhaps that of equality of political rights (votes). And nothing but this so-called equality reveals so clearly the futility of the franchise for bringing about equality of economic opportunity. In the first place, it is not to the advantage of the politician to deal with the question of equality of economic opportunity. There are only two ways in which the mass can know what is meant by the phrase: one is a deep-seated desire within the individual to learn what his relationship to the universe is; the other, in lieu of that desire, political education in fundamental economics. But it is granting a good deal to imagine, even for a moment, that the politician knows sufficient about the question to deal with it from the rostrum. Anyway, there is an idea abroad that most politicians consider that those who have studied fundamental economics are queer people who go by the name of "cranks."

#### MASTER OF ARTS

Let us revert to our old friend, early man, who saved us so much exertion and investigation. He had no sociologist to impede his progress, and fill his head full

of nonsensical notions of what he would do when he was massed together with his colleagues. Early man had to do everything on his own initiative, and all the equipment that he had for tackling the myriad problems of everyday life was his own particular "nous"—early common sense. It was ordained that he should triumph through his own exertion, that he should solve every problem by his own wit and intelligence. The only educational system that early man came in contact with was that provided by the earth. He was a land animal, and took his lessons directly from the experience of the day. And in this system he was something akin to a senior wrangler for he must have succeeded, otherwise he would have gone with the Ichthyosaurus. Instead, he was a master of all the arts he had to study. Modern man would quail and shiver at the least of the problems which faced his progenitor every hour of the day. And this is what government and sociology have done for the man of our time.

An old prospector, who went into a western State fifty years ago, recounted his impressions of the early days, and he vividly described the type of man he met, who went ranching and mining in the deserts. Then, in comparison, he described the types of today he had to meet, who came seeking work in his district where he held an official position. He said that there was no comparison. They were so far removed from the old type, they did not seem to have any of the blood of that stock in them. And he added, "This State would never have been opened up by such riff-raff."

#### ORIENTATION

The excuse that is put forward for the sociological work which is done by governments is that conditions

are changed and, therefore, man in some strange way is altered, and is not "oriented" to the change. Some say that the Industrial Revolution of the end of the eighteenth century was the beginning of the new period, but when, on analysis and inquiry, it was discovered, fifty years ago, that the Industrial Revolution could not be shackled with such responsibility, the sociologist shifted his ground, and took to the strange notion that the coming of the Machine Age had thrown man out of his gear. What the next excuse will be cannot be guessed, but it may be taken for granted that in a few years the sociologist will be hard at work to find another reason for a change in the "adaptability" of man. It would be difficult to find an instructor in an institution of learning of any consequence in this country, who took issue with these pretexts. The notion runs through the whole gamut of teachers and writers, with very few exceptions. Only the other day the best-known philosopher of the country wrote about the social significance of truth, and said it "is so far socially conditioned that no one mind can determine it in isolation."

Presumably, economic truth, so simple as the fact that man is a land animal, cannot be determined by an isolated individual. Early man had to wait until a group of sociologists or philosophers appeared upon the scene before he could say with any degree of certainty at all, that he depended upon the earth for the gratification of his desires and needs.

#### THE MASS

But let us return to the pretexts that have been put forth as reasons for the necessity of government and sociologists herding men together and directing their lives. And let us ask ourselves what have been the real causes of the change they refer to. We need not go very

far back in history to find vast quantities of evidence which shows that government, the law-makers, have conspired to reduce man to the status of a pauper, for it must be understood quite clearly that the mass is not the whole mass; it is only that section of society which supposedly cannot look after itself. No sociologist or philosopher would ever think for a single moment of including himself in the mass. No one would dream of including politicians in the mass, particularly American politicians, Federal or local. Bureaucrats, all people with safe jobs, sinecures, captains and managers of industry, bankers and their assistants, the faculties of universities, all people who can be included in the term "the well-to-do" are beyond the sociological pale. Though many of them may not earn their livings according to Hoyle, and of these many may "grind the faces of the poor," as the saying goes, they nevertheless are exempt from the herding process. The reason why the line of demarcation is drawn between the well-to-do and those who cannot fend for themselves is because the sociologist knows that the well-to-do are untamable.

The evidence of a conspiracy against the poor is written clearly in English history. Sir Thomas More was very sure of this conspiracy. It began in John of Gaunt's day and it was prosecuted with vigor all through the period of the Tudors. But the greatest evidence of it is to be found in the period from 1760 on. It began with the change in the system of taxation and reached its culmination at the time of the enclosures by act of Parliament, when the countryside was depopulated, and the landless flocked into the towns.

In this country it began with high protective tariffs, which nearly brought about the ruin of agriculture. It can be traced easily enough if the student has a mind to do it.