



# Socialist Values and Time<sup>\*</sup>

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## Introduction

**From the depths of adversity, the Labour Party begins to recover heart and head. The defeat of 1979 enraged the Party with the way it had been led and plunged it into bitter internal strife. The defeat of 1983 was profoundly sobering. A new Leader emerged whose very inexperience in high office appears as a virtue both to party activists and to many of the general public: the past is tainted and "experience" (with honourable exceptions) has become almost a synonym for the virtual withering away of all those values and theories that used to constitute the public philosophy or the political rhetoric of the Labour movement - a movement that once talked to the public not almost exclusively to itself. And the public begins to welcome leaders who do not appear, like the Prime Minister at this moment, both personally arbitrary and an artificial creation for the media, perhaps even by the media.**

The Labour Party begins to argue with its opponents again for the sake of the public and the nation, and less with itself (with dishonourable exceptions). And it must argue not over the minutia of party programmes, but over the broad direction of the economy and the whole quality and equity of our national life. Strangely, Margaret Thatcher for a while, for two electorally crucial moments, beat the Labour Party at its own old best game: the ability to state publicly broad principles derived from a reasonably coherent theory. We must take issue if not always with each of the principles of self-reliance, self-help, competitiveness, individualism, thrift, order, distrust of the State, yet certainly with the way they are advanced and related to each other; but we must not miss either the plausibility of these principles as popular rhetoric, especially (as the election figures show) when aimed at the skilled worker still in employment, nor the fact that they are grounded in an elaborate economic theory (the monetarist version of old *laissez-faire*) capable both of elaboration and popularisation.

This pamphlet is an attempt to show that the beliefs of democratic socialists can be restated in modern terms: that we possess both a theory and a doctrine which, while not dogmatic, nor

derived from sacred books, such as are available to followers of both Marx and Adam Smith, yet can be stated more simply than some believe. The beliefs have common ground with much libertarian Marxism (still more with much of Marx's Marxism), but the common ground can be expressed in common language and common sense. The tradition associated with the early Fabians, with early Shaw and Wells, with G.D.H. Cole, R.H. Tawney, Harold Laski and both Anthony Crosland and Dick Crossman, is still very much alive and should stand up and speak for itself as a public philosophy, as the ideology of a public political party not of a private socialist debating society - as it seemed that some of the Far Left, not too long ago, wished the Labour Party to become.

We need thought, thinking and rethinking, reviewing and re-forming old thoughts as well as forming new, quite as much as we need research groups on policies - perhaps at the moment more. Research needs a sense of direction unless we are to recreate a parody of the Fabian [p2] tradition: the suspicion that research was for sake of research. I think the new spirit of the Fabian Society can be the main, though far from the only, forum for such thinking; even though, as will emerge, I dislike the excessive centralism and the trust in benign, permeated bureaucracy of the old Fabian tradition. I like the old phrase "inevitability of gradualism" - despite the fact that nothing is inevitable. For the "gradualism" of old Fabianism spoke of the persistent means towards a far from "gradual" end. Any social theory, as well as elementary common sense, will see how long is the time-scale towards the radical social transformations that are needed to make life more decent, just and prosperous for all, not just for the favoured and favouring few. But the electoral defeats were so grievous and our loss of our old public philosophy so profound, that we have to start *almost* as if from the beginning again.

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## 1. Evolution and Revolution

**I think that all socialist ends are revolutionary but because they do aim at a new society they can only be pursued by political and gradualist means as fast and no faster than we can persuade all those who, despite the obvious failure of Thatcherism, are not persuaded. Even in 1918 Rosa Luxemburg warned Lenin, just as she had warned him thirteen years before, that freedom must be the means not the eventual end of the party's strategy; and though the time traveler, H.G.Wells, visited Russia in 1920 and at first had good words to say for the Bolsheviks, he was under no illusion that Lenin's "dictatorship of the proletariat" was either temporary (as the Roman origin of the office of Dictator was meant to suggest) or anything other than rule by a small party oligarchy.**

George Orwell wrote in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (probably with both Lenin and the Webbs in mind) that:

*"Centralised ownership has very little meaning unless the mass of people are living roughly upon an equal level, and have some kind of control over the government. 'The State' may come to mean no more than a self-elected political party, and oligarchy and privilege can return, based on power rather than on money."*

His "Fairy Story" or fable written in 1944, *Animal Farm*, was not so much untimely as something that created an astonishingly belated popular recognition that the revolution, based on cries of

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity", had, once again, been betrayed. Yet he did not argue that the fault lay in any inevitable growth of power hungry elites (the "pigs"), but rather in the excessive credulity and trust of the other animals in their leaders: "all animals" must be the basic power behind long revolutionary changes as well as the objects of "the revolution" led by those who unhappily become "more equal than others". Beaumarchais once remarked melodramatically that "Slaves are as guilty as tyrants".

Great confusion has arisen between the myth of the "revolution" as a climactic *event* and the reality of the "the revolutionary *process*." The opportunity for reshaping societies towards greater social [p3] justice may only come either through the sudden overthrow or more often the breakdown of repressive autocracies, but the revolutionary opportunity does not guarantee the revolutionary outcome: a benign outcome needs restraint and tolerance, as well as skill and will, exercised through decades and generations. If the classical Marxist critique of capitalism was broadly correct, its theory of inevitable stages was wrong: for it failed to reckon with and guard against nationalism, bureaucratisation and above all the pure power-hunger and desire for self-perpetuation among new as much as among old elites. At the least, the theory of stages needs restating in terms of possibilities; and even diluting to allow for the overlapping of stages. This could yield a less misleading model of the post-revolutionary world, one more open to variation and to influence by popular debate, rather than depending on belief in laws of history wholly determined by social structure or modes of production. Such laws (or rather tendencies) always condition but they never determine human action.

Thus the debate in the first part of the century between "true Marxist" revolutionaries and revisionist evolutionary Austrian and German Marxist "Social Democrats" (in the sense then current) was perhaps never as contradictory and unbridgeable in theory as it seemed to the passionate protagonists. They did, however, differ about progress through either evolution or gradualness, such as German socialists and British Fabians used to argue for in the 1900's and 1920's; but the essential point was that they both then thought that by governing with the right values and by deliberate stages of economic and social planning, a socialist society could be achieved. In this they differ from the new Social Democratic Party, who, whether from wisdom, class-interest, exhaustion or fear, no longer believe that an egalitarian society can be achieved or should be achieved, even: only perhaps equality of opportunity. They hope more modestly, if somewhat vaguely, simply to manage a mixed economy benignly with the interest of the welfare of the disadvantaged strongly in mind. They aspire to civilise, perhaps to inject a few socialist values into, not to replace, the economic dynamic of that competitive, individualistic ethic of Western capitalism which intrudes so systematically and unasked into so many aspects of social, cultural and personal life.

The Social Democrats are right about the primacy of liberty, but they are wrong to think that it is always threatened by equality and to believe that a proper sense of individualism must always be linked to the competitive acquisition of private property. Their own project is perfectly possible, given favourable economic growth such as Anthony Crosland assumed in the 1950's and 1960's in his book, *The Future of Socialism*. The philosopher should lament and not mock that their hour of electoral opportunity seemed to come at a time of unique difficulty for their theory; whereas it is the decline of the economy in Great Britain that could also give opportunity to the Left of the Labour Party, as now seems to happen in France and Greece. Some Social Democrats could have remained social democrats within the Labour Party - theirs was not a difference in theory or doctrine, but political misjudgment and failure of nerve at a crucial moment.

I would boldly but simply claim that there is no *necessary* incompatibility between revolutionary and evolutionary varieties of socialism: if socialism is to occur at all, it must be pursued and

consolidated through political means. Ralph Miliband, a Marxist who will not join (or rejoin) the Labour Party, has written in *Marxism and Politics*:

*"Regimes which depend on the suppression of all opposition and the stifling of all civic freedoms must be taken to represent a disastrous regression in political terms from bourgeois democracy .... But the civic freedoms [p4] which, however inadequately and precariously, form part of bourgeois democracy are the product of centuries of unremitting popular struggles. The task of Marxist politics is to defend these freedoms; and to make possible their extension and enlargement by the removal of their class boundaries."*

His views on this point are not untypical of many modern Marxist intellectuals in the West, the Third World and even in Eastern Europe. In an earlier book on *Parliamentary Socialism*, he argued that the acceptance of parliamentary conventions and evolutionary socialism emasculated the alleged revolutionary spirit of the early British Labour movement. Apart from the fact that this no longer seems to be true (if ever it was historically), his thesis can at best only apply to specific contexts. It would be a massive *non sequitur* to say that because of some past experiences, socialism cannot proceed by parliamentary means; or to identify all forms of republican assemblies with the specific conservative conventions of a particular phase of the British parliamentary tradition.

Determined democratic socialists, however revolutionary their long-term aims, have to build up *popular* support if their measures are to work. When they resort, as in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, or in many contemporary states in Africa and Asia, to dictatorial coercion and control, not merely is liberty destroyed, which is obvious enough, but even sheer welfare is grievously limited. The evidence is now overwhelming in the Soviet world that productivity suffers both through the sheer inefficiency and often corruption of unchallengeable centralised bureaucracies and through a massive indifference, sullenness and propensity to go slow when workers can neither change their jobs, form free trade unions, strike, nor even - if driven to that pitch - hope to revolt with any chance of success. The very working masses whose productive power is essential to any kind of progress are rendered impotent.

George Orwell in 1944 reviewed F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*:

*"Professor Hayek is probably right in saying that in this country the intellectuals are probably more totalitarian-minded than the common people. But he does not see, or will not admit, that a return to free' competition means for the great mass of people a tyranny probably worse, because more irresponsible, than the state. The trouble with competitions is that somebody wins them. Professor Hayek denies that free capitalism necessarily leads to monopoly, but in practice that is where it has led, and since the vast number of people would rather have state regimentation than slumps and unemployment, the drift towards collectivism is bound to continue... Such is our present predicament. Capitalism leads to dole queues, the scramble for markets, and war. Collectivism leads to concentration camps, leader worship and war. There is no way out of this unless a planned economy can somehow be combined with freedom of the intellect.. "*

Consider the many one-party States in the Third World who claim to be socialist but whose dominant ideology is, in fact, nationalism. This nationalism often enables rulers to take the support of the masses for granted. But there is a world of difference between such States, which can, like Tanzania, at least tolerate criticism and public debate about policies among the ruling elite and the intelligentsia, and those more common one-party States in which no public dissent is tolerated. The moral differences are the most important today because of the growing number of

developing countries claiming to be "Socialist". Their claims will become ever more strident the further back into history the original struggle for national liberation fades: nationalism cannot remain forever an off-the-peg justification for each and every arbitrary act of party, leader or President. The differences in economic efficiency may be less obvious and may be affected by a hundred and one contingent factors; but in theory (that is in long-term tendency), other things being equal, it is [p5] unlikely that uncriticised planning can be more effective than plans that are open to public debate and which may even have arisen from debate. Plans that can be criticised can be modified. People who tolerate criticism are more likely to change their minds. If the plan may neither be criticised nor modified and it does not work as expected, then little is left but to impose it with coercion, suppress evidence of failure and discontent, and imprison all those who say that the Emperor has no clothes. Such desperate anti-political measures have even been dignified by a name: "permanent revolution".

In multi-party regimes there may well be a consensus, indeed, which can hinder or delay the realisation of socialist goals. But socialists, like anyone else, must realise that great enterprises take much time. Rome was not built in a day. There is no answer but patience and skill in persuasion. The building of socialism is the work of generations and to do this we need, once again, to do things that matter to people immediately and then carry them with us, slowly, patiently, definitely, step-by-step towards greater future betterment. Socialists must distinguish between a consensus of values (which is rare in any society) and the need to reach a consensus about procedures (which is common in parliamentary democracies). These rules or conventions of the political game may be biased, quite naturally, in support of the existing systems. But socialists cannot hope to modify these rules except by the rules, by persuasion or by demonstrating good fruits from political power gained by socialist parties observing these very rules. Socialists should not be surprised if their criticism of these rules is sometimes taken as a threat to ignore them; and thus if the very people we want to reach and uplift, often reject us and suspect us of being not merely anti-establishment - as we are or should be - but anti-political. Even such a mild and democratic business as the British Labour Party's plan to abolish an appointed and hereditary House of Lords, needs balancing simultaneously with measures which appear to ordinary people to check the powers of the Government in other ways. Intellectual socialists cannot have it both ways: to hold that the mass of the people have been "socialised" into conservative constitutional beliefs is not to ignore such constraints, but to demonstrate that it is in these terms that the argument has to begin and has to be won. All politics, indeed, must deal with people as they are.

The potential political and the actual productive power of the people is, indeed, more essential to socialist theory than it is to contemporary capitalist theory: this is the minimal core of truth in the original labour theory of value. While popular capitalist doctrine still preaches the individual work ethic, that workers should work as hard as they can for necessarily disproportionate rewards and that there are jobs to be had for those who *really* want to work, liberal economists favour a more technical argument about the inevitability of capital-intensive industry and of uncontrolled "free trade" in finance and international investment, whatever the cost in unemployment. Full employment is no longer seen as economically possible or as politically crucial: free market theorists now gamble on the passivity of the masses if the marginal rate of mere subsistence can be found and funded, coupled with investment in a type of mass-communications designed, quite literally, both to take people's minds off things that matter to create unfree illusions of helplessness (which was the satiric intent of Orwell's "prolefeed" in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, aimed at the contemporary mass media not at a distant future). "True conservatives", or old fashioned Tories, however, while believing deeply in natural hierarchy and in maintaining inequality, yet are genuinely paternalistic: they have a sense of community and would draw the line, if they knew how, at any economic doctrines that result in mass unemployment.

The "new conservative" faith in the universality of the market mechanism could well founder on the bitter, dehumanising effect of mass unemployment. [p6] But equally socialist leaders must show sensitivity to a complex industrial world in which the workers and managers, if not persuaded freely and given time to adjust, simply will not work or will not work well, will prove unwilling to adjust themselves to new technologies and changing social priorities. Even an advanced industrial power which attempted genuine socialist programmes all at once, too quickly and without a broad prior base of support stretching far beyond party activists, could face some of the same problems as in African and Asian socialism: the danger of alienating elites from the masses. Chairman Mao Tse-tung's "Cultural Revolution" was no answer to such a problem, but equally the move towards a managerial bureaucracy in China is neither socialism nor the glimmering of liberalism that some Western observers imagine.

Coercive government by party bureaucracy all too often is the crowning achievement of revolutions pursued by nonpolitical means. The Apostle Paul was right to say that "every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things", if he is serious about the 'mastery'. And in Western industrial societies coercion by mass unemployment also marks the failure of "mastery", not its typical or most efficient mode. "Mastery" involves patience with men and women as they are, as well as an ability to persuade them of what they or their children could become.

Put in simple terms, one does not, as I *think* Miliband now agrees, throw out the baby with the bathwater. Liberty is not hopelessly tainted by capitalism, nor is the idea of liberty as we know it "purely bourgeois", a product of the rise of capitalism as both Marx and Hayek have argued; the one rejoicing, the other lamenting, but agreeing on this essential point. On the contrary the tradition of free politics and of republican government long preceded the capitalist era: it was both an ideal vision and an occasional imperfect practice from the time of European classical antiquity, the memory of which, among scholars and humanists, even among fearful tyrants, never died. We do not quarrel with J. S. Mill's views on representative government nor on liberty: we simply work to realise them in a way open to all, not just used by a few.

There could come in time a revolutionary "transformation of values", certainly of the priorities we give to our many different values; humanity could discover "the dignity of work" as William Morris hoped, and reject its alienation, and a common culture could arise in place of an impersonal division of labour which both separates and cripples culture and citizenship; but all this will not, except in religious myths and their ideological substitutes, come suddenly or at once. The ideas and the sense of direction already exist, but the recruitment has hardly begun, detailed maps and plans for provision along the route are not to be found, nor has thought been given to how to keep up the spirits of the army on the march - still less to what should happen if it decided to stop or turn round. Transitions are never easy. Deliberate ones have been rare. But the enterprise is possible, if conducted by free men in a freely chosen way. Personally I am a "moderate Socialist", but no longer a "moderate" in newspaper senses: my goals are extreme and therefore I moderate and measure my means. The "march of the common people" depends on the people wanting to march.

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## 2. Socialist Theory

**We should recognise that the basic empirical theory of socialism is both more coherent and yet more conditional than is often supposed; and that [p7] the moral doctrine of socialism is wholly consistent with the theory: both modify each other**

**even if the roots are not always the same. Theory generalises and explains; doctrine moralises and directs towards action.**

Let us grant that there are many varieties of socialism, even without each newly independent nation claiming a uniquely national form. Many but not all of these divisions are variations on Marx's themes, some of which, however, would be quite unrecognisable by and congenial to their founder. Some claim to possess "true Marxism" and interpret the texts with scholastic zeal as direct guides to action. Others more subtly and sensibly claim that Marxism is a "living method" - hence prone not merely to growth, but presumably to unforeseeable accidents as well. However there is also the decentralist, syndicalist and co-operative tradition of socialism that stems from Proudhon and Robert Owen. This rejects the economic theory of stages and holds that capitalism can be destroyed from within by forming cooperative communities for production. Then there is the managerial or mixed economy version of socialism which emerged from both the German revisionists and the British Fabians: that the capitalist state can be permeated and controlled for the general welfare. Not to forget what I technically call "British socialism" which has its roots in an eclectic fusion of Robert Owen's cooperative ideas, the cultural vision of William Morris, Methodist conscience, Chartist democracy and revisionist Marxism: libertarian, egalitarian and above all ethical, placing more stress on personal exemplifications of socialist values than on public ownership or class legislation. And there is always the anarchist and communitarian criticism of, and example to, these mainstream socialisms. Other categorisations abound.

Is there a common ground core of meaning amid all these revolving and colliding concepts of socialism? I think there is. Put in the simplest and most basic terms, socialism has both an empirical theory and a moral doctrine. The theory is that the rise and fall and the cohesion of societies is best explained not by the experience and perpetuation of elites (which is conservatism), nor by the initiatives and inventions of competitive individuals (which is liberalism), but by the relationship to the ownership and control of the means of production of the primary producers of wealth - in an industrial society, the skilled manual worker. The doctrine asserts the primacy and mutual dependence of the values of "liberty, equality and fraternity", and it draws on the theory to believe that greater equality will lead to more cooperation than competition, that this will in turn enhance fraternity and hence liberate from inhibition, restriction and exploitation both individual personality and the full productive potential of society.

The theory is not fully comprehensive: in its strictly empirical and characteristically economic form it is dangerously close at times to being purely a doctrine for the skilled industrial worker. When it speaks to and for the poor and the dispossessed it assumes the kind of grounds for believing in human rights or depicting the quality of a good life that one finds in the Christian tradition and in the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. Attempts to explain the meaning of these doctrines in terms of the economic theory seem far-fetched or fatuous. Socialist theory has no more made an entirely original contribution to ethics than it has to aesthetics or to science. While socialist theory and doctrine complement each other in practice, yet neither logically entails the other, nor even together are they fully comprehensive. To think that any political theory or doctrine must be fully comprehensive is precisely what I have argued elsewhere makes for a totalitarian rather than a political style of thought. Marxists may write about aesthetics and ethics if they will. It is interesting and sometimes useful to see how far the popularity, for instance, of cultural or moral ideas can be explained in terms of class interest and social stratification. But their origin, truth and value are never reducible simply to the economic concepts of the general theory. Russian and Chinese Communism have both gone very far in suggesting that there is a correct socialist way to do everything - from agricultural research to sexual conduct and artistic production. But this is nonsense, and its meaning is to be found neither in socialist theory or doctrine but rather in the need for uniformity in would-be totalitarian



societies. The democratic socialist should cheerfully concede, as did Orwell, that reactionaries can write great poems and novels and socialists poor ones. British socialism has valued culture, was once parodied as crying "culture for the working classes", but it has never either taken a narrow view of culture as exclusively "high culture", nor argued that all culture must be class-based, ideally proletarian.

What is more surprising is that there is no distinctively democratic socialist theory of political institutions. What kind of political institutions does socialism need? Most of the answers come in conventional republican or liberal democratic terms, except that working people will or should participate more in what were originally distinctively bourgeois institutions, make more use of these electoral or parliamentary or informative devices. Few liberals would quarrel with this; indeed, this is liberal doctrine except that socialist and liberal theories expect different outcomes from working liberal, representative institutions. The Cooperative movement in Britain, once so important a part of the Labour movement, now seems to have lost its way, certainly lost its old dominance in the High Street consumer market; and while producers' cooperatives as an idea point a way to the future, actual examples in this country have been few in number and provide no experience to draw upon, certainly not one that has entered into the general consciousness of the Labour movement still less the electorate. Only the commune and the soviet have emerged historically, and then so briefly, as distinctively socialist institutions. But few think that the spirit of Marx's somewhat inconsistent if passionate championing of the Paris Commune of 1870 as the very model of a classless society, still haunts the Soviet Union, even though the Czechoslovak revisionists in 1968 in the "Prague Spring" invoked the memory of the Commune as if someone in Moscow still cared or could be shamed. But certainly even when some socialists talk like tough guys about "taking over the State", whether by parliamentary or other means, to use it for wholly socialist policies, then almost at once, a somewhat contradictory and equally socialist reaction and argument arises - one which stresses face-to-face institutions, decentralisation, regionalism, local communities and industrial democracy as being both the school and the final resting place of socialist values.

Yet socialists do have a distinctive attitude to political and social institutions. They are sceptical that institutions of State or those set up by the State in democratic but non-socialist regimes are always as neutral as they claim to be. This is a healthy scepticism, so long as everyone is aware that they are normally dealing with relative, not absolute, degrees of bias, as with well meant but ultimately impossible attempts at pure neutrality. But if socialists expect "fair play" they are foolish. Yet if they try to change the rules, say of the press or broadcasting, to get "fair play", they should remember the suspicion the majority of their fellow countrymen still view them with, and will continue to do so precisely because they aim to change the known world, and precisely because most regimes called socialist in the world are despotic. Ours is a large enterprise and to hurry or to proceed at unrealistic speed can be as fatal as simply accepting the present rules as immutable or trying only to be as humane as possible to the crew in a leaking ship set on the wrong course. Socialists must convince people that change is possible and desirable; yet not hope to convince by the refining and re-[p9] iteration of abstract and sometimes incomprehensible socialist theories, but rather by reawakening traditions and memories of successful popular protest and by argument appealing to existing common beliefs and common interests. Is it fair, for instance, that opportunities for work and rewards for labour within the present system should be so accidental and disproportionate? Yet until some idea of a just reward is firmly established, people in jobs and "reasonably well off" will simply not accept the principle of equal needs. The rules must be changed by the rules. Theory will guide what policies and priorities to select, but to change the present world we must both understand it, and respect people as they are not simply as they ought to be and can become. Developing a strategy, we must be good tacticians still but not mere tacticians. If our roots are deep, we can bend to the wind and then spring straight again.

Socialist theory when applied to history can demonstrate that great changes are possible, but must also comprehend that everything cannot change at once and that social systems are rarely as systematic as either classical Marxist theories or classical liberal theorists have supposed. Marxist theories of a complete indoctrination or "socialisation" by education or the media can induce unnecessary despair or rage for violent, instant and utter change. But the "systems" are in fact so full of imperfections and inconsistencies that, as conservatives often complain, many unexpected opportunities are given to the politically literate radical. Even in the industrial world, mixed economies are not simply facades: they are remarkably mixed. The mixture can be worked upon and varied. Differential advance in different sectors is possible, despite the preconceptions of systematic theory. And in pre-industrial societies there was often a remarkable lack of congruence in the relations between rulers and ruled, the rulers often being an alien aristocracy, speaking a different language, taxing the peasantry ruthlessly but rarely trying to mobilise them or to change or proselytize them in any way. "Let sleeping dogs lie" was an autocratic adage; and Alfred, Lord Tennyson alleged that peasants ruminated that "Kings may come and kings may go, but we go on forever". And in non-industrial societies in the modern world (which is virtually to say "the Third World") the case is much the same: the ruling elites are now at least of the same nation as the mass of the people, but their culture and way of life can be very different.

The ideas of free citizenship and of political activity had their origins in what were, broadly speaking, the aristocratic cultures of Greece and Rome or among the merchant and bourgeois classes of England, France, Holland, Scotland, Sweden and the German and Italian "free cities". Even in those societies it was always difficult to prevent any public example of liberties being exercised among the few from exciting the emulation of at least some of the many. Example or mimesis is a basic social mechanism. The source and enduring myth of republican ideas and institutions was in the slaveholding cultures of Greece and Rome; but this does not taint the seed. In many ways the classical ideal of free citizenship is not so much superseded by Marx in his critique of capitalist society as assumed by him. If all this was not part of his own cultural preconceptions, it would be hard to make sense of his fragmentary, undeveloped but important accounts of what is this autonomous human personality that can be emancipated from the alienating, competitive conditions of an industrial society where man seems divorced from the fruits of his labour. In his early *Critique of Hegel*, for instance, he wrote that "the essence of *man* is the *true community* of men" and that "men, not as abstractions but real, living, particular individuals are this community. As they are, so it is too." Marx was much closer to both the classical and humanist traditions and to the French Enlightenment than many of his most famous disciples.

Thus it is historically false to identify most of the characteristic political institutions of modern "liberal democracy" with the rise of the capitalist market. Here [p10] the theory is often in error. Capitalism accelerated the spread of such institutions through their instrumental use both to liberate new productive forces and to impose new types of control on the working class. Even so, the political and educational concessions involved in establishing a manipulative facade of free institutions proved more important than either side once thought, ultimately threatening any simple class control of the system. The skilled working man needed by the new factories and the new technologies was a very different human animal from the peasant typical of the agricultural mode of production in autocracies. He had to be literate, for one thing, and was dangerously concentrated in cities, for another, even in capital cities. It was difficult to stop him from organising trade unions, even in restraint of trade, without denying him the skills that the economy demanded. He was a constant threat to the State precisely because its power and wealth came more and more to depend upon his abilities. Small concessions in the franchise always proved the thin edge of a wedge. And many of the new weapons of control proved double-edged.

His new masters had to educate him and, for instance, quite naturally, sought to control that education and to limit it narrowly. But on the scale demanded, teachers were both hastily trained and hard to control completely. They began to constitute a new intelligentsia or at least a special subsection of the middle class, open to new secular ideas and still full of old evangelical ones; and even the oldest ideas of those who taught them were heavily contaminated, through Latin and Greek, with the classical myth of free citizenship. Several generations of school children in Western Europe must have believed that long before the French and American revolutions (that their teachers would rarely mention, let alone discuss), there had been something rather like the results of these revolutions going on all the time in Greece and Rome. And gradually ideologies of progress began to replace myths of the "good old days". When the pupils emerged from the partial dark of such utilitarian school rooms, they often saw rudimentary democratic institutions existing already.

Some leaders of opinion like John Stuart Mill argued that the mass of the people should come into their own and exercise political power, if and when they were fully educated; and that if they were fully educated, they would - which was not what happened. Others sought to postpone that fearful democratic dawn by restricting education. But the very demands of capitalist technology for skilled and literate workers, quite apart from radical and socialist agitation, both heightened the crisis and the demands, if not for new political institutions, at least for accelerated popular access to existing ones.

That socialist theory is distinctive but not comprehensive can be seen even in the narrowest claim that control of the mode of production controls all else. To many Marxists, economic determinism is almost a banality. Engels said: "We make our own history, but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these the economic are finally decisive." But if we must read the words with Talmudic or hermeneutic closeness, the first phrase and the last are of equal importance. If we see these "finally decisive" economic conditions as outer limits on human action, then there is still much history we can make for ourselves; but if we see these "definite presuppositions and conditions" as with us constantly and immediately, permeating all our thoughts and limiting our ability to think otherwise, then we can make little history for ourselves: history is then, indeed, "the recognition of necessity". Without socialist doctrines or values, more often assumed rather than asserted by Engels, there would have to be a pessimistic not a progressive conclusion.

Marx himself said, "The mode of production in material life conditions the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes in life". Since he does say "general character" and "conditions", [and] does not here talk about specific [p11] features or causal law and necessity, the claim is unexceptionable. We are conditioned, but we are not determined. Within these conditions there must be, indeed, as most contemporary Marxists now admit, a "relative autonomy" of the political, of the State, even of ideology (it is not always easy to explain the growth, let alone the continuance, of ideologies in purely economic terms). But to believe both that economic determinism is false and (more arguably) that Marx and Engels were either not economic determinists or not consistently so, is not to licence any kind of idealist fantasy in politics. Marx did establish a mode of thought that all socialists share: first consider what follows for the organisation of a society and for possible changes within it from establishing who owns the means of production and how; then consider all other relevant factors, consider how the mode of production must be modified in the interests of the working class.

Though there is common ground, five things have made democratic socialists unhappy with classical Marxist theory: (i) its lack of an explicit ethical doctrine; (ii) the adherence of some Marxists to rigid economic categories; (iii) a lingering habit of viewing the texts of Marx and

Engels as sacred dogma rather than as fruitful starting points (among others) for speculation; (iv) the refusal of many Marxists to take pains to write plainly and to express the theory clearly in common speech (indeed some seem to imply that they have an esoteric, inaccessible knowledge: the usual justification of autocracy); and (v) the confusion between the fertile idea that theory and practice always modify each other and the false idea that in any given situation only one true policy, party line or practice is entailed by theory. It is always irritating to be told in argument that a rival or alternative policy is "necessary", "scientific" or simply "objective", and this belief is corrupting to those who hold it. Marxist theory, like any other theory, has a characteristic view of what politics it thinks are most likely to work; but there are simply too many variables in actual social situations, also too many conflicting perceptions and values involved, to make any one policy taken from the book definitively correct. If socialists are marching towards a new Rome, they should be well aware that all roads do not lead to Rome; but that even given a strong will and a true sense of direction, there are always alternative routes, indeed room for false starts and new attempts, not any single royal road of theory or practice. Policies must emerge from the interplay between ethical doctrines and empirical theories in the hands of people able to develop, from their experience as well as their knowledge, good political judgement. It is easier than we think to know either what is right or what is "theoretically correct", but it is more difficult to know *how* to act and *what* to do. "Politics is the art of the possible", as Edmund Burke said; but we democratic socialists, though we too have a sense of tradition, also have more generous views on what is possible.

The other socialist traditions have commonly shown better political judgement and have had more say about actual and possible policies than have most Marxists, even if their theories have been less systematic and more eclectic. The Marxist is usually particularly poor, for instance, in knowing the mind of his enemies; if you call Conservatives "Fascists", for example, you are unlikely to adopt relevant tactics both in dealing with them and persuading the ambivalent. Democratic socialist doctrines certainly have much more to tell us than the Marxist tradition about specifically socialist values and thus the priorities of policy they help to define.

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[p12]

### 3 Socialist Values

#### The interdependence of values

**Values are important. When ordinary people have said that they no longer know what socialism stands for, it is unlikely that they are thinking either of details of policy in manifestos or striving for "the correct theoretical perspective". Whether we are followers of Labour Parties, Social Democratic Parties or "true" socialism (of 57 varieties), values are always involved. Those who "unmask" the "hidden curriculum" in education, for instance, can themselves be bitten as they bite, or at least asked to come clean whether they believe their holy selves to be "value free" or simply to be right. Not all hidden values are oppressive, many are benign. There is no objection to people believing that they hold the right values. Everything depends on *how* values are held and asserted and on *how* they are related to other values.**

Any values to be realised in the real world keep company with other values and often contradict them. We cannot, indeed, have both complete equality and complete liberty, but I don't want either alone: the one mediates the other. Also some values are asserted as procedures and some as

goals: we may be sure *what* we want to do, but equally sure that it should not be done *that* way. "Liberty", for instance, can be both a procedural value and a goal. But because no single practice or policy follows from theory in any circumstances, it is our values that mainly decide what alternative policies to follow-what route is *best*.

Two schools of thought, however, seem unwilling to debate *what* values we should hold, and often seek to avoid talk of values at all: determinist Marxism and managerial pragmatism. Marx himself in his early writings, as we have suggested, seemed to take for granted both the classical tradition of free republican citizenship and a view of human nature found in Kant. He did not believe either, like many of his disciples, that all present values are simply class values and would be wholly different in a classless society. Even when Marx produced in *The German Ideology* a formal theory of ideology, which seemed to say that *all* values are products of class or of modes of production, the argument still presupposed that these pre-capitalist, republican values are continual animating forces. Freedom-as-action, and scientific knowledge, were plainly special categories, and together they formed the presuppositions of the theory of ideology, not something to be explained away by that theory. Nonetheless, the theory of ideology notoriously opened the door to the belief that all values and ideas are systematically related *products* of class and the mode of production, and can thus be manipulated by the State or the Party: only in a post-revolutionary society will values and human nature become autonomous, ends in themselves.

This theory has a relative and sometimes a salutary truth: we always need to think of the sociological context of ideas, both to understand their historical meaning and their political possibilities. But as a "necessary logical framework" or as "scientific laws", these propositions are misleading and untrue. Because they are untrue much of the contemporary academic literature of the "sociology of knowledge" (Marxist epistemology) is less threatening or challenging than simply time-wasting, a jargon-ridden arena of pharisaical sectarian jealousies with little or no relevance to political practice.

The other school of socialist thought [p13] that fights shy of values are the pragmatists or new-style Social Democrats. They make a cult of being purely practical and of accepting the present system, if administered with decency and humanity. Consider, for gross example, that former leader of the Labour Party, Harold Wilson, who wrote two big books on his administrations, *The Labour Government, 1964-70* and *Final Term*, and another on *The Governance of Britain*, all without once discussing, even rhetorically, theories, doctrines or values of any kind (let alone socialist). He obviously believed that pure description is validation and held a pietistic belief that everything he did, because he held high office, was interesting or of value. To be purely practical in this sense is simply to accept uncritically the existing values of society - so many of which are, indeed, specifically managerial and capitalist, stressing the virtues of acquisitiveness, competition, self-reliance and efficiency. But pure pragmatism is simply impossible, either a self-deceit or a public deceit. Wilson's implicit values seem to be conservative ones: a dedication to the business of simply keeping the ship of state afloat, with little hope or care about direction.

Social Democrats (in the new sense) profess to be pragmatists but in a less narrow sense than Wilson's. They may indeed have certain future-looking values, though differing amongst themselves about these. But their predominant values are procedural: about *how* things should be done, not about what should be done. For they either lack imagination about the possibilities of deliberate social change or simply believe that only relatively minor technical adjustments are needed in the mix of a mixed economy. Many people indeed sympathise with these humane and limited viewpoints or are frightened by going beyond them. Yet the decline of the British economy and the growth of mass unemployment owes much to pragmatism: the lack both of any sense of direction and of positive values, such as equality and fraternity. Most Social Democrats

and pragmatists simply assume or claim that "means" constitute "ends", that social justice is simply a matter of procedural values - like liberty, tolerance, equality of opportunity and electoral reform.

Procedural values are important, both for understanding politics and for politicians to be at least sufficiently empathetic to understand the minds of their opponents and what they are really up against. Elsewhere I have tried to characterize basic procedural values and named them as "respect for reasoning", "respect for truth", "toleration", "fairness" and "freedom".<sup>1</sup> But these do not of themselves constitute a particular political doctrine, only the pre-suppositions of any genuine political education and of *all* doctrines that are political - democratic socialism included.

Liberty, equality and fraternity are the specifically socialist cluster of values - if one treats "cooperation" and "community" as closely related to "fraternity". Only equality is specifically socialist in itself: liberty and fraternity however, take on a distinctively socialist form when the three are related to each other. And the three values themselves presume that individuals are both agents and the objects of values, although individualism, as I will suggest, can take on a specifically socialist form.

## **Liberty**

Liberty deserves almost fanatic support from democratic socialists; a truly socialist movement is so committed to more liberty and to more open government that at times it can seem almost incoherent among the multitude of small, good causes who run across the stage of the movement, whether scripted or not, and find support in the wings. And at times it can seem almost paranoiac in its belief that anything less than totally open government is likely to be concealing oppressive weapons behind every lazily or habitually closed door. Liberty, by itself, is indeed an exuberant and unpredictable thing. The actions of free men are always unpredictable: this is why bureaucrats dislike citizens and why [p14] some Councillors try hard to stop their tenants painting their houses differently or keeping this or that kind of pet animal. Here is the unavoidable tension between the theory of socialism and its moral beliefs in local practice. And some "libertarians", who call themselves socialists and who join socialist movements, seem to believe that anything goes so long as it is an authentic action of an untrammelled personality. If I bite, I bite freely and splendidly.

Such political "street theatre" is a cross that any democratic socialist movement in a free society must bear as cheerfully as it can. But true socialists are concerned with judging morally the social consequences of individual actions quite as much as with writing accounts of human action in social terms: even here values must be asserted clearly. Bad social conditions do lead to increased delinquency for instance, but this does not justify delinquency - it only affects our theories of how to diminish it and our views on sentencing policy. True socialists examine how even the most "authentic" individual actions, whether of violent protest or colourful self-assertion, can affect the equal rights of others or diminish rather than enhance fraternity. The Labour Party is proud to have gathered so many vociferous minorities into its ranks; but the liberated must mediate their liberties to those of others, and study how they can be part of the greater whole. It may be liberty, but it is neither right nor politic for a hundred tails to shake one dog. And winning a vote on policy at a Party conference may or may not be relevant to winning a General Election.

Liberty is not, we have argued, to be abandoned as a bourgeois concept or on account of its origins. But it need not remain in the narrow nineteenth century tradition of "freedom from", simply of not being interfered with by the state or powerful neighbours. Sir Isaiah Berlin has eloquently argued, in his famous essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", the danger of thinking of

liberty in other than negative terms: if we give any positive content to liberty, ascribe to it any objectives, then we end up, all too often, crying out like Rousseau to "force people to be free" - as it were, "here is your Welfare State, damn you (or bless you); now you are free! And the social worker is King, or Queen." The warning is salutary. Reformers have need to watch it. In any possible society, socialist societies included, people may not like what they are given and must be free to challenge by public debate (or by turning their backs on it all) both values and policies. But even our good negative liberties ultimately depend on positive political action. The positive assertion of liberty is needed to open doors, to create an open society; but then we do not just sit admiring so many choices of ways forward or to exit, we need to choose, by free and open debate, the best doors to go through and then move on - although perhaps never, indeed, completely shutting any.<sup>2</sup> People who use their liberty to avoid political life are more often done down than left in peace. The price of liberty is even higher than eternal vigilance, as Lincoln sadly said: it demands eternal action. If people have not been accustomed or allowed in the past to act as equal citizens, say women in general, say the black population in particular, or the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, then they must not merely have the prohibitions removed, but the disadvantaged must be given positive encouragement and positive inducements to use their liberty. Freedom needs its antique, republican, pre-liberal cutting edge restored in modern conditions: freedom is positive action in a specific manner, that of a citizen acting as if among equals; and not merely to preserve rights of existing citizens (says the socialist) but to extend them to the disadvantaged and the wretched of the earth.

Socialists must add the egalitarian assumption to liberty that not merely must all men and women be treated as citizens, but also be helped to count equally as citizens and, above all, expected to act as citizens. Liberty in this positive sense of public action does not deny liberty in the more liberal, negative sense of being left alone and in peace: it subsumes, complements and extends it. A free man or woman must move back and forth between public and private life, both the richer for the other. Citizens in socialist societies must have rights against the State as well as a duty to work for commonly agreed purposes. This is what stirred the world in the example of Polish "Solidarity". R. H. Tawney long ago argued the complementarity of rights and duties in his great essays *The Acquisitive Society* and *Equality*. We are foolish to leave all talk of duties to the other side.

Thus talk of socialist liberty as being completely different from bourgeois liberty is melodramatic nonsense. Many left-wingers who are libertarians both at heart and in their personal behaviour get themselves trapped in their writings in a bad piece of Marxist logic: that only in the classless society after the revolution can there be true liberty - until then all we have is capitalist liberty and an "oppressive tolerance" (a phrase of the late Herbert Marcuse). "Thank God for small mercies", say men actually living in oppressive regimes. Socialists must always try to extend liberty to more and more people and to more and more activities in whatever circumstances possible. They must at least try to persuade those who think that liberty is being left alone in comfort to watch the television or to cultivate one's garden, that governments rarely leave people alone or treat justly those who will not stand up for themselves and combine politically.

Often the most passionate anti-socialist arguments come not from liberals who dogmatically believe that liberty depends on the free working of the market mechanism, but from liberal elitists who think that liberty is all very well for the likes of us but an impossible proposition *en masse* for the likes of them. They fear not so much an egalitarian political tyranny, whatever their rhetoric, as a debasement of their culture. Perhaps they flatter themselves too much to think that it is their culture that popular politicians wish to universalise and hence debase or vulgarise. Their real defence is that their culture is in itself a free activity, irrelevant to political considerations except in totalitarian regimes, unless they themselves try to make it so by claiming either that

educated elites should rule by virtue of their culture, or should have their special culture specially subsidised by the state. The argument in Britain, for instance, that the existence of private education is the absolute test case of freedom, would be more impressive if the private schools were not so brazen in arguing that their education constitutes a good investment. Property rights and educational rights are, indeed, closely linked in both conservative and liberal doctrine.

"In so far as the opportunity to lead a life worthy of human beings is needlessly confined to a minority", wrote R.H. Tawney, "not a few of the conditions applauded as freedom would more properly be denounced as privilege. Action which causes such opportunities to be more widely shared is, therefore, twice blessed. It not only subtracts from inequality, but adds to freedom".<sup>3</sup>

The anthropologist Malinowski in his *Freedom and Civilisation* also assumed that freedom was something positive. If philosophers defined it's meaning negatively, he saw it as part of human action and a basic mechanism of social adaptation.

*"Those who attempt any definition of freedom in terms of negative categories and in terms of an absolute and unlimited absence of trammels, must be chasing an intellectual will-o'-the-wisp. Real freedom is neither absolute nor omnipresent and it certainly is not negative. It is always an increase in control, in efficiency, and in power to dominate one's own organism and the environment, as well as artifacts and the supply of natural resources.*

*The instrumentalities of freedom we find in the political constitution of a community, its laws, its moral norms, the distribution of its wealth, recreation, justice, and religious or artistic gifts of culture. To scour the universe for possibilities of freedom other than those given by the organisation of human groups for [p16] the carrying out of specific purposes, and the production of desirable results, is an idle philosophic past-time."*

As liberty is maximised it will become more participative and positive, more distinctively socialist. Yet always free participation will bring many voices not one; refusal to hear criticism can be no more a virtue in socialist societies than in conservative; and no multiplication of opinions, however dramatically contrived, can guarantee "truth" or sensible decisions about means and ends. If journalists are allowed liberty, they will criticise and sometimes abuse Governments and even Labour leaders; and if council tenants are treated as citizens, they may choose tasteless curtains, prefer cash to standard decorative schemes and not always welcome unannounced visits from social workers and council officials with proper enthusiasm. "Participatory democracy" like "liberty" is often a very rough and ready, all too human business, as well as a necessary condition of social justice; yet it is far from a sufficient condition. What is it all for?

## **Equality**

No one who can honestly call himself or herself a socialist would not agree that equality is the value basic to any imaginable or feasible socialist society; nor that egalitarian behaviour and example is not a necessary part of building any road to socialism. For this reason, presumably, some members of the Labour movement do not ordinarily choose to call themselves "socialist" at all, not merely from prudential reasons - that the majority of our fellow countrymen are not stirred by the word, or if so somewhat negatively, but because they honestly and, to them, realistically hope only for a more compassionate and concerned welfare society, with a high Beveridge minimum but with a moralised, talented and public spirited rotating hierarchy (in other words, social democracy, whether in or out of the Labour Party). Governing in such a spirit is not to be despised. It may even be seen as a necessary staging post. It would be a great deal better



than our present society; indeed we thought we had it securely but now we have lapsed back thanks to deliberate actions of Governments. But this moderate spirit both perpetuates some of the causes of injustice and unacceptable inequalities that it seeks to ameliorate and it is an unnecessarily limited ambition.

If we are thoughtful and careful, there is no necessary contradiction between equality and liberty. But difficulties have to be faced. It is quite possible to have societies in which the mass of the population are, in Tocqueville's words, "isolated but equal", with only a small and even a benign governing class. Montesquieu had pictured "oriental despotism" as being of this kind, vast masses of roughly equal peasantry under a small military and administrative elite. This is what some Left-Marxist opponents meant when they accused Stalin and, later, Chairman Mao, of creating a new form of oriental despotism. The hallmark of "despotism" was, to all these writers, the lack of intermediate social grades typical of both European feudalism and modern autocracy. So equality of condition is not necessarily socialist: it can be despotic. This dark thought has been a common imagined feature in London's *The Iron Heel*, Zamiatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. I actually prefer to speak of an egalitarian society rather than an equal society. Even so, without a sincere desire to achieve an egalitarian society, any democratic socialist movement loses its dynamic and lapses back into a directionless pragmatism and the paternalism of a benevolent hierarchy - in homely terms, the Councillor and the social worker perpetually sad that their people are not grateful for their efforts on their behalf, and cannot be trusted to make collective decisions for themselves without untidy results.

The concept of equality, however, has notorious difficulties and is often parodied: a literal and exact, universal equality, whether of opportunity, treatment or result is almost as undesirable as it is impossible. Equality of opportunity, even if obtainable, could only be a once-off affair, a way of reshuffling or new-dealing the pack - unless everyone was childless and there was no inheritance of property, skills or even predispositions. Equality of result would either be, indeed, the death of liberty or a response to a very precise specification of particular areas, such as income, for instance, but not necessarily all work, trade or barter in leisure time. Nevertheless an egalitarian society is both conceivable and desirable. Certainly some societies are remarkably less unequal than others; but if by an egalitarian society is meant a classless society, one in which every man would see every other man as brother, sister as sister, brother and sister, of equal worth and potential, then one can readily imagine a genuinely fraternal society with no conceit or constraint of class. It would not be a society in which everyone was exactly equal in power, status, wealth and acquired abilities, still less in end-products of happiness; but it would be a society in which none of these marginal differences were unacceptable and regarded as unjust by public opinion - a public opinion which would itself become, as gross inequalities diminished, far more critical and active, far less inert and fatalistic than today. These margins would remain perpetually ambiguous, open, flexible, debatable, a moving horizon that is never quite reached, irreducible to either economic formula or legislative final solution; but less intense and less fraught with drastic consequences than today.

No difficulties about the concept are so great as to warrant abandoning it or treating it as pure ritual of the socialist church. One difficulty is that socialists want, rhetorically and politically, to make something sound positive which is philosophically best stated in negative terms. There is no "complete equality" which can "finally be realised". unless genetic engineering were to come to the aid of economic planning (with about equal accuracy and predictability, one would hope). But there are so many unjustifiable inequalities. Poverty, for instance, limits life and the exercise of freedom in nearly every possible way, and if riches or affluence give undoubted freedom to their possessors, it is usually at the cost of their humanity and fellow feeling. If we believe in the moral equality or the fraternity of all mankind, then *all* inequalities of power, status and wealth need

justifying. The boot should be worn on that foot. Inequalities can be justified only if these inequalities can be shown to be of positive advantage to the less advantaged. Some inequalities can be justified, many not - particularly if one adds the vital condition of democratic citizenship: actually to ask the disadvantaged and to depend on their reply. No precise agreement is ever likely to be reached or, if so, only for a particular time and place. Nor can philosophy supply incontrovertible criteria for what is an unjustifiable inequality. Each case will stand on its merits and opinions will differ. But the important point is to see that inequalities of reward and power are unjustifiable in principle unless some clear public benefit follows from them that could not otherwise exist.

Here I am following the arguments of John Rawls in his monumental *A Theory of Justice* and of W.G. Runciman in his *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*. Some socialists have misread their arguments as merely a radical form of liberalism. But even if that was their intent, if in fact all inequalities were called into question, constantly questioned, criticised and forced to justify themselves in the public interest, then one would at least be in a society with a dominant egalitarian spirit. The vast differences in power, status and wealth that are in fact acceptable to most people in a class-conscious society, will grow less tolerable as income differences diminish and as egalitarian spirit grows, by argument, agitation and example, as well as by legislation.

Equality does not mean sameness. Men, not robots, animate an egalitarian spirit. The idea that even a strict and absolute equality of condition would destroy human individuality and character is not so much a Tory nightmare as a science fiction fantasy. Are most of the things we most enjoy [p18] doing in life likely to be repetitive and "the same" if they are always done between two people, walking and talking together, who would have, whoever they were, roughly equal income and be of the same, or no, social class? The fears of Tory and "market liberal" authors that high taxation and state intervention will necessarily destroy individuality,<sup>4</sup> these are literally absurd. Do they really think that man is so artificial and individuality so fragile? Can they really not imagine that everyone could have roughly the same standard of living, equal status and equal access to the processes of political power and yet still retain individuality? Or can they, more understandably, simply not imagine how their fancy selves could adjust to such a society? For some people genuinely believe that individuality, character and culture only exist among the prosperous and well-educated,<sup>5</sup> and that "the masses", as the Natives used to, "all look the same". Masses can be generalised about but not the educated and the gentry. It is the saddest fate of the poor to have even their individuality removed from them in principle as well as threatened in practice. Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells and George Orwell had a different view of the matter: they actually romanticised poverty as a school of eccentricity and character. Intellectually the alliance is a strange one between the elitist snobbery of Cambridge Toryism, the contemporary high priests of the cult of inequality, and the competitive men of the market who claim that high taxation destroys "initiative". I suppose a Marxist would say that what they have in common is class interest.

Tawney in 1931 (long before Rawls) argued that equality was best seen simply as the negation of socially imposed inequalities:

*"So to criticize inequality and to desire equality is not, as is sometimes suggested, to cherish character and intelligence. It is to hold that, while their natural endowments differ profoundly, it is the mark of a civilized society to aim at eliminating such inequalities as have their source, not in individual differences, but in its own organization, and that individual differences, which are a source of social energy, are more likely to ripen and find expression if social inequalities are, as far as practicable, diminished."*<sup>6</sup>

He argued that a socialist society would have more diversity in it, not less, when he expressed:

*"... straightforward hatred of a system which stunts personality and corrupts human relations by permitting the use of man by man as an instrument of pecuniary gain. The socialist society envisaged... is not a herd of tame, well-nourished animals, with wise keepers in command. It is a community of responsible men and women working without fear in comradeship for common ends, all of whom can grow to their full stature, develop to their utmost limit the varying capacities with which nature has endowed them."*

Now "less unjustifiable inequality today!" and "no unjustifiable inequality tomorrow!" may not be slogans that "warm the blood like wine", but that may be fortunate. For "Forward to Equality" is more likely to warm the hearts of party activists than those whom they need to persuade. In practice in modern societies not only trade unionists are highly interested in differentials. And philosophically no one value, be it liberty, equality, fraternity, love, truth, reason, even life itself (as Thomas Hobbes taught) can at all times override all the others or be sure never to contradict them. Equality could certainly be maximised in a totalitarian state; but only at the expense of liberty, so that genuine fraternity is destroyed. The political socialist, who knows that democracy must be the means as well as part of the end, having a theory of society, looks at values together, both in their social setting and in relation to each other. He no more postpones liberty until the classless society than he reserves egalitarian and fraternal [p19] behaviour and example until the classless society. If he does, he will not get there; and when he does, classlessness by itself will not have solved all problems and removed all possibilities of injustice.

The political socialist as egalitarian need not get drawn into the parody argument which assumes exact equality of income and wealth: that is somebody else's nightmare, not his dream. Literal-minded distributive socialism is very hard to find. "Soak the fat boys, and spread it thin" may be good populist rhetoric, but most people know it would be thin unless new productive forces arise. Industrial relations are bad, not because the workers on the shop floor believe that the cow can be milked without being fed; they are bad because people think that it is unfair or unjust that they should be restrained in their wage demands while their bosses actually write to tell newspapers that people with high incomes have no incentive to work harder unless income tax is cut and their children can freely inherit all their wealth. Workers, oddly, use their eyes and see how much patriotic restraint in expenditure and overseas investment is practised by those who at least try hard to look like ruling classes and British industrialists.

Socialism claims that with greater equality there can be greater fraternity, hence greater co-operation, and hence greater productivity since wealth basically comes from the worker. "Working together" should be the popular slogan of democratic socialism, not the old condescending "Labour Cares" or the self-deception that the man in the street would be a theoretical socialist, but for the mass media. Working together creates the conditions for equality and an atmosphere of fraternity. Power, special skill and status also count for a lot, but so does having a clear and worthwhile job. Real managers like to produce; real leaders carry followers with them, learn from them and take their successors from the ranks; but the English upper middle class now typically prefer banking to industry and spend much of their income ensuring that their own children succeed them.

So much scope for action (and alternative actions) remains in the business of moving towards a far greater equality; and this is not to be represented as jealous leveling but rather as a constant, aggressive questioning of the reasons for and the justifications of both existing distribution of incomes and wealth and the existing divisions of responsibility between "workers" and

"management". Such questioning could prove as popular as it is right. More important for socialism than abstract arguments about formal ownership is progress towards taking all wages and income out of the market and determining them by representative arbitration and open comparison of relativities. Public policy should work towards complete openness of all incomes and towards a minimum and a maximum income. If people's incomes were known, they would have to be justifiable. Many differences can, on examination and after open discussion, be justified. But they need to be. *We need to develop this as a whole new branch of applied social philosophy rather than of traditional economics.*

Socialist theory *began* as a critique of the theory of wages in the classical economics of Adam Smith and Ricardo: simply that they are unjustly determined in market economies. Free trade unions need free collective bargaining, indeed, as a great but minimal achievement in a market economy. The result, however, is not social justice in any sense, still less "equality" (even of opportunity), precisely because trade unions rarely constitute even a majority of the working population, even before long-term mass unemployment returned to mixed economies. In a socialist and egalitarian economy their collective power will concentrate on reaching agreement about general procedures for arbitrating wage differentials as part of the whole complex of real income, not on a multiplicity of local or industry-wide conflicts with employers. Half-way houses will be many in the evolution of an egalitarian society: wage, welfare and tax structure will all take a long time to come together [p20] (many still do not see the need nor perceive the connection); and different institutions will evolve in different societies and even in different parts of the United Kingdom. But the essential step forward must be the establishment of a guaranteed national social wage, set at a level not simply to avoid the pain of poverty, but to create equal opportunities for full citizenship and participation in everything that is held to be part of the good life;<sup>8</sup> and the limiting of top incomes to a level that does not create life styles or opportunities for inheritance that frustrate the objectives of the social wage. Poverty is not just not starving, it is being shut out from all the things that public opinion holds necessary for a decent life. Neither minimum nor maximum can be decided *a priori*; they are a matter for continuing experiment and open debate.

If economic equality is a relative concept, there is one definition of equality that should be absolute: to end the different rates of mortality between social classes or to gain equality of life and death. The matter is flagrant. Even in a still relatively prosperous country such as Great Britain in a reasonably good year, 1971, the death rate for adult men in social class V (unskilled workers) was nearly *twice* that of adult men in social class I (professionals). The "neo-natal death rates" (deaths in the first month of life) were also *twice* as high, and for the period from one month to one year, actually *five* times higher.<sup>9</sup> Quite simply, this is morally wrong and is avoidable. Well-off conservatives, when confronted with such figures, simply will not believe them, will sneer at "statistics" or sometimes quite literally - repress them. In an odd way, it is to their credit as human beings that they choose not to face such facts, rather than to admit them as a justifiable price for inequality.

National comparisons of infant mortality and death rates between poorer and richer countries tell an even more ghastly tale. By a common definition of "less developed" societies, the average lifespan of men and women taken together is 42 years, and in developed countries it is 71.

Quoting these figures, a philosopher discussing possible justifications of violence says: "It is not too much to say that what we have before us are different kinds of lifetime".<sup>10</sup> The "Brandt Report" on world poverty and "North-South" relations simply and prudentially argued that the

disparities were so huge that soon the *peace* of the world will depend on a massive reallocation of resources.

The gaps between the social classes even in a relatively wealthy country like Britain are great not merely in the precision of death, but in the more general incidence of ill-health. In his Galton lecture in 1975 Sir John Brotherton (a former high Civil Servant) said: "For the most part the evidence suggests that the gaps remain as wide apart as a generation ago and in some instances the gaps may be wider".<sup>11</sup> Thomas Hobbes based his philosophy of political obligation on the alleged necessity of individuals to surrender all power to a State that could effectively minimise the chances of violent death. A modern Hobbes might set his sights higher and see the power of the State at its highest when it can maximise the life expectancy of its inhabitants, and at its most precarious when it fails to do so. Certainly if there was no difference in the death rate between social classes, we would know that we no longer had social classes. This is a fairly obvious if unusual definition of a classless society: one in which "life chances" are equal. Ralph Dahrendorf has recently written a book on *Life Chances* which oddly forgets about death and says little about poverty; but equality of opportunity in Dahrendorf's good liberal senses is not equality enough if it perpetuates, sometimes even increases, such real differences in life span itself. If governments will not move towards such equality, small wonder that some would tear them down irrespective of liberty. Life and death are intrusive matters.

The cult of inequality has strangely survived the demise of aristocratic society. Even Americans are noticeably more [p21] egalitarian than the British. Even the Scots and the Welsh are noticeably more egalitarian than the English. As Tawney argued, dead creeds often survive as habits. But of late the "habits" have been revitalised as ideology: the strange amalgam of free market economics and traditional hierarchical thinking that is "Thatcherism". An egalitarian should feel no shyness in challenging that. For it is overwhelmingly likely that there will be more exercise of human freedom, not less, as unemployment, poverty, and class differences in sickness and mortality, type and length of education, and of income, are all diminished.

Again, the democratic socialist as egalitarian is not a believer in literal equality. One argues on two fronts: against both the "no holds barred" of neo-conservatism and against the utopianism of "nothing less than complete equality of outcome" of what I still regressively call "student (or is it infantile?) Marxism". Even if there was equality of incomes, only a totalitarian regime could even try to ensure literal equality of outcome: to control completely all *uses* of income and labour other than consumption, all leisure-time labour, all do-it-yourself even for sale or barter.<sup>12</sup> But the converse is equally true. If anyone fears that equality of incomes by itself would lead to uniformity, they are simply wrong. And if anyone hopes that economic equality by itself would lead all people to treat each other as equals, they are very hopeful. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for us treating each other as equals.

In an egalitarian society, that is a society which respects human equality and dislikes hierarchy, and in a society with far greater equality of social condition than ours, individual talents could flourish without those restrictions of poverty or even relative deprivation which unfairly limit the quality of life of some and unfairly advantage others. In his *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, W.G. Runciman argued that it is a moral imperative to *respect* all men and women equally, but not to *praise* all equally. Yet it does not follow that disproportionately "praised" or admired talents or skills should carry with them directly proportionate rewards. Neo-conservatives crudely assume that differential talents will not be exercised unless there is a directly commensurate economic reward: that high taxation destroys and lower taxation enhances initiative. This crude reductionism needs to be challenged. Praise can be sought as an end in

itself. People's desire to exercise particular functions - unhappily including power over others - bears little relation to marginal increases or decreases of economic reward. There is a deep, human instinct to enjoy and admire the job well done, and deep satisfaction too in working together, in togetherness, sociability, mutual aid. Those who doubt it should try it sometimes. They miss some of the best experiences in life if not.

The democratic socialist's concept of the individual is more humane and plausible than the Hobbesean-utilitarian assumption of man-the-competitive-atom that underlies both neo-liberal and neoconservative thought. The socialist sees the individual as achieving his or her identity as a person by sociability. We are all unique individuals, indeed, but we uniquely interact with others; and who we are is shaped as much by their perceptions of what we do and say as by our effect upon them. This is a subject in itself. But we can say both that a moral belief in equality brings out the individuality of each other person, and that more equal social conditions and more tasks to be done and decisions to be made cooperatively, whether in firm, factory, school or voluntary body, would create a cumulatively greater respect for the equality of others.

So an egalitarian spirit arises out of protest as well as reason. But reason must tell us that true equality is no more but no less than the removal of all unjustifiable inequalities: and that it is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition for democratic socialism. "Equality" needs to be related not merely to liberty, but to that most rhetorical, potent, but least defined of values, "fraternity". We will have an [p22] egalitarian society when we are able to work together on common tasks and to make decisions together.

## **Fraternity**

"Fellowship is life", said William Morris, "and lack of fellowship is death". "Fraternity", however, is the least defined of the values of the Left, whereas a huge literature exists on "liberty" and "equality". Nothing is decided by arbitrary definitions. Rather let us simply ask "when do we find what we ordinarily call fraternal behaviour?" Surely it is when we are performing some common task, work or even a team game, which we agree needs doing and is done in such a way that each of us has something to contribute? A group of men and women who want to get the job done in time and in the right way, a football team, a committee room on election day, a good committee, an army with high morale in battle, a nation at war, all these furnish examples of situations in which fraternity is not merely helpful but also are examples of situations which positively generate fraternity. Note that fraternity does not always involve liberty it can, better that it does; but fraternity can exist under coercion as well as voluntarily.

So it would appear, firstly, that fraternity is an attitude of mind, and one associated with activity. Fraternity is not radiating an abstract love of humanity: it arises from people actually working together towards common ends. For instance, I am doubtful how much it means for me to say that I feel fraternity towards "Prods" or "Tigs", blacks or whites, unless I actually work or mix with them. We may love each of these (in a rather abstract sense), respect them or simply tolerate them; we can even treat them as equals (insofar as we have occasion to be with them at all); but fraternity must at least involve working on common tasks together or in living together (like brothers in a family, with their jealousies and independence as well as bonds of circumstance and affection).

The metaphor of brotherhood needs exploring. Actual brotherhood is commonly an odd mixture of affection and rivalry, even jealousy; so fraternity does not necessarily involve men and women being literally equal, still less treating everyone the same. Perhaps, indeed, fraternity is closer to friendship than to love. Friendship is not a total identification with another and it is rarely, if ever,

consistent with trying to make another over into some other image than their own - whether the image of an ideology, the image of God, or one's own. Fraternity must surely accept all people, even friends, as they are - warts and all. By all means seek to involve them in common tasks; and to influence them; but then seek neither to condemn their inadequacy, nor be jealous of their superiority, nor avoid being influenced our-selves. If we are to experience genuine fraternity we must take each other as we find each other, not in fancy dress or seen through tinted glasses. We cannot say that there can be no genuine fraternity until the classless society or until we are "born again" into some future state. Fraternity like friendship implies present simplicity and lack of ostentation and pomposity, but some restraints nonetheless, for we are dealing with other people. There is a difference between "making oneself at home" in a friend's house, and acting "as if it belonged to you". Similarly if fraternity is treating people equally, this does not mean that one treats everyone as if they are, in all relevant respects, the same. W.G. Runciman's distinction is relevant, between "equality of respect", which should be universal, and "equality of praise", which becomes empty if universalized; people do have different talents and aptitudes which should be recognised. The only limitation on praise and reward is that no talents or aptitudes can justify social hierarchy. To a brother or sister I must be neither servile and acquiescent nor censorious and condescending.

So fraternity must involve, firstly, common tasks and activities, and secondly an exultant recognition of diversity of character. Fraternity implies individuality, not sameness; but, of course, like socialist ethics in general, it is also concerned with how individuals can work together and contribute best to the common tasks of a reforming society, living in and creating actual communities. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." But can fraternity cut across class lines? Is fraternity compatible with inequality?

The harsh and deromanticising answer is, "sometimes". Fraternity can - for a moment - cut across the most rigid class lines. This is the fraternity engendered on great occasions, be they wars, battles, long marches, last stands or even Labour Party annual conferences. The fraternity of great occasions, however, of *Sturm and Drang*, of Struggle and Passion, is inherently temporary - unless the pressure is artificially kept up, as when Trotsky advocated "permanent revolution" to ensure the monopoly of power of the Communist Party (in the right hands) and Chairman Mao argued, even as Machiavelli and Jefferson had done, that every generation must experience the intense comradeship of revolutionary renewal. Sometimes a kind of fraternity is engendered in new nations between the leader and the masses which is real and elevating for a while, but which if continued indefinitely becomes a deliberate fraud: the illusion of the leader as father or as big brother which can disguise dictatorship, despotism and continuing gross inequality.

Such momentary fraternity can lead in wholly unhumanitarian directions. Erich Remarque wrote of the "false fraternity of the trenches" in his *All Quiet on the Western Front*. For even when released from that compulsive and deadly fraternity, years later, many who had experienced it felt during the 1920's and 1930's a sense of loss, a deep psychological void in normal life - shared indeed by many who had only read about it! Some sought to fill this void from very different sources, including both the Communist Party and the Fascist movements. The Fascists of the 1920's and 1930's tried, even short of war, to recreate this wartime atmosphere of blood brotherhood or false fraternity. A once-famous book by an apostate Nazi, Von Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, argued the paradox that people did not first march with the Nazis because they agreed with them and shared their values, but they marched because they *wanted* to gain a feeling of brotherhood and wanted to agree with them. Camping, drilling, marching, demonstrating, rioting - and beating up Jews or Communists together - gave them the experience of fraternity they desired so much. They did it for that reason.

Such fraternity of even good great occasions is not what democratic socialists want; nor one that could not apply to *any* group of human beings, irrespective of class, race, sex, nationality, religion or intelligence: we want a fraternity for all seasons and possible for all of us, self-willed and enduring. Fraternity without liberty is a nightmare, liberty without fraternity is competitive cruelty, but fraternity with liberty is humanity's greatest dream. But if fraternity is hard to find in liberal contexts, small wonder that some people may seek it in violent actions.

In modern society, fraternity is too often only experienced in emergencies. It would be idle to pretend that those who are ordinarily able to purchase what they want (and constantly to invent new wants) are likely to feel any real sense of brotherhood with those who have to struggle all the time, and often fail, to purchase what they minimally need. Rather than brotherhood, the favoured ones are more apt to perceive threat from the disadvantaged - I could sometimes wish with more reason. Any abstract fraternity they might feel is empty of real content while their lives do not touch, while their sons and daughters so rarely intermingle and seldom marry outside their social class. Their ordinary relationships with each other are guided by the social distance arising from exploitation and work, command and obedience. The upper classes (while often indeed "fraternal" among themselves - nothing more egalitarian, indeed, than an [p24] upper-class club) call for sacrifice and belt-tightening from ordinary wage-earners, but not from themselves. They admit the working classes to be patriotic insofar as they act "responsibly", especially in matters of wage restraint, and when the unemployed do not kick back. They approach the working classes in times of crisis with the coarse, temporary affability of Shakespeare's Henry V speaking to the common soldiers on the eve of Agincourt:

*"For he today who sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile  
This day shall gentle his condition."*

However, there are some contrary signs of hope. While sociologists point to a declining sense of fraternity and mutual aid in traditional working classes (which is itself a relative and not irreversible matter, especially as the lesson of hard times begins to sink in), others point to an increased fraternity in the younger generation. Despite the class bias of higher education, for instance, most students for over a generation have acted in a more classless manner, in their dress, speech, life-style generally and patterns of friendship. Many try valiantly, a few successfully, to sustain this even in the world of commercial and industrial work. And they see themselves as part of a wider youth culture, heavily working class in its origins, whose music and dress may not have universal appeal, and may indeed be [the] subject of commercial exploitation, but which is nonetheless egalitarian in spirit. This "youth culture" has now spread throughout the Western world, [and] tries hard to make links with the Third World consciousness, however artificial, absurd and tentative these links at times may be; and it even penetrates Eastern Europe and is a cause for worry in the Kremlin itself. All this has happened without any conscious government policy, often in the teeth of ruling classes and educational authorities: almost everywhere schooling, for instance, is less dragooned and more informal - even in the private sector that tries so hard to resist it and maintain "Victorian values" and a proper sense of hierarchy. It need only be given a political purpose.

Contemporary women's movements are especially rich in "fraternity". The incongruity of the word in this context should indeed make one pause. I myself do not believe that a sensitive use of an historically male-dominated language is necessarily "sexist", in the sense of artificially preserving male dominance. Certainly languages are hard to control. Some might argue that the very use of "fraternity" helps perpetuate assumptions that male dominance is natural. It could. Personally I rejoice in how much fraternity at its best is exemplified in women's groups working



together for common purposes as equals. But I grant two things to those who have more than nominal worries: the one is that the Fascist perversion of fraternity, the aggressive brother's band, is indeed a strongly male image, is in many ways a revealing caricature of psychological stereotypes of manliness, aggression, competitiveness and xenophobia; and the other is that "sisterhood" in some ways is truly a less ambiguous image of what I am trying to convey by "fraternity". Think simply of any group of women spontaneously "rallying round" to help and support another in need or trouble. "Sisterhood" then has all the connotations of support, care, practicality, grace, sensitivity and empathy needed for the best definitions of politically minded socialists working together. In principle it would be no more strange for men to say "liberty, equality and sisterhood" than for women to say "liberty, equality and fraternity". Indeed it might be salutary, for "sisterhood" makes a clear moral point: the concept would then be liberated, indeed, from its less happy associations with "a brother's band against the world" rather than with good human groups able to relate peaceably as equals to all others. The words "Peace women", for instance, may perpetuate a sexual stereotype, but if so then it is a powerful and good one. In terms of sheer comprehensibility, however, it still seems to me, on balance, more sensible to try to de-sex, even to feminise, old "frater- [p25] nity", rather than to pause to rewrite most languages or to impede them with more neologisms. Thus I repeat (but with this important qualification) that amid the anti-fraternal competitiveness of capitalist society, women's groups are especially rich in counter-examples of "fraternity", truly conceived.

Again those who talk as liberals and Social Democrats of the need for more worker participation in industry and "co-ownership", and those who talk as democratic socialists of the need for industrial democracy or cooperative ownership of industry, have in common a sense that there is a vast energy and know-how ready to be released if the men and women who do the hard work could influence or control the work. And in Great Britain the "old Tories" or true conservatives in the Conservative Party have a sense at least of the need to preserve communities and community values, unlike the "market liberals" in their party who seem willing to see communities disintegrate in favour of a model of a purely individualistic, competitive and careerist society - a capitalist system which, indeed, never fully succeeded in destroying the fraternal institutions of working class life. The task of good government is to create a sense of common purpose and problems that must be solved together: fundamental economic and social policies which actually need widespread support to work for the overriding purpose of creating greater equality and a genuine, active liberty or common citizenship for all in each country and gradually for all mankind.

If more genuine fraternity or sisterhood existed, worries about literal equality and marginal differentials could be less acute. Literal equality would not guarantee fraternity unless there was also a sense of common purpose; and existing degrees of inequality must make fraternity in everyday life excessively difficult. The Duke and the dustman, the dictator and the poor peasant, may indeed feel themselves to be members of the one nation, but that nation then will be based on a sense of hierarchy, condescension and deference, not brother-hood; at best only a poor and dependent cousin-hood. In Beethoven's *Fidelio* the King is converted to the principles of French enlightenment and suddenly proclaims: "Let all men be my brothers". He means well, but it is no good. And what the Count had wanted to do to Suzanna was not funny: Beaumarchais's *The Marriage of Figaro* when first played had a mocking, satiric, cutting edge. The master and servant relationship is mutually corrupting. For, firstly, while there are Dukes, Counts, dictators and millionaires, such gifts and flatteries are a sham and a deceit: power is never let go of and always returnable. True fraternity can be encouraged by governments and leaders by example, but it cannot be imposed: it must have roots in popular institutions and struggles. Oppression and common enemies can indeed stimulate fraternity; but the only way to maintain fraternity in such

conditions is to continue oppression or war (even if the government is now called Communist rather than Czarist).

Both the Communist Party and the Fascist movements of the 1930's sensed a profound human need when they cultivated their emotions of fraternity simultaneously on a very small and local scale (the primal image of the brother's band, organizing in shop-floor cells or in neighbourhood militias) and also on a vast scale (the Party and the Movement itself, even for a while the international movement). We do indeed need both. The experience of fraternity is learned in small groups; and learned best in small groups which fulfill a variety of roles-working, governing themselves and providing as many of their own services as they can: the image of the commune and of industrial democracy. But it must be extended to all humanity certainly beyond the nation, otherwise the world will only see the deadly rivalry of East and West replaced by fear of war between North and South. And yet fraternity must be extended in such a way that the large scale does not obliterate the small. We do indeed need both.

Consider one example of a problem of balancing the large with the small, for the [p26] matter is not easy when brought down from principle and rhetoric to earth. In Great Britain we are now a multi-racial and multi-cultural society - whether we like it or not (indeed, we always have been, with Scottish, Welsh or Irish compatriots). Few people now seem to favour complete *assimilation* of immigrants as *individuals*: that everyone should be English. Most people now talk, albeit vaguely, of a pluralist society and the *integration* of different *communities*. We recognise that different cultures can live side by side. But can this be an excuse for tolerating gross inequalities between them in standard of living and life-chances? The socialist answer, indeed any humanitarian answer, is obvious. And can the good recognition of cultural diversity be an excuse for minorities sometimes to restrain their members by force, especially their women and children, from leaving? This problem is more difficult. Surely no amount of communal fraternity can excuse injustices and un-freedoms in the light of general principles of human rights? It is hard to know where to draw the line in practice. But some lines must be drawn in public law, only after much debate, however, bringing these issues out in the open, neither suppressing nor denying them. We must protect greater cultural differences than we have tolerated or known in the past, but must also protect freedom, especially the possibility for individuals to move during their lifetime from one culture to another and sometimes back again. Both the nation and the new sub-cultures have to make political and social adjustments: such adjustments are only unjust if the majority use their power imperceptively and inflexibly - unpolitically. If the majority fail to conciliate the minority they may (in a narrow sense) be acting democratically, but they are storing up the kind of trouble for the future (as happened in Northern Ireland) that makes democracy unworkable.

Socialists must always remind themselves that economic planning will never by itself create a more fraternal society. Simple arithmetical equality could conceivably create even fiercer competitiveness. We must not over-sociologize. Social conditions can help or hinder but they cannot guarantee more fraternity, nor, fortunately, always destroy it - as people on strike in hard times show us. Fraternity is an ethic that can grow only if believed in freely and practised. It goes with simplicity, lack of ostentation, friendliness, helpfulness, kindness, openness, lack of restraint between individuals, everyday life and a willingness to work together in common tasks. It doesn't only go with fierce memories of the trials and struggles of a movement's early days or with the temporary happy unison of party meetings - however long they last.

Yet fraternity does not mean no leadership: it only means no permanent class of leaders tomorrow and no *noblesse oblige* today - no condescension, no giving favours; but rather leaders receiving trust on account of peculiar skills of both empathy and action which are being used for common

popularly decided purposes. Fraternity does mean creating by public policy as well as by individual example, common purposes and cooperation both in working life and leisure. A fraternal society would be one in which there would be far more popular participation in deciding how decisions are to be made. Fraternity is frustrated by any gross inequalities of income and by the acquired and encouraged acquisitiveness of capitalism: "the rage for the accumulation of things", as Orwell once remarked, a rage that is so obviously never satisfied and which thinks that it can only be satisfied by the exclusion of others.

Nor is fraternity, like the socialist views of positive freedom, necessarily incompatible with individualism, unless brothers simply push too hard - this needs to be said for it worries so many people. If, of course, one punches into the concept of an "individual" all that Professor Hayek does in his *Road to Serfdom, Individualism and Economic Order* and many other works (to put it briefly, the whole *laissez-faire* economic theory), then plainly man as such a programmed predator has very little interest in being fraternal. Hayekian man [p27] will obey the law only out of utilitarian self-interest; and that civil law is not able, though it may rashly try, to change the natural "laws of economics". But more humane concepts of "the individual" should raise no problems for socialists or others. All we need to say is, anthropologically, that mankind is unique and that one aspect of that uniqueness is that each member of the species is unique; and, philosophically, that every man must be treated as an end in himself, never as a means to an end. Having said this, there is no greater reason in principle why human beings should not act with fraternity towards each other rather than with aversion, with cooperativeness rather than aggression or competition. Both images are induced cultural achievements and owe more to nurture than to nature.

Socialism does, however, have a distinctive modulation of this general view of *homo sapiens*. Socialists, after all, stress sociability. Some, like Kropotkin and the anarchists, benignly "cheat" by building into their model of human nature a cooperative spirit of mutual aid, just as some social biologists will picture natural man as "red in tooth and claw", or at least a little Reaganite. Stressing sociability as a cultural achievement, some socialists go overboard in seeing social classes as more real than individuals; so that, once again, true individualism can only exist after that mythic, almost eschatological event, the Revolution. There is no need to go that far. Some suggest, for instance, that it is better to talk of individual human *identity* rather than conservative "character", Marxist "class identity" or Rousseauistic "personality". Many people today take for granted that the main object of "a liberal education" and of personal life is to develop something called "personality" and to attain "self-knowledge". "Personality" implies that I am myself at my best when I am performing spontaneous, unique and "authentic" acts (all over the place). Many libertarian socialists hold this view, but it is a view hard to reconcile with the socialist stress on sociability and cooperation: "personalities" are all very well when they challenge established conventions; they are less helpful in creating new conventions of social justice and a fraternity for all seasons.

My "identity", however, implies something both individual and social. It is individual because it is uniquely mine, but what it actually consists of is a series of mutual recognitions with other people in a social context.<sup>13</sup> It is no use my believing that I have a true but suppressed personality unless I can show some signs of it [that are] recognisable and tolerable to other people. And you cannot expect me to take to you as a person unless you present some attributes recognisable and tolerable to me. And each in trying to gain recognition for a "personality" may end up with a tolerably civilised "identity". Thus individualism should be limited by deliberate sociability. This is far from an abstract or empty remark, as two very different examples may show. I think that I have no right to take heavy drugs (and that you have a duty to stop me), both because of the social consequences involved (for even if you do not presume to try to coerce and cure, someone

will have to pick up and throw away the de-socialised pieces), and also because I will destroy my sociability, certainly that adaptability and flexibility that enables a self to relate to other selves in the real world.<sup>14</sup> Also I would not really like to become suddenly very rich; for even if it was not obviously at the expense of others (like winning the pools), it would threaten my existing relationships and therefore identity - with which I am not entirely unhappy, at least have learned to live with once I gave up the adolescent habit of asking, like poor Peer Gynt, "who am I really?". Of course extreme poverty is more obviously damaging to personal identity and the more widespread problem. There are more Wozzecks than Gynts.

Democratic socialists, unlike some old Marxists, must allow that sociability is a wider concept than social class. Class, in a class society, is inevitably a very important part of identity, but it can never be a sufficient account of individual identity. To give a homely example, I was once abused [p28] by a woman for being middle class; perhaps and indeed, but that had not been the basis of our original bond. To be more formal and theoretical, the concept of social class works well with many aggregate predictions of behaviour, but less well with "exceptions" of individual behaviour, which are often so important both politically, intellectually and morally. Individuals should cultivate both fraternity and tolerance as they try by collective action to move towards an egalitarian and libertarian society.

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## 4. Socialism and Social Theory

**I have argued for the primacy of values against three schools of thought: those who think it is possible to be purely pragmatic; those Marxists who think that values are simply a product of the mode of production; and the neo-liberals who think that public life must follow the laws of the market and that values are only relevant to a residual sphere of private life (some even apply this argument to religion). And I have tried to define what values are specifically, when taken together and modifying each other, socialist. In fact, these other schools of thought are not value-free: the colloquial speech and behaviour of their adherents reveal commitment to quite specific values - however inchoate, contradictory or unhelpful to humanity (rather than to special sections of it) they may be.**

To argue for the primacy of values is *not* to say that doctrine - systematic accounts of what ought [to] be the case - can ever exist apart from theory - generalisations about what is or will be the case; and *vice versa*. Quite simply all doctrines purport (in some circumstances or on some time-scale) to be *possible*. Thus, all doctrines must have a grounding in theory. And all social theories are a selection from an infinite number of facts of some small range to which relevance, significance or value is attached. Probe a theory and one will find some doctrine. Of course the truth of the generalisation will not necessarily be affected by the values or motives of the investigator - indeed it is an elementary test of objectivity, realism or seriousness that one will often admit that what one hopes to see sometime is not likely right now.

I will return to the relation between socialist values and socialist theory in the penultimate, and next, section on "Socialism and Time". But I want now to defend democratic socialist doctrine against common charges of wooliness or vagueness by indicating briefly that it has something distinctive to say about each of the main theories of society, without itself claiming (so dangerously) to be, like Marxism, fully comprehensive. In fact the Marxist reputation for comprehensiveness is gained very much at the price of clarity, and no one version ever agrees

with the other when specific inferences for practice are drawn. So let me speculate on what socialism should have to say about the main plausible theories of the rise, fall and stability of societies.

For general theories of social change are more clear and common than we often imagine; the difficulties lie in their relationships both to each other and to political practice. I can identify nine general [p29] theories, not of equal importance, but each held by learned people and plausible at some level to ordinary people; and each needing some kind of response from socialists, a possible beginning for rethinking. Before doing so, one assumption that is so often neglected: one must think both for the short and for the middle and long term. People may properly concentrate on being politicians, planners or revolutionaries, but to do so in total exclusion of the other time-scales is self-defeating. Here I speculate mainly about what could and should be done in the long run, irrespective of scepticism about whether central planning, physical or fiscal, can control anything like as much as once hoped or feared; and speculate not in hope of finding a pure and all embracing socialist theory (still less revisionism revised), but to show how a socialist perspective is still relevant to all other theories. So some suggested beginnings for a long march of rethinking.

(a) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of the role of the inhabitants.* Socialists were the first to say that not merely could and should all inhabitants of states be citizens (liberalism) but that maximum participation from free men and women was needed if societies were to prosper and be just. High theory went together with a belief in the common sense of the common man. The Conservative view that stability depended on the deference of natural "lower orders" was challenged and mocked. The demand was for government by the people, not just for the people: but not simply government either, the workplace, too. Socialism talks about man as worker as well as citizen. Industrial discipline and industrial unrest? But isn't there a fairly obvious hypothesis as to why people so often kick against the pricks irrationally? Consultation, of course, is a proper, perhaps often necessary, first step; but as a substitute - deceit and delusion. Yet the difficulty in the Labour movement is that historically it arose as a force led by and for the skilled worker. What of the unskilled? Too much union power? "Free collective bargaining" and "social justice for all" - won't someone tell him/them that this is impossible (that is how socialism began, a critique of the liberal theory of wages). Why don't the unions use their power to gain a minimum income for all and to impose a maximum, too? "Mini-Max" as a slogan? Relativities should be diminished and should be determined politically. Economically the unions are too purely defensive (they have had to be) and naively distributionist. Could they not become productivity minded? - probably not, as they have been and are organised. But is it utopian to think that ordinary workers, if they thought that their firms were, indeed, theirs, would have new ideas and consistent energy?

More participation is needed in a socialist society than in either capitalist or pre-industrial republican states, but it must stop short of being compulsory. When voluntary abstention is officially induced, a new form of despotism arises. Objectively we already have all the prerequisites for general participation, yet is the stultifying "prole-feed" of the entertainment media and the mass press individually chosen or institutionally imposed? Partly imposed; one hopes it will entertain the unemployed adequately. The system does without their participation. Socialism must be democratic, but we need to think carefully about *duties* of participation as well as rights to elect. The model of the jury system could be extended. Aristotle observed (not liking it) that the democratic way of filling office must be by lot, for elections are usually *won* by the most able or the most rich; call them, he said, demagogues.

(b) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of ideology or official doctrine.* It really is so clear that traditional societies that insisted on a State

religion were imposing beliefs that social order should be static. And modern liberal societies [p30] that make utility the test of ethics, whether things are useful as each separate individual judges them to be useful, are committing or dooming themselves to a perpetual competitiveness for a perpetually receding horizon of expectations about the possession of material goods. Good for industry and technology but bad for a humanity that does *know* better. The pre-capitalist world did have conventional limitations on acquisitiveness, imposed by the ruling class; but could not an educated society impose such beliefs on themselves? Some of us do, either from principle or from indifference to or contempt for what is commonly thought to be "the good life". (However good our schools, the media and the advertisers prove far more effective as shapers of values- not just the popular press, consider *The Observer* as the priest of stylish-living and conspicuous consumption, the preacher of trendiness and the keeper of a residual, centre-page Sunday conscience).

Socialism begins with scepticism about all official doctrines, but it should not descend into a belief that therefore all ideas are ideological, instrumental. If there were less class interest and competitive individualism, autonomous moral principles would be more important as guides for social policy, not less: the dialogue of liberty, equality and fraternity with tolerance and compassion. Political and moral speculation is likely to flower, not to wither away, in a classless society.

(c) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of their social structure.* The theory of class determination (surely "conditioning", not determination) is a truth, but a limited and an ambiguous one; status, wealth or office can all compound class, it can be each or blendings of all three in different times and places. Perceptions of race or of nationality complicate matters and severely limit the practical application of classical Marxism. Serious conservative thinkers believe in the doctrine of class as much as Marxists believe in the theory. A classless society would still have sub-groups, a plural society rather than a mass society; but the conceit, constraint and discrimination of class could vanish. I find this the least ambiguous piece of socialist ideology and am puzzled why spokesmen of the Labour Party do not see its persuasive values if presented not in terms of leveling down, but of leveling up.

What would a classless society be like? I suspect that culturally it would be more bourgeois than either proponents or opponents believe. "Proletarian culture" is often a debasement of human potential, and indeed of actual achievement, a product of oppression, not the pointer to the future. Avoid inculcating standard accents and competitive commercial values, oh ye radical teachers (do *not* "educate for industry"), but think that most of the things that you and they want in a better society are those skills and tastes that the bourgeois have already achieved in their leisure - though you will doubtless use them differently. Perhaps the young in their leisure, but only in their leisure, and only while they are young, are experiencing a classless culture through Pop, Rock, Punk and New Wave. But a classless society need not have a common culture, only non-economically determined cultures. And "youth culture" is largely an exploitative fraud, though a dangerous one to the system, for the possibilities of social mixing it has revealed may not be lost or limited purely to the time of youth. Regional cultures should flourish.

(d) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of the nature of the elite groups.* Should socialists talk about no elite groups or only about no permanent and self-perpetuating elite groups? To deny the existence of elites within the movement can be as silly as the Surbiton Tory who says, "I don't believe in social classes". Only by believing in the existence of elites can we control them. Those who talk a lot about democratic election of leaders also need to talk about their control. I grow [p31] more interested in the Jacksonian or populist paradigm: obviously not all necessary functions of government can be made so simple (Illich

does go too far) that anyone can do them; but many can. Many more than we suppose. Elites tend to claim both general competence and to exaggerate difficulties. Socialists should not get trapped into attacking all authority, or "Labour moderates" into defending all authority. The 18th century *philosophes* knew what they were about in attacking the *abuse* of authority, or its *extension* into areas where its skills were irrelevant. We must think, interrogate and polemicise to keep each authority within the narrowest limits. Yet socialists should not fool themselves that they can govern or that the people can all govern without some experts and some people of exceptional ability. I distrust talented political leaders who affect not humility but ordinariness, who claim they are exactly as others. "Penetrable elites", "mobile elites", "circulating elites", these are serious moral terms, not merely bits of descriptive sociological jargon. Again, we have to move through time; we cannot abolish time in one great revolutionary apocalypse.

Why concentrate so much on fears of my own side rather than attack the contemptuous elitism of the English ruling classes? Because we have more internal persuasion ahead of us. Because our far Left still does not understand that when they/we say "socialism", most people think of Russia and Eastern Europe and do not produce sophisticated, relativistic excuses for "the betrayal of socialism", but condemn them for what they have done *as* socialists. The far Left are crazy to clamour for more nationalisation until there is a generation of socialist engineers and middle management.

(e) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of their institutions.* This is a distinctively liberal view, indeed in its roots even more old-fashioned: Whig constitutionalism that went with a belief in the rule of law, checks and balances and the division of powers - essentially the negative state defending the liberty of the existing citizen class against State power and interference with the market. Too much importance can be attached to institutional forms alone. Consider the great fit of institutional tinkering that ran through this country in the 1960's and early 1970's, until the economic crisis worsened and *both* main parties rediscovered the primacy of political economy. Unexpectedly the Conservatives found their version first, and turned monetarist theory into a popular rhetoric.

Perhaps socialism does not have a distinctive theory of institutions - apart from the brief, haunting vision of the commune and soviets (summoned up by Lenin, then destroyed by Lenin). Perhaps it is simply enough for socialists to be more knowledgeable about institutions and law than has always been the case. Almost any set of institutions can be turned to unexpected uses; but none can furnish an alibi for failure (*vide* the *wicked* role of the civil service in *his*, or even in *her*, obsessive memoirs); and nor can the right institutions, however rational (*vide* the Webbs and their imaginary Russia), nor however democratic (*vide* Tony Benn's belief that *vox populi* is *vox dei*, i.e. Chartism), guarantee success or perpetual right action. But democratic socialists should see the danger of simply "taking over" existing institutions of the State, and should have a distinctive attitude towards maximising *every* opportunity for popular participation. We believe in parliamentary government, but not limited to Parliament. Sceptical of the old Whig doctrine of "Parliamentary sovereignty" (invented to secure the unity of England and Scotland and to prevent the recurrence of the Civil War), we need not accept that everything that is "extra-parliamentary" democracy is anti-parliamentary.

If a socialist perceives all people as equals, he need not be obsessed by uniformity of treatment. So surely it follows that a democratic socialist should be committed to a far more decentralised, plural [p32] istic, even quasi-federal organisation of society and the economy than has been customarily envisaged in the Fabian tradition (always excepting G.D.H. Cole's writings<sup>15</sup>)? Fabianism has in the past prided itself on, or to some positively stunk of, elitism, paternalism, centralism and administrative uniformity. Rules need to be imposed by the State to obtain

minimal standards of public provision in many fields. But if beyond that minimum people are to make decisions collectively, both as if they were equals and to enhance by so doing their equality and fraternity, then tidy-minded centralists must be tolerant of different outcomes - even when mistakes and inequities occur. Local government must involve appreciably different local choices in the allocation of resources. The kind of equality we socialists should favour is that of maximising the opportunities of people making decisions corporately, in concert, together - again, as if they were equals and to enhance egalitarianism by participation. And we, too, need to say more about political and constitutional limits on central State power - why leave the devil with some of the most popular tunes?

Socialism can stop short of syndicalism - a view that Douglas Cole, after all, abandoned. But it should not *respect* "the State" overmuch - it should use it but distrust it; and it must accept an ever-changing division of powers between centre, regions and localities. And in the United Kingdom nations enter into the question too - something on which Fabianism has traditionally been either very obtuse or very English. An egalitarian Scotland would be different in many ways from an egalitarian England. The role of the central state in the allocation of resources is vital; but it does not follow that rules for its disposal need to be so centralised, detailed and uniform. Some socialists have given themselves much too paternalistic and bureaucratic an air. The Morrisonian public corporation has proved a blind alley. To move towards an egalitarian society we need new and innovative constitutional and institutional thinking, not a bland reiteration of the myth of the sovereignty of parliament and a belief that all traditional institutions can be used for new purposes. Harold Laski in his *Grammar of Politics* argued a proposition now unfortunately forgotten by most socialists: that power is inherently pluralistic or federal. Whatever meaning can be attached to "sovereignty" is plainly contradicted by our joining the E.E.C., for instance, and also by many national institutions within the United Kingdom which may in theory be there by the grace of Parliamentary sovereignty, but in practice are part of the culture, history and inherent dispersal of power.

The Anglican theologian J.N. Figgis once argued that the status and role of churches in modern free states contradicted the doctrine of sovereignty. His secularist disciple Harold Laski cast trade unions in the same role (which may be precisely why the present Government, with its fetish of sham sovereignty, is so fiercely anti-union).

Some functions of government need a far smaller scale to operate effectively, while some need a far larger scale - the E.E.C. and N.A.T.O., for all their faults, exemplify or prove this need. Certainly socialists must cheerfully claim that participation is an education in itself, and that it would be worth some marginal cost in economic efficiency to achieve participative institutions. Equality without participation can only be imposed - by an elite, and one is back with hierarchy again, as in the Soviet Union: bureaucratic oligarchy.

(f) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of the economy.* To many this is a banality, both to classical Marxist and Hayekian. Again, to recall what Marx actually said: "The mode of production in material life conditions the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life". If he did say, as he did, "general character" and "conditions", rather than "specific features" and "causes", who can disagree? The folly that [p33] Marxists are prone to is to think the theory self-sufficient. Economic factors do not determine everything not even anything specifically; yet nor does the market necessarily provide the optimum distribution of neither resources nor fair wages. To believe the contrary though is not to give licence to any kind of fancy. The broad theory of Marx and Engels is surely correct for industrial society, but less easily applicable to pre-industrial formations. Alone it is so abstract, other theories are needed before entailments can be drawn for policy and practice.



Popper on Marx was an odd mixture of the silly and the profound; but this should not discredit his and Mannheim's general notion of hypo-thetico-deductive method as the logic of planning. To influence economies one has to think systematically, but work indirectly and tentatively. Keep a line of retreat open when you plan "irreversible changes", otherwise if you fail to influence men, you fall into massive violence to force them into the preconceived mould.

Consider especially the belief that in a socialist state there would be no private property. We are not talking about tooth-brushes, of course, but we may be talking about heart-pacers and even about clothes, if they are used as indicators of class or of dissent. Private schools, but what about houses and cars? Some things that I mix with my labour, I should surely be allowed to keep. The stunting of other lives and freedoms only arises when I can use my property to deprive others, directly or indirectly, of the substantial minimum of a new conventional, but less acquisitive and competitive, good life. There has been little socialist thinking about minimal justifications of property. And it does affect our views about the organisation of an economy. All kinds of small things may be done better if people have a strong sense of possession. (Am I really against the sale of council houses?) But we need to understand better when it is that possession does not imply exploitation or unfair inherited advantages. The beginning of socialist humanism should be to know why Plato thought that the family must be abolished, but to understand also why it cannot.

If we live with property at all and even say "large-scale public", "small-scale private", we live in a mixed economy. But that is simply a description, neither a slogan nor an understanding, neither doctrine nor theory. Probably better not to ask earnestly or tauntingly "what should the mixture be?" as if general economic criteria could ever be produced. The political dimensions are dominant, but need they hinder efficiency? Ownership, as distinct from control, is a dogma. Often "why not public ownership?" (in some form), but often "why kill the goose that lays the golden egg?". In a world economy with multi-national companies, a socialist economic strategy for a country has to be opportunistic. It must either generate or tolerate increased productivity. Socialist values must be imposed on the working of a mixed economy, but state ownership and state control by themselves are either not necessarily socialist, or not the socialism I thought that the British Left wanted to see. Are there models? If so Sweden more than Hungary, but both look more alike than Cuba or Rumania. The critique of the injustice of the capitalist system used to contain a critique of its inefficiency, precisely for not involving the working class itself in decision-making and the technicians in management. It also questioned whether incentives are in fact primarily economic, certainly at the higher margins. Even the empirical basis of the Conservative case about taxation and incentives has gone unchallenged by two Labour Prime Ministers. Have *they* not heard of job satisfaction?

(g) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of attitudes to law.* Not many socialists go far with this view, but many overdo attempts to expose all law as simply the instrumentality of class exploitation and oppression. And similarly police power. Socialist societies will need law and police, too, but seen as social services, not as "awful majesty" or as "the power of the State": they will be demythologised and [p34] disarmed, respectively. Isn't the necessary arming, in the present context, of some of the police an interesting index not simply of the inadequacy, but of the rottenness of some central feature of our present society? Socialist societies will need public law if we are to avoid what Jack Common and George Orwell once called "negative socialism": the integration of the one Party with the one State. Diffusion, decentralisation and possibly federalisation of both political and economic power will need new networks of tribunals and arbitration, more "administrative law".

Conservatives have seen law as embodying tradition; liberals have seen law as statutes passed by representative assemblies but enforceable independently of either Parliament or State; and socialists have tended to see law simply as policy, as the necessary relations of the interests of society - hence tests of "party spirit" or "will it help the State?" are applied to particular judgments. But the baby of justice must not be thrown out with the bathwater of liberal-capitalism. If "independent judiciary" as we know them is a myth, judges nonetheless cannot be servants of the State, even of a socialist State, nor appointed like British magistrates for party services: they must be free citizens in an egalitarian Republic. "Citizen judge" is the only proper way for a judge to be addressed: "Comrade" is as conniving and untrue as "Your Lordship" is servile. Yet at the moment the judiciary is biased against social change.<sup>16</sup> Judges often confuse a proper traditionalism about legal procedures with an illicit conservatism about social values. Indeed, we would like to change some of the antiquated and class-biased rules.

Yes, we do believe in the "rule of law"; but we also believe that bad laws should be changed. Children should be taught both attitudes equally.

No, we do believe that most constitutional law is conservative biased. But we do believe that the rules should only be changed by the rules, and that all exercise of power needs institutional constraints. Why should the Labour Party oppose a new Bill of Rights? It all depends what is in it. Let us start on one for Northern Ireland.

(h) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of attitudes to knowledge.* "History" was the key to conservatism, "the diffusion of useful knowledge" was to liberalism, and science was to socialism, not simply the social sciences. Socialism seemed committed to social research. Recently there has been a negativistic outbreak; the dread word "epistemology" is scattered through student essays to imply that all forms of knowledge are part of a social system of class control. The answer is obvious, both in polemic and logic, *tu quoque* brothers; but the rubbish goes on as a closed world of its own - a flight from empiricism. Not science but the sciences, should be asserted; or simply that socialism and sociology have, indeed, a common ancestry and a parallel path. Socialists are committed to prediction, which conservatives hold to be impossible in principle, dangerous in practice. Liberal theories of justice start from positing (as in Locke, Mill and Rawls) a hypothetical equality of starting-point, contractarian myths, or the Social Democrats' one god, "equality of opportunity": the grounds of just actions are found in, as it were, a reformed past, what it would have been if .... But socialists do believe in progress, not simply in fairness, therefore good actions must be the outcome of understanding the future consequences of policy. The "ought" cannot be derived from the "is", even from a future "will be"; but a socialist ethic is a speculation on what men would be like in better and more equitable conditions. So socialists must have a 'special interest in those forms of knowledge that seek to forecast social change. A socialist argument cannot proceed simply by analogies drawn from the past: future possibilities and the deliberate creation of them are canvassed. But it is necessary to be sceptical about the degree of probability of predictions, aware of the multiplicity of conditioning factors, and shrewd enough not to confuse predictions of what is likely [p35] to happen with arguments about what ought to happen. The ethically desirable must be the sociologically possible, but rarely is it the immediately probable.

(i) *Many believe that the rise and fall or stability of societies is best understood in terms of attitudes to information.* Autocratic societies believe in official information only and in strict censorship; liberal societies believe in a competitive flow of information, from a privately owned press; and actual so-called "socialist" societies believe that all the media should be party propaganda. Democratic socialists believe, like liberals and unlike conservatives, in open government; but they have more prior ideas of why they want the information and for what

purposes to use it, while to the liberal gathering circulation is often an end in itself, a confusing overload. Democratic socialists are right to consider alternative competing *forms* of ownership and control of communications, but the plural is essential. Socialist politicians are wrong, out of wounded *amour propre*, however great the provocation, to give currency to one arbitrary application of radical escapist epistemology: that all the press serve the interests of the capitalist system: (i) it isn't that systematic; (ii) some journalists don't and survive and (iii) much of what they do is like water off a duck's back - quite worthless, not even wicked. I am worried that Left-wing politicians get obsessive about criticism, rationalising it as a concern for a flow of objective information. Theory and knowledge are far more important. If by clear argument we can change the terms in which people consider problems, more fair reportage will follow. Harold Wilson was plainly a victim of "the age of information flow" and confused information with knowledge: public relations took over from reality. A socialist public. relations won't change reality either.

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## 5. Socialism and Time

**Democratic politics is a process fully compatible with what could prove to be in outcome a revolutionary society. The application of socialist values would indeed be revolutionary in contrast to any form of government that exists at the moment, though some base-camps are better prepared than others. But it should be obvious, from history, sociological knowledge and commonsense, that such transformation cannot occur overnight.**

"Eternity", said William Blake, "is in love with the products of time." When an evolutionary transformation is attempted in countries with long established representative institutions, many conventions are a brake upon progress: but the price of trying to ignore such brakes, experience suggests, is simply too great. When a revolution (as an event) occurs in countries which have not had such a tradition, it is desperately difficult for those in power to see the need to create genuine representative institutions if they even appear to impede the speed of social advance. But such is life, or rather society. Yet in neither condition is democratic socialism impossible. Perhaps some Marxists truly believe that liberty fatally obstructs progress and that parliamentary institutions are incompatible with socialism; but the reaction of the Russian leaders to Czechoslovakia in 1968 and to Poland in 1981 did not follow from such theoretical considerations: theirs was the sadly normal reaction of autocracy faced by popular challenge. In the Soviet Union it is quite clear that [p36] liberty has not been consciously and momentarily sacrificed for equality; on the contrary, and from the very beginning, Communist government suppressed criticism of all kinds. Without liberty the popular demand for equality has withered away into a new kind of social stratification based upon party membership and office building, largely determined by competitive examination and interview.

Any consideration of the time-scales involved in industrialisation in Western Europe, or of the bad consequences of an imposed, rapid industrialism from the top, whether on the Stalinist model in Russia or on the Meiji model in Japan, must convince socialists and their opponents alike that the enterprise is a long and difficult one. Even after violent revolutions, old attitudes survive to an astonishing extent; it is as misleading to underestimate the changes in post-revolutionary Russia, indeed, as it is to ignore continuities. And from a base-camp established amid representative or parliamentary institutions, the time needed for the establishment of a socialist society may appear desperately long. But the built-in political necessity of any British socialist government having to carry with them an enfranchised public opinion, as well as an already organised trade union

movement (including both civil servants and teachers), guarantees that each move of the camp further and further up the mountain will be built upon solid ground, less likely to slip backwards or simply to get stuck.

The rhetoric of socialist politicians, particularly when the Left-wing struggles for control of a party and a movement against the Right, invariably promises more than is possible in a brief time: the "life of the next Labour Government", even absurd claims about bringing in "fundamental and irreversible" shifts in power in the first session of a new Parliament. Even if they could, the results would be disastrous: great changes can only come in stages. Or has this rhetoric all been swept away by the results of the 1983 General Election when Labour with a socialist programme could not even hold a majority of skilled workers?

Did people ever really believe such rhetoric? Most of it was for internal party consumption. Now rhetoric is both the curse and the joy of politics. The press are, indeed, perhaps ungenerous to take rhetoric too seriously, and to imply so wickedly that politicians will do as they say.

Journalists are not philosophers. But serious socialist leaders should not give hostages to fortune by promising more than they can fulfill in the short term. The *short term* is the life of a Parliament and is the period of building a base and support for social change. Short-term legislative measures must respond to immediate problems and be popular or at least widely acceptable in the country at large (especially if they need a response in the behaviour of working people to work at all, as so much economic and social legislation does). But short-term measures should be consistent with middle-term theories about *how* to achieve long-term goals, such as an egalitarian society; or at the very least, amid the often desperate contingencies of politics and economic events, not inconsistent with those goals.

The *middle-period* is the period of trying to change attitudes and values, both by persuasion or by the removal of institutions whose main function is to maintain privilege and social stratification, be it private education, private medicine or the investment policies of banks and pension funds. Even the removal of some of these institutions is unlikely to work in a socialist direction if not done gradually, or unless enough of the people who work [in] them are at least willing to serve the new system unobstructively. In retrospect it does not seem to have been a very bright idea of the Labour Government of 1945-50 simply to replace the management of so much industry by civil servants, without the generation of socialist managers and engineers that was by then the forgotten part of the great vision of Shaw, Wells and the Webbs. the role they cast for the new polytechnic institutions. Middle-period planning and transition plainly requires at least a generation simply because of the need for attitudinal change: it is not possible in the life of any one or two Parliaments.

Yet amid short-term legislation, middle-period strategies have to be canvassed. People have to be convinced of and made familiar with the new ideas. Educational change has to be undertaken in the short-term programme to provide the personnel and the skills for the strategy of the middle-term structural changes. But such changes and the strategies themselves have to be debated, speculated about, before they can be established. And all the time the *long-term* values of the classless society are to be asserted and refined: what will the social differences of the sexes be, or the role of cultural minorities in a classless society? A socialist movement needs moral philosophers as well as economists, or rather needs to popularise both modes of discourse in a speculative, not a dogmatic spirit. Again, "the ethically desirable must be the sociologically possible". The bounds of present possibilities can be extended, but only over time and by debate, not edict.

For a socialist movement simply to campaign on long term values would be absurd. For it simply to campaign on immediate reforms of the present system is, indeed, not socialist at all (simply desperate patchwork on a worn-out garment). It needs always to campaign on three different levels: (i) short-term tactical reforms within the system to build a basis of popular confidence for advance; (ii) middle-term strategies to change the system; and (iii) long-term persuasion to work a new system in a new spirit. These levels do not contradict, they complement, each other so long as the distinctions about time are made clear. Politicians are pretty useless who can only dwell in one dimension; public servants may have to. Party manifestos would look very different if written in this manner (more socialist and less Chartist). But even if it may be a long time before institutions will exhibit socialist values, socialists can. Part of persuasion is reasoning but part is example.

Government must work through stages, but individuals can simultaneously work amid short-term limitations, plan for middle-term change and speculate on the future, without hypocrisy or self-deceit. Young civil servants or managers are not "selling out to the system" if they implement policies which they think are mistaken or work within institutions they think to be regressive, so long as their criticisms are made and heard within or without the workplace. They *can* help change the climate of expectation and should hope to use their knowledge, and expect to be consulted, in formulating middle-term strategies. Social workers are not "shoring up the system" if they help real people in trouble: they are helping people in trouble. With socialist policies they may be able to tackle problems in better ways, they may have less problems, but they must convince not desert their clients. Teachers are not betraying children by teaching our bad syllabuses well, so long as they use every opportunity they have in the present system to change them or at least to refuse to moralise them. If socialist policies and greater social equality diminish both the feeling of hopelessness and the class-labels of learning, however, there may be greater motivation, more learning and less teaching. Factory workers are not working for capitalism, they are working for a living wage. But with socialist policies wage differentials could count for less and their skills could be used to better effect. It is not romantic in the least to think that "industrial democracy" could be more efficient than private ownership; it is a serious hypothesis to be tested and assessed in many different ways, in firms of different size and on different time-scales. Working "within the system" efficiency has to be proved, but in being proved the assumptions of our existing definitions of "efficiency" can be challenged: is capital intensive machinery really less costly than labour-intensive processes of work in all conditions? Someone has to pick up the bill or pay the cost of labour-saving that becomes unemployment.

As well as the classes, there are the sexes. A woman is not necessarily selling [p38] the pass to prove herself as good as a man in a man's world, not unless she rests content with her individual achievement and fails to use her position to try to change the assumptions of that world. Women today are less and less content to work for men in the home; they too work for wages because they need to, or even when middle class women do not need to, they then work to prove their independence and equality. Expectations of radical change already exist, and need but to be built upon. Pressure groups have modified both public policy and public opinion even within our present society. Some women may not have to wait for the classless society to act like equals and to be treated as equals. But equality of the sexes without social equality will be hamstrung by class differences and opportunities. Progressive middle class women should beware of imposing their values on working class women. They campaign, to take an example important for women, against the impersonal regime of hospitals and to have their babies "at home". Being individualistic, they do not like being bullied and categorised in hospitals; and middle class women are also, on average, healthy, so less at risk outside hospital. But they should not make a cult of home-birth and imply that other women are unnatural not to do so, until such time as bad housing conditions and poverty no longer make infant mortality so dramatically different between

the social classes. We live side by side but in different time-scales, even biologically and demographically. But middle class women should not be ashamed of making differential advances to equality in education and employment, for instance: such example is likely to spread, in time. Yet women's lib readers should be aware of how small a minority they are; and that to capture a Labour Party Conference is far from conquering the country.

Advance must be by "small steps", indeed; but steps if they are really steps should have high rises as well as broad treads, and need to be placed on top of each other, not scattered surrealistically over the landscape as opportunity knocks or according to who holds what Ministry. I like the metaphor of rapid small steps rather than few giant steps. Nonetheless in both short-term and middle-period planning, differential advance can be made. The idea that societies are systems is a highly abstract one and should not be applied too literally to limit practice. "The whole man moves at once", as Hoffmanstahl was wont to quote, but societies are not like that - only in the imagination of Engels and Hayek. Every plan must be flexible enough to allow unexpected opportunities to be seized on one part of the line, costly attacks abandoned for the moment at another, so long as there is a general move forward.

Socialist movements in the West were in danger of losing confidence in their leaders' wills or abilities to move towards a classless and freer society. The rank-and-file party activists are often grossly unrealistic, often in too much of a hurry (and anything of this kind made in a hurry is not likely to last); but if they are it is at least in part the fault of past leaders who were so pragmatic that they both lost sight of and could never talk with conviction about either middle-term restructuring of institutions or long-term attainment of socialist values.

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## 6. Theory and Present Practice

**All I have tried to do is to reassert the primacy of values in socialist doctrine, to demonstrate that there is a characteristically democratic [p39] socialist theory, and to suggest that advocacy and example - as a "public philosophy" - are necessary instruments of social change. Understanding, will and moral conviction must be there. True equality cannot be imposed. It must be freely accepted and lived. But it will not come, of course, without planning, policy and legislation. Of those I have said next to nothing. I have tried to grasp the shape of the wood, for once; but I am only too well aware that it is composed of trees.**

But for the trees of social policy, let me say just this. The empirical evidence is almost as depressing as the election results where there have been long-term attempts through social policy and public expenditure to diminish inequalities. Take health. The Black Report suggests that after nearly forty years of a National Health Service, while health has generally improved, differentials between social classes may even have increased. The already advantaged are always in a better position to take advantage of public facilities, and in any case eat better and live and work in healthier environments.

Some of us once pinned great hopes on public education. But the work of A.H. Halsey and his colleagues has proved beyond doubt that the influence of home background, which is to say social class, on educational performance, particularly if access to tertiary education is used as a measure, is greater than that of *any* observed school system, private or public, selective or comprehensive.<sup>17</sup> Some parents on reading Halsey should regret their costly competitive

investment in private education. They could have saved their money. The vital factor in getting to university is the propensity to stay in school until the age of 18 - which correlates more strongly with parents' social class than with types of school. Certainly Halsey argues that "the integration of the private sector into a national system, so that it ceases to play a class discriminatory role, is essential if the ideals of *either* meritocracy or equality are to be realised"<sup>18</sup>, but he also shows that education by itself is most unlikely to create an egalitarian society. Certainly conditions have improved greatly and standards too in the public sector since the Second World War, but in the private sector, once again, as much or more. Some hope and some fear for too much from schools. Equality of access to education would be good in itself, as is education; but it is neither a benign nor a sinister back door to socialism.

The picture is depressing over the whole range of the social services. Julian Le Grand recently showed for housing and transport, as well as for education and health care, that hopes to bring greater equality through greater public expenditure have been largely frustrated - again mainly by differential use of these services by people already more advantaged.<sup>19</sup> Considerable benefits have occurred for the mass of the population, but even greater for the minority. The net effect has been humanitarian, but not egalitarian.

Le Grand suggests that all these attempts to reach greater equality by increasing each social service individually and by blanket public expenditure have failed through "a reluctance ... to confront the ideology of inequality ... by leaving basic economic inequality relatively untouched, it sowed the seeds of its own failure."<sup>20</sup> He reaches the important and simple conclusion that if one wishes to redistribute income, one must redistribute income - whether by income tax, negative income tax, minimum guaranteed wage or even expropriation of some types of property.

*"Greater equality of incomes would lead to greater equality of costs (in terms of the sacrifices involved and sometimes in money terms as well). This in turn would lead to a greater equality of use and hence of public expenditure. It would also contribute importantly to greater [p40] equality of outcomes. A more equal society in terms of income would be one where more equal treatment was offered for equal need, where inequalities in health and education and in educational outcome were reduced, and where the gaps in housing and travel opportunities were diminished. The strategy of equality therefore should become one of achieving greater equality of money income."*<sup>21</sup>

Raymond Plant has reached the same conclusion in a recent Fabian Tract and adds the powerful reason that a good many of the unpopular "bureaucratic and regulatory features of the welfare state are a consequence of attempting to tackle the symptoms rather than the causes of inequality."<sup>22</sup> Their suggestion sounds more radical than it is if one considers what a very large proportion of wage incomes are already settled on known scales and with conventional relativities rather than by market forces. Alec Nove's "feasible socialism" would also allow for wages to be taken out of the market so long as most prices remained in. More immediately the Labour Party must cease, in the short term, entertaining itself with middle period arguments about forms of control and ownership and restate firmly as a public philosophy the justification and advantages of graduated income and inheritance taxes. It does not need "the Tory press", it only needs average commonsense to see that increases of public expenditure, let alone moves to redistribute income, involve higher graduated rates of taxation. We dodged that issue in two general elections.

The ways and means towards a democratic and participatory egalitarian society must be debated again, and in such concrete terms: old Fabian precision animated and humanised by a broader moral perspective and a greater toleration for those particular and varying inequalities which arise

from conscious decisions by groups of equals, not from the permanent dominance of social class. "Working together" should be our slogan, not "Doing good".

So to learn to think in terms of different time-scales (not wings or factions) simultaneously. They do not contradict, they complement each other and politicians are useless who live in one dimension alone. We have to react to day-to-day events realistically and pragmatically, respecting people's opinions as they are - but not mere pragmatism. We also have to pursue middle-term policy for the eradication of poverty and other injustices - consistently, which means winning elections and changing opinion slowly, as well as determining long-term priorities. And socialists have all the time to practise a code of morality based on fraternity which we can believe will be natural to all in the long-term future condition of an egalitarian society in which all men are free - in the present world, so few are genuinely free. Socialists must not treat other people as if they are already living in the future; to do so is fantasy or oppression. But socialists themselves must be a testimony that some better, more fraternal and co-operative type of human relations is possible. Otherwise what does it matter who can manage the declining economy best?

Perhaps all this has fallen between advocacy and defence, and too philosophical for some and not philosophical enough for others. I believe that socialism must be able to present its theories and its doctrines, as well as its campaign policies, in a simple language of common sense and common understanding. But, nonetheless, it is not easy to fight on three fronts simultaneously: against socialists impatient of political means; against pragmatists who think that benign public administration is all we need or can have; and against sceptics who think that all socialism is inherently anti-political and anti-libertarian and who themselves believe that social hierarchy, poverty and unemployment are the prices that all must pay for the culture and liberties of some. But it must be done, and in the long run all people will want to be citizens and citizenship cannot be fully practiced other than among equals.



## **References** (found inside back cover)

1. See my "Procedural Values" in Bernard Crick and Derek Heater, *Essays on Political Education* Falmer Press 1977.
2. See the critique of Berlin, "Freedom as Politics", in my *political Theory and Practice* Allen Lane 1971.
3. Being the last words of the Epilogue to the last edition of R.H. Tawney, *Equality*, 4th ed. Allen & Unwin, 1952.
4. For example, Sir Keith Joseph & Jonathan Sumption, *Equality*, London 1979.
5. For example, Roger Scruton, *The Politics of Culture and Other Essays*, Manchester 1981.
6. R.H. Tawney, *Equality*, 4th ed., London 1952, p.57.
7. R.H. Tawney, *The Radical Tradition*, London 1954, p.101, quoted by Christopher Hampton, *Socialism in a Crippled World*, Penguin Books, 1981, an eloquent protest against the separation of the cultural from the political.
8. See Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, Penguin 1979.
9. See the "Black Report", *Inequalities in Health: Report of a Research Working Group*, DHSS, London 1980, p. 1, (republished as Peter Townsend & Nick Davidson (eds), *Inequalities in Health*, Penguin 1982).
10. See Ted Honderich, *Three Essays on Political Violence*, Oxford 1977. In his *Violence for Equality*, London 1980, he dismisses most justifications for social violence; but insofar as huge inequalities, always resulting in great differences in life expectancy, are *deliberately* maintained by any government, then he considers that there is always a residual justification of violence. Professor Honderich simply points out that governments have a greater opportunity (thus moral duty) to end misery without violence than most revolutionaries have to create justice through violence.
11. Quoted in the Introduction to the "Black Report", *op.cit.*
12. See Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, London 1983. His eighth feature of a "feasible socialism" is: "It is recognised that a degree of material inequality is a precondition for avoiding administrative direction of labour, but moral incentives would be encouraged and inequalities consciously limited. The duty to provide work would over-ride consideration of micro-profitability" (p.228). Gavin Kitching's *Rethinking Socialism: a theory for a better practice*, London 1983, is also a brilliant attempt to cut socialist theory back to its hard and relevant basics, a critique of much Marxist economics in Marxist terms, and an important start on a new theory of stages and time-scales.
13. Kathleen Nott in her *The Good Want Power*, London 1977, advances two postulates "(i) that liberty is a discernible fact" and "(ii) that becoming aware of it and accepting it as a fact either for oneself or for others entails a principle of mutual recognition." But I doubt if she would like my socialist gloss on her, however democratic, since her sub-title was "An Essay on the Psychological Possibilities of Liberalism". But much common ground, common humanity.
14. I tried, very speculatively, to develop this notion of sociability limiting personality and individualism in the interest of "identity" in my *Crime, Rape and Gin*, London 1974, whose subtitle explains what it is about: "reflections on contemporary attitudes to violence, pornography and addiction."
15. See A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy*, Oxford 1979, and his excellent anthology, *British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880s to 1960s*, London 1983.
16. See J.G.H. Griffith, *The Politics of the Judiciary*, 2nd ed., London 1981.
17. A.H. Halsey, A.F. Heath and J.M. Ridge, *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain*, Oxford 1980, p.193 ff.
18. *Ibid.*, p.213 ff.
19. Julian Le Grand, *The Strategy of Equality: Redistribution and the Social Services*, London 1982.
20. *Ibid.*, p.150.
21. *Ibid.*, pp.140-41, and on methods of redistribution, see Le Grand and R.V.F. Robinson, *The Economics of Social Problems*, London 1976.
22. Raymond Plant, *Equality, Markets and the State*, Fabian Tract 494, 1984, pp.27-28. I was able to read this only when my Tract was going to press. I wish I had read it earlier. It is a rigorous and most distinguished critique of market liberalism, and his Rawlsian account of equality is wholly congenial, as is his relating it to other values. I only differ from his scepticism about decentralisation.

[Back cover]

## **Socialist Values and Time**

Values are important: when ordinary people have said that they no longer know what socialism stands for, it is unlikely that they are thinking of details of policy in manifestos or striving for "the correct theoretical perspective". **Bernard Crick** shows how democratic socialism can recover its ability to state publicly broad principles derived from a coherent theory. Socialism possesses, he argues, both an empirical theory and a moral doctrine. The doctrine asserts the primacy and mutual dependence of the values of "liberty, equality and fraternity". It draws on the theory to believe that greater equality will lead to more cooperation than competition; that this will in turn enhance fraternity and hence liberate from inhibition, restriction and exploitation both individual personality and the full productive potential of society. Idealism and realism can be combined if socialists think in terms of stages: short-term tactical reforms within the system to build a basis of popular confidence for advance; *middle-term* strategies to change the system; and long-term persuasion to work a new system in a new spirit. He writes as "a moderate socialist - but no longer a moderate in newspaper senses: my goals are extreme and therefore I moderate and measure my means".

## **Fabian Society**

The Fabian Society exists to further socialist education and research. Since 1884 it has enrolled thoughtful socialists who wish to discuss the essential questions of democratic socialism and relate them to practical plans for building socialism in a changing world. Beyond this the Society has no collective policy. It is affiliated to the Labour Party. Anyone who is not ineligible for membership of the Labour Party is eligible for full membership; others may become associate members. For membership and publications details, write to: Ian Martin, General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1 H 9BN.