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Mutualism

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We often derive a coign of vantage in reviewing old scenes through the lens of a different word; though the field of vision be a familiar one, the various word-lenses we use often bring out in bolder or less relief the features of the picture. The triune formula of Hegel, used so effectively by Proudhon in his analysis of industrial relations, may here offer us such an instrument for the survey of history in the same field; for, after all, history is but the biography of the race-soul in its effort to construct a cosmos from the chaotic web of events in which it finds itself immersed. In fact, it is the ceaseless transformation and flux of social relations which create the various vestments of humanity, which we ticket in the race-wardrobe as religion, poetry, philosophy, science, politics, etc. A never-ending process which actually is “the roaring loom of time which weaves for God in the garment we see him by.”

In Hegel’s thought, which he applied to all knowledge, from the two contradictions, *is*, and *is not*, the “roaring loom of time” weaves for us a neutral point in *becoming*. Without accepting his ontology, his dialectical method remains a most exhaustive instrument for synthetic generalization. Nor is this neutral point by any means a compromise between opposites, for

the notion returns enriched by the process, becomes the substantial union of both its terms, richer in scope and harmony. Though the writer differs widely from his logic, his method opens rich fields when applied to the philosophy of history, of which one such is my present purpose.

In the biography of the race we see this exemplified in the evolution of industrialism. From the crude, disjointed efforts of the savage, we find industrial relations marked by two opposing characterizations of human activity: the rule of personal and impersonal will. Let us briefly scan these:

1. *Slavery*, the first step towards the *solidarite* of effort, was the cradle of industry. It was in this subordination to the personal rule of others that the first lever of civilization, division of labor, lifted mankind out of the animal phase of "each scratching for himself." Less barbarous than the slaughter of the captive, it made possible the development of the softer, or *human*, feelings which now are asserting mastery over the brute in man.

Excess in products became possible, and *pari passu* increased socialization. Through the first capital was born, and by this and the second slavery became modified to serfdom. But the advantage resulting rested mainly with the master. National wealth augmented, in which it is true all share somewhat, but the essential feature of this phase, personal rule, still dominated if but indirectly.

2. *Capital* supplants personal rule. It required the electric spark of the French Revolution to end the transitional agony, but since then capital has assumed a more mobile character; it has become impersonal, *in itself*; though confined yet by the leading strings of legalization to personal guidance in a large measure.

Labor has by this change become organized under capital. The essential spirit of this regime is free capital, but as it nears its maturity, to provide for the increasing surplus of labor, a surplusage dangerous to it, the economic struggle for existence

finds manifestation in seeking new markets in new lands, Asia, Africa, South America. But this is but a struggle for breathing room only, and indicates that the world's activity is in another transition period; the issue being less how to doctor up a moribund system than to more clearly discern the phase toward which it leads and for which it is preparing the ground. The rule of capital having been based, *in itself*, on freedom, it has only resulted to the benefit of those who could "corner" capital; further, that the impersonal rule of capital has too often degraded the labor it organized; that the capitalist as such is exempt from labor, and the laborer is doomed to crave as a favor the permission to use his muscles productively; all points inevitably to the conclusion that greater freedom can alone be in harmony with evolution, can meet the idea which has dominated past phases and prepared the way for each transitional change.

3. We may therefore find the third phase, the synthetic unity of the preceding ones, in *free association*, combining the necessity to labor of the first and the broader generalization of the second.

Both the personal rule of the one and the impersonal rule of the other, centered in the widened Self of social evolution, find the spirit of each materialized in mutual accord. The rivalry of excess of products and increased socialization merges self-will into the higher selfhood of interrelated humanity. And it is precisely because of this contradiction between the narrow self-will seen in slavery, and the broadened free-will to which capital aspires, that *free association* for mutual interests alone presents synthetic unity. Macaulay said that the remedy for the evils of capitalism will find their remedy in greater freedom to capital, which in turn preserves the economic benefit of slavery in the transformation of the egoistic self into the higher self of human interrelations.

We may again consider these phases under other terms.

1. *Authority*, the genius of the past, manifesting itself in

priestcraft, statecraft, wherein “divine right” becomes personal rule entrenched in *position*. 2. *Freedom*, manifesting itself in rebellion, insubordination, the rebound to egoistic will: the negation not only of authority, but order as well. Activity, from the evils of a false cosmos, endeavoring to return to chaos, *opposition*. 3. *Mutualism*, or free association, is the synthesis wherein the race returns to enrich the union of thesis and antithesis with their harmonization in the higher self.

In other words, to use Hegel’s, the formula is Position, Opposition, Composition. The *position* once entrenched in law, custom, tradition, etc., is negated by *opposition*, of which illustrations are seen on every hand; but find their *composition*, or synthesis, in the *order* which invariably follows rather than precedes progress.

As in religion the race has swung between the position of Faith, and the opposition of Doubt, Denial, so we may even now see philosophy seeking their composition in a reconciling Conviction. So in the clearer consciousness of the Greater Self, the consensus of all past activity and the Over Soul of present endeavor, the ever increasing interweaving of higher and broader thought into the warp and woof of existence, the *condition* of social life—we may already discern reason harmonizing personal and impersonal will in the richer and fuller outgrowth and ingrowth—mutual will.

Thus through the lens, *Mutualism*, we view the scene of human activity, and lo! the relations which constitute it are seen to be the same we had already grown familiar with as scanned through the lens—*Anarchy!*

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