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DIE GESELLSCHAFTS-ORDNUNG UND IHRE NATÜRLICHEN GRUNDLAGEN. Entwurf einer Social-Anthropologie zum Gebrauch für alle Gebildeten, die sich mit socialen Fragen befassen. Von Otto Ammon, Mit 5 Abbildungen im Text. Jena: Gustav Fischer. Pp. viii., 408.

The fundamental theoretic thoughts of this book can be given in a few words. The true object of the social order is the selection of the best, the most capable. On this depends every possibility of progress, every possibility of solving the increasing problems of civilization, of even preventing the fall of existing civilization. Perhaps the thought in its universality will nowhere arouse opposition. The extremest socialism would scarcely be inclined to believe that every man was capable of *any* performance, provided only that it was imposed upon him for the sake of society and with a corresponding livelihood assured to him. Socialism also is not inclined to relinquish the intelligent control of production, the continuation of inventive activity, and creative intellectual work; on the contrary, its advocates promise that the powers of mankind will have an entirely new development when the burden is lifted that the capitalistic *régime* of to-day has laid upon the masses, when talent no longer starves on the hard crust of misery, when freedom from the humiliating and hindering struggle with want gives each one room for his individual development.

The principal object of the work before us is to prove that this view of the existing order of society and this form of hope for the future is a dangerous delusion not in harmony with the natural laws of social life. The author attempts to show that the existing social order of civilized peoples possesses, as the product of a development of several thousand years and of a slow selection of forces, mechanical instrumentalities for selection, which work with at least comparative perfection, and that it would be an attempt of hopeless folly to change fundamentally the order of society, and to create artificially new instrumentalities for selection, with the idea of winning by means of them better results. Ammon considers

the view erroneous that the number is considerable of those who, despite high gifts, are obliged to languish in straitened circumstances. He thinks that there are either no, or but few, unrecognized talents in the lower class; that in consequence the lower class, considering its average endowment, must remain upon a tolerably low plane, since it represents only sediment of which the most valuable constituents have been distilled.

The deductive proof for the position that the proportion of higher endowed individuals to the mass of population can be in general only a small one, Ammon furnishes, in accordance with Francis Galton's method, by applying the combination-theory to the grouping of mental characteristics among men. I regard this proof absolutely conclusive. Equally incontrovertible seems to me what Ammon says about the value of class organization for the social end of natural selection. The organization of classes continues the work of natural selection among men, for it militates against the chance of panmixia,—that is, the sexual blending of men of contrasted types of endowment. If one should do away with classes, or if men should cease to marry principally within their own rank, the consequence would be a strong decrease in the number of highly endowed individuals. Here one is compelled to make a choice between fundamental principles, so far as such a thing is possible in questions of national development. The decrease of highly endowed individuals in consequence of a panmixia, thoroughly carried out, would also have for a consequence the decrease of the weaker endowed, as Ammon shows by means of the population- and endowment-curves established by Galton.

The question is, Should we strive for a slight raising of the average mental level at the risk of making less frequent higher orders of endowment? It repeats itself when we think of attempting to do away with existing inequalities of income, and, in this way, place the great mass of those who have little more than the minimum necessities of existence on a more favorable footing. Here, too, one would buy a relatively slight elevation of the standard of life among the masses at a heavy loss; one would have given up the advantage which society gains from the existence of a number of highly educated and better-fed individuals, and from the excitement of competition; and this deficiency would soon let the whole average sink considerably. The inequality of men, the division of labor, and the organization of classes resting upon it are natural laws of human society which can be set aside by no

reform. If one should attempt to set them aside, one would, to the extent he succeeded, have done away with nature's means of breeding selected individuals. But so little is a caste-like exclusiveness of social classes towards each other meant by this that the author asserts in the most emphatic way that a continuous influx of new elements from the lower ranks to the upper strata of society is an indispensable condition of the health of a social body. The dying out of the upper classes constantly going on must be offset by the fruitfulness of the lower. The social question as it is ordinarily taken is thereby made unsolvable; but the social question in its higher signification is first truly solved by this strong production, —*i.e.*, the renewal of the higher classes in society by bringing to them fresh blood and by strict selection.

According to the general principles thus gained, Ammon considers in his second part most of the projects for social reform under discussion to-day. The need of reform in social arrangements Ammon thoroughly recognizes; he sees therein simply a consequence of the rapid change which the last half century has brought about in the outward conditions of life for the race. Only against political radicalism, especially so far as it has a socialistic coloring, does Ammon carry on (on above mentioned grounds) a relentless war. Chapter XXXV., in which he develops a number of general points of view for the judging of social reforms, gives the broad outlines of his social ethics and contains really the quintessence of the practical proposals which follow from his social anthropology. I say intentionally "social ethics," although the application of such a conception to views like Ammon's may seem to many to-day almost paradoxical. For the leading practical thought of the book is the well-being of the whole,—the furthering of welfare and progress,—for the sake of which we have to put up with many hard things which grow out of arrangements fixed by Nature's laws. We can and must try to soften these hardships, so far as is possible, without endangering higher ends,—in many places in the book there is manifest a noble ethical fervor, which should suffice to protect the author against the charge of making himself the advocate of a class-state, and of the fleecing and oppression of the working-people. But with inexorable distinctness the leading thought stands out that a one-sided heeding of the principle of welfare is inevitably at the cost of progressive development; that the establishment of complete equality of conditions must lead to doing away with all competition, all selection, to a perfect stand-

still, to the paralysis of forces, to the death of culture. The criticism of the social-reform activity of our time is in its details exclusively fitted to the conditions of the German empire, and therefore need not be further explained here. Still there are also in this part a number of chapters which are either of more general bearing or else contain thoughts that can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, without difficulty to conditions outside of Germany.

One will not agree with the author in all his opinions. Along with the proper accentuation—for which we may be grateful at a time when the socialistic current is running as rapidly as at present—of the beneficial results of competition and natural selection, many of the evils connected with the present forms of the competitive struggle deserved to be made prominent. Not in all cases do the instrumentalities for natural selection allow the actually valuable to come to the front; not in all cases is work best performed under the pressure of competition. Often the conditions of the competitive struggle are such that only the worse sort of men, the worse wares, predominate. Often a small advantage in one direction is bought with excessive sacrifice in another. It looks as if the author had not sufficiently weighed the possibility, that the preservation of the instrumentalities for selection, now existing in the social order, may be compatible with a certain socializing of many fields of labor. But giving the grounds in detail for this idea would lead beyond the limits set to this notice. Let it suffice to emphasize that Ammon's book, although, like everything that is human, not perfect, yet by the clearness of its fundamental thought, by the fulness of its well-sifted, positive material, and by the sureness of his method, rises far and away above the average of the many well-meaning but poorly thought-out works about social problems, with which literature swarms and which for the most part only appear to forthwith vanish again from the horizon of men. The book will share in the life of the truths which it contains.

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