My reason for attempting a treatment of this difficult subject is twofold. First, I am greatly impressed by what seems like a lack of thorough patience and goodwill in the controversy on both sides. A student of philosophy has not the special knowledge possessed either by Mr. Huxley or Professor Haeckel in biology, or by Mr. Karl Pearson in mathematics,¹ not to speak of other writers who

¹ A lecture given before the London Ethical Society.

¹ Ernst Haeckel was a German biologist who formulated a deterministic theory of the ontogenetic development of the individual. Haeckel believed in the truth of spontaneous generation, not because it could be proved in the laboratory, but because a denial of it led to belief in a Creator. He was known as the 'German Darwin' because of the enthusiasm with which he introduced Darwin's ideas into Germany. His *Generelle Morphology* is a thoroughly and consciously Darwinian book. He is frequently cited in Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man: Selection in Relation to Sex* (London, Murray, second edition, 1888). Darwin says, for example, that 'Professor Haeckel was the only author who, at the time when this work first appeared, had discussed the subject of sexual selection, and had seen its full importance . . .' p. 3. It was Haeckel who extended the debate about natural selection into the social sphere, and who expressed astonishment at the possibility of natural selection being compatible with socialism. He maintained that it was natural selection which drove people to attain higher levels of culture. He had a firm belief in the natural law of progress which he thought that neither tyrant nor priest could resist.

T. H. Huxley (1825–95) was a distinguished biologist and social commentator. He popularised many of Darwin's ideas, but did much valuable work of his own. In terms of ethics he made the famous distinction between cosmic evolution and ethical evolution. His ideas are discussed in the introduction to this volume, and in Andrew Seth's contribution.

Karl Pearson (1857–1936) was a biologist and mathematician with a keen interest in statistically proving Darwin's theory of natural selection. He was critical of
have entered upon this debatable land perhaps too light-heartedly; but he ought to possess above all things the goodwill and habit of patience which enable him to track out common elements in different phases and processes, and to hold together ideas which the noticeably impatient mind of exact science or semi-political publicism pronounces to be *ab initio* incompatible. I cannot help it if this implication is considered insolent; in the *popular* utterances of natural and exact science nothing strikes one so forcibly as their impatience. And secondly, it appears to me that certain classes of facts known to those closely occupied with administration of charity or of Poor Law relief form at least an important contribution to the problem in question, and that, though touched upon from time to time, they have not been treated with adequate knowledge, and their rather ambiguous import has therefore not been rightly read.

I will begin by referring to an observation of Lotze which applies very widely to the attitude of our time.

Our own generation, maintaining its opposition to philosophy, endeavours to console itself for its want of clearness in respect to general principles by a vivid exercise of the sensuous imagination. If we come upon pile-dwellings in some forgotten swamp, we piously gather together the insignificant remains of a dreary past, supposing that by contemplating them we shall grow wiser, and learn that which a glance into the affairs of everyday life would teach us with less trouble.

Something of this kind is forcibly suggested by the necessity which modern culture appears to be under of attempting to designate well-recognised phenomena of civilised society by names drawn from the evolution of the plant and the lower animal world.

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Spencer, Haeckel and Huxley for portraying natural selection as the competition among individuals. Like Benjamin Kidd, he applied the theory of natural selection to international relations and to justify imperialism. Pearson agreed with Carlyle and Ruskin that England must hold its place in the world and protect the welfare of her own people at the expense of other peoples of a lower order, if necessary. He was also a socialist who lectured on the ideas of Marx and Lassalle. He was not, however, a Marxist. He espoused the idea of class unity, rejected working-class internationalism and embraced, instead, an ardent patriotism.
We have the struggle for existence, natural selection, and panmixia, asserted and denied to be conditions of human progress, and the absurdity culminates when Mr. Herbert Spencer, in an ethical treatise, speaks of a human society as 'a local variety of the species'. But where a continuous evolution is concerned, mere difference and mere sameness are more than usually inadequate instruments to express the relation between its stages; what is really needed is very patient and very careful interpretation and analysis directed to tracking the true strand of continuity.

For the sake of clearness, I will at once briefly indicate my conclusion. I believe in the reality of the general will, and in the consequent right and duty of civilised society to exercise initiative through the State with a view to the fullest development of the life of its members. But I am also absolutely convinced that the application of this initiative to guarantee without protest the existence of all individuals brought into being, instead of leaving the responsibility to the uttermost possible extent on the parents and the individuals themselves, is an abuse fatal to character and ultimately destructive of social life. The abolition of the struggle for existence, in the sense in which alone that term applies to human societies, means, so far as I can see, the divorce of existence from human qualities; and to favour the existence of human beings without human qualities is the ultimate inferno to which any society can descend. This view, it will be seen, is practically that of Mr. Kidd in his work on Social Evolution. In no critical question has patience been more necessary and more wanting than in forming an estimate of that remarkable popular treatise. It is easy to show that Mr. Kidd is neither a scholar nor a philosopher; his estimate of social conditions is, in my judgment, misleading, and it does not appear probable that he is a master of natural science. But all this is no proof that on a particular issue he has failed to hit the nail on the head,
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and mere candour compels me to say that, in the essential distinction on which his attitude to Socialism is founded, I am fully in agreement with him. I refer to the distinction which he chooses to call that between true Socialism, which aims at arresting competition and guarantees existence without protest to all individuals, and State Socialism, which regulates the competitive struggle while enhancing the efficiency of competition.4

Now let us remind ourselves what is the fundamental meaning of the Struggle for Existence as conditioning natural selection in the world of plants, and of animals below man. 'I should premise', Mr. Darwin writes, 'that I use this term (Struggle for Existence) in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including what is more important, not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny'. The examples which follow explain that not only may two dogs, when food is scarce, be said to struggle for food; but a plant on the edge of a desert struggles against drought - that is, is dependent upon moisture, though there is in this case no competition with other plants at all; a plant may again be said to struggle with other plants for the means of disseminating its seed, or, I may venture to add, for the chance of fertilisation by insects, in which two cases its individual life is in no way or degree necessarily risked in the struggle. That is to say, the organism which wins in the struggle for existence, from the very beginning, is that so adapted to surrounding influences and objects that it not only arrives at maturity, but leaves offspring, to a relatively large extent, under such conditions that they also are likely to arrive at maturity. The 'existence' depends upon definite qualities which may no doubt be noxious, or, again, may be beneficial to the objects and creatures in contact with them.


5 Kidd defines true socialism as: 'the final suspension of that personal struggle for existence which has been waged, not only from the beginning of society, but, in one form or another, from the beginning of life' (3rd ed., 208–9). Idealists such as Caird, Jones and the Australian Idealist Francis Anderson use the distinction differently. For them true socialism is that kind of socialism which uses the State to enhance the individual's capacities. It does not suppress individualism, but, on the contrary, empowers individuals to act in spheres that were previously not possible. False socialism is that which suppresses individuality and legislates in the interest of one class.
When the struggle for existence is regarded with reference to selection, then in the plants and lower animals a further consideration enters in. The natural resources on which they depend cannot by their action be artificially supplemented, and prudential restraints from leaving progeny cannot exist. This being so, more individuals are produced than can possibly be maintained, and those of the surplus which are not destroyed by other agencies must perish of starvation. Natural selection determines according to their qualities which individuals shall survive and which shall not, and also which individuals shall leave progeny and which shall not. It is thus untrue even of plants and the lower animals to say that natural selection operates exclusively through destruction of individuals. In the main, moreover, artificial selection, of which sexual selection is the elementary form, and which need not act at all through extermination of individuals, does not differ in principle from natural selection, so long as it proceeds with a view to qualities which have power to set in motion the selecting agency by means which may be called natural – that is, otherwise than through a sheer conscious desire on its part to guarantee support to all existent individuals as such. For this reason, I suppose, the term natural selection is, and fairly may be, used to cover the processes of competition in society (although in them selection is conscious), so long as in these processes existence, except under protest, is determined by definite qualities which naturally set in motion the selective agency. The true line of demarcation at which the whole principle underlying natural selection is abandoned, must be where selection ceases to be selective – that is, where any agency guarantees to individuals existence without protest, irrespective of human qualities. Natural selection in the wider sense suggested by this contrast plainly does not operate by starvation, but by varied forms of acceptance, rejection, and discouragement; and, at least, by abstinence from anti-selective action, i.e. from retrogressive or negative selection.

Natural selection, then, is the process by which the struggle for existence determines the perpetuation of those stocks or family

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* I use the term 'existence under' or 'without protest', because in human society it is impossible forcibly to prevent the production of individuals destitute of cooperative qualities, or to starve them when produced. All that can be done is to express a protest by want of encouragement, or by penalty directed against any visibly in fault, whether parents or individuals themselves.
strains which have qualities most enabling them to conquer or to use their surroundings, especially so as to obtain success in the rearing of offspring. Now, further, the absence of what has been called 'selective value' in any quality — that is, its inability to exercise determining influence on the success or non-success of its possessor — withdraws it from the influence of selection, and there is no reason to expect that such a quality will be maintained in efficiency. 'Variations' which have no selective value 'must disappear again'.

This result, which Spencer finds in Darwin and himself fully accepts (loc. cit.), appears to me — speaking with great diffidence — to contain all that is really important in the disputed principle of 'Panmixia', which he rejects. But for our purpose, the transmission of qualities as modified by use and disuse would serve the same purpose. Qualities which are not imperatively demanded by society will not be maintained either by natural selection or by exercise.

We are now prepared to consider the case of social animals and of human communities. In proportion as exchange of services by division of labour within a group takes the place of competition of all against all, the group itself becomes the primary unit in the struggle for existence. Now, selection as between competing groups can only make adaptations in them by transforming the individuals of which they are composed, and this it is found to do with astounding thoroughness and variety. According to Weismann's recent contention, which seems likely to be justified, selection as between groups has power in the case of social insects to modify even the sterile members of the community by selecting the stocks or families from which sterile members with socially useful qualities are destined to proceed. How then does group selection affect the relations of the members of the community to each other? Plainly, I think, in this way, that the competition of communities without operates by means of the competition of individuals within. By the necessi-

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1 Herbert Spencer, *Inadequacy of Natural Selection*, pp. 11, 12. Herbert Spencer speaks of 'a variation' and of 'a faculty'. The same rule must surely apply to an organ (cf. *Principle of Ethics*, vol. II, p. 429). Spencer does not seem to contend that his principle of the transmission of acquired qualities would prevent the destruction of social characteristics by retrogressive selection, and, in fact, the same conditions of environment which would destroy the selective value of these qualities must also ensure their disuse. [The articles that comprise *Inadequacy of Natural Selection* first appeared in *The Contemporary Review*. The book was published in London by Williams and Norgate, 1893.]
ties of the community certain conditions are imposed on life within the community, and the ‘existence’ struggled for, which even at first, as we saw, included the successful rearing of progeny, now includes the conditions, be they less or more, which attach to one or another form of co-operative living. The struggle for existence has, in short, become a struggle for a place in the community; and these places are reserved for the individuals which in the highest degree possess the co-operative qualities demanded by circumstances. The bee or ant has been precisely moulded to every detail of its work by this form of natural selection; and I take it that that community has always been victorious in which a place has been denied to those individuals in whom the co-operative qualities were absent. Where, however, as in the case of the bee, there are no competing stocks within the community, the absence or destruction of useless individuals is a consequence of group-modification and essential to its full effect, but is hardly in its turn a perpetuating cause of such modification.

If we now turn to human society, we find that the so-called ‘existence’, which is the aim of the so-called ‘struggle’, has received a yet further accretion of qualities. Although it would be obviously a blunder to say that every human individual aims at the common good – for if so, every one would be moral – yet it is true that the existence which any human beings regard as tolerable is made what it is by ideas which depend on a social conception – in short, by a standard of life. Further, it is very noticeable and very natural that, owing to the freedom allowed by an aim presented to intelligence the conflict of stocks within the group revives in human society as not only an effect but a cause of group modification, seeing that some stocks perish and others survive within the group, by reason of their respective qualities.

Now, at this point, I must recur to the subject of my opening remarks. We have gained but little by applying inadequate conceptions, drawn from the life of plants and of lower animals, to the life of man. The struggle for existence, and the process of natural selection, especially when understood by popular science and publicism in a way far more crude and less pregnant than that indicated by Darwin himself, are terms which do not adequately designate the

* Frequently, of course, in the social insects, involving sterility.
phenomena of human adaptation. But the worst evil which has come from applying these, as Lotze says of other conceptions, without so much as a glance at the affairs of everyday life, has not been of the most obvious kind. It is bad enough that a fundamental truth should be crudely and rudely formulated and misapplied, because people think it modern and up to date to use conceptions drawn from anything else rather than from our experience of the matter in hand. For this evil we have largely to thank Mr. Herbert Spencer, and in spite of his great abilities and untiring industry, or rather because of them and their abuse, I think that a Dante of philosophers ought to grant him the distinction of the lowest circle in the inferno. But the more terrible evil, a natural consequence of the former, is that the fundamental truth, having got into low company, is repudiated as a disreputable acquaintance by the impatient purist among social reformers, and things which were known 2000 years ago, and which are obvious, as I am forced to believe, to those who look straight at the facts in question, are disputed because of the new-fangled analogies which are meant to support, but which really disguise, them.

Unquestionably, in human society, instincts and tendencies are modified by ideas. A human community does not aim at mere survival, but at a certain kind of survival; and rather than survive on certain terms, a decent society would choose destruction. A human individual, again, does not aim at mere survival, but at a certain kind of survival; and although, in the general interests of humanity, it is considered right to cling even to bare existence, yet in spite of this scruple, a being with full human qualities will readily forfeit such existence in preference to endangering these qualities in itself or in others. This we see in the phrase, 'All that makes life worth living.' It is, therefore, I submit, a fatal misconception by which Mr. Huxley tells us that in human society the struggle is not for

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5 Dante's Divine Comedy gives us a vision of hell, purgatory and heaven. The Inferno is divided into circles. One to five comprise upper hell, and six to nine lower hell. The ninth circle is the habitat of the treacherous who fall into four zones, or categories: those who are treacherous to family and friends; traitors to their country and causes; those who are treacherous to guests; and those who are treacherous to superiors. The Divine Comedy, trans. C. H. Sisson (London, Pan, 1981).
existence but for enjoyment; rather, the struggle is for a certain kind of existence, and failure to secure this entails, on the whole, immediate or rapid extinction of the particular stock which fails. Under a similar misconception, it is alleged that survival of the fittest is nothing more than survival of the fittest to survive. No one can deny that there are eddies and back currents in the river of life; but a complete discontinuity between the principles of nature and of humanity is extremely improbable, especially if we consider that the latter has come into being by the processes of the former. And this improbability is intensified to impossibility when we examine from the logical side the nature of those victorious ideas which have imposed themselves as moral upon the human race, for they are seen to be marked throughout by organic quality – by the power of arranging life and dealing with circumstance; and it is precisely this quality, however caricatured in some phases of its growth, which forms the essential strand in the development of living things. Those may sneer at strength who do not believe that reason is the ultimate power, but those who hold a different conviction cannot but judge that the survival of the most vigorous in the struggle for the existence which is aimed at, is, on the whole, the survival of the most reasonable. I repeat emphatically, 'in the struggle for the existence which is aimed at', for vigour is a term relative to circumstances; and the most vigorous in a struggle determined by one standard of life is the weaker in that determined by another. We have to consider, then, not only the bare fact of survival, but the nature of the struggle in which survival has to be sought. 'It is for us to struggle', said Aristeides to Themistocles, 'both now and ever, which of us shall perform the greatest services to his country.'

But, emphatically, the development is continuous; the struggle of Aristeides is an arduous struggle still, and competition is not less but more strenuous in proportion as its purpose is more complexly determined. Does any one seriously doubt that there are in every society worse and better varieties, always remembering that the

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6 Herodotus, Histories, book eight, 79. The Penguin translation of 1972 reads: 'At this moment, more than ever before, you and I should be rivals, to see which of us can do most good to our country' (550). In Plutarch, Aristeides again makes reference to his rivalry with Themistocles: 'We two, Themistocles, if we have any sense, will have to stop this vain and childish feud of ours. From now on we ought to begin a more honourable kind of contest to save our country...' Plutarch, Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1960), 118.
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minimum test of excellence, by success in the struggle for existence, involves from the first capacity to give the progeny a good chance of maturity – in short, to furnish what we call good birth and breeding?

And, once more, the conception of panmixia in the general import, in which, as I think, Spencer himself affirms it, applies by analogy to human society. If selection for certain qualities ceases, the qualities in respect of which it ceases cannot maintain themselves; and if worse varieties – those of bad birth and breeding – are encouraged to perpetuate themselves, does any one doubt (what Plato already knew) that society must deteriorate?

But, it is asked of us, can there be the same cosmic process in society as in lower nature, when in society you can in some degree restrict the reproduction of individuals so as not to exceed the food-supply, and in nature there is perpetual excess of multiplication over the means of subsistence? Does the pressure on which the struggle depends exist at all in society? Mr. Huxley is inclined to say that this is so to a very small extent,¹ and that therefore the processes are not the same in kind. But first, as the supply of necessaries for civilised life is wholly produced by labour, every individual born is prima facie in excess until he justifies his existence by definite qualities. For if not, why should some one else work that he may eat? This is at once a powerful pressure in the way of producing selection, and a source of resistance to all multiplication. Secondly, if multiplication is restricted, the restriction must be either selective or non-selective. If non-selective, it is not restriction for our purpose, for it may well chance to diminish the supply of necessaries, which is wholly artificial, more than it diminishes the population. If selective, it is not opposed to the cosmic process, but itself effects the same end in a presumably less painful though analogous way. This argument from the apparent absence of severe pressure in civilised communities really shows that if society is to prosper, the cosmic process of selection by definite qualities is, and must be, continued in them perhaps under the name of restriction. And this Mr. Huxley recognises by his simile of the garden, the difference between which and wild nature depends chiefly on the despotic selection of the horticulturist. The requirements of despotic selection, which Plato too made an absolute condition of his artificial

¹ Loc. cit.
society, to which I will add the deeper reason that no despotic selection can exercise the causal action which belongs to the human analogue of natural selection. It is a question throughout not merely of birth but of breeding — ‘success in leaving offspring’ in the widest sense — and in human society the breeding or training is almost the more important condition for preservation of offspring. But quality of breeding material and moral upbringing for a human being, operating mainly through ideas and expectations, cannot be secured without definite conditions which mere despotic selection within a wholly uncompetitive society would absolutely exclude. No social selection — I do not shun the paradox — no social selection can be moral except natural selection in the large sense explained below; for it alone operates through character and through ideas. I will now indicate what I conceive to be the true analogue of natural selection in human society, and I will name it at once as comprising two elements: first, the moral and material responsibility of the family; and secondly, the direct interference of society and the State, considered more especially as abstaining or not abstaining from retrogressive selection. It is not the action of the spur of hunger nor the greed of gain; these are not human motives, and each of them is operative, as Huxley rightly implies of the former, throughout only a small section of society, strictly perhaps not at all. If you reply that the spur of hunger is a phrase for the desire to live, and to live a human life, then I say that it is an ill-chosen phrase, used on both sides, we must remember, in this controversy, and that we can never obtain a correct analysis of anything till we are careful to say what we mean. That existence even on the lowest plane of our society involves a standard of life and not mere animal existence.

A probable instance of this struck me in relation to the modification of sterile individuals; probably Plato’s government would try to breed from geniuses, but it may be that geniuses are fitted to be the last offshoots of vigorous races, and that to get them you must breed not from them but from such stocks as produce them, which is more difficult.

‘We must, if we are to be consistent, and if we’re to have a real pedigree herd, mate the best of our men with the best of our women as often as possible, and the inferior men with the inferior women as seldom as possible, and bring up only the offspring of the best. And no one but the Rulers must know what is happening, if we are to avoid dissension in our Guardian herd.’ Plato, Republic (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987), 459d–e.
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needs, is shown by the fact that to many aliens English slum or workhouse life appears a paradise.

First, then, of the family. The Western monogamic family as we know it is neither opposed to the State nor independent of it; it is largely the creation of Roman law, is supported by the law in all civilised countries, and could be destroyed or disfigured beyond recognition by indifferent or hostile State action. Now, broadly speaking, the co-operative individual, as demanded by civilised life, can only be produced in the family, and therefore by a stock capable of forming a true family; and the test and engine of his production is the peculiar form of moral responsibility, supported by law and covering both material and moral incidents, which the family implies. Its unique importance as an agent of selection arises, of course, from the fact that to the family is entrusted the multiplication of the species, and its automatic action as a selective agency depends on the recognition of the principle that this union should only be entered on where the conditions of success in the struggle for a distinctively human existence, including as throughout a proper rearing of offspring, may be reasonably anticipated. The question of population is not a mere numerical question; of some qualities of population it is impossible to have too much, for they are self-limiting, of others every individual is in excess. The main difference between these kinds of population depends on the material and moral responsibility for the family being left with those who have voluntarily formed it, and on every possible discouragement being thrown in the way of unions taking place where the true conditions of family life do not exist. I say, then, that the struggle to realise the conditions of true family life in its moral and material senses is the human 'struggle for existence' within the group, and that defeat in this struggle does largely entail, and ought as far as possible to entail, the extinction of the stock so failing. The moral responsibility on its material side is one which, above all, needs care and patience in analysing. Even if it includes, by misfortune, the need of meeting the pressure of hunger, it is not the mere appetite so described; the need of providing necessaries and decencies for wife and child is not mere greed or hunger in the man. But although I repudiate such phrases as 'the necessity of the spur of hunger', I fully recognise the fact that an absolutely secured material position, such as that of the wealthy class, is not favourable, on the whole,
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to productivity in the interests of society; and I desiderate for every one, for their own sake, some possibility of falling into distress by lack of wisdom and exertion. It is not the same thing, however, to hold a position which, with all its possibilities as a human life, may easily be forfeited through indolence or folly, and to be urged on by the mere animal terror of starvation. The former is that scaffolding or support afforded to the internal by the external conscience (to use George Eliot's phrase) which no one need be ashamed of requiring. We are all of us at times poor creatures; and the most high-minded is none the worse for being kept up to his work. But the latter is an animal motive; and I doubt whether, in a technical sense, it can ever be rightly identified with the mainspring of a true human life. Yet none the less, the large fact is that natural selection by the struggle for existence is, in the sense I have indicated, essential to the prosperity of human society, and the means of this selection is the fullest recognition both by law and by public opinion of the responsibility attaching to the author of a family, both for its material and for its moral requirements.

Time does not permit me to analyse fully the drift and import of modern sentiment and legislation regarding the family. My point is sufficiently clear if I explain that such analysis should be directed to distinguishing between two movements which have much in common – which, in fact progress in curves perhaps even coincident for a portion of their arcs. The free school, the improved and cooperative dwelling and factory, the library, the club, and the permanent organisation of labour, may all of them be agencies for ennobling and enlarging the family life and making its basis more solid. It is also possible that they, or extensions of them, may be made agencies for destroying it. And here we come face to face with the direct selective or anti-selective action of the State, or of wholesale philanthropy.

I wish very distinctly to insist that this is also capable of two directions, and that the problems arising are not to be solved by administrative nihilism, but by care and analytic experience and patient continuance in well-doing. But subject to this reservation, I desire to call attention to the frightful dangers that attend any overriding of what is relatively natural selection through family responsibility, by the direct interference of administrative or other philanthropy. I do not at all deny that sometimes the evils caused
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by partial interference may demand completer interference. Time only permits me to indicate a few typical points.

I begin by a general statement applying to our whole social life which very clearly emphasises the difference between the improvement of surrounding conditions of life, and the operation of natural selection in the extinction of the worst varieties. It is alleged\(^4\) that the Registrar-General’s analysis of the death-rate for the period from 1858 to 1890, distinguishing the causes of death preventible by improved surroundings from those dependent on hereditary constitution, shows the former to be diminishing, but the latter to be increasing in their operation. This would mean that the weakly, who are saved from neglect and from acute disease, live past the time of child-bearing, only to fall victims to constitutional ailments which, meantime, they have transmitted to descendants. Life is longer, but death from old age is rarer than thirty years ago.\(^1\) If this is true, and I give it with some reserve, the inference is plain. The severer selective agencies have been arrested by improved surroundings; but family responsibility, the only practical substitute, has not yet operated in their place, and the race is less robust.

Passing from this general tendency to the direct action of the State, we find, of course, that, to some extent inevitably, the Poor Law encourages an element of the population for whom the family does not exist, or who are preserved only to hand on to others the defects which, but for our elaborate hospitals and infirmaries, would have perished with them. Particularly frightful in this connection is the case of those known as feeble-minded pauper girls, who become recurrent inmates of the workhouses, where the best medical attendance is furnished to them, and of whose children the kindest-hearted woman will often say, ‘fortunately the child died’. Here it may be that a further interference may help. These girls are not fit to protect themselves in the world, and though they cannot be certified as proper inmates for a lunatic asylum, it seems possible to prevent the evils that attach to their life and its perpetuation by some form of attractive custodial home.

\(^{4}\) [John Berry] Haycraft, in British Medical Journal, 24th February 1894. See Darwinism and Race Progress, by this author, about to be published by Sonnenschein and Co. [The article referred to is an abstract of lecture II in the series ‘The Milroy Lectures on Darwinism and Race Progress’. The book was published in 1895.]

\(^{1}\) The appearance of this is partly owing to increased accuracy of diagnosis.
And apart from the question of medical care as such, there is no doubt that the public provision for the destitute must to some extent, and may to a terrible extent, be the cause of early and reckless marriages which fulfil no moral nor material conditions of the union, of desertion of wife and children, and of irregular unions. In all these cases, besides the direct evil of ill-nurture, a bad variety is almost certainly perpetuated. I forbear at this late hour to introduce the whole miserable story of the old Poor Law, with its payment per head for children born out of wedlock, by which it was rightly said that the English law had abolished chastity. If any one thinks that wholly and in principle these evils have now been annihilated, he is unacquainted with the subject, and with the difficulties inherent in a system which is bound to deal humanely with all comers of every kind, and therefore cannot but be in some degree a refuge in which the wreckage of society refits, only to be wrecked again to the lasting injury of the community. The typical case of the American Jukes family, 1200 descendants of which, in seven generations, were estimated to have cost £260,000 in prison expenses and public relief, is an example of the worst varieties, which, with the best administration, are not easily extinguished, and with every laxity multiply like a bacillus.

Now the general conclusion which I desire to draw is not in the direction of recurring to severity against the helpless, but it urges the absolute necessity of regarding all these interferences as unavoidable evils and not as precedents for more general action. We should make them thorough and effective where they are essential, and convert, where possible, the very treatment which might otherwise encourage a bad variety into a hindrance to its perpetuation, as by the seclusion of the hopeless inebriate and the feeble-minded girl-pauper, or by the best possible nurture of the pauper child, the almost insuperable difficulty of which shows the hazard of the whole system. We should avoid in every way the protrusion of analogous

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mAt present, in a case of which I have information, five illegitimate children of a single pair are being maintained by the ratepayers. Being unmarried, the father cannot be compelled to maintain them except by procedure initiated by the mother. She will take no action, and he can laugh at the public. See also IV.

8This was a widely cited example. Herbert Spencer uses it in The Man Versus the State (Indianapolis, Liberty, 1982), 110. Also see R. L. Dugdale, The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity (North Stratford, New Hampshire, Ayer, 1973).
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interference into the healthy life of the industrial class. We should never forget that the system is a necessary evil, nor ever handle our public initiative, whether through the Poor Law or through more general legislation, so as to relieve the father of the support of the wife and children, or the grown-up child of the support of his parents. We should raise no expectation of help, or of employment invented ad hoc, which may derange the man's organisation of life in view of the whole normal responsibilities which, as a father, he has accepted. Whether by any particular measure we are destroying a man's responsibilities or helping him to face them is in each case, so to speak, a question for the jury. The distinction of principle is all that I plead for in this page.

The same points are illustrated by the results observed from the action of vast voluntary agencies whose operations approach in magnitude those of the State. I read a couple of extracts from a trustworthy Report from East London. This is a Report from experienced people, who, having been asked to help cases of the kind referred to, have gone into them carefully in detail. The question is the old one of the effect of Shelters and Refuges.

Such shelters" confer no real or permanent benefit on those who use them; they are not centres of reform, and they do not restore their inmates to independence or self-support. They are merely places of temporary lodging, from which their inmates go away in the same condition as that in which they arrived, if not in a worse one. So far from lessening the number of destitute people without regular means or employment, they tend to increase it, because they make the life of the shiftless and the idle more easy, and so offer a new temptation to those who are too willing to live, as far as possible, at the expense of others.

Beyond this, these refuges appear to us to make it easy for husbands and wives to evade their mutual responsibilities, and to neglect the education and proper bringing up of their children. We have met with instances of the husband being in one shelter, the wife and children in another; or of the husband altogether deserting his family and living away from them, apparently doing little for his own support, and nothing for theirs; whilst they, in the refuges, are supported by the charitable. In regard to the children of those who frequent these institutions, it is almost inevitable

This letter has since been published as a letter from the Whitechapel Committee of the C.O.S. in C.O. [Charity Organisation] Review, November 1894.
that they should suffer morally and physically from the nature of their surroundings. There is no discrimination in regard to the admission of inmates, many of whom are of the most degraded character, and the least fitted to associate with the young or respectable.

As a rule, children from the refuges do not attend school, and it is very difficult for the School Board, in their case, to exercise their legitimate authority. We know, as a fact, that parents and children are turned into the streets from morning till evening to pass the day as best they can, sitting or standing about in public places, and often, no doubt, employed in begging. This must be bad alike for mind and body.

We believe that in this district, at any rate, the evil is on the increase, and is having an appreciable effect upon the population of the district. I may mention as an instance of this, that the superintendent of one of the shelters said, that the average number of those who passed through it is 1500 per month. They are not allowed to remain more than three days at a time in the shelter, but may return after a short interval, which is usually spent in other institutions of the same kind.

I quite understand that to many hearers this will appear an isolated piece of grumbling, and in no way typical of rocks ahead in social interference by retrogressive selection. But I venture to think that to those who have attended both in detail and in principle to the history and symptoms of the social problem, it is merely a rather striking example of what everyday and universal experience both of State and of wholesale private action has long made familiar.

I am therefore convinced that the general distinction on which Mr. Kidd has lighted in his treatment of modern Socialism is sound in principle. If Socialism means the improvement of society by society, we are going on that track more or less today, as civilised society has always gone, and the collective organisation of certain branches of production is a matter open to discussion with a view to its consequences. But if Socialism means the total suppression of the personal struggle for existence, as above described, and the collective guarantee of support to all children, or still worse to all adults, without enforcing the responsibilities of parents or of sons and daughters, then I think that it really is in hopeless conflict with

* The italics are mine [B.B.].
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the universal postulates of the struggle for existence and natural selection, as justly interpreted of human society. Experience has amply shown that such conditions operate on man as panmixia operates among lower organisms. The worst varieties throughout the whole community are perpetuated equally with the best, and if we believe in inherited degeneration by disuse, then for this reason too social qualities must in such conditions degenerate. The best are indeed heavily handicapped by having to support the others, and the tendency is for the whole community to lose the efficiency of its human qualities. An aim of the kind has quite certainly been suggested by some Socialist writers— I mention Mr. Bellamy, and, so far as concerns the children, explicitly, Mr. Blatchford see also Mr. Shaw and Mr Wallas, but I attach less importance to the avowed aim than to the intellectual drifting which makes leeway towards a result of this kind, under the influence of precedents such as the Poor Law or Free Education, first theoretically misunderstood and then practically distorted step by step. I have attempted this evening to indicate the confusion and its source.

And see generally the manifesto of English Socialists signed, among others by the Fabian Society, urging 'the free maintenance of all necessitous children', not, it will be observed, suggesting any restriction to the children of necessitous parents, nor any attempt to remove, in each case, the evil of which the children's need is a symptom.

*Merrie England*, p. 19: 'I say there is no need for any struggle for existence', p. 44; 'I would have all our children fed and clothed and educated at the cost of the State.' [London, Clarion/Walter Scott, 1894].

*Fabian Essays*, 'Transition', p.199-200, first edition: 'One can see that [...] the economic independence of woman [women], and the supplementing [supplanting] of the head of the household by the individual as the recognised unit of the State, will materially alter the status of children and the utility of the institution of the family.' [Published by Scott in London, 1899 and edited by George Bernard Shaw.]

*Fabian Essays*, p. 146: 'If we wish to wean the children from the selfish isolation of the English family.' The passage from Morris and Bax, quoted by Professor Flint in *Socialism*, p. 284, throws a painful light on the attitude of some Socialists to the family. [Published in London by Ibister, 1894.]