

The Social Philosophy of Emil G. Hirsch

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I

In the period of almost half a century spanned by his ministry (1876-1923), Emil G. Hirsch was accorded well-nigh universal recognition as the most eloquent and able Jewish preacher in America. He was a man of towering intellect and rare oratorical power whose views, spread far beyond his immediate audiences at Chicago's Sinai Temple through the medium of the press, exerted a pronounced influence on the thinking of contemporary American Jewry.

The range of Hirsch's interests, manifested in his pulpit utterances, was tremendous. Theology, science, philosophy, literature, psychology—all were included in his intellectual domain, and from all he attempted to extract for his listeners some moral lesson. In his view, the office of the Jewish preacher was primarily that of moralist and ethical guide. Thus it is natural that, notwithstanding his far-flung interests, the most fundamental and frequently recurring theme in his sermons throughout his lifetime was social justice. It is not unlikely that Hirsch's place in the annals of the American synagogue will remain secure largely because of his great sermons dealing with social problems.

Hirsch's years in the ministry coincided with a period of profound change in American life and thought. Under the impact of new social forces and revolutionary intellectual discoveries, many of the most deeply cherished institutions and conceptions of the early nineteenth century were crumbling and disappearing. Out of the ruins of these old forms and ideas, which in their heyday had been considered by the contemporary American as eternal and axiomatic, were to rise new and radically different ones, requiring novel adjustments and perspectives.

The stresses and strains of this transitional period are clearly reflected in Hirsch's sermons. Believing, as he did, that the message of the pulpit must always be vital and of immediate relevance, he addressed himself in his preaching to the pressing problems of the day—economic, social, political, cultural, and religious. Though in many respects a creative and original thinker, Hirsch was basically a child of his age. In his sermons are to be discovered most of the major currents

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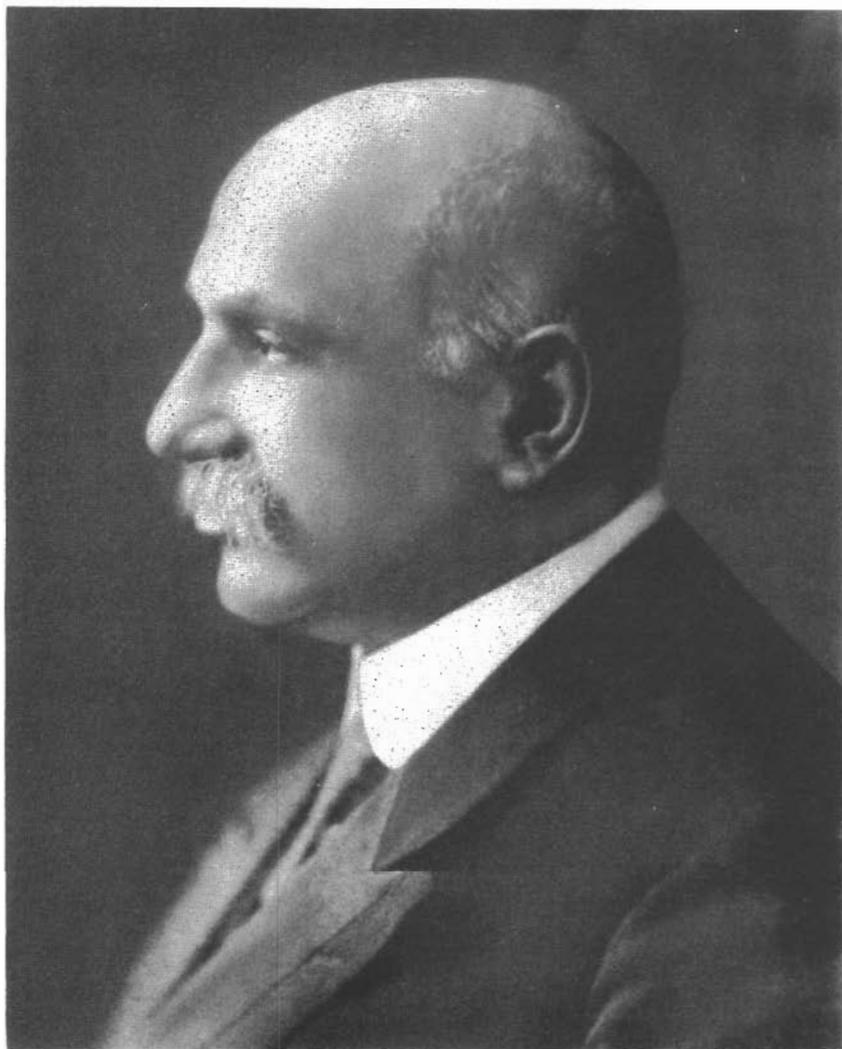
and many of the minor eddies of contemporary American thought. A familiarity with these and with the most important historical developments of the period is, therefore, indispensable for a proper understanding of his message.

II

The year in which Hirsch began his career as a rabbi saw in progress that thoroughgoing metamorphosis in the structure of the American economy which had been inaugurated by the Civil War. Already the consequences inherent in the process which was transforming America from an agricultural into a primarily industrial land were beginning to manifest themselves. The rise of the great cities, the development of big business and investment banking, the increase in immigration, the development of a class system based on the possession of wealth, the rise of labor unions and industrial conflict, the growth of America as an important power in international affairs—these and other phenomena too numerous to mention were part of the American environment to which Hirsch returned from his studies in Germany in 1876. In the years that followed, the influence of industrialization was to become so pervasive and far-reaching that Henry Adams was not indulging in mere poetic fancy when, upon seeing the dynamo at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, he concluded that its discovery was the most important event in modern history.

Hirsch was to ponder deeply the host of new problems that industrialization brought to America. Among the questions that vexed his mind in these years, and concerning which he spoke to his congregation, were the proper distribution of wealth, the effect of unemployment and poverty on the working classes, the maintenance of political democracy in an oligarchic and royalistic economy, and the general moral legitimacy of a social order based on selfishness and competition.

The economic system which permitted the creation of vast business empires and immense aggregations of capital such as those controlled by the Goulds, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, and the Swifts found its theoretic justification in the doctrine of the Manchester school of economics, a doctrine with which Hirsch was to find himself, as we shall see, in bitter disagreement. One of the cardinal principles of Manchester liberalism, or laissez-faire capitalism, was that given expression by Jay Gould: "Labor is a commodity that will in the long run be governed absolutely by the law of supply and demand."¹ The great Old World exponents of laissez-faire capitalism had been Quesnay, Smith, Mill, Bentham, and Ricardo. Their intellectual heir and the chief living representative of their economic doctrines in the



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1870's and the 1880's was the renowned Englishman, Herbert Spencer, whose influence on American social and economic thought of the post-Civil War period is incalculable. Spencer's economic philosophy, based on a combination of Manchester liberalism and the Darwinian concept of "the survival of the fittest," was the gospel of the American industrialist and businessman of the age. To Hirsch and to a growing band of liberals, in both the religious and secular worlds, it was anathema. But the champions of Spencerian economics were still dominant. Among the greatest of them was the famous William Graham Sumner, whose work has been thus described by a recent social historian:

No one applied more rigorously to the social realm the Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest than this Episcopal rector turned sociologist, who conceded to the commandments from Manchester an authority he could not concede to those from Mt. Sinai. He elevated *laissez-faire* into a social and economic law and assigned to it the same standing as the law of gravity.²

Many of the great industrial magnates of the last decades of the nineteenth century were "self-made" men, risen from obscure and lowly stations to fabulous opulence and power. An expanding economy and a government which, though espousing an attitude of *laissez-faire* toward the working class and its economic problems, abandoned this attitude in the interests of the railroad promoters and the manufacturers by handing them large land grants and establishing high protective tariffs, made possible great concentrations of wealth in their hands.³ Their success stories, presented in fictional form by writers like Horatio Alger and in biographical form by industrialists like Andrew Carnegie, nourished the flame of optimism in the hearts of millions. Anyone, it was thought, could be rich if he only wanted to, and everyone wanted to. Jay Cooke, writing of the expanding commercial life in St. Louis, commented: "Through all the grades I see the all-pervading, all-engrossing anxiety to grow rich. That is the only thing for which men live here."⁴ Hirsch found it necessary repeatedly to rebuke his congregations for similar tendencies.

But the bright hope that a million dollars was just around the corner for anyone willing to work hard enough was rudely dispelled by events which showed the fallacy of that hope and dramatically pointed up the inherent weaknesses of the economic system on which it was founded. In 1873 a great financial panic occurred in which thousands of persons were ruined. Four years later the great railroad strike introduced large-scale industrial violence in America, a phenomenon destined to recur with terrible frequency in the years that followed. In 1886, six years after Hirsch took up residence in Chicago,

there occurred in that brawling, bustling capital of the Midwest the great McCormick Harvester Strike and the riot in Haymarket Square, which culminated in the unjust conviction and execution of several alleged anarchists. Six years later, in 1892, came the Homestead Strike, in which a bloody battle was fought in the small Pennsylvania steel town. The following year another financial panic occurred, far worse than the one which had taken place twenty years before. In 1894 the great Pullman Strike occurred, and in the same year bloody industrial warfare broke out in the Cripple Creek coal fields of Colorado. Unemployment in that year had become so widespread that the quixotic Jacob Coxey led a huge army of jobless workers to Washington, there to find himself and his lieutenants jailed for walking on the grass.

Throughout these years Hirsch constantly preached about the nature and causes of this economic unrest and joined his voice to the chorus of opposition against the prevailing economic order.

The movement of opposition toward the rampant individualism and unbridled competition of the Manchester philosophy became progressively stronger in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Many groups—farmers, labor union members, Socialists, single-taxers—were rising to demand responsible government action for the alleviation of the economic distress of the masses.

The liberal and reform movement of the late nineteenth century reached its climax in 1896, when the Democratic Party, which had absorbed most of the progressive elements, ran as its candidate for the Presidency the "Great Commoner," William Jennings Bryan. Though Bryan lost, the liberal and agrarian movement did not really fail. For the quest for social justice which it heralded was continued in the decades that followed and, in considerable measure, attained. The twenty years between Bryan's first struggle for the Presidency and Wilson's second has become known in American history as the Progressive Era. In this period practically all the major social and economic institutions of American life were subject to criticism and reform. The very term "reform" was the catchword of the period, and its theoretic exponents in all fields were legion.

Many of the reforms which Hirsch and his fellow-liberals in the rabbinate and in the Christian Social Gospel movement advocated were effected in this period. Slum clearance, government regulation of the hours and wages of labor, factory safety legislation, compulsory workmen's compensation and insurance laws, the protection of women in industry, the regulation of child labor, prison reform, the spread and improvement of public education, public health and welfare programs, the graduated income tax, the reform of political machinery—all these were products of the Progressive Era.

The thinking of Hirsch and of many other public men who, in this period, urged the abandonment of the old laissez-faire philosophy and supported governmental social welfare legislation, was influenced by numerous scholars, writers and politicians. There were sociologists like Lester Ward, who (in the very year [1883] that William Graham Sumner, that vigorous proponent of absolute individualism and complete laissez-faire, published *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*), wrote his famous *Dynamic Sociology*, containing an elaborate argument for intelligent social planning and insisting, against Spencer and Sumner, that social progress is not natural and inevitable. Economists like Richard T. Ely urged that economics must be related to ethics and denounced Manchester liberalism, and Thorstein Veblen realistically bared the irrational psychological motives underlying the contemporary economic system, while publicists like Henry George advocated the single tax as the panacea for all social ills. Novelists like Edward Bellamy, who in *Looking Backward* (1888) portrayed a utopian society in which there was complete social, economic, and political equality; revolutionary socialists like Johann Most and David De Leon, and moderate socialists like Eugene V. Debs, the group of journalists known as the "muckrakers," who wrote exposés of the corruption existing in many social, political, and economic institutions, and many others too numerous to mention represented this trend.

To all of these Hirsch was indebted for much of his thinking on the great public issues of his day. Their influence will become manifest when we consider, in the next section, the social message of his sermons.

III

Hirsch's overriding concern with social problems began quite early in his preaching career. As the years progressed and industrial conflict and social unrest increased, his concern waxed. He began to feel that the social question was the essential problem of religion in general and of Judaism in particular. It must take precedence over theological and soteriological interests. In 1894, when strikes and industrial violence were already a fairly familiar phenomenon in American life, Hirsch wrote:

In days like these when the foundations of civilization seem to tremble; when distrust stalks everywhere; when man has learned to regard man as only a machine and tool; when incendiary torches are lit and dynamite bombs explode; when rulers of republics are killed by the dagger of the fanatic, and cities quiver for days in anxiety and anguish lest the firebrand be thrown into

peaceful homes, and busy hives of commerce be reduced to ashes—shall we have nothing else to do but lose ourselves in metaphysics about the existence of God and to sigh and to pray and to fast for our own self-satisfaction? . . . The world waits once more the prophet; would once more hear the word of a nobler view of life than gain and profit and greed and hurrying and chasing after the booty. We need once more to be taught to feel that humanity is more than a pack of wolves fighting for the carcass by the way-side; we need once more the stern sacramental words of duty and obligation; of righteousness and justice—justice, mark you, not charity. Away with this pretender. Off from the throne with that usurper. Away with all this charity. Justice we need. Social justice everywhere.⁵

To Hirsch, the social conflict of his time seemed not essentially a struggle between capital and labor for the greater share of wealth. It seemed to him to hinge, rather, on the worker's demand and right that he be not regarded merely as a tool or machine, a "hand" hired out by the hour, but as a human personality, a child of God made in his image.⁶ Fundamentally, Hirsch declared, the social problem was an ethical and religious one.⁷ A system in which self-interest was the supreme motive and in which human beings were regarded as commodities the value of which was subject to the law of supply and demand was, he constantly reiterated, both immoral and irreligious.⁸

Hirsch never minced words in his denunciation of the worst excrescences of the contemporary economic order. The ill-ventilated and unsafe sweatshops, in which men and women worked fourteen hours a day at wages insufficient to support themselves, particularly aroused his anger:

Sweatshops are an expedient of hell, and no matter what commercial morals may say, God in heaven and Judaism protest that he that works shall eat and eat sufficiently, and not be robbed of his manhood . . . Ye Jewish merchants,—profit or loss—, what are these considerations? Do ye, at least, whatever others may devise, your duty to stamp out this barbarous system. It is a blot upon the face of our civilization.⁹

Very early in his career, as has already been pointed out above, Hirsch developed an extreme antipathy to the doctrines of Manchester liberalism, in which, like many other thoughtful men of his age, he saw the root of all the economic injustice and unrest of the time. His denunciations of Manchester liberalism were frequent and violent.¹⁰ His criticisms of the system included numerous elements: that its assumption of an "economic man," motivated only by self-interest, is artificial;¹¹ that its making of selfishness the basis of social organization is

immoral;¹² that its exaltation of the idea of freedom of contract is a fraud, for, since the worker and the capitalist can hardly be conceived to be on equal bargaining terms, "freedom of contract is a beautiful phrase and nothing more";¹³ that it prevents social amelioration by insisting that the government may not interfere to protect the underprivileged;¹⁴ and that it prospers no one but the capitalist.¹⁵

Hirsch admitted that originally Manchester liberalism, being a revolutionary protest against the authoritarianism of existing society, had been a valid and beneficial movement. But because of the mistakes noted above it had, he insisted, become pernicious and destructive, and must, therefore, be abandoned.¹⁶

In his reading of history Hirsch saw in the Middle Ages a society based on social function and on the responsibility of the individual to contribute to the welfare of society. This seemed to him a more reasonable and ethical system than the individualistic doctrine of Adam Smith and the Manchester school, and he urged its re-adoption:

Thus history has judged of Adam Smith's theory. The theory, so brutal, has failed. It is Chronos devouring his own offspring. We are not individuals. We are not made to be individualistic. We are human beings that live in and with others and through others. History has spoken. What the Middle Ages had we must have again, the sense of our belongingness one to the other. If we have it, the social problem and the social contest loses much of its sharp edge.¹⁷

Over and above its other faults, Hirsch declared, Manchester liberalism erred in the tremendous importance that it assigned to personal rights to the neglect of social duties. This fault is an oft-repeated theme in his criticisms of the system.¹⁸ In two sermons preached in 1895 and significantly titled "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Hirsch set forth his thesis that the doctrine of individual rights which, when first proclaimed, had held forth the promise of maximizing freedom and opportunity for the masses, had now become an instrument of class oppression.

Can it be denied that the mere doctrine of the rights of man has played into the hands of the selfish? While it has been the lever to lift up a few, it has also, contrary to the hope and confidence of its first coiners, proved a weight to drag down the millions. The bald theory of rights has prospered the capitalist and none other. It has sponsored a new kind of selfishness of which the former ages knew nothing.¹⁹

The basic error of the theory of rights, Hirsch held, was that it failed to recognize the primacy which society does, and by right should, have

in the life of the individual. "It undermines the essential life of society by putting the individual first and society last, reducing the latter to a sum in arithmetic, an equation in statics, instead of regarding and treating it as a theorem and function in dynamics."²⁰

Hirsch declared that the time had now come for a new emphasis on the duties of man toward society. For, he insisted, the solution to the social unrest of the time cannot come merely through mechanical or external remedies. There must also be a recognition by men that, in addition to the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness which they possess, they are bound by certain inalienable duties toward society. Hirsch indicated quite clearly what he considered the nature of these duties to be:

If the right to life is inalienable, the duty to make the proper use thereof is as emphatically inalienable. The individual is always under the social relation. This is the fulcrum for his lever. Not as he lists, but as the social welfare and his power for social service suggest, must the individual shape his own career.

To own the fruit of one's labor is an inalienable right; to dispose of one's earnings by will and testament may even be included in this category, though some theorists would question the legitimacy of such latitude. Yet property is our own only to do therewith what shall prosper the common life. The right to possess is limited by the duty to utilize one's own for the social good Nor is property ever more sacred than humanity. Wherever the right of property clashes with a duty toward humanity, the former has no credentials that are entitled to consideration.²¹

Hirsch believed not only that society should take precedence over the individual, but that it had, in fact, always done so. In his extensive reading of history Hirsch discovered a practically complete societal and historical conditioning of the individual. Single men and single generations, he maintained, are conditioned by their historical antecedents. This is especially true of social and political institutions. The abstract theories concerning the origin of government formulated by a Hobbes or a Rousseau are, he declared, false and artificial because they do not take account of the historical forces which have produced human institutions.²² Hirsch discovered historical and societal conditioning even in those areas in which the individual seems to be most free and undetermined. Thus, he insisted even that the individual human conscience is nothing more than the internalized judgments of the society, a doctrine later taught by Freud and his disciples. The content and expression of conscience differ in different individuals, declared Hirsch, because the value judgments of the societies and environments within which they live differ.²³

Yet though Hirsch, in his early years, constantly preached that society in fact is, and by right should be, primary in the life of the individual, who has the duty to suppress his own desires in order to further the common good,²⁴ he was not to retain this view throughout his life. In his later years he emphasized, as we shall see, the dignity and value of the individual personality above the welfare of society and condemned socialism, which he at one time had praised, for placing society before the individual. The tension between his Kantian philosophic outlook, in which were emphasized the dignity and supreme worth of the individual, and his understanding of history, which led him to assign the dominant place to society, issued ultimately in a triumph for Kantianism. Individual self-determination became the supreme value.

Hirsch's faith in man, especially in the *great man*, was strong even in the years when he was proclaiming the dominance of society. Thus, he modified his conception of the origin of conscience and declared that though, in the generality of men, conscience is only the reflection of the dominant values of the society, in extraordinary men it is much more. Men of genius, he argued, transcend the notions of morality current in their time and replace them with higher ideas. These then become the conscience of the age, only to be replaced by further advances.

Defining conscience as I do, I still cannot be blind to the fact that certain men are gifted with a keener appreciation of the wrongs and the evils, and thus rise from society above society. These men are the prophets in the present of the things that must be if humanity is to live in the future.²⁵

The theory that men must forever abide the mirror of their environments is not true. Environments furnish prejudices that are as those come to us by heredity. Still ours is the power to rise above our surroundings. We can throw the usurper out of the windows and fill the room thus made by new and better impulses.²⁶

Hirsch insisted that progress is not mechanical²⁷ and protested strongly against the enervating Spencerian principle that time and evolution will ultimately set everything right.²⁸ With Lester Ward he believed that social progress is effected through intelligent planning, and with Thomas Carlyle he believed, as we have seen above, that the creative thought which leads to progress is the work of great men of genius.

Of progress itself Hirsch never had any doubt.²⁹ In this he was entirely in accord with the dominant optimistic mood of contemporary America. His sermons are filled with buoyant and exalted paens to progress: "I believe in moral progress. As the years roll by, the minds

of men are widened, their sympathies become broader, and their conduct is attuned to higher music. This I will not have disputed. It is the staff and the stay of my intellectual creed."³⁰

The doctrine, shared by John Fiske and most of the liberal reinterpreters of Darwinian evolutionism, that man is ever advancing to higher levels, Hirsch declared to be one of the great distinctive ideas of Judaism: "The future has better things in store than had the past; upward runs the course of humanity, not downward; this is a fundamental distinction of the philosophy of life preached by Judaism at all times and the doctrines taught by other organized systems of social life or the dogmatically fixed thoughts of other religious bodies."³¹

In 1899, on the eve of a new century, Hirsch surveyed the decade that had just passed and, despite his recognition both of the injustice, violence, and suffering which had characterized it, and of those incipient forces—nationalism and racialism—that were to plunge the world into darkness in the twentieth century, nevertheless insisted that progress was bound to come. The present gloom, he argued, was merely "the darkness before the dawn."

In all Messianic legends the thought is central that the advent is announced by disorganizing and disrupting wars I for one cannot concede that revived nationalism and racial bigotry, of which the Jews above all other men have most to dread, portend more than that the day of battle is upon us. The Messianic agony is stirring the depths. The century to come will not belie the promise of our deeper and wider sympathies.³²

The specific content of the progress which Hirsch expected, at least in his early years, is quite clear. It was the emergence of a socialistic order of society. In 1891 Hirsch declared that the different forms of political and economic organization that had existed in human history—despotism, aristocracy, feudalism, and individualism (Manchester liberalism)—were only successive steppingstones. Now the last of these is itself about to be transcended.

And thus he who has eye to see understands that the individualistic age is at an end, and that soon (shudder at the name if you cannot understand it) the socialistic period will begin, for the individualistic time is but a stepping-stone to that form of society where the individual knows that beyond his rights, and before his rights, come certain duties and certain obligations. That will be the next succeeding stone.³³

Though here proclaiming the coming of socialism, and in numerous other places, as we have seen, scathingly denouncing Manchester economics,³⁴ and in still other places declaring that Jewish ethics de-

mands a socialist economic order,³⁵ Hirsch was not, even in his early years, entirely unambivalent in his advocacy of socialism. In a sermon preached in 1891 and entitled "Government and Society," he criticized not only anarchism and Manchester individualism, but collectivism as well. The latter, he declared, assumes that government can be omniscient, ordering society for the welfare of all men. Not only is this not true, he argued, but collectivism would also destroy hope, ambition, and incentive, and thereby degrade men.³⁶

But, though challenging the validity of orthodox socialism, Hirsch, in this very same sermon, formulated a conception of the function of the state and a program of specific social legislation which can only be termed socialistic. The purpose of the state, he maintained, is to "guard, not merely preventatively, but by way of initiative, the common interests of all, and more specifically, to return to the original intention of law, which was to protect the weaker against the aggression of the stronger."³⁷

Specifically, Hirsch declared, a legitimate program of state action would include a system of differential and progressive taxation, safety and sanitation regulation of factories, workmen's insurance the cost of which would be borne primarily by capital, regulation of hours of work, prohibition of child labor, protection of women, strict control of monopolies and large corporations, and the guarantee to labor of the right to assemble and to organize.³⁸ All these were included among the reforms demanded by the liberal movement of Hirsch's time and most of them were achieved in the Progressive Era.

In 1897, in a sermon dealing with "The Problem of Poverty," Hirsch urged even more liberal social legislation by the government: the implementation of a system of co-operative buying which would eliminate the middleman, compulsory sickness and accident insurance, public housing for the poor, and the establishment of institutions to lend money to the needy without the requirement of collateral which they do not possess.³⁹

Though Hirsch did not urge, as the orthodox socialists did, the nationalization and government ownership of industries, his recommendations for social legislation were certainly a radical departure from laissez-faire capitalism and an approach to socialism. Still others of Hirsch's statements concerning the right of property and inheritance and concerning capitalism clearly indicate the socialistic cast of Hirsch's economic thought, at least in the first part of his ministry:

The contention that inheritance and ownership of immeasurable wealth are fundamental principles which cannot be modified is not true. Truth and righteousness are fundamental principles; justice and sympathy are, and not the right of inheritance. It is

not a natural right, it is an acquired right, an artificial right. The time may come when society will rise to a better constitution, when what is created by all will revert to the uses of all.⁴⁰

I am not of the opinion that private property is ethically and fundamentally wrong. Against the capitalist I have nothing to urge; but against capitalism, against a capitalistic order of society, my religion—the religion of Jeremiah and Isaiah, the religion of the best among all men—has everything to urge.⁴¹

From the discussion thus far it appears that Hirsch was completely in sympathy with the growing liberal movement in both American secular and religious life of the late nineteenth century. He shared both in its protest against the heartless selfishness and brutality of the contemporary economic system and in its advocacy of a more just and humane distribution of wealth. He agreed with its challenge of laissez-faire capitalism and with its advocacy of ameliorative social legislation. He rejoiced in the concrete accomplishments of the reform movement, in support of which he so frequently raised his voice. That he was actuated in his social thought both by an intellectual appreciation of the inadequacies of Manchester liberalism and by a deep sympathy for the masses who suffered under that system is obvious. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that he was as truly a democrat in politics as in economics. He certainly did not share the democratic faith of a Paine or a Jefferson in the ability of the people to govern themselves well. Even his sympathy for the masses seems to have been that of the kindly and generous aristocrat rather than that of the impassioned and convinced democrat.

That Hirsch accepted Carlyle's "great man" theory of history has already been noted above in the discussion of his view of the method of social progress.⁴² That he also shared Carlyle's aristocratic contempt for the masses must also be stated. He went so far as to borrow and use, with approval, Carlyle's vulgar phrase for the masses—"them asses."⁴³ Hirsch considered the granting of suffrage to the Negroes of the South as one of the most serious errors in American political history. Indeed, the whole idea of universal suffrage was repugnant to him. In it he saw the source of all political corruption.

"Them asses," as Carlyle pronounces the phrase, are always susceptible to the blandishments and the tricks of the crafty demagogues. . . . Therefore, in all countries where political dogmatism has not brought forth its natural offspring, political demagogism, the municipal franchise is conditioned by property tests or by tests of educational attainments, certainly by a clean bill of moral health.⁴⁴

It is rather surprising that a man who was not an ideological democrat in politics should have kept his liberal economic principles fairly intact throughout his life. Yet Hirsch managed, in considerable measure, to do so. Even after the disillusionment with socialism which came to many American liberals after the Bolshevik revolution, Hirsch did not return to a full-throated cry for capitalism. It is true that he was no longer the flaming radical he had been in his youth, but he was also not completely the tired and disillusioned liberal. The criticism of socialism which he had voiced in 1891⁴⁵ was, indeed, intensified now. Thus, shortly before his death, in the year 1923, Hirsch made the following statement with regard to socialism:

[It] denies the one fundamental factor of our personality. It denies the initiative of the individual, it denies the scope and the sway of individual action and ambition. It kills individual ambition, for Socialism is really the most consistent scheme of militarism. It puts us all into battalions and into regiments. We are all regimented and we are all under discipline, and our individuality is chilled and killed.⁴⁶

Yet capitalism did not even then recommend itself fully to Hirsch. He still saw its inadequacies: its degradation of men into machines with price tags attached, its failure to prevent recurrent panics and depressions, its inability to solve the paradox of simultaneous excess production and widespread want. Nevertheless, a modified and restrained capitalism, which recognizes the infinite worth of every human personality, is to be preferred, declared Hirsch, to the regimentation of socialism. "Of the two, the capitalistic scheme allows much more scope for the assertion of individual power and individual ability than does Socialism."⁴⁷

It is entirely characteristic of Hirsch that when he made his final choice, the deciding factor was his conviction that modified capitalism was more in keeping, both really and ideally, with the dignity of man. For the latter was a dominant theme in Hirsch's thought throughout his life. In spite of the contradiction and paradox in his thought—in spite of his insistence that only the great men of genius influence human history, and in spite of his belief, simultaneously held, in the primacy of society and the societal conditioning of man—Hirsch always affirmed one cardinal dogma: the value and dignity of every man.

In the end the tension inherent in Hirsch's simultaneous belief in the supreme importance of society and of the individual was resolved by his conviction that that system which recognizes the supreme importance of the individual and seeks his highest welfare leads also to the highest welfare of society.

NOTES

RA=*Reform Advocate*, the Jewish journal of Chicago in which Hirsch published most of his papers and addresses.

- ¹Nevins, Allan, and Commager, H. S., *A Short History of the United States*, New York, 1945, p. 326.
- ²Commager, H. S., *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's*, New Haven, 1950, p. 201.
- ³Faulkner, H. A., *American Political and Social History*, New York, 1946, Fourth Edition, p. 231.
- ⁴*Idem.*
- ⁵"The Radical's Religion," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1894, pp. 107-8.
- ⁶"The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA*, Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.
- ⁷"New Year's Reflections," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1895, p. 336.
- ⁸"Thy Kingdom Come," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 279-81; "The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA*, Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.
- ⁹"A Discourse on the Eve of the Day of Atonement," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1894, p. 205.
- ¹⁰See the following sermons: "Government and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46; "Conflicting Tendencies," *RA*, Vol. 2, 1891, pp. 51-54; "Hard Times," *RA*, Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 363-66; "The Psychology of Sin," *RA*, Vol. 7, 1894, pp. 132-35; "New Year's Reflections," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1895, pp. 334-38; "Modern Heretics," *RA*, Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43, and "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Parts I and II, *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90, 205-8.
- ¹¹"Government and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46; "Modern Heretics," *RA*, Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43; "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90.
- ¹²"Modern Heretics," *RA*, Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43.
- ¹³"Government and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 345.
- ¹⁴"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part 1, *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90.
- ¹⁵*Idem.*
- ¹⁶*Idem.*
- ¹⁷"New Year's Reflections," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1895, p. 337.
- ¹⁸See the following sermons: "Individual and Society," Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 247-50; "Stepping Stones," Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 264-66; "Conflicting Tendencies," Vol. 2, 1891, pp. 51-54; "Hard Times," Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 363-66; "The Inalienable Duties of Man," Parts I and II, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 187-90, 205-8 (preached in 1895); and "Democracy Triumphant," Vol. 17, 1899, pp. 43-48.
- ¹⁹"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, p. 188.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 189.
- ²¹"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part II, *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, p. 208.
- ²²"The Dangers of Democracy," *RA*, Vol. 6, 1893, pp. 282-86.
- ²³"Individual and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 247-50; "A Growing Conscience," *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 241-44.
- ²⁴See notes 17 and 20.
- ²⁵"Individual and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 249.
- ²⁶"A Growing Conscience," *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, p. 243.
- ²⁷"The Dying Century," *RA*, Vol. 18, 1899, pp. 249-55.
- ²⁸"Thy Kingdom Come," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 279-81.
- ²⁹See the following sermons: "Stepping Stones," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 264-66; "The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA*, Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 202-5; "The Citizen," *RA*, Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 112-13; "Justice and Judgment," *RA*, Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 192-95; "Our Disenchantments," *RA*, Vol. 15, 1898, pp. 223-24; "The Dying Century," *RA*, Vol. 18, 1899, pp. 249-55; "The Twentieth Century," *RA*, Vol. 19, 1900, pp. 49-50.
- ³⁰"The Citizen," *RA*, Vol. 15, 1898, p. 112.
- ³¹"The Value and Influence of Utopia," *RA*, Vol. 5, 1893, p. 205.
- ³²"The Dying Century," *RA*, Vol. 18, 1899, p. 254.

- ³³"Stepping Stones," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 266.
- ³⁴See note 10.
- ³⁵"Modern Heretics," *RA*, Vol. 11, 1896, pp. 340-43; "Modern Prophets," *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 293-96; "Proper Themes for the Pulpit," Vol. 17, 1899, pp. 239-45.
- ³⁶"Government and Society," *RA*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 343-46.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 346.
- ³⁸*Idem.*
- ³⁹"The Problem of Poverty," *RA*, Vol. 13, 1897, pp. 3-6.
- ⁴⁰"A Discourse on the Eve of the Day of Atonement," *RA*, Vol. 8, 1894, pp. 202-5.
- ⁴¹"The Inalienable Duties of Man," Part I, Vol. 13, 1897, p. 188.
- ⁴²See note 25.
- ⁴³"The Day of Small Things," *RA*, Vol. 14, 1897, pp. 453-56; "The New Discipline and Duty," *RA*, Vol. 16, 1898, pp. 244-47.
- ⁴⁴"The New Discipline and Duty," *RA*, Vol. 16, 1898, p. 245.
- ⁴⁵See note 36.
- ⁴⁶"The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion," in *My Religion*, p. 136.
- ⁴⁷*Idem.*

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