

STATECRAFT AND BIOLOGY

STANLEY B. JAMES

THE close relationship which exists between the scientific and political realms might be illustrated in many ways. I do not allude to the fact that statecraft is itself reckoned as a science, or even to the obvious influence on practical politics of economics and sociology. These examples do but bear witness to the impact, on those concerned with government, of the scientific spirit. What I have in mind, rather, is the influence of specific physical sciences in suggesting ideals and methods for the ordering of political communities. Conspicuous in this respect has been in the present era the effect on statecraft of biological conceptions. Biology may indeed be regarded as holding central position among modern sciences, and from that strategic point imposing its concepts on sister-sciences. "There are many indications to-day," wrote Professor J. Arthur Thomson, "that we are at the beginning of a new era—the era of biological control, when for the first time on a large scale mankind is turning to the life-sciences (in addition to medicine) and saying: 'Show us what you can do for us in the way of betterment.' Sporadically in recent years biology has been consulted by physicians, educationalists, practical men, and even statesmen; there are signs, we think, that it is soon going to be appealed to more generally by educated humanity, seeking life more abundantly." Even more specific was the assertion made in the course of a British Broadcasting Talk by Sir Walter Morley Fletcher, that "we can find safety and progress only in proportion as we bring into our methods of statecraft the guidance of biological truth." These authorities appear to have referred more particularly to matters of detail, such as those of a eugenic character. Their remarks are applicable, however, to considerations of a more general character. Biology to an increasing extent supplies the terms in which political theory is stated, and such theory seems even to depend for the motives invoked on facts of a biological character.

This will be apparent directly we mention the importance that is attached to the racial factor. The constitution-makers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries paid little attention to this. From their point of view, it was sufficient to establish a legal authority binding together those who happened to occupy

a certain territory in order to create a nation, even though the component elements should be of different and even of violently opposed racial elements. Whatever may be the effect of the Melting Pot, it cannot be denied that those responsible for the beginnings of the United States disregarded the need for racial homogeneity, trusting to time and a pacific policy for the process of fusing. So unconscious were they of any impediment to orderly government arising from heterogeneity that they boasted of the hospitality which threw open the doors to all the world.

Even more contemptuous of the racial factor has been the policy of those who planned for an international revolution. For them it was not race that mattered, but class. Patriotism, from Lenin's point of view, was simply "bourgeois-nationalist narrow-mindedness." "The Frenchman, the German, or Italian who says, 'Socialism is opposed to outrage on nations; therefore I defend myself when my country is invaded'"—he wrote in *The Proletarian Revolution*, "this man is *betraying* Socialism and Internationalism, since he only thinks of his own country, places above all his bourgeoisie, without reflecting upon the international connections which make the war an *Imperialist* war, and his bourgeoisie a link in the chain of Imperialist brigandage." It might indeed be argued that class distinctions create differences of a biological character. Did not Disraeli write of the "two nations" "who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thought or feeling as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners and are not governed by the same laws—the Rich and the Poor"? And has not Mr. H. G. Wells written in the same strain? Whatever might be the physical effect of class differentiation, however, it was not this which was explicitly the occasion of the class-war, but the proletarian status itself without reference to this secondary effect. It was the cause of the workers as workers, and not as a distinct biological species, which the revolutionists championed.

In view of what has been said as to the increasing importance attached to the biological factor, it is interesting to note what is taking place in the two cases named. In the United States what was at first a national unity based on soil and the possession of a common political ideology and Constitution has developed in addition a genuine racial unity which is "in the blood." A new race has come into existence, making less necessary, from the standpoint of national unity, that ideological and constitutional

agreement which formerly was the chief guarantee of an integral life. As time goes on and political changes occur, this biological factor will increase in importance, the more so as the stream of immigration has become a trickle. What effects this may have on policy it is difficult to say, but as to the increase of racial considerations itself there can be little doubt.

For different reasons and in a different way, Russia presents a parallel case. Accompanying the departure from orthodox Marxism there has been and is to-day in operation a policy which would sacrifice the international revolution for an intensified effort to organize Russia itself. The U.S.S.R. is to be made the source of revolution. It is to constitute the foundation-stone of the international building. Its *rôle* is limited to this function. That means a transfer of emphasis to national concerns as such. Instead of the scorn formerly poured on patriotism, we can see the development of a distinctively Russian sentiment, nor is it difficult to foresee that, in course of time, "blood", mixed as it may be, will assert itself under the hammer and sickle as it does elsewhere. The tendency, which is unmistakable, will be strengthened, of course, by any failure on the part of the revolutionists to plant their ideology in other parts of the world. From sheer force of circumstances the Revolution must become national, and may even become racial.

As to the strength of the biological factor in countries like Germany and Italy, there is no need to speak. It may be noted in passing, however, that, warlike as these nations may be, the importance attached to race differentiates their imperialism from that of a former age. It cannot logically mean the indiscriminate dominance of other peoples such as that seen in the short-lived Napoleonic Empire. Racial solidarity, though in one direction it means increased aggressiveness, implies and imposes limitations. A hotch-potch Empire composed of various races is in accordance with the ideology neither of Hitler nor of Mussolini.

Next in significance to this emphasis on race comes the importance attached to the family as a political unit. The same realist temper which demands physical homogeneity on the larger scale is seen in the jealousy which safeguards the integrity and enhances the importance of the domestic group. For the family is a biological fact. It has not been created by doctrinaires. Nature, and not any particular political or sociological theory, is responsible for it. Apart therefore from any moral considerations, it must be apparent that the disintegration of family life, which is a conspicuous feature of western civilization to-day,

is a source of weakness. Contact with nature, recognition of basic biological fact, the cultivation of a social life having its roots in a common physical heritage, serve as ballast to the ship of state which, in stormy weather, may have decisive effects. It is impossible, therefore, to withhold admiration for the statecraft of rulers who have opposed the disintegrating influences referred to, and have given the strength of their *régimes* to the protection of the domestic unit. The purest example of this is to be seen in the new Portugal, the constitution of which, drawn up by Oliveira Salazar, is less known than it should be. A quotation from a speech made in June, 1930, by Salazar will illustrate the point. "The political liberalism of the nineteenth century", said the Portugese Dictator, "created the 'citizen'—the individual isolated from the family, the class, the profession, the cultural *milieu*, from the economic whole to which he belonged—and gave him the optional right of taking part in the constitution of the Government. It was there that the source of national sovereignty was assumed to be.

"If we regard realities, we find ourselves confronted here with an abstraction—an erroneous or inadequate concept—and it is in turning towards the natural groups necessary to individual life, and upon which political life really depends, that the point of departure which we seek will be more surely found. The first of these is the family, the irreducible social unit, the original core of the parish, of the township, and therefore of the nation. Effectively protected in its formation, its preservation and development, the family ought to exercise, through the voice of its head, the right of electing the members of the administrative bodies, at least those of the parish, for that right is no more than the natural expression of the hearths and homes, with the common interests which are theirs. In harmony with this, we find Article XIV of the Portugese Constitution laying it down as necessary 'to establish taxation in accordance with the legitimate expenses of the family, and to promote the adoption of the family wage.' Even more striking is the provision regarding education. The family, and not the State-owned and compulsory school, is declared to be the natural *milieu* of the child. Every parent, we are told, is free to decide whether his child shall receive that education at home, in a private school, or in a State school; and the home is considered to be the normal place."

Although this would seem to carry to its further limits deference for the family as a political, social and economic unit, the Portugese Constitution does but illustrate a tendency

observable in other countries. It would occupy too much space to exemplify the legislation which confirms this statement, but it may be taken as a general truth that insistence on racial purity has as its correlative a corresponding regard for the welfare of the domestic group. Blood relationship is given prior place in both the extensive and the intensive sense.

In speaking of the attention paid to blood-ties we must not confine ourselves to the living. Social unity may be established in a perpendicular as well as in a horizontal direction. The past no less than the present claims attention, ancestors as well as contemporaries. Hence, where biological conceptions prevail, racial and family traditions will be found to have acquired special force. This traditionalism is simply the social equivalent of the interest shown by the scientist in heredity. The effect it has as a stabilising factor is too obvious to need exposition.

A term, borrowed from biology, which explains much in modern sociology is "organic." Common as it is, however, its significance in this connection needs to be pointed out. It is not enough to say that the twentieth century, having abandoned the *laissez-faire* principle and rounded-up its rugged individuals, is busy putting its house in order. The prevalence of planning is to-day common to all civilized states. The reaction against the individualism of the past is not to be dismissed in that easy way. It is not enough to say that a more systematic conception of society has succeeded to the era of unco-ordinated activity. Planning is of different kinds and the distinction between one kind and another may be of fundamental importance. The "planning" of a plant in the manufacturer's sense of that word and that of a plant in the original and natural sense of the term vary widely. The one is mechanical and the other biological. The future of society depends to no small extent on keeping the distinction clear. In the one case we have an organization, efficient it may be, but imposed from outside according to preconceived ideas. It has been the general defect of such mechanical systems that they have ignored human nature, or at least the particular type of human nature, national or racial, of those with whom it has had to deal. Moreover, this type of system displays a rigidity, a lack of fluid suppleness, a proneness to make inelastic regulations which kills spontaneity and makes readjustment to changing circumstances difficult. Too often it is supposed that bueaucracy is the only alternative to *laissez-faire* conditions. Any attempt to discipline a people is regarded as exemplifying bueaucratic tyranny. This, however, is to overlook the fact that in a living organism one has both

co-ordination between the parts and a native vitality. In the building up of the human body it is nature itself which acts as the architect. Unless we are to believe that mankind is fundamentally anarchic, it should be possible to discover the laws which human nature itself dictates and, by articulating and enforcing these, to secure a form of society which is biological rather than mechanical. We seem to have a fair example of this in the respect shown by the Portuguese Constitution for the family group. In other cases we might discover that the Government had taken into consideration certain traditional institutions and characteristics of its people, merely giving the force of law to what, among that particular people, was most normal. We can scarcely doubt that the parliamentarianism favored by the Italian *Risorgimento* was alien to the spirit of the nation on which it was imposed, or that the abandonment of this form of government for one more congenial to the Italian character was a step in the direction of freedom. For freedom must be interpreted as the opportunity to fulfil one's true nature, and if an authoritarian *régime* suits a people better than one known as democratic, then, paradoxical as it sounds, the authoritarian government allows a freedom which the democratic type of government denies. This applies not only to the authoritarian aspect of Corporativism, but also to its structural character. The Corporative State divides society according to the functions exercised. There are no longer upper, middle and lower classes, but those concerned with the leather trade or with medicine, or education, and the groups thus formed, based, be it observed, on the actual functions exercised, are linked together in a cooperative whole. Such an organism reminds us of the way the cells forming the body are co-ordinated for the welfare of the body as a whole. That there must be something about such a system which recommends it to normal human nature, would seem to be indicated by the fact that it resembles the guild system under which mediaeval society thrived. In the corporative society you have a structural arrangement which is far better described by the biological term "organism" than by a word having the mechanical associations of "organization."

We have left till last the all-important question of the dynamic power which is to supply the driving-force of the community. Here we find ourselves dealing with that problem of vitality with which, as its name implies, the science of biology is mainly concerned. What mysterious power is it which keeps at bay the disintegrating power which we call death? What causes the activity of the cell? These questions are as baffling when applied

to the social organism as when they refer to animal life. All we know in either case is that vitality cannot be manufactured. It is not a product of the laboratory.

There is one point, however, where it is necessary to distinguish between the vitality of animal life and that which maintains a social organism. Physical vitality will not suffice for the latter. In fact we may say that social organisms are vital to the extent that the spiritual dominates the physical. It may even be that material prosperity exercises a paralysing effect on the spirit of a people. A nation composed of individuals wholly engrossed in the pursuit of wealth is less *alive* than one which has been roused to a corporate heroism by an appeal to its idealism. It is here that we discover the chief significance of a statecraft that can be interpreted in biological terms. That type of statecraft will be concerned less with the accumulation of goods than with the creation of life. Its standards of value will be stated in units of energy, rather than in those of size and weight. It will want to see the whole man and the whole community engaged in cheerful labour. To the worker as such will be accorded the rank of nobility, and, in order to ensure that the nation is kept biologically fit, enervating pleasures, which weaken the moral fibre of the people, will be discouraged.

Such in brief is what may be called the Biological State, which, as will have been observed, differs considerably from the Servile State and other well-known varieties of human grouping. The implications of the term are suggestive. We have long been familiar with the uniformity of design to be found throughout the lower orders of life, and we have seen the same design repeated even in the human body. We have not realized to the same extent, however, that the social organism may present a sublimated version of the pattern, or that what promises to be the sociology of the future might be described as a branch of biology. Should this view prevail, a norm will be provided for our "reconstruction" experiments. Planning will take a new direction. Social architecture should become less mechanical, more creative. We shall remember that the ideal is not an efficient organization, but a living organism employing as its dynamic forces already in existence but often stifled or misdirected, which group men less according to arbitrary or artificial divisions and more according to real relationships and which, left to themselves, invariably create those traditional institutions characteristic of a normal human society—the family and private property.