

TOWARDS A WELFARE SOCIETY:
A Critical Re-appraisal of L.T.Hobhouse's
New Liberalism and Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Although L.T. Hobhouse (1864-1929) has long been considered one of the leading political thinkers of the British new liberalism, the whole range of his thought has not been given as much attention as it deserves. Through a thorough analysis of Hobhouse's academically written works, the thesis demonstrates that he made a considerable contribution to the political thought of the new liberalism through his clear and articulate vision of a liberal welfare society. This vision was built upon a strikingly consistent system of political, economic, sociological, and philosophical arguments. The thesis argues these claims from three perspectives. First, while sharing with other new liberals a focus on the cultivation of individual morality as the primary purpose of social reform, Hobhouse further associated the idea with a notably pluralist perspective, focusing on the activities of intermediate organizations as well as the state. Secondly, his ethics of harmony offered a distinctively new liberal criterion on the development of morality and wealth distribution, whilst showing a notable intellectual affinity with T.H. Green's theory of rights. In fact, despite his incessant critique of philosophical idealism, Hobhouse's views were what could properly be called those of an 'idealist liberal' in the realms of ethics and political philosophy. Finally, on the basis of the integration of his new liberal ethics, idealist-inclined realist metaphysics and neo-Spencerian evolutionary sociology, Hobhouse labelled the core principle of a liberal welfare society 'citizenship' in his sociology, identifying its partial realization in modern society. Welfare society was envisioned as a global community premised on the mutual recognition of moral rights and duties. This vision was later in part succeeded by T.H. Marshall's sociological theory of citizenship, but its scope and philosophical depth was a specific product of Hobhouse's systematic thought. In summary the thesis is an attempt to show the originality and comprehensiveness of Hobhouse's welfare thought and thus to restore his reputation as a serious thinker.

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Introductory Chapter

This thesis aims at clarifying Leonard Trelawney Hobhouse's (1864-1929) vision of a welfare society, through systematic exploration of his wide-ranging works. Hobhouse has been well known, particularly in the realm of the history of political thought, as one of the leading thinkers of the British new liberalism. Historians who are familiar with early British sociology may also recognize him as the first professor of sociology in Britain and regard him as belonging to the last generation of comprehensive sociologists. Hobhouse was, however, by no means a political theorist or a sociologist of a typical kind. Historians have indeed noted that he left a variety of other kinds of works, such as those in metaphysics, ethics and comparative psychology, which can never be categorized simply as political or sociological.

Despite the wide scope, however, there has hardly been any study which systematically explores his thought as a whole. This thesis attempts to undertake the task, with a hypothesis that a clear consistency may be detected when we approach each aspect of his thought as an aspect of his unique view of the conception of 'welfare'. Indeed, it was Hobhouse's life-work to envision and theorize an ideal society where all its members could maintain co-operative relationships with others while having the feeling of happiness and developing moral capacities. Hobhouse called such a desirable state of the individual and society 'harmonious' or 'welfare', and so every aspect of his thought was more or less an element which elaborated his vision of a 'harmonious welfare society'. By approaching his thought from such a specific perspective, this thesis attempts to illuminate its full theoretical structure. In this introductory chapter, I will first undertake a literature review in order to indicate how this thesis makes a contribution to the existing body of literature. I will then present the scope and methodology of my argument.

1. Literature Review

Existing literature on Hobhouse may mainly be divided into two groups: those working on his sociology and those on his political thought, particularly on the new liberalism.

On the former, the work by Morris Ginsberg (Hobson and Ginsberg 1931), the disciple and successor of Hobhouse at the London School of Economics, remains the best introduction to his sociology. Appreciating Hobhouse's wide-ranging interests, Ginsberg's work contains chapters on Hobhouse's epistemology, ethics and psychology. But each discussion remains somewhat discrete. Ginsberg does not explore the relationships between these dimensions, nor does he pay enough attention to the clear intellectual relationships Hobhouse had with his contemporaries. In this context, Owen (1974) gives a more systematic account of Hobhouse's sociology, by connecting his philosophical foundation and his theory of social development. Owen also illuminatingly compares Hobhouse with other contemporary (though mainly foreign) sociologists, such as R.M. MacIver, C.A. Ellwood, W.G. Sumner and P.A. Sorokin. His work lacks, however, a historical perspective, that is the need to situate Hobhouse in the political and sociological context of Britain at that time. More recently, Studholme (1997) attractively indicates the 'family resemblance' between Hobhouse and Anthony Giddens, in the context of their reflexive social theory and the center-left political ideology, but her argument is also limited in its generality. Although these works give useful overviews of Hobhouse's sociology, by and large he has been neglected in the field of sociology.¹ As will be argued in this thesis, this neglect seems to be mainly due to a critical evaluation by certain historians of early British sociology as a whole.

It is instead historians and political theorists who have re-appraised the historical and theoretical importance of Hobhouse's political thought. The re-evaluation began in

¹ Studholme notes that Hobhouse 'is now an almost forgotten sociologist' (Studholme 1997, 532).

the 1970s by the pioneering works of Clarke (1971, 1978), Emy (1973), Freeden (1978, 1986) and Weiler (1972, 1982). They demonstrate that there had once been a collectivist variant in the history of British liberalism, which had been called the ‘new liberalism’. In their arguments, the new liberalism has been understood as a loosely-united group of Liberal politicians, progressive thinkers and journalists who attempted to reconstruct the political thought of liberalism in order to rescue both the Liberal party and liberal ideology from the political and intellectual crisis they were facing.² Those studies have also argued that new liberal thinkers never confined their argument to abstract theorizing, but had strong concerns with the practical issues of social reform. In contrast to nineteenth century liberalism, which had maintained the doctrine of *laissez-faire* in its economic policy, the new liberalism offered an argument for state intervention into the free market economy, in order to correct the shortcomings of an economic system which had produced unacceptable levels of poverty and unemployment among the working classes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Since the 2000s, the new liberalism has begun to attract the attention of political philosophers. As a response to the communitarian critics of modern liberalism, for instance, some have argued that the new liberalism contained an aspect of ‘perfectionist liberalism’ (Simhony and Weinstein eds. 2001). Against the new right critique of the post-war welfare state, others have shown that the new liberalism possessed a unique theory of reciprocal justice which could introduce a fresh theoretical perspective to the defenders of the welfare state (White 2003). Moreover, influenced by the recent re-appraisal of the philosophy of British idealism,³ other scholars have included not only more radical-minded idealists, such as T.H. Green and D.G. Ritchie, but also a more controversial figure Bernard Bosanquet, who has often been considered as

² For a further discussion, see chapter 1, sect. 1.

³ Since the 1980s there has been a re-appraisal of the philosophy of British idealism. Some of the major works are: Vincent and Plant (1984), Nicholson (1990), Boucher and Vincent (2000 and 2011), Sweet (eds.) (2009) and Mander (2011).

essentially conservative, in the camp of the new liberalism.⁴ These philosophical studies have been given in an attempt to present the British version of modern liberalism as the one distinguishable from its American counterpart represented by, for example, John Rawls and Robert Nozick.

In this 're-discovery' of the new liberalism, Hobhouse has been considered one of the central figures, along with his life-long friend J.A. Hobson. Hobhouse's *Liberalism* (1911) has often been seen as a canonical text. This would particularly be the case because of its apparent commitment to collectivist policies, such as the old-age pensions, unemployment insurance and progressive taxation, as well as to key new liberal concepts, such as positive liberty, the organic conception of society and the social conception of property. Peter Weiler's comment, that 'Hobhouse's New Liberalism was one of the intellectual roots of the modern welfare state', has thus been a widely shared view (Weiler 1972, 161).

Considering the high praise often given to Hobhouse, it might seem rather paradoxical that there has been little systematic work on his writings. Some might think, though, that there is a good reason why Hobhouse has not been given a key role in the literature, while Hobson and Green have.⁵ It might be argued that, there was hardly any originality in his thought, in terms of his theoretical contribution to the new liberalism. As will be argued in this thesis, Hobhouse himself admitted a huge intellectual indebtedness to both Green and Hobson: the conception of positive freedom and of organic society to the former and the social conception of property to the latter. Thus,

⁴ See, for example, chapter 4 and 6 of Simhony and Weinstein (eds.) (2001), and Morefield (2002). On the theoretical relationship between Bosanquet and Hobhouse, see chapter 2, 5 and 6 of this thesis. On T.H. Green, see chapter 3 and 6. On Ritchie, see chapter 6.

⁵ On Hobson's new liberalism, see Allett (1981), Freeden (eds.) (1990), Long (1995) and Caine (2002). For Green's political philosophy, which some have included in the camp of the new liberalism, see Richter (1964), Carter (2003), Dimova-Cookson and Mander (eds.) (2006) and Tyler (2010).

while *Liberalism* was indeed a representative text of the new liberalism, it might be concluded, Hobhouse's political thought did not have as much profundity and uniqueness as that of Green and Hobson.

One notable exception, however, is Stefan Collini's *Liberalism and Sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England 1880-1914* (1979). As the title suggests, Collini examines Hobhouse's political thought and seeks to understand its theoretical relationship with his sociology. Collini's perspective remains original, and with his broad and strictly evidence-based survey, it has earned a reputation as the most sophisticated work on Hobhouse's political and social thought to date. Nevertheless, the study is not wholly satisfactory. First, as Collini adopts the Skinnerian 'intellectual history' approach, the main purpose of his argument is therefore to situate Hobhouse in the intellectual contexts of the turn of the century. As a result, his whole discussion leaves the system of Hobhouse's overall thought largely unexplored, which is a disappointment to some extent, considering the title of the book. That Collini chooses not to examine two of Hobhouse's later works, *The Rational Good* (1921) and *The Elements of Social Justice* (1922), reflects this regrettable tendency.

Secondly, while Collini still succeeds in presenting the connection of Hobhouse's political thought and sociology by focusing on an idealist conception of 'progress' as its metaphysical basis, he does not fully analyze what kind of society Hobhouse envisioned as the ultimate goal of such progress. Collini's argument is limited to pointing out Hobhouse's indebtedness to the idealism of T.H. Green, arguing that Hobhouse's 'Greenian assumptions' led him to regard 'the advance of altruism and cooperation' as a form of progress, and that the Greenian concept of 'the common good' was set as its goal (Collini 1979, 235, 125-129). Apart from the concepts of 'progress' and 'the common good', however, Hobhouse developed a rich diversity of other ethical concepts, such as 'harmony', 'rights', 'justice', 'happiness', 'citizenship' and 'welfare'. All had

distinct meanings and form a systematic ethical theory as a whole, which overlapped, but was far from identical with Green's idealism. In short, there is a notable gap in Collini's analysis, particularly in relation to Hobhouse's ethical theory.

Last but not least, it should be noted that Collini's occasional theoretical evaluation of Hobhouse's new liberalism and sociology is strikingly negative throughout the book. He points out, for example, the 'potential illiberalism' of Hobhouse's political thought, the notable 'ambiguity' in his thought on distribution and the 'extremely odd' structure of his sociology (Collini 1979, 124, 134, 225). On the basis of these assessments, Collini goes as far as to raise 'some doubt as to whether it is now particularly illuminating to label Hobhouse as a 'Liberal' or a 'sociologist' at all' (Collini 1979, 235). Such an essentialist comment seems very odd considering his self-claimed Skinnerian approach. At any rate, Collini does not seem to have found anything theoretically valuable in Hobhouse's political and social thought. Thus, the only book focused systematically on the new liberalism of Hobhouse ends up concluding that, 'his thinking was embedded in a set of assumptions which no longer demands our allegiance, and addressed to a range of problems which no longer commands our attention' (Collini 1979, 253). It can thus be said that Collini's work directly or indirectly promotes the view that Hobhouse is not the kind of thinker worth being considered as a key figure in the study of the new liberalism.⁶

2. Contributions to Existing Literature

This thesis attempts to defend Hobhouse's thought against these negative views by demonstrating that he possessed a system of welfare thought which made unique and

⁶ Indeed, a reviewer of Collini's book points out that the book does not change his impression that 'Hobhouse is by general agreement a second-rate thinker' (Liebersohn 1982, 530).

significant theoretical contributions to the political ideas of the new liberalism. The main contributions he made to the new liberalism were twofold. On the one hand, Hobhouse constructed a systematic ethical theory and provided contemporaneous new liberals with a philosophical basis for the key concepts they had been using in their promotion of social reform, such as 'freedom', 'rights', 'justice' and 'welfare'. The objects of his ethical theory were broad, ranging from the development of individual morality, a relationship between the individual and society to the distributive justice as a moral guidance of economic reform.

Among these objects, it was the morality of individuals in society to which Hobhouse paid most attention in his ethical theory. This indicates the other key point concerning his theoretical contribution: it was the realm of society, rather than the state as a collective political organization, or the individual as a living monad, which was the central focus of Hobhouse's whole thought. The focus on society, where individuals are consciously or subconsciously related to others, naturally led his attention to sociology. With the aid of ethical theory, Hobhouse envisioned and theorized an ideal 'welfare society' in his sociology, which also incorporated a collectivist state in its scope. In sum, Hobhouse enriched the welfare thought of the new liberalism by deepening the ethical and social sides of its theory.

In addition to the above core argument there are a couple of other scholarly contributions it can make: first, to the historical study of the British welfare state and second to the philosophical study of British idealism.

On the former, as well as putting an emphasis on the ethical and social aspects of Hobhouse's welfare thought, this thesis also illuminates its *pluralist* perspective. As part of Hobhouse's general theory the thesis argues that voluntary organizations (as well as the state) were envisaged as agencies of economic reform. Addressing such a pluralist perspective in Hobhouse's welfare thought would be associated with a recently

developed approach in the historical study of the British welfare state, undertaken by historians such as Pat Thane, Jane Lewis and Geoffrey Finlayson (Thane 1996; Lewis 1995; Finlayson 1994). Abandoning the Whiggish interpretation of modern welfare history as the transition ‘from the individualistic Poor Law to the collectivist welfare state’, they have discovered the complementary, rather than conflicting, relationships between the state and other welfare providers, such as voluntary sectors, the market and family. My assumption is that the intellectual history of the welfare state may also be discussed from this new perspective, in which Hobhouse has a crucial role. Though I cannot fully investigate this topic in the thesis, I will still attempt to illuminate the pervasiveness and diversity of such pluralist welfare thought at the turn of the century, by addressing not only Hobhouse but also a few other leading welfare thinkers such as the idealist philosopher Bernard Bosanquet and the Fabian socialists Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

An additional contribution of the thesis is the special attention paid to the intellectual relationship between Hobhouse and idealist philosophers, such as T.H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet and D.G. Ritchie. Though several recent studies have referred to some ‘family resemblances’ in their thoughts (Collini 1979; Vincent and Plant 1984, 43-94; Nicholson 1990, 92; Meadowcroft 1995, 113-166), the relationship between Hobhouse and British idealism remains ambiguous. The main reason seems to be that Hobhouse is well known as a leading critic of idealist philosophy, especially his argument against Bosanquet in *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (1918). Hobhouse accused Bosanquet’s political philosophy of being based on a ‘bed-rock conservatism’ (Hobhouse 1918, 24), harshly criticizing every aspect of it from an explicitly liberal standpoint. As Michael Freeden points out, Hobhouse in this text effectively played a role ‘as an evaluator, consumer, and disseminator of Idealist notions’, which left a profound influence on later scholars in their critical understanding of idealist philosophy

(Freeden 1986, 33). As a result, while some recent scholars of idealism have attempted to defend Bosanquet by pointing out errors in Hobhouse's interpretation (Nicholson 1990, 198-230; Panagakou 2005), a full comparative investigation has not yet been undertaken. As Matt Carter states, still 'there is further scope for research into Hobhouse's links with idealism' (Carter 2003, 138). This thesis undertakes the task, attempting to draw a clear conclusion as to the degree of the intellectual influence of idealism over Hobhouse.

3. Scope, Methodology and Outline

While the aim of this thesis is a systematic understanding of Hobhouse's thought, considering a vast range of his works and interests, it is almost impossible to explore all the aspects of it in one thesis. Here I should probably confirm what the limitations of scope this thesis has. First, the thesis will not examine the topics related to international relations, such as the British Empire, foreign policy, imperial wars and the establishment of the world league. Although it is a fascinating task to examine Hobhouse's views on these issues, I will curtail my argument on them and focus on what directly relates to the domestic political issues regarding social reform.⁷ Similarly, in terms of Hobhouse's epistemology shown in his *The Theory of Knowledge* (1896) and *Development and Purpose* (1913), I will only deal with the aspects which can be directly associated with his envisioning of a welfare society.⁸ Finally, my analysis will be mainly aimed at those texts written in an academic manner, *i.e.*, books and journal articles. Consequently the journalistic and private aspects of Hobhouse's work, *i.e.*, articles written for current affairs in newspapers and his correspondence, will again be

⁷ On the international thought of Hobhouse and Hobson, see Bell (2009).

⁸ See chapter 6. Hobhouse's epistemology is in fact another 'uncultivated' area. Partial examination can be seen in Nicholson (1928), Hobson and Ginsberg (1931) and Griffin (1974).

limited to the minimum.⁹

In terms of methodology: to reiterate, the primary aim of this thesis is to identify Hobhouse's vision of a 'welfare society' via a systematic understanding of his wide-ranging arguments, from political and economic thought, ethics, metaphysics to sociology. For this purpose, I will take a 'textual analysis' approach, which focuses on interpreting the contents of texts and analyzing their logical consistency or inconsistency within itself or with other texts. Such an approach may be contrasted with a so-called Skinnerian 'intellectual history' approach, which focuses more on the recovery of the intentions of authors and of the discursive contexts regulating thinkers' language and assumptions. The latter approach is taken in Collini's work, whose merits and problems we have seen above. Textual analysis will enable this thesis to undertake what Collini does not do. Thus much greater emphasis will be placed on examining the logical relationships in the contents of Hobhouse's wide-ranging texts, so as to draw out a full understanding of his welfare thought as a comprehensive whole.

The thesis will be divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the political arguments regarding social reform which were raised by new liberals at the turn of the century, and identifies the uniqueness of Hobhouse's early thought in this group. Chapter 2 turns to the welfare thoughts of Bosanquet and the Webbs, showing that they shared with Hobhouse a moralistic and pluralist view of social reform and that all contributed to formulating a specific intellectual context at the turn of the century. Chapters 3 and 4 explore Hobhouse's ethical theory, which laid the normative foundation of his political and social thought. Examining its relationship with utilitarianism and Green's idealism, chapter 3 analyzes its theoretical structure by focusing on several key concepts such as 'happiness', 'harmony', 'rights' and 'welfare'. Chapter 4 then examines how his ethics was also developed into a theory of distributive

⁹ Excellent surveys of Hobhouse's journalistic articles and letters can be found in Freeden (1978 and 1986), Clarke (1978) and Collini (1979).

justice, set as an ethical criterion for new liberal social reform explored in chapter 1. Chapters 5 and 6 turn to Hobhouse's political philosophy and metaphysics, with special attention to their relationships with British idealism. Chapter 5 explores the relevance of Hobhouse's critique of Bosanquet's political philosophy. Chapter 6 analyzes his metaphysics of evolution, mainly by focusing on his critique of idealist teleology. Chapter 7 turns to Hobhouse's sociology, which was constructed on new liberal ethics and the evolutionary metaphysics explored in the previous chapters. This chapter highlights the concretized image of a welfare society shown in his sociological research on modern society. The conclusion confirms that Hobhouse's vision of welfare society was an outgrowth of his ethical, political and social thought as well as of an evolutionary metaphysics, all being interrelated in complex ways and exhibiting a conspicuous theoretical consistency.

Ch. 1 The New Liberalism and Early Hobhouse on Social Reform

1. Introduction

The study of the new liberalism has often accompanied certain important questions: who propounded it and whether there was any coherence in its ideas (Vincent 1990)? While one specific focus determines the sphere of its protagonists, it often contradicts the other. Thus, as to the first question, a focus on its commitment to social reform would incorporate radical politicians, journalists and thinkers, such as R.B. Haldane, H. Samuel, H.H. Asquith, D. Lloyd George, W. Churchill, C.F.G Masterman and possibly W. Beveridge and J.M. Keynes, as well as Hobson and Hobhouse. If, on the other hand, imperialism and other foreign affairs at the end of the nineteenth century were the focus, a line would be drawn between ‘new liberal’ pacifists such as Hobson and Hobhouse and the so-called ‘Liberal Imperialists’ such as Haldane, Samuel and Asquith.¹⁰

As to the second question, some scholars throw doubt on the alleged coherence of ideas among new liberals, insisting that what primarily united them was not so much a doctrine as political or pragmatic necessities of the time, such as the necessity of gaining more working-class votes (Clarke 1978; Bentley 1987).

This thesis does not aim to give decisive answers to these questions. It only attempts to make a modest suggestion: if we focus on the intellectual situation at the end of the nineteenth century over the issue of social reform, where a young Hobhouse also formed his thought, we may identify some common theoretical grounds loosely uniting

¹⁰ If the scope of analysis is extended, radical newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Speaker* and the latter’s successor the *Nation* can also be chosen as ones of the central topics for the study of the new liberalism. Indeed, previous studies have often seen these newspapers as well as journalists, such as Masterman, H.W. Massingham, and C.P. Scott, as having played crucial roles for disseminating its ideas. See Freedon (1978), Clarke (1978) and Weiler (1982).

new liberal thinkers together. As Michael Freeden states, what united new liberals was a need for ‘ethical guidelines’ (Freeden 1978, 253) over the issue of social reform. Before starting to analyze Hobhouse’s welfare thought, then, this chapter briefly explores, in the next section, what sort of ethical perspectives new liberals in the period came to possess. I will then turn to Hobhouse’s first volume, *The Labour Movement* (1893), in the third section. Hobhouse’s argument in this book not only shared the central elements of new liberal ethical perspectives, but also furthered their scope by incorporating a uniquely pluralist perspective. In other words, Hobhouse not only showed an enthusiasm in constructing an ethical principle for the new liberalism, but also discovered an effective way for putting the principle into practice in the activities of voluntary organizations, such as trade unions and co-operative societies.

2. New Liberals and Social Reform

It seems true that the first combination of the term ‘new liberalism’ and ‘social reform’ was an outgrowth of a political motive to rescue the Liberal party from a crisis it was facing in the late 1880s. A direct cause of the crisis was Gladstone’s Irish Home Rule of 1886, which resulted in the split of the party and Joseph Chamberlain’s formation of the Liberal Unionism. Before then, however, the Liberal party had already experienced a continuous inner conflict between the Whigs and the Radicals (Jenkins, 1988), and the latter’s submission of the *Radical Programme* in 1885, which endorsed further land reform, more progressive and direct taxation and free public education, accelerated the division.¹¹

Observing the conflict within the party, a Liberal M.P. and the son of a Chartist,

¹¹ The Programme, presented as the Radical election campaign in 1885, was originally submitted by Joseph Chamberlain to *Fortnightly Review* in 1873 when he was still the mayor of Birmingham. It presented the slogan of ‘4Fs’: free schools, free land, free church and free labour. See Sykes (1997, 84).

Llewellyn Atherley-Jones (1851-1929), stated that the growth of the Radicals had gradually severed the upper and middle classes from the Liberal party, and that ‘for the first time in the history of English politics, we find Liberalism almost exclusively identified with the particular interests of the working class’ (Atherley-Jones 1889, 187). Viewing this situation positively, he pointed out that it was a chance for the Liberal party to regain its integration by appealing to the ‘interests of the working class’ on the basis of the principle of Radicalism, or what he called the ‘new Liberalism’ (*ibid.* 192). The underlying views were that the Liberal party had to win the race against the Conservatives for obtaining the votes of newly enfranchised working-class electorates, and that their primary interest would be not so much in what the Official Liberals had currently focused on – Irish Home Rule and other matters of High Politics – as in ‘Social Reform’ for ameliorating their living and working conditions. He thus concluded that the urgent task of the Liberal party was ‘to devise and formulate those reforms’ which would bring ‘a wider diffusion of physical comfort, and thus a loftier standard of national morality’ (*ibid.* 192).

Atherley-Jones’ suggestion to create a social-reform-oriented liberalism was echoed by other radical Liberals within the party. R.B. Haldane (1856-1928), later the Secretary of State for War (Dec 1905 – Jun 1912) and Lord Chancellor (Jun 1912 – May 1915, Jan 1924 – Nov 1924), for example, also understood that the Liberal party was entering ‘a period...in which...Social questions, largely took their place’ and called for the growth within the party of ‘New Liberals...who esteem a progressive policy in social matters more highly than anything else’ (Haldane 1896, 133, 134).¹² Another younger M.P. Herbert Samuel (1870-1963), later the Home Secretary (Jan – Dec 1916, Aug 1931 – Oct 1932) also emphasized that ‘in any attempt to state the aims of

¹² See also Haldane (1888). Haldane was deeply committed to educational reform ever since he had given a speech on the Universities of Scotland Bill in 1889. On the relation between Haldane’s (German idealist) philosophical background and his ideas on public policies, see Vincent (2007).

Liberalism the proposals of social reform must take the first place' (Samuel 1902, 11). Samuel especially considered poverty to be the fundamental object of social reform: '[i]t is poverty and its consequences which...do most to prejudice health and to limit knowledge, and poverty is the antithesis to a right standard of material comfort' (*ibid*, 8-9). In sum, these radical Liberals recognized that the main social group, whose needs the Liberals should attempt to meet, had shifted from the upper and middle classes to the working class. The focus of politics should accordingly be on the economic difficulties this class was facing, which had become more and more visible by successive studies since the 1880s.¹³

Social reform was, however, far from the speciality of new liberals, but had already become a chief political issue across party lines. Atherley-Jones was concerned that the Conservatives seemed to be better adapting themselves to the new situation than the Liberals: '[O]f the two parties the Liberal was the more tardy in taking up questions of social reform. ...The Tories joyfully availed themselves of social reform as a set-off against Home Rule' (Atherley-Jones 1893, 630). Haldane was also discontented with the Official Liberals, claiming that 'these leaders must throw off that indifference to the relations of labour and capital' (Haldane 1888a, 153). Moreover, they recognized that another political turmoil was coming from the left side of the political spectrum. At the end of the 1880s, the organization of unskilled workers was being promoted in London and other cities. Unlike the 'old' unions of skilled workers who had been co-operative with the doctrine of Gladstonian liberalism, the 'new' unionism argued for social reform by the state to create fairer wages and working conditions. Its leaders, Tom Mann

¹³ Already as early as 1883, the publication of Andrew Mearns' *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* raised attention among the middle classes to the pervasion of poverty and accompanying 'social problems' such as malnutrition, low wages, unemployment, poor housing and lack of education among the urban poor in London. Charles Booth's later survey gave statistical evidence to the concern: the result published in 1889 as *Life and Labour of the People* showed that more than 30% of the population in London were living under the 'poverty line' he had set.

(1856-1941), John Burns (1858-1943) and Ben Tillett (1860-1943), were self-professed socialists and actively involved in the campaign for a separate labour party.¹⁴ In the center of the campaign was Keir Hardie (1856-1915). Being a founder of the Scottish Labour Party in 1888, Hardie was elected to the Parliament as an independent labour member in 1892 and was among the ones who formed the Independent Labour Party (the ILP) in 1893, of which Tom Mann became the Secretary. The ILP was markedly socialist: it voted almost unanimously for the policy goal of ‘the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange’ (Adelman 1996, 22).

New liberals were generally sympathetic with the newly emerging unionism of unskilled workers.¹⁵ However, as Peter Weiler rightly points out, ‘enthusiasm for the trade unions and the working class must be distinguished from the Liberal attitude toward the I.L.P. and socialism’ (Weiler 1982, 56). New liberals indeed showed an ambivalent attitude towards the term ‘socialism’. Recognizing that it could include different meanings,¹⁶ they deliberately accepted some and rejected others. Haldane noted, ‘[i]f by Socialism be meant the recognition that the time for construction has come, and that the State must actively interfere in the process, then it is true that we are all Socialists’ (Haldane 1888b, 467-468). Similarly, Atherley-Jones regarded ‘English Socialism’ as another word for ‘Social Reform’, indicating ‘the occasional extension of legislative and administrative aid by the State to classes of individuals who may be at a permanent disadvantage in their contractual relations’ (Atherley-Jones 1893, 631).

¹⁴ Tillett later remembered that what he had been observing at that time was ‘the beginning of that close alliance in thought and purpose between the Trade Union Movement and the Socialist Movement which produced in due time the Labour Party’ (Tillett 1931, 116).

¹⁵ See Atherley-Jones (1893, 633) and Haldane (1890, 253-254). On the London Dock Strike of 1889, Samuel later stated in his memoir, ‘My own sympathies were keenly with the dockers; I subscribed to the fund, and was enthusiastic over the victory’ (Samuel 1945, 6).

¹⁶ For an overview of how the term was being used at that time, see Freeden (1978, 25-75).

Samuel also noted that the 'Liberal shares with the Socialist...a deep indignation at the economic evils that exist. He is willing to join with him in securing vigorous action by the State for their cure' (Samuel 1902, 152).

In short, the type of socialism new liberals accepted was a general attitude to support state intervention in order to ameliorate the welfare of the entire, but especially the working, population. What they refused was, in contrast, a continental type of revolutionary and statist socialism.¹⁷ Samuel called the latter 'complete collectivism', in which the state is expected to 'nationalize and municipalize all industries', insisting that there should be a certain limit of state activity in order not to destroy liberal values: '[e]nterprise, inventiveness, readiness to welcome improvements are essential to success and progress in industry; they are qualities which public authorities playing the part of manufacturers may be found to lack' (Samuel 1902, 147). The same point was later made by Winston Churchill (1874-1965) in his well-known speech of 1908, where he contrasted the Liberal with the 'revolutionary Socialist' in a rather caricatured manner: 'Socialism seeks to pull down wealth; Liberalism seeks to raise up poverty. Socialism would destroy private interests; Liberalism would preserve private interests in the only way in which they can be safely and justly preserved, namely, by reconciling them with public right' (Churchill 1909, 155). New liberals thus realized that they had to find a principle which forged a middle way between the older liberalism of the Manchester School and state socialism.

On the formation of a separate labour party, new liberals tended to be almost unanimously critical during the 1890s.¹⁸ For one thing, they were concerned that such

¹⁷ Atherley-Jones named Marx and Lassalle as the representatives of this type of socialism: '[t]heir Socialism is a system of social polity involving a complete reorganization of existing economical conditions' (Atherley-Jones 1893, 631).

¹⁸ Haldane (1888b, 468) declared, '[w]ith the so-called Labour party it appears to me that there can be no compromise. Our business is to fight out with them the issue they raise in the interests of the status and independence of labour itself'. Lloyd George also later lamented, 'I think it was a mistake for the Labour Party to go in for anything like

an independent party might be influenced by the kind of socialism they could not accept. But a more important reason was that they considered a separate party harmful for the unification of progressive forces. Thus, Samuel emphasized that ‘a Labour party which was not Socialist would have no right to remain independent’, for ‘the progressive forces are not so powerful or so weakly opposed that they can afford to dissipate their energies in minor disputes arising from no differences in principle or in spirit’ (Hardie and Samuel 1896, 259). After the Labour Representation Committee was organized in 1900, this view was passed on to their endorsement of inter-party alliance against the Conservatives. This can be seen most typically in Churchill’s speech in 1906. He addressed, ‘[t]he fortunes and the interests of Liberalism and Labour are inseparably interwoven; they rise by the same forces, and in spite of similar obstacles, they face the same enemies, they are affected by the same dangers’ (Churchill 1909, 72).

However, a strong doubt was raised by Keir Hardie in 1896 as to the abilities of liberalism to find a principle which could intellectually unite non-state-socialist-radicals together. If there was anything which could be seen as the central doctrine of liberalism, Hardie insisted, it still seemed to be the ‘commercialism’ of the Manchester School, or ‘the doctrine that labour is a commodity to be bought and sold like any piece of inanimate goods, and that production is for profit and not for use’ (Hardie and Samuel 1896, 254). His conclusion was simple: ‘Liberalism is impotent. It has served its day; and no man in his senses would dream of uniting the active living present with the dead or dying past’. Although the ILP’s political achievement was far from successful,¹⁹ new

independent class representation’. Quoted in Wrigley (1976, 25, 26).

¹⁹ The ILP made headway on several town councils and local school boards and in by-elections, but it failed to obtain any seat in the general election of 1895. Even after the trade union movement became more sympathetic to the idea of independent labour representation and finally agreed to form the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, the ILP socialists remained a tiny minority within the party. As Adelman (1996, 36) points out, until their final withdrawal from the Labour party in 1932, they always ‘felt, not without cause, that they were in danger of being swallowed up by the trade union Leviathan’.

liberals well recognized Hardie's point: unless constructing a well-grounded liberal principle for collectivist social reform, they would fail to maintain an ideological prevalence over Conservatives and Socialists. Even during the heyday of the Liberal government from 1905 to 1914, J.A. Hobson (1858-1940) reminded Liberals of their intellectual mandate, with describing the current situation as 'the crisis of liberalism'. Hobson understood that liberalism would sooner or later collapse politically and intellectually unless it obtained 'the intellectual and moral ability to accept and execute a positive progressive policy which involves a new conception of the functions of the State' (Hobson 1909, xi).

To sum up, although new liberals did have a political motive to rescue the Liberal party, it was associated with the necessity to build a firm theoretical basis which could reconcile the increasing state roles for social reform with the essences of liberal value, especially of individual freedom.

What is noteworthy is that there was a loosely-shared sense among new liberals that this principle should be an ethical rather than an economic principle. Social reform was first supposed to be aimed at the enhancement of the morality or moral consciousness of individuals, rather than at the growth of material wealth. Secondly, it was thought that the principle of the new liberalism needed to be the one which could theoretically clarify the moral duty of the state. In short, there was an implicit consensus that the new liberalism essentially should be an ethical doctrine.

As to the first point, it had already been realized throughout the nineteenth century that the logic of the market economy often conflicts with that of moral personalities expressed as individuality, religious faith and public spirit (Searle 1998). It was now liberals themselves who came to be aware that the market principle itself does not enhance morality and that they ought to prioritize the latter rather than the former in their ethical principles. Haldane thus emphasized that 'Liberalism in its widest sense'

was ‘an affair of spirit...the proper frame of mind’ (Haldane 1896, 141). This understanding led to a modification of the definition of the term ‘liberty’ itself. Considering the idea of so-called negative liberty as the absence of external constraint insufficient, Haldane drew on T.H. Green and remodelled the term as the autonomous development of morality directed at ethical righteousness.²⁰ Similarly, Samuel argued that ‘the ordinary rule of private morality’ resides in ‘the duty of each man to lead, so far as he is able, and to help others to lead, whatever may be held to be the best life’ (Samuel 1902, 6). For him, ‘[t]he trunk of the tree of Liberalism is rooted in the soil of ethics’ (*ibid*, 6), and so its primary aim should be the promotion of moral individuals who could pursue a healthy, knowledgeable and comfortable life through mutual aid.

New liberals were also conscious of the importance of clarifying the duties of the state. In the case of Samuel, this was based on an idea of the reciprocal duties between the individual and society, emphasizing ‘[to] the duty of the individual, the duty of Society must correspond’, that is, a duty to ‘help men, so far as it may be able, to lead their lives in the best way’ (Samuel 1902, 6). The duty of society then leads to the duty of the state, that is, to provide individuals with legal and material conditions such as equality of opportunities, for ‘the State is nothing else than Society itself organized for the purposes of corporate action’ (*ibid*, 6). Seeing poverty as the prevention of the poorer classes from having such opportunities, Samuel declared, ‘[w]hoever admits that the duty of the State is to secure, so far as it is able, the fullest opportunities to lead the best life, cannot refuse to accept this further proposition, that to lessen the cause of poverty and to lighten its effects are essential parts of a right policy of State action’ (*ibid*, 11). Similarly, Churchill thought that a state’s duty is to secure its people the minimum

²⁰ Haldane here quotes from Green’s definition of freedom expressed in ‘Lecture on ‘Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract’ (‘...freedom as...a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying...the greater power of the citizens as a body to make the most and best of themselves’ (Green [1881]1986, 199)), assessing it as ‘form[ing] the main basis of the Liberalism of the future’ (Haldane 1896, 137).

conditions for standard lives, declaring in a speech of 1906, '[w]e want to draw a line below which we will not allow persons to live and labour' (Churchill 1909, 82). In short, new liberals used an idea of the duty of the state in order morally to justify collectivist social reform. Behind the idea was their understanding that the plight of individuals is not fully their fault. Beyond laziness and bad habits, are certain social causes beyond their control.²¹ It was not difficult for them to assume that for the suffering of individuals caused by society, society has a moral duty to alleviate it.

In sum, new liberals at the turn of the century had two premises underpinning their arguments for social reform, which could both be described as ethical: the development of morality as a goal of social reform and the duty of the state to provide external conditions necessary for attaining such a goal. Both these premises were articulated with theoretical sophistication in the work of Hobhouse.

3. The Early Hobhouse's Pluralist Perspective

We have briefly looked at the theoretical characteristics of the new liberalism over the issue of social reform in the 1890s and 1900s. L.T. Hobhouse also developed his interest in social reform during this period and it should be first noted that even a quick glance at his first book *The Labour Movement* (1893) would be enough for readers to recognize that his perspectives were more or less identical with those of other new liberals. Referring to Green, for instance, Hobhouse argued that 'true liberty...is found when each man has the greatest possible opportunity for making the best of himself' (Hobhouse 1893 [hereafter LM], 93). He also saw the purpose of social reform ethical rather than economic or institutional, pointing out that '[m]ere reform of machinery is

²¹ As will be seen in the next chapter, Hobson criticized an allegedly individualistic view of the Charity Organization Society toward poverty on the basis of a 'sociological' view. For a general explanation of the historical 'transition' in the attitude toward poverty during the nineteenth century, see Woodard (1962).

worthless unless it is the expression of a change of spirit and feeling' (LM, 4).

On the other hand, a couple of experiences Hobhouse had around this time gave *The Labour Movement* some unique characteristics. The first of such experiences was his strong interest and occasional commitment to trade unionism. Not only sympathetic with the new unionism of the late 1880s, Hobhouse also had close relationships with its leaders such as Tom Mann and Ben Tillett (Collini 1979, 59). When a 'lib-lab' M.P. George Howell criticized new unions' use of strikes, Hobhouse defensively emphasized that old and new unions are not in conflict with each other in principle, suggesting that they cooperate together for the sake of workers' welfare and independence from the control of the capital (Hobhouse 1891, 144).

Secondly, an intellectual influence from Fabian socialism can be identified. Hobhouse never joined the Fabian Society, but he had frequent contact with it at the time he was developing ideas for *The Labour Movement*. One of Hobhouse's closest friends at this time was Sidney Ball, a leading Fabian at Oxford. In the late 1880s, Ball introduced Hobhouse to the Society's central members, such as Graham Wallas, G. Bernard Shaw, Herbert Bland, Sidney Webb and Beatrice Potter (Collini 1979, 60). The relationship between Hobhouse and the Webbs²² became especially close: Hobhouse once talked of Sidney as 'one of the most interesting men I have met' (Hobson and Ginsberg 1931, 30), while Sidney praised Hobhouse in 1892 as one for 'whom I have an overwhelming admiration' (MacKenzie ed. 1978, 413). Beatrice in turn relied on Hobhouse as one of the more supportive recruiters for the Fabian Society, along with other progressive thinkers,²³ while Hobhouse learned a lot from her historical study on

²² Sidney and Beatrice married in 1892.

²³ Beatrice wrote in her diary in December 1895, 'We are also trying our best to attract the clever men from the universities – Sidney and Wallas lecturing at Oxford and Cambridge.... Leonard Hobhouse recruits for us at Oxford, the young Trevelyan at Cambridge.' (MacKenzie. ed. 1983, 85) Another example of the closeness between Hobhouse and the Webbs is the fact that Hobhouse's cousin, Henry Hobhouse, married Beatrice's elder sister, Margaret.

the co-operative movement. Indeed, in the prefatory note for *The Labour Movement*, Hobhouse named Beatrice's *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* (1891) as one of the two texts to which, he confessed, 'I wish expressly to acknowledge how much I owe' (LM, vii).²⁴

While *The Labour Movement* has never been fully studied, these experiences place the book in a unique position both in Hobhouse's whole works and in the work of the new liberalism. In short, while other new liberals tended to focus on the role of the central government for collectivist social reform, Hobhouse's approach in the book was notably pluralist, in the sense that he paid as much attention to the roles of voluntary organizations such as trade unions, co-operative societies and local government as those of central government. Not only considering voluntary organizations and governments to have complementary functions, Hobhouse took the former as the major places for individuals to develop their morality. In other words, it can be said that Hobhouse's new liberalism characteristically focused primarily on the *social* sphere of civil society where individuals have voluntary, conscious and co-operative relationships, rather than the *political* sphere of the central government whose main issues would be the policy formation process of politicians and civil servants.

Of course, other new liberals did make occasional references to the importance of voluntary associations. Samuel, for instance, recognized that 'Trade Unions, Friendly Societies, Co-operative Societies, Temperance Societies, numberless forms of voluntary association from the great Churches down to the humblest village institute, help in securing progress' (Samuel 1902, 28-30). Nevertheless, there seemed to be a curious lack of interest among new liberals in the roles of voluntary associations. This was particularly observable in their argument on trade unionism. Despite his supportive statement shown above, Samuel stated:

²⁴ The other text Hobhouse mentioned was Alfred Marshall's *Principles of Economics* (1890).

Even trade unionism...fails to establish a true freedom of contract in industry. Its area is limited. The lower grades of labour seem incapable of forming stable and effective organizations. ...In spite of their great achievements, trade unions have been found inadequate to safeguard the freedom of the working-classes against the overwhelming force of economic pressure. (Samuel 1902, 26-27)

A more critical view was given by J.A. Hobson. He consistently held that the activity of trade unionism was based on a spirit of individualism which had led to 'trade-individualism' or class-sectionalism, of which his organic conception of wealth and society was critical. Hobson argued that such a spirit was based on a theoretically wrong assumption concerning the individual property rights towards the whole product of labour, neglecting the parts of socially created wealth and consequently prioritizing the sectional interest of a particular trade or a class over the good of the whole:

A trade taken by itself has interests distinct from, and discordant with, the interests of other trades and of society, and trade-individualism is not to be regarded as an ultimate social order. ...Even were the recurrent dream of a federation of all trade-unions in a nation, or even in the industrial world, so realized as to secure the most powerful solidarity of labour, we should still be confronted by a 'class' solution of this social problem. ...As a present fact, the labour movement, even in its widest significance, is distinctively a class movement...and, as such, must simply be regarded as the largest form of individualism. (Hobson 1899, 104-105)

As John Allett shows, Hobson was also critical of the movements of industrial

democracy during the inter-war years such as guild socialism and syndicalism, and claimed instead the importance of the control of industry by parliamentary democracy (Allett 1981, 232-240). In comparison with Hobson's views, Hobhouse's consistent support of trade unions is striking.²⁵ He regarded them as undertaking indispensable functions especially for overcoming the problem of low wages.

The presence of many low-paid workers was conspicuous evidence for Hobhouse that the market principle does not function from both economic and ethical perspectives. On the basis of Alfred Marshall's distinction between short and long periods, Hobhouse argued that in the short-term, where the quantity of supply is fixed,²⁶ wages are determined not by the cost of labour but by its supply-demand relationship to the market. In fact, many industries had neglected the over-supply of labour, forcing workers to accept far less wages, if enough to avoid starving, than necessary for having healthy lives: '[t]he market wage for short periods bears very little relation to the needs and comforts of the labourer who sells his work and may leave him in a very bad plight' (LM, 66). On the other hand, adjustment of supply and demand might happen in the

²⁵ Even at the height of his belief in the usefulness of state activities – that was when the Asquith government was undertaking Liberal Reform –, Hobhouse did not forget to confirm that the inequality had historically been redressed by the experiences of trade unionism in civil society rather than by the state, the role of which was merely to legally confirm its legitimacy afterwards. Hobhouse thus stated:

[Trade Unionism] was essential to the maintenance of their industrial standard by the artisan classes, because it alone...could do something to redress the inequality between employer and employed. ... For purposes of legislation the State has been exceedingly slow to accept this view. ...[I]t is only within our own time, and as the result of a controversy waged for many years within the trade union world itself, that legislation has avowedly undertaken the task of controlling the conditions of industry, the hours, and at length, through the institution of Wages Boards in 'sweated industries', the actual remuneration of working people without limitation of age or sex. (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 41)

²⁶ Actually, in Marshall's own term, this is the 'market-period equilibrium'. Marshall distinguished the market-period from the short-period and used the latter as where the amount of supply apart from capital can be adjusted.

long run by the gradual movement of capital and labour, and wages might be accordingly increased by the reduction of labour supply. However, Hobhouse pointed out, there are always substantial amounts of fixed capital and inflexible skills in the market, making theory difficult to be put into practice.²⁷ Until the long-period equilibrium is finally brought in, the market would permanently experience a ‘friction’, during which ‘a whole trade is disorganized, employers are contending miserably with forces that are too strong for them and wage-earners are pinched’ (LM, 64). In short, the reality of the market accompanied inflexibilities which defenders of the market principle often left out of their consideration.

Moreover, Hobhouse realized that even the long-period equilibrium would not guarantee ethically ‘fair’ wages necessary for ‘civilized existence’ (LM, 18), owing to the structural inequality of power between employer and worker in bargaining. Such inequality is primarily brought by a vicious circle surrounding low-paid workers: the chronically low wages give workers no breathing space, but only force them to permanently compete against others for other low-paid jobs in order to sustain the lives of themselves and their families. Employers, on the other hand, are capable not only of enjoying the reserved army of labour, but of reducing competition among themselves by mutual co-operation in order to maintain advantages in the bargaining against workers: ‘the employer being already...an absolutely rigid combination to the extent of the number of workers he employs, and being also as a rule well versed in the conditions of the market and the general business of bargaining’ (LM, 18). In sum, Hobhouse identified the causes of low wages not only in the friction of supply and demand but also in the inequality of power between employers and workers, both being permanently existent in the free market.

The functions of trade unions and co-operative societies are illuminated at this

²⁷ ‘You cannot turn a cotton manufacturer into a farmer, nor a cotton mill into a coal mine.’ (LM, 64)

point. As to the former, Hobhouse saw it as particularly effective for negotiating with employers as workers' collective wills so as to reduce the inequality between them. Trade unions were thus taken as bringing a truly 'free' contract between workers and employers:

[I]t raises wages to the point obtainable by such competition between equals. The fact is that the Trade Union suppresses free competition in one sense, but institutes it for the first time in another. It abolishes the unrestricted competition of isolated individuals against one another which places all at the mercy of the employer, and substitutes for it a combination of men bargaining for employment on free and equal terms. (LM, 20)

It is true that Hobhouse was, like other new liberals, aware of several limits of trade unionism. First, like Hobson, Hobhouse admitted that a trade union often 'lays down rules in its own interests to the damage of the public'. Nevertheless, he was convinced that it was possible to overcome this tendency by a national level of union organization, which he called 'the Federation of Unions' (LM, 47). In the Federation, 'very diverse interests of many localities have to be weighed against one another' through dispassionate disputes and democratic decision-makings. He thought that such an organization would eventually remove 'the narrowness and pettiness, and the tendency to foster sinister interests which were almost inseparable from the original form of Union' (LM, 47-48).²⁸

²⁸ In the first edition of *The Labour Movement*, Hobhouse was not yet so sure to what extent such the 'Federation of Unions' could really be established. But in the third edition of 1912, he seems more optimistic, probably being encouraged by the actual growth of national and international levels of Labour organizations in the meantime: 'This process is furthered by the development of the Federal Principle, by the Trade Union Congress, by the formation of a Parliamentary party, and in another direction by the International Congresses of particular trades which are building up a valuable

Secondly, like Samuel, Hobhouse was aware that the principle of voluntarism, which unions adopted, tended to attract only those workers who already had sufficient resources to contribute to the union. For this reason, twenty years after the fervency of new unionism, Hobhouse came to have a rather pessimistic view about the possibility of unskilled workers' combination:

Trade Unionism is weakest just where the need for its work is most urgent. The worst paid workers have not the reserve of force necessary for building up a stable combination, and though the past year has seen a revival of combination among ill-paid and unskilled workers, it is not possible to write as hopefully of the permanent prospects of unassisted Trade Unionism in this direction as it was twenty years ago, when the 'New Unionism' of that day was in the full vigour of its youth. (Hobhouse 1912, 57)

Here, Hobhouse stated, the necessity of 'the democratic State', by which he meant democratically elected local and central governments, should be recognized. Its main function was to set the legal minimum wage, which would not only rescue the workers at the bottom from poverty, but also increase the productivity of their labour and eventually make them more actively committed to voluntary activities in civil society. Again, just like the function of trade unions, legal restrictions prescribed by the state were by no means destroying free contract. They were rather to redress inequality between workers and employers, making the former 'freer' in the labour market.²⁹

Hobhouse realized that while trade unionism had historically led to the clarification of

counterpoise to the national rivalries of aggressive finance.' (Hobhouse 1912, 84)

²⁹ 'The weaker party gains the protection of the law, and can no longer be driven into accepting conditions to which no man, unless he were driven, would accede' (Hobhouse 1912, 89). For this purpose, Hobhouse also promoted state regulation of other working conditions such as 'sanitation and safety in work, the limitation of hours, provision for sickness and accident' (*ibid.*).

workers' various needs and the consequent improvement of working conditions, the state had advantages in its universality of application (LM, 52). In short, he saw the functions of trade unions and the state to be complementary.

A similar view can be seen in his argument on co-operative societies and local/central governments as the complementary agencies for supply-demand adjustment. Hobhouse regarded co-operative societies as counterparts to trade unions in civil society: while the latter protects producers' rights, the former promotes consumers' rights. In short, a co-operative society was 'a community of consumers, undertaking, through their committee and officials, to provide the goods they require for their own use' (LM, 36). He identified its functions as threefold: a co-operative society (1) collects funding from its members as capital for investment so that trade would not have to depend on capitalist financiers, (2) directs the management of the whole trade processes from production to wholesale, thereby enabling supply to be adjusted to demand, and (3) 'communizes' profits either by using them for common purposes or returning them to the members in proportion to their amount of purchases, thus abolishing competition.³⁰ What is noteworthy is that Hobhouse understood certain functions of local and central governments as common in nature with these functions of the co-operation: the functions of government were to input capital, which is absorbed through taxation, and provide goods and services which 'practically all the members of a community require' such as security, roads, transport, light, fresh air, water and so forth (LM, 39). While the chief difference was whether the membership was voluntary or compulsory, the principle of democracy would make citizens of a state as if the 'members of a large Co-operative Society':

³⁰ In his own words, 'the Co-operative Movement admirably achieves all that is required of the collective control of Industry in the matter of directing Production, communizing the surplus, and accordingly restricting competition.' (LM, 39)

They find that as a body they have certain needs in common; they direct their servants, the mayor and the councilors, to make arrangements to supply these needs, and they raise the necessary capital by a rate upon themselves. This is Co-operation, or, if you prefer it, Socialism. ...In each case the persons who are to use the product set the producer in motion, and determine the quantity and quality of the product. (LM, 40)

It is not very clear to what extent Hobhouse wanted the capitalist private trades to be replaced by this co-operative system. At one point, Hobhouse does seem to recognize the value of private business. Thus, he suggests a line be drawn between public and private enterprises. This line would be determined by whether a good is 'of standard character, in universal or very general demand, and not admitting of much variety of taste' or 'of individual taste' needing to meet a variety of personal demands. Hobhouse assumed that while the former needs to be secured publicly, the latter may better be dealt with by private enterprises (Hobhouse 1912, 72). But he seems ultimately to have wanted to limit the sphere of private business, as far as to make it rather exceptional, applicable only to '[t]he spheres of literary and artistic production'. Thus, he declares, 'there seems to be no valid reason for placing a definite limit on public enterprise' (Hobhouse 1912, 73). For Hobhouse the advantages of voluntary and official co-operation were too obvious to be limited:

[T]here are definite advantages to be gained from public organization. There is the control of the conditions of labour, the organization of industry which tends to mitigate periods of industrial depression, the economies of large scale production, the common enjoyment of the profit, and from the point of view of the consumer the public guarantee of the soundness and regular supply of the article. (Hobhouse

1912, 73)

This latter expectation was contrasted with Hobhouse's caution against private business, namely that it might promote 'a competitive spirit concentrated on personal gain instead of public good', which would not only put 'strain and over-pressure' on individuals, but would also leave the public spirit of the common good undeveloped (LM, 71). Indeed, the actual income gaps in the market economy had not only been morally unjust, but even harmful to the morality of individuals, especially of the rich, for it had a strong effect of encouraging the spirits of competition and materialism against any public spirit he endorsed:

Neither beggary nor princely wealth conduce best to a happy and well-ordered life. For the wealth made there is no tangible increase of happiness or development to show. Meanwhile the lure of profit-making corrupts all industry and changes honest work into a constant struggle to get more and more, and an unceasing effort to over-reach others. ...When money becomes the test of success, ...the signs of wealth are held the proofs of merit and ability, and display becomes the first object for men of means. There is not one class in England at this day that is not infested by this taint. (LM, 69)

In sum, Trade unions and co-operative societies, as well as local and central governments, were taken to be four main agencies for restricting the market principle and gradually directing the whole economic structure towards a more regulated one. Moreover, Hobhouse identified one more essential function in the voluntary organizations: the development of morality. He had a strong conviction that the morality of individuals as 'citizens' could never be directly developed by external regulation or

compulsion, but only through their active commitment either into certain social and political organizations or into autonomous personal interactions with others in civil society, which would enable them to understand their distinct personalities as well as the society to which they belonged. One would then be able to know for the first time his/her unique roles within the society which would eventually lead to the attainment of the public spirit of the common good. Hobhouse thus regarded voluntary organizations as having 'a moral and educational force' (LM, 48). A trade union, for example, teaches the 'doctrine of fellowship and brotherhood for all who work at the same bench'. Such 'fellowship' would not necessarily fall into the growth of sectarian interests. Hobhouse rather believed that '[e]very advance in Trade Unionism involves a progress in the intelligence and public spirit of the workers' (LM, 48). Activities in a trade union would enable individuals to learn the principles of 'mutual help and forbearance' with a notice that there would be an occasion when his/her personal freedom must be 'interfered with' for the sake of the 'general good of his neighbours' (LM, 46, 48).

Similarly, the co-operative societies were seen as the means for making their members aware of the social functions they undertake in economic activities and cultivating their public spirit thereby. 'In substituting Co-operation – whether voluntary or State-regulated – for competition', Hobhouse stated, 'we are introducing a new and, I should contend, a desirable principle into industry' (Hobhouse 1912, 74). Again, it would be 'the spirit of mutual help, the sense of a common good', enabling each individual to 'feel that his daily work is a service to his kind, and that idleness or anti-social work are a disgrace' (Hobhouse 1912, 75). The spirit would replace the whole society where material success was the main object of respect by 'social' motives such as 'the prospect of advancement, of social esteem, of the pure love of work, and of the desire to serve society' (Hobhouse 1912, 116). Hobhouse did not think that industry based on social motives was beyond the capacity of human nature, and so he concluded,

‘they [social motives] can never be extinct, and we have but to curtail the field of the other impulses which compete with them in human nature’ (Hobhouse 1912, 116).

All this seems to explain why Hobhouse regarded voluntary organizations in civil society rather than the state as the primary agencies of social reform. They were seen to be arenas where individuals could perform certain socially useful functions: identifying their own needs and social wills, putting these wills into practice for social betterment and claiming and promoting state legislation which reflects and secures those needs and wills more fully and universally. Such a view was sustained by Hobhouse’s conviction that each individual would be able to become a *citizen* with social interests through a continuous involvement into the social activities which reflect his/her own interests.

As will be indicated in the next chapter, the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 and the Fabian Society’s official support of the war encouraged Hobhouse to distance himself from the Society (Clarke 1978, 62-74). Hobhouse, however, never lost his interest in voluntary organizations. When the third edition of *The Labour Movement* was published in 1912, he stated in the preface, ‘[t]he need of the day is still as it was twenty years ago to appreciate the right relations between “voluntary” associations like Trade Unions and the collective action of the State’ (Hobhouse 1912, 5-6). And his *Liberalism* sums up his belief in the value of voluntary organizations:

What he needs...is organization with his neighbours and fellow workers. He can understand, for example, the affairs of his trade union, or, again, of his chapel. They are near to him. They affect him, and he feels that he can affect them. Through these interests, again, he comes into touch with wider questions – with a Factory Bill or an Education Bill – and in dealing with these questions he will now act as one of an organized body... The development of social interest – and that is democracy – depends...on all the intermediate organizations which link the

individual to the whole. (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 112)

Thus, it should be noted that while the endorsement of a collectivist state was surely one of the central tenets of Hobhouse's new liberalism, it was always proposed in association with the complementary roles of 'intermediate' organizations in society, the commitment to which was seen to enable individuals to develop their capacities and public morality.

4. Conclusion

This chapter examined how new liberals and Hobhouse, around the 1890s, approached the issue of social reform. It turned out that though the main motivation for radical Liberals to propose the new liberalism was political, *i.e.*, in order to rescue the Liberal party, many of them were aware that they needed to build a firm liberal principle of social reform in order to do so. Their approach was decisively ethical, in that, first, they aimed at the development of the morality of individuals, and, secondly, they considered it a moral duty of the state to provide legal and material conditions necessary for such development.

Hobhouse shared both of these perspectives in his earliest volume, *The Labour Movement*, and even furthered the scope by introducing a notably pluralist perspective. Trade unions and co-operative societies were, together with local and central governments, considered indispensable for overcoming the chronic problems of the low wage and supply-demand gap caused by the free market economy. Moreover, Hobhouse saw these voluntary organizations as the main spheres for individuals to develop their public spirit as well as the sense of mutual aid and fellowship.

It can thus be said that Hobhouse's argument theoretically reinforced the new

liberal principle of social reform, by associating the development of morality with the activity of voluntary organizations. Above all, it gave the conception of 'equal opportunity' a more positive connotation than other new liberals had assumed. As David Weinstein points out, the conception proposed by new liberals had a somewhat ambiguous aspect: it did not ask whether or not individuals with such opportunities secured by the state should actually *use* them for their self-development (Weinstein 2007, 38-39, 188-189). Hobhouse in turn asserted that those opportunities should always be understood in association with the active wills of individuals which find the source of self-development in social relations. His thought on social reform was thus something we might be able to call 'ethical welfare pluralism', which envisioned a welfare society where its members are given legal and material conditions by the state for enhancing their morality and simultaneously have active wills towards such enhancement through social interactions in voluntary organizations.

Ch. 2 Bosanquet and the Webbs on Social Reform: The Development of Ethical Welfare Pluralism

1. Introduction

The first chapter demonstrated that Hobhouse developed an ethical-pluralist perspective on the issue of social reform, which in this chapter prompts us to re-appraise the intellectual context at the turn of the century in Britain for two reasons. First, it can add a fresh perspective to the study of the new liberalism, which has been frequently associated with the endorsement of collectivist social reform by the state. Secondly, exploring the new liberalism from such a pluralist perspective may invoke a relatively new approach to the historical study of British welfare state. As noted in the introductory chapter, recent historical studies have relativized the so-called Whiggish interpretation of modern history, which emphasized a clear-cut historical transition from the stage of individualism, charity and the poor law to that of collectivism, social policies and the welfare state. Refusing to make such a clear-cut distinction in the historical process of social welfare, this new interpretation has focused on the interactions among various agencies such as the family, charity, community, voluntary organizations and the market, as well as the state. It has been indicated that the modern history of Britain has never been free of such interactions, even after the establishment of the post-war welfare state regime. It could thus be argued that the history of the welfare state should rather be called the history of ‘the mixed economy of welfare’ regime, a position between the welfare state and welfare society.

What has not been sufficiently studied, however, is the *intellectual* ground of such pluralist interactions. Although it would be too much to say that ideas are *the* determinant of historical processes, we may still say that certain ideas always regulate

our ways of thinking and decision-making. As Michael Freeden notes, ‘ideas are facts...and...political thought is a ubiquitous aspect of political behaviour’ (Freeden 1978, 245). The history of the early welfare state from this new perspective would never be complete without the history of pluralist ideas on social reform. Revealing such an aspect in Hobhouse’s thought indicates that the new liberalism may also be reconsidered under this new approach.

Moreover, this pluralist approach requires us critically to reflect on some frequently held views as to the intellectual relationships between the new liberalism and other groups. In particular, we may be able to discover some shared intellectual grounds beyond their mutual criticisms and subjective understandings of each other. The rest of the chapter does not try to undertake a full re-appraisal of the intellectual situation at the turn of the century, but it attempts rather to illuminate such commonalities by choosing three leading thinkers (embodying two intellectual groups) regarding social reform at the turn of the century: the idealist philosopher Bernard Bosanquet and the Fabian socialists Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Their arguments were so influential that both Hobhouse and Hobson had to tackle and challenge their views. This chapter focuses on Bosanquet and the Webbs on the issue of social reform in relation to the critiques presented by both Hobson and Hobhouse, with the aim of illustrating the point that the intellectual interest in an ethical ‘welfare society’ was being developed by these leading proponents from different intellectual groups.

2. Bosanquet’s Philosophy of Charity and Hobson’s Critique

Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), a British idealist philosopher and a leading intellectual of the Charity Organization Society (the COS), was once severely criticized by J.A. Hobson for his old-fashioned individualism in philosophy and conservatism in political

ideology, all apparently implicit in his views on social welfare. Later historians have tended to follow Hobson's interpretation of the COS (Pinker 1971, 82; Rose 1972, 26; Stedman Jones 1976, 256-257). Asa Briggs, for instance, stated that the COS 'were strong individualists, critical of "the foolish charity of the public" and shocked by what they regarded as the "horrible cruelty of the sentimental interference with the lives of the poor"' (Briggs 1961, 20). Bosanquet's views on the state³¹ and social reform have also frequently been considered deeply conservative. Stefan Collini, for example, has argued that, 'Bosanquet's theory was not "collectivist" but conservative, and is thus consistent with his defence of C.O.S.-style individualism, since by 1900 individualism *was*, of course, a conservative stance' (Collini 1976, 109).

However, it is important methodologically to distinguish how past thinkers were evaluating each other from the actual contents of their arguments. The former focuses on how their arguments worked historically in the formation of a specific intellectual context, while the latter is concerned more with the theoretical interpretation of their texts. As to Bosanquet's thought, in particular, this distinction is especially important, considering the very different view articulated by his wife Helen Bosanquet, who was also a leading figure of the COS. Helen Bosanquet commented that her husband 'was always an advanced Liberal with a strong sympathy for Labour aspirations' (Bosanquet 1924, 97). Her statement indicates the possibility not only of some errors in the common understandings, but also of some potential commonalities between Bosanquet and new liberals in their thoughts on social reform.

British idealism was primarily associated with a group of philosophers who attempted to build a systematic philosophy based on the metaphysics of Kant, Hegel and Fichte and the ethics of both Plato and Aristotle. Many idealist thinkers were, however, not only philosophers but also actively committed themselves to disputes and

³¹ Bosanquet's political philosophy of the state in relation to Hobhouse's critique will be discussed in chapter 5.

activities regarding contemporary social problems (Vincent and Plant 1984). Bosanquet was also one of the leading theorists of the COS. Established in 1869, the COS had become the most influential voluntary organization for the relief of poverty by the turn of the century. Based on a newly developed 'casework' approach, the COS's key aims were to integrate existing charity groups in order to provide more efficient, effective and orderly services than those 'unscientific' charities undertaken by, for example, Christian churches. As A.M. McBriar states, the COS was 'responsible for introducing an element of trained professionalism and scientific investigation, previously little known or appreciated, into the field of charity and social work' (McBriar 1987, 55). Bosanquet's role in the COS was central. He was an active member of Council of the COS from 1898 until his death and was also enthusiastically involved in the establishment and operation of the School of Sociology and Social Economics, a training organization for the COS social workers. But his most important contribution was the construction of the central principles of the organization, through a series of articles, books and lectures.

It was the COS's theoretical side which was harshly attacked by a new liberal economist J.A. Hobson. Hobson had identified the root-cause of poverty and unemployment in the extreme mal-distribution of incomes and wealth between rich and poor. He observed that such inequality had created the combination of 'over-saving' among the rich and 'under-consumption' in the domestic economy, which, in turn, led to an outward flow of capital abroad and consequent cyclical trade depressions. What was primarily necessary for the relief of poverty was, Hobson argued, the state-led redistributive policies with a purpose of securing the equality of opportunity for all, through taxation of the rich, the public ownership of land and transport and the public management of social insurance (Hobson 1896; 1909, 159-175).

From this view, Hobson attacked the COS and especially Bosanquet's seemingly negative attitude towards state welfare. In 1896, Hobson wrote an influential article

‘The Social Philosophy of Charity Organization’ which embodied a much fuller account of his criticisms. Hobson’s two main points were: first, he alleged that Bosanquet’s argument contained a double-standard regarding the principle of private property. While condemning out-relief or doles as ‘a payment for idleness’ (Hobson [1896]1909 [hereafter SC], 198), Bosanquet seemed reluctant to criticize the unearned incomes of the rich, such as bequests and land rents, thus seemingly affirming these incomes as morally legitimate, as long as they were in use ‘to help to plan out his life as a rational whole’ (SC, 197). Hobson identified an apparent contradiction here, as Bosanquet appeared to give more chances to the propertied classes than to the poor:

Mark what has taken place in passing from the application of the theory of property in the case of ‘doles’ to the case of ‘unearned’ incomes. Doles were shown to be pernicious by reason of their origin, *i.e.*, as windfalls; unearned incomes are to be tested not by origin but by use. If they are put to a good use, we are to keep silent about their origin, and about the injury which their payment inflicts upon those whose work they represent and who need them for self-realization. (SC, 200)

Secondly, Hobson attacked Bosanquet’s attribution of the cause of poverty to the weakness of the will of the poor, as well as its lack of personal effort, rather than to the economic environment. What underlay Bosanquet’s argument, Hobson believed, was the ‘individualist’ or “‘monadist” view of society’ (SC, 204, 205), which ignored economic and social forces thwarting opportunities and stultifying motivation. Bosanquet thus wrongly took it for granted that ‘the poor can provide for themselves, and need not be poor if they choose to exert themselves’ and consequently rejected ‘all the teaching of social science’, such as trade cycles, irregularity of wages and the

competitiveness of market structure, which were all ‘independent of individual control’. (SC, 206, 205) Hobson thus insisted that economic reform should be prioritized, since the morally degrading effect of the external economic environment on the poor had been so obvious.

In short, Hobson found the ideology of conservatism in Bosanquet’s argument, an ideology which defended the interest of the propertied classes and attacked state welfare for the poor. The social casework aspect of Bosanquet and the COS approach was also doomed to failure, since it was based on a class-based feeling rooted in complacency and ‘a sense of superiority’ of the educated rich (SC, 214), rather than any real sympathy with the circumstances of the poor. Hobson concluded that, ‘[t]hey will then find they cannot exert a moral educative force which they do not actually possess, and that they do not possess it because their supposed superiority is not a moral, but ultimately an immoral superiority resting upon a monopoly of material, intellectual, and spiritual opportunities’ (SC, 216).

While Hobson’s critique of the COS was followed by many later scholars, it is not as well known that Bosanquet and his wife Helen gave an articulate and clear response to Hobson’s critique in the following year. They asserted that the criticism was a distorting caricature of the COS from ‘the unsympathetic outsider’ (Bosanquet and Bosanquet 1897 [hereafter CO], 112). Their reply was brief, but every point they make in the article had already been systematically expressed in Bernard Bosanquet’s other writings.

On Hobson’s allegation of Bosanquet’s class-based double-standards, regarding private property, Bosanquet dismissed it for two reasons. First, he briefly replied that almost all reforms had emanated from the propertied classes (and Hobson himself was also part of that class). Secondly, Bosanquet insisted that his view was consistent enough, since he had made it clear that private property should be considered morally

legitimate ‘*in so far as* the owner is enabled to determine and organize his future life’ with it (CO, 113 (my italics)). In his article ‘The Principle of Private Property’, which Hobson quoted, Bosanquet had already attached important conditions to the legitimacy of property: private property was surely necessary for ‘a provision for possible self-satisfaction and possible self-expression’, but this satisfaction and expression should be kept distinct from ‘the mere successive removal of wants successively arising, such as satisfies an animal’ (Bosanquet 1895, 309).³² They should rather be based on the owner’s consistent moral will, which reflected her ‘recognition of a common good’ (Bosanquet 1895, 308). In other words, there should be an interdependent relationship between private property and one’s moral character. The former was necessary as the material conditions for the fulfilment of the latter, but the owner’s will towards the latter was also necessary for any property to be morally legitimate: ‘[t]he social need is to make possession of property very responsive to the character and capacity of the owner’ (Bosanquet 1895, 312).

It was on this ground that Bosanquet criticized ongoing out-relief under the existing Poor Law. It seemed to him to be continuously degrading the moral character of the poor due to ‘the simple fact that, as the law stands, out-relief must be withdrawn in proportion as the recipient earns’ (CO, 113). What Hobson did not see, however, was that Bosanquet was not against all forms of social allowance, nor did he have any ‘hostility to economic reform’ (CO, 113). It was only those allowances and reforms given mechanically, being blind to the effects on recipient’s moral character, to which he was strongly opposed. It seems that for Bosanquet, questioning the origin of an income, *i.e.*, asking whether it was acquired through labour, inheritance, or public assistance, was not essential. The more crucial issue was the spiritual conditions and motives of its recipient, as well as what kind of moral effect such an income would

³² The article was written as one of the chapters of a book he edited: *Aspects of the Social Problem* (1895).

cause her. Indeed, Bosanquet thought that when an unearned income was used for merely satisfying the owner's 'momentary wants', such as greed, indolence and incompetence, such 'property' should be regarded as a form of 'dole' and thus should be morally criticized (Bosanquet [1890]1899, 345).

It is true, however, that Bosanquet was not so passionate about clarifying the occasions when economic reform and public assistance became beneficial for moral character. He appeared more concerned with criticizing those policies which he saw as likely to degrade the moral character of individuals. Bosanquet regarded the tendency towards the universal provisions of employment, housing and school meals by the state as having these degrading effects. The basic idea underlying his assessment was that state activities, necessarily involving the use of force, were incompatible with the autonomous development of morality. Thus, for Bosanquet, '[t]he promotion of morality by force....is an absolute self-contradiction', for 'every act done by the public power has one aspect of encroachment, however slight, on the sphere of character and intelligence' (Bosanquet [1899]2001, 186, 187). The role of the state in social reform was thus to be negative, limited to what he called 'hinder[ing] hindrances' (Bosanquet [1899]2001, 185) to the development of morality, such as the provision of primary education against illiteracy and the control of liquor traffic against intemperance.

There are, however, some ambiguities in Bosanquet's critique of state welfare. First of all, it seems possible that his 'hinder hindrances' principle is compatible with those policies which new liberals endorsed. One may easily assume that the lack of basic income is a hindrance to the pursuit of moral character and so should be secured universally by the state, thus justifying the old-age pensions, minimum wage regulation, workers' compensation and the insurance for sickness, etc. The same thing may be said to the security of employment, if one assumes, as Hobhouse does, that the contribution to society and the interaction with fellow members through daily-works are the very

essences of morality. Thus, it seems that Bosanquet's 'hinder hindrances' principle was sometimes being unnecessarily narrowed down by his rather biased presupposition that some policies *must* always degrade the moral character of individuals. It is noteworthy, though, that Bosanquet himself was partly aware of the possibility for sufficient wages and comfortable houses to be necessary external conditions for the promotion of morality. He thus stated,

[I]t is further true that material conditions which come close to life, such as houses, wages, educational apparatus, do not wholly escape our principle. They occupy a very interesting middle region between mere hindrances of hindrances and the actual stimulation of mind and will. On the one side they are charged with mind and character, and so far are actual elements in the best life [, and so the state should not interfere]. On the other side they depend on external actions, and therefore seem accessible to State compulsion, which extends to all external doings and omissions. (Bosanquet [1899]2001, 190).

The statement indicates that Bosanquet limited his focus to the level of principle, rather than how it should be applied to concrete policies. For him, whether any policy undertaken by public force is justified or not depended on whether it could be considered 'external' and so not directly affecting one's internal moral conditions. As to the provision of school meals, again Bosanquet was not criticizing the free school meal itself, but rather worried its degrading effects on parents who did not pay for their children. Instead of its selective provision, Bosanquet suggested that 'all children should be given a free meal without discrimination' (Bosanquet [1890]1899, 347).

In the end, the main reason Bosanquet repeatedly criticized collectivist social reforms was premised on his observation that many contemporary collectivists tended to

be preoccupied with what he called the combination of ‘Moral Individualism’ and ‘Economic Socialism’. It was a standpoint which viewed the world and human nature from the materialistic and egoistic viewpoints (that is Moral Individualism), therewith aiming at solving poverty directly through collective organization of properties (that is Economic Socialism). Their reforms might be able to realize more equal distribution of wealth and let all escape from material poverty. But as long as it was based on the spirit of Moral Individualism, Bosanquet believed, it would never raise the moral character of individuals, on which all the elements of the common good depended. This does not mean that Bosanquet always separated ‘Economic Socialism’ from ‘Moral Socialism’. The combination of two Socialisms would be ‘heaven’ indeed for him (Bosanquet [1890]1899, 321). But under the circumstances of that moment, where the former tended to neglect the spirit of the latter, he felt the necessity of constructing an alternative approach, while criticizing the lack of such an ideal combination.

It was the casework approach undertaken by voluntary charity organizations which Bosanquet considered more appropriate for improving the material conditions and moral character of the poor. In contrast to the economic reform by the state machinery, which merely investigated and dealt with the circumstances of the poor by abstract classification, casework should adopt the maxim ‘individualize the case; don’t classify’ (Bosanquet 1917, 164). It is the principle which requires a social worker to deal with its case *thoroughly*: to visit ‘every person and family who needs your help’ and give them effective advice as well as a material support if necessary on the basis of the understanding of their material and psychological circumstances. In order to do this, Bosanquet asserted, a social worker always needs to understand a person from two different viewpoints: first, as a *social* being, or as ‘a meeting point of all or some of these influences of...[the] district [which the social worker covers]’, and secondly as a *human* being, whose nature must embody ‘much in him that has not been brought out’

yet (Bosanquet 1917, 163-4). The former addresses the material and psychological conditions in which the poor has been put, which have hindered their human nature from being cultivated. But the latter view enables a social worker to believe that moral aspects of human nature are potential within them, able to be discovered and released when guided properly.

On the basis of this trust in the moral aspects of human nature, Bosanquet disagreed with Hobson's allegation that the activities of the COS were doomed to fail because of the deep class-based divisions of the behaviours and feelings between the poor and social workers. As noted above, he dismissed this allegation as an opinion of an 'outsider' who had never been committed to casework by himself:

Any one who has known what it is to stand face to face with the realities of poverty and distress, and to strain every faculty in the attempt to alleviate them, knows well enough that there is no room for any personal feelings of superiority or inferiority on one side or the other. And he knows also that to say there can be no true sympathy between members of different classes is to sin against human nature. The distinctions which seem so marked and so insuperable to the critical outsider vanish like a dream before the 'touch of nature' which awakens sympathy... (CO, 115)

It can thus be argued that Hobson's criticisms were not relevant in several respects: Bosanquet did not treat out-relief and unearned incomes differently, nor did he regard the cause of poverty solely as the defect of moral character; more importantly, Bosanquet's COS principles were far from 'individualist' or 'monadist', but based on a conception of 'Moral Socialism', regarding individuals' moral character as the product

of the commitment to mutual recognition.³³ What Bosanquet wanted to criticize was the popular discourse made by many collectivist reformers who dealt with the problem of poverty from a single viewpoint – the material condition of the poor – and never tackled it in relation to their psychological and spiritual conditions. Bosanquet was deeply worried that the whole issue of social reform might become just a matter of social engineering by an elite class, leaving behind the ethical matters of the common good and human nature, on which any lasting reform should depend.

It is noteworthy that Bosanquet's criticism of the combination of 'Economic Socialism' and 'Moral Individualism' was shared to a considerable extent by both Hobson and Hobhouse. Hobson did not neglect the importance of moral character, emphasizing 'the interdependence and interaction of individual character and social character as expressed in social environment' (SC, 208). More importantly, Hobhouse showed exactly the same concern as Bosanquet about a type of collectivist or socialist reform which did not care for ethical principles and the moral consciousness of individuals:

The true end of Socialism...is in the first place ethical. It is not the subordination of the man to the machine of State, but the use of the State for ethical, that is to say human ends. Politics...are rightfully subordinate to ethics. ...Now the essence of the ethical end is that it tries to comprehend human life on all sides... Hence the ethical is necessarily opposed to the abstract view as represented by any single political dogma. (Hobhouse 1898, 143)

It is true that Hobson and Hobhouse differed from Bosanquet in several important respects. New liberals believed that state intervention in the market and the security of

³³ I will explore Bosanquet's conception of recognition in chapter 5.

the minimum standard of living for all should be the priority of social reform for the development of individuals' moral character. Their underlying argument was that certain material conditions were necessary as 'external' conditions for self-development. Bosanquet, in turn, was more cautious about the risks of material provision, given by the state, ceasing to be 'external' by falling into 'mechanical' category, and then having degrading effects on moral personality. Bosanquet further emphasized that professional casework would be more effective for the poor in trying to escape from poverty by their own moral wills. As a whole, however, the views of these theorists on social reform were not as distant as is often thought. If they had been aware of this overlap, there might have been even a chance for them to have collaborated in some way to enable the development of a comprehensive plan for an ethical welfare regime, *i.e.*, focusing on the co-operative relationship amongst various welfare agencies, such as the state, charity and family, aimed ultimately at the ethical end of the common good.

3. The Fabian Socialism of Beatrice and Sidney Webb

Like Bosanquet's idealist principle of the COS, the Fabian Socialism of Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) and Sidney Webb (1859-1947) has also been understood, though notably in an opposite direction to Bosanquet, in rather simplified and caricatured ways. Particular attention has often been paid to the non-ethical aspect of their political thought. Dividing the tradition of British socialism by 'ethical', 'religious' and 'romantic' strand and 'scientific', 'efficiency' and 'rational' strand, scholars have frequently taken the Webbs as the representatives of the latter strand (Greenleaf 1983; Clarke 1978; Pierson 1973). Other Marxist-oriented scholars have associated Sidney Webb's class position of managerial and technocratic elitism with his inclination towards a bureaucratic and statist form of socialism (Harrison 1987; Hobsbawm 1964). In addition, the Fabian

Society as a whole is also thought to have lacked a systematic philosophy under the leadership of the Webbs. The Society is thus taken to have ‘appeal[ed] simply to “common sense” of a practical sort’ (McBriar 1962, 149). It was considered to be ‘a form of utilitarianism... limited to practical efforts to modify the existing industrial order’ (Pierson 1979, 31-32).

One crucial factor for such an image of the Webbs as unethical and bureaucratic was due to their contemporaries’ criticisms of them and the Fabian Society, and it is noteworthy that Hobhouse and Bosanquet were also involved in the controversies. Despite his early indebtedness to Beatrice’s study of the co-operative movement, Hobhouse became critical of the Fabians after the late 1890s. Historians attribute the Boer war to be the main reason for their rupture. Along with Hobson, Hobhouse was firmly against the war, seeing it as motivated by the fanatical spirit of jingoism, as well as the interests of financiers. He thus chose to take the ‘pro-Boer’ side (Clarke 1978, 68-74). The Fabian Society, on the other hand, after a long internal dispute, took the side of the British Empire and imperialists.³⁴

Fabians’ support of the war disappointed many progressive thinkers and made them turn to the value of Cobdenite liberalism. Hobhouse was one of them³⁵, criticizing the Fabian’s political strategy of ‘permeation’ into the Liberal Imperialists as a form of opportunism which undermined the main basis of collectivism. As seen in the final part of the previous section, the principle of collectivism was taken by Hobhouse as ethical, aimed not at the increment of state functions, but at the development of the morality of

³⁴ For the political process within the Society from its initial reluctance to deal with the overseas issues to the appearance of *Fabianism and the Empire* (1900), see Semmel (1960).

³⁵ As early as 1904, Beatrice Webb lamented how many ex-supporters of the Fabians became distant to them: ‘[s]ome of our old comrades of ten or even eight years ago have become indifferent or even hostile to our ideas’. Along with Wallas, Llewellyn Smith, Hewins and Trevelyan, she names Hobhouse as those who were ‘no longer... *habitués* of Grosvenor Road’. (Mackenzie and Mackenzie (ed.) 1983, 324)

individuals. Moreover, for him, it must be a *liberal* principle embodying ‘all the elements of value represented by the older Liberalism’, such as ‘justice, equality, liberty, or humanity’ (Hobhouse 1898, 143, 140). From this standpoint, the Fabian’s unethical and opportunist approach to social reform, focusing exclusively on the value of ‘efficiency’, seemed to Hobhouse to be such that ‘all that was human in Socialism vanishes out of it’ (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 228).

Furthermore, the main problem Hobhouse found in Fabian socialism was its seemingly elitist statism. He thus pointed out, ‘[t]he creation of a highly centralized machine, so delicately specialized in structure and so intricate and secret in working as to be incapable of any real control on the part of the electorates, appears to be the conscious purpose of Mr Webb and his associates’ (Hobhouse 1907a, 183). In *Liberalism*, he called the Fabians’ standpoint ‘Official Socialism’, criticizing it as based on the ‘contempt for average humanity in general’ (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 82). For Hobhouse, Fabian socialism appeared to be mistakenly basing the progress of society on the efficiency of organizations, constructed by elite bureaucrats for the material strengths of the nation (whether economically or militarily), rather than on the promotion of an ethically just society and the autonomous moral development of individuals. Hobhouse thus concluded: ‘Socialism so conceived has in essentials nothing to do with democracy or with liberty. It is a scheme of the organization of life by the superior person, who will decide for each man how he should work, how he should live, and indeed...whether he should live at all’ (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 83).

Bosanquet’s distinction of ‘Moral Socialism’ and ‘Moral Individualism’ was originally introduced in his paper given to the Fabian Society in 1890.³⁶ At that stage, he was a rather sympathetic critic of the Fabians, warning the Society not to base its ‘Economic Socialism’ on ‘Moral Individualism’, which he had found in the arguments

³⁶ This paragraph owes much to McBriar (1987, 112-115, 131-140).

of Marxists and Anarchists. By the time he edited *Aspects of Social Problem* in 1895, where the leading activists of the COS, such as Helen Bosanquet (*nee* Dendy), C.S. Loch, as well as Bosanquet himself, presented their views on social reform, Bosanquet came to see the Fabian Society as going down the wrong track. Even when Sidney Ball insisted in his critical review of the book that Fabian socialism was *both* moral and scientific, Bosanquet was not persuaded, regarding Ball's ideas as 'not those of the main Socialist groups, including the Fabian Society' (McBriar 1987, 137).

In fact, against Bosanquet, the Webbs themselves tended to emphasize the intellectual distance between them, particularly during the dispute over Poor Law reform in the 1900s. Beatrice, in particular, leading the Minority Report, accused the Majority Report (in which COS's views were reflected) of sticking to the principle of laissez-faire individualism, which attacks all governmental extension (Vincent 1984, 343-344). Describing the existent Poor Law as working on 'the Principle of 1834', consisting of 'national uniformity', 'the principle of less eligibility' and the 'workhouse system', the Webbs vividly contrasted it with their own 'Principle of 1907' which contained the principles of 'curative treatment', 'universal provision' and 'compulsion', all supposed to be undertaken by 'the Central Authority', *i.e.* the state (Webb and Webb 1910, 257-273). The Webbs then pointed out that the Majority Report, notwithstanding its some sympathetic expressions with the reform of the Poor Law, showed 'a very definite trend backward to the "Principles of 1834"' (Webb and Webb 1910, 278). It can thus be said that the Webbs as politicians rather than intellectuals, were also responsible for spreading the popular but somewhat erroneous understandings of the late-Victorian intellectual map over the issue of social reform, by dividing the moralistic, individualist and pro-Poor Law position of the COS against their own scientific, bureaucratic and pro-state welfare position.

While it is true that there were certain differences in the approaches and theories

between the Webbs, Hobhouse and Bosanquet, however, it should not be overlooked that the Webbs also continuously had moralistic and pluralist views in mind when arguing for social reform. First of all, it is not correct to label their thought during the 1890s and 1900s as simply statist. Their bibliography in this period shows that their central concern was on the historical and sociological analysis of trade unions and local governments, rather than the centralist planning of the economy.³⁷ Just as Hobhouse observed the growth of labour legislation by the state as having followed the preceding activities of trade unions during the nineteenth century, so the Webbs also developed their well-known idea of the ‘National Minimum’ from the historical observation of the development of the ‘Common Rule’, which had been practiced by both old and new unions as the minimum standard controlling their working conditions.³⁸ As Jose Harris rightly states, the national minimum by the legislative power of the state was to ‘impose upon the whole community the standards of health, safety, income and social security that the older and soundly-established trade unions had obtained for themselves by their own collective voluntary efforts’ (Harris 1990, 168). Similarly, the Webbs regarded municipal services such as lighting, street paving, policing and sewers as having originated in “voluntary associations of leading inhabitants” from the middle of the eighteenth century’ (Stapleton 1991, 153). In short, they saw the function of the state as complementary to that of voluntary organizations.

The same theme can be seen even in their involvement in the Poor Law reform

³⁷ In this period, they studied together the history, practice and theory of trade unionism in details, the results of which were published as *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and *Industrial Democracy* (1897). They also published the first three volumes on the constitutional development of English local authorities during the 1900s: *The Parish and the County* (1906) and *The Manor and the Borough* (two volumes, 1908).

³⁸ The Webbs observed, ‘The enforcement of a common minimum standard throughout the trade not only stops the degradation, but in every way conduces to industrial efficiency. ...The remedy is to extend the conception of the Common Rule from the trade to the whole community, and by prescribing a National Minimum, absolutely to prevent any industry being carried on under conditions detrimental to the public welfare.’ (Webb and Webb 1897, 766-767).

debate, where the Minority Report they had prepared has been frequently depicted as more centralist in character than the Majority Report of the COS. While criticizing the COS for its failing to distinguish the morally 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, and thus failing 'to save many even of the most virtuous cases from the deterrent workhouse' (Webb and Webb 1911, 239), the Webbs nevertheless recognized that there were several points in which voluntary agencies had been in fact superior to the state: they were 'in invention and initiative, in their ability to lavish unstinted care on particular cases, and in the intensity and variety of the religious influences that they can bring to bear on personal character' (Webb and Webb 1911, 240). The Webbs thus did not regard the voluntary sector as the residuum agency in the relief of poverty, something as destined to be replaced by the bureaucratic 'welfare state', but as its essential partner, playing the roles of pioneering new theories and methods of social welfare, of providing a close and disproportionate amount of care if necessary, and of influencing the morality of recipients through the religious atmosphere it provides.

The final point argues that the image of the Webbs as non-ethical or 'mechanical' socialists, needs to be modified. Like Bosanquet and Hobhouse, if not quite as much, they retained a consistent interest in developing the morality of individuals, emphasizing the fulfilment of their capacities as social duties. Their conclusion to *Industrial Democracy* was, for instance, all about the relationship between liberty, democracy and public spirit. Like new liberals, they understood liberty as 'the utmost possible development of faculty in the individual human being' or the 'fullest development of personal character'. What is also noteworthy is that the Webbs regarded the 'industrial democracy', by which workers regulated their own working conditions through collective bargaining and mutual aid, as the best means to achieve a sense of such 'positive' freedom. '[D]emocracy is', they stated, 'not only consistent with Liberty, but is...the only way of securing the largest amount of it. ...It is only when...the

ultimate decision on policy rests in no other hands than those of the citizens themselves, that the maximum aggregate development of individual intellect and individual character in the community as a whole can be attained.’ (Webb and Webb 1897, 848). The statement indicates their conviction that liberty as self-development requires democratic co-operation in the voluntary sphere of society. In sum, the Webbs took industrial democracy as the essential means for both individual freedom and the growth of public spirit. *Industrial Democracy* thus concludes:

When the conditions of employment are deliberately regulated so as to secure adequate food, education, and leisure to every capable citizen, the great mass of the population will, for the first time, have any real chance of expanding in friendship and family affection, and of satisfying the instinct for knowledge or beauty. It is an even more unique attribute of democracy that it is always taking the mind of the individual off his own narrow interests and immediate concerns, and forcing him to give his thought and leisure, not to satisfying his own desires, but to considering the needs and desires of his fellows. (Webb and Webb 1897, 849)

After the First World War, the Webbs published what Beatrice later called the ‘summary’ (Cole ed. 1952, 203) of their works, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (1920). Though politically it was considered ‘the least successful of their major books’, as it managed to ‘exercise little influence on the shape of public opinion’ (Cole ed. [1949]1985, 275, 276), the content itself can be said to be the most comprehensive one in their works, in terms of presenting a comprehensive socialist programme.³⁹ It is striking, for the reader, that the Webb’s attitude towards the

³⁹ The book was originally written for the International Socialist Congress as a report ‘upon the “socialization” of industries and services, and upon the constitution that

capitalist economy becomes at this point much more overtly critical. In *Industrial Democracy*, written more than twenty years before, for instance, they did not intend to abolish the capitalist system by socializing the whole trade. The principle of the National Minimum, introduced there, was meant to remove the ‘parasitic trades’ from industries, so as to encourage remaining trades to compete with each other more efficiently for the growth of national economy. Thus, the Webbs stated, ‘it [the enforcement of National Minimum] would in no way prevent competition between trades, or lessen its intensity. ...The capitalist would be free to introduce any machinery, to use any process, or to employ any class of labour that he thought most profitable to himself’ (Webb and Webb 1897, 790). In the *Constitution* text, in contrast, they clearly endorsed the transformation of the whole economy; although this was still not revolutionary socialism.⁴⁰ This was chiefly because they came to understand that the capitalist system had maintained the inequality of power which had enabled only a small wealthy class to enjoy their ‘personal freedom’, while permanently depriving it from the rest of the population.⁴¹ Under such circumstances, the Webbs declared, the ‘Capitalist System...lost its moral authority’ (Webb and Webb 1920 [hereafter CSC], xxxvii).

On the other hand, they still maintained their early pluralist perspective. Instead

should be adopted by any nation desirous of organizing its life upon Socialist principles’ (Webb and Webb 1920, xxxv).

⁴⁰ They do not elaborate on the motives for this change of attitude in this book, but one of the historical underpinnings can be found in their experience of the World War, where they observed that, in a rather Hobsonian way, the imperial war had been motivated by the competition for the world market by the transnational capitalist class. See Webb and Webb (1923, 148-158).

⁴¹ ‘Under such a system personal freedom becomes, for large masses of the people, little better than a mockery. The tiny minority of rich men enjoy, not personal freedom only, but also personal power over the lives of other people; whilst the underlying mass of poor men find their personal freedom restricted to the choice between obeying the orders of irresponsible masters intent on their own pleasure or their own gain, or remaining without the means of subsistence for themselves and their families.’ (Webb and Webb 1920, xxxviii-xxxix).

of suggesting the full nationalization of the whole industry by the central government, the Webbs proposed gradual enlargement of the 'socialization' of industries by local governments and co-operative societies. They were convinced that '[i]n view of the enlarged spheres of Local Government and of the consumers' Co-operative Movement in the Socialist Commonwealth, it is possible that, out of all the many hundreds of industries and services that go to make up the economic and social life of the nation, only half a dozen or so will need to be organized and directed nationally' (CSC, 168). Thus, while proposing to nationalize basic industries such as the post office, railway, coal-mining, banking and insurance, the Webbs emphasized that many other services closer to local life, such as gas, water and tramways, be provided by local governments and more daily goods produced by voluntary co-operative society. Here, the findings of Beatrice's earlier work on the British co-operative movement were maintained. Local governments and co-operative societies were supposed to create 'democracies of citizen-consumers', managing the whole processes of trade from 'the ownership and organization of the instruments of production' to the 'manufacture and... distribution' (CSC, 152). One of the main functions of such a pluralistically controlled economy was fair distribution: it was supposed to 'ensure the distribution of the inevitable surpluses that we know as rent and profit' so as to better 'satisfy the ascertained desires or demands of their members' (CSC, 152).

However, the Webbs did realize a defect in this consumer-oriented democracy. For it tended to treat producers' needs as secondary:

When permitted to exercise undisputed authority over their employees, they [Democracies of Citizen-Consumers] have tended, often out of mere thoughtlessness, to refrain from improving, and even to worsen the conditions of employment; and, more especially, to ignore any desire of the workers

concerned...for any personal freedom beyond what has become customary in capitalist employment. They have done practically nothing, any more than does the Capitalist System, to secure the willing co-operation of each section of workers in the running of the services. (CSC, 153)

The Webbs thus suggested that even under the socialized economy, the management of industry ‘need[s] to be complemented by Democracies of workers by hand and by brain’ (CSC, 154). Ever since studying the function of trade unionism in *Industrial Democracy*, they were aware that industrial democracy, having been practiced by trade unions, was indispensable for the improvement of producers’ personal freedom, as well as of the efficiency of the whole industry. The Webbs were aware, however, that the producers’ interests were also limited, often becoming ‘vested interests’ in conflict with the benefit of the whole economy. They were thus opposed to the claim for self-governing workshops, *i.e.*, the direct management of each work place by its own workers, proposed by contemporary guild socialists such as G.D.H. Cole and S.G. Hobson,⁴² for such workshops would have no motives for ‘innovations’ necessary for further efficiency and ever changing consumers’ demands of the community:

[I]n the practical administration of its own industry, a Democracy of Producers...is, by the very nature of its membership, perpetually tempted to seek to maintain existing processes unchanged, to discourage innovations, that would introduce new kinds of labour, and to develop vested interests against other sections of the community of workers. (CSC, 156)

A socialist alternative to the capitalist economy, therefore, must have been found in a

⁴² For an overview of British guild socialism, see Stears (1998).

good system of governance which could balance the needs and interests of both consumers and producers. I will not explore in detail their following (somewhat clumsy) argument for the organization of effective management. Suffice it to say that the Webbs' idea was again far from centralist. They proposed that each industry be administered by a team comprised of the manager and the representative of consumers and workers. An underlying conviction was that the central government should not intervene in the daily management of business. Its role should be limited to 'a general supervision and control, and the decision of its annual budget' (CSC, 120). They surely thought that elite professional bureaucrats did have some significant roles at this point: thus 'the disinterested professional expert ...invents, discovers, inspects, audits, costs, tests or measures – in supplement of the initiative in all these respects of the administration' (CSC, 198). But soon after the remark, the Webbs added that their roles are strictly limited, in that an expert would 'have no power of command, and no right to insist on his suggestions being adopted. His function is exhausted when report is made'. Despite some popular views, the Webbs did have a critical view of 'a bureaucracy' entrenched by the 'very growth of the government business' (CSC, 78). The pluralist perspective was thus pivotal in Webb's thought on social reform.⁴³

What is noteworthy is that, like their previous works, the pluralist perspective was combined with their moralistic ideas about democracy and self-development. '[T]he object of Democracy', the Webbs stated, 'is...the positive one of obtaining for all the people, in the fullest degree practicable, that development of personality, and that

⁴³ Indeed, it is noteworthy that G.D.H. Cole, who had critically regarded the Webbs as the protagonists of 'the "Selfridge" State' (Cole 1917, 122), later confessed, in his essay entitled 'Beatrice Webb as an economist', that he 'misunderstood Beatrice Webb, regarding her and Sidney as the quintessential representatives of bureaucratic collectivism, and brushing aside the large concessions made in *Industrial Democracy* and their other writings to the claims of the producers. ...[H]er natural sympathies were on the side of voluntary organization, of producers as well as of consumers...' (Cole ed. [1949]1985, 280)

enlargement of faculty and desire dependent on the assumption of responsibility and the exercise of will' (CSC, 100). 'Development of personality' was taken to accompany the growth of public spirit, itself realizable through individuals' active commitment to the social reforms the Webbs envisioned. They thus concluded that the 'spirit of service' would be attainable to individuals in a 'genuine Co-operative Commonwealth'. It was 'an advance in morality' by which 'those who have the gift for industrial organization should be as public-spirited in their work, and as modest in their claims to a livelihood, as is already normally the case among scientific workers, teachers in schools and colleges, the whole army of civil servants of every degree and kind, municipal officers of every grade, the administrators of the Co-operative Movement and the officials of the Trade Union world' (CSC, 351). In short, it may be said that their vision was to build a society composed of 'civil servants', in its literal sense. The ultimate aim of social reform was thus considered moral rather than mechanical: 'Socialist institutions within a community, exacting from the average man a higher level of morality than that of the Capitalist System...bring about an actual change of heart, and are thus the effective instruments of religion' (CSC, 352).

4. Conclusion

By illuminating the essence of both Bosanquet's and the Webbs' welfare thoughts on social reform, this chapter has argued that many of Hobson's and Hobhouse's critiques were not relevant, and that Bosanquet and the Webbs actually shared with Hobhouse a moralistic and pluralist perspective, at a general level. It was moralistic in the sense that they all saw the aim of social reform as the development of morality, which encourages individuals to contribute to others and the whole society. It was also pluralist in the sense that they all saw voluntary organizations in civil society, rather than central

government, as the key agencies for attaining such development. It is true that their approaches to social reform were different in some essential respects. While Bosanquet focused on the various conditions of individual wills, new liberals paid more attention to the external conditions affecting citizens. The Webbs were more policy-oriented than Hobhouse and were committed to the analysis of the empirical facts about social and institutional problems. Hobhouse was, as will be seen from the next chapter, also more inclined to ethical issues, such as the just distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, it seems possible to argue that, leaving aside their subjective assessment of others, their theories of social reform were mutually complementary rather than antagonistic. Bosanquet's focus on the personal level of welfare services towards the poor does not necessarily conflict with either Hobhouse's or the Webbs' focus on a more macro level of reformist plannings, while the Webbs' practice-minded approach would (theoretically) be complemented by both Hobhouse's and Bosanquet's philosophy-oriented thinking. In short, their thoughts all had something to contribute theoretically, particularly whenever one attempts to envision a welfare society based on the moral wills of individuals.

Historically speaking, their moralistic attitudes may be understood in the context of what historians describe as the Victorian intellectuals' persistent interests in 'character' (Collini 1985; Smout (eds.) 1990; Harris 1993). Indeed, though regarded as the significant thinkers in the development of the British welfare state, they would not have accepted the non-ethical aspect of the post-war welfare state regime, which Jose Harris terms 'Keynesian consumerism' (Harris 1990, 182) or 'private libertarianism' (Harris 2000, 36). This point seems to raise some further questions: to what extent their 'ethical welfare pluralism' was being shared by other thinkers at the turn of the century, and to what extent it was embodied in the practice of social reform and maintained up to the post-war period? These all seem to be the questions worth exploring for the future historical study of the British welfare state.

In the remainder of the thesis, however, I will turn my attention back to Hobhouse. After illuminating some commonalities of ideas among the leading thinkers, at the most general level, the discussion will turn now to what was unique about Hobhouse's welfare thought. The thesis will discuss that it can be found where Hobhouse contributed most to the arguments of the new liberalism: namely within his ethical and social theory. From the next chapter, I will argue that his ethical and social theory was not only systematically constructed, but was also something which could be considered theoretically more liberal than both Bosanquet's and the Webbs' core arguments.

Ch. 3 Harmony, Rights and Welfare: The Crux of Hobhouse's New Liberal Ethics

1. Introduction

When Hobhouse posited in his early works that the principle of collectivist social reform must be both liberal and ethical, in that it has to be based on liberal ethics aiming at the enhancement of individual morality, he was aware that he himself needed to answer several fundamental questions: what is liberal ethics in the first place, and where should individual morality be directed? In fact, Hobhouse thought the answers to these questions would be identical in the end: for the betterment of society, the moral consciousness of individuals should be directed towards the gradual internalization of liberal ethics. As seen in the previous chapter, Hobhouse saw conceptions such as justice, equality, freedom and humanity as its key elements. But he further pointed out that they need be given a logical ordering to avoid one unnecessarily cancelling or conflicting with others:

These conceptions represent certain sides or aspects of the moral consciousness of mankind; and if that moral consciousness has any sort of validity, it must be capable of constituting a harmonious ethical order in which all its claims find satisfaction. When treated in isolation, indeed, the principles of justice and benevolence, or liberty and authority, or any others that we like to take, are apt, as moralists know, to harden themselves into exclusive and often partially incompatible rules. (Hobhouse 1898, 140)

Thus, Hobhouse was aware that he needed to establish a theory of liberal ethics as a

guideline for the development of individual morality. This was what he aimed to do in his ethical and political thought after the 1900s.

This chapter examines the central characteristics of Hobhouse's liberal ethics which appeared in the texts such as *Liberalism* (1911), *Social Evolution and Political Theory* (1911), *The Rational Good* (1921) and *The Elements of Social Justice* (1922). Although ethical thought was central to Hobhouse's whole thinking, it has rarely been fully explored apart from Weinstein's important works (Weinstein 1996; Weinstein 2007).⁴⁴ Rather than Weinstein's genealogical approach which situates Hobhouse's ethics in a strand of utilitarianism, I will focus more on its internal structure in order to make it easier to see later how his liberal ethics relates to his discussions of distribution (chapter 4), political philosophy (chapter 5) and sociology (chapter 7).

It is noteworthy, though, that Hobhouse often referred to the nineteenth century liberals Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill and T.H. Green, when developing his own ideas. In a way, Hobhouse probably intended, by such references, 'to locate his brand of liberalism within a perceived tradition' (Freeden 1996, 195). By associating himself with these past thinkers, Hobhouse was able to argue that his political and ethical thought could be happily situated in the tradition of nineteenth century liberalism. Moreover, such references had the effect of making the unique characteristics of his own ethical theory more vivid. In this sense, it was what could be called a 'new' liberal ethics. This chapter thus also looks into how Hobhouse evaluated these past liberal thinkers when constructing a theory of new liberal ethics. In the first and second sections, exactly how Hobhouse clarified the concepts of 'inner harmony' and 'social harmony' through his critical inheritance of Bentham's and Mill's utilitarianism will be explored. The third section turns to how this key concept in his ethical theory – 'harmony' – was related to other concepts such as rights, welfare and the common good. The final section focuses

⁴⁴ Another exception is Seaman (1978). I will refer to his work in chapter 4.

on Hobhouse's critique of T.H. Green's ethical notions of rights and social recognition, highlighting that his critique was at a significant point irrelevant, in the sense that he missed a Kantian aspect of Green's rights theory. It will be argued that Hobhouse's view was much closer to Green's in ethical theory than he himself acknowledged.

2. Bentham and Inner Harmony

Liberal utilitarianism, established largely by Jeremy Bentham and modified by J.S Mill, was undoubtedly one of the most dominant intellectual groups in nineteenth century Britain. The consequentialist characteristic of utilitarianism was widely shared in the late nineteenth century by many thinkers (beyond ideological difference) from Henry Sidgwick to the Webbs (Morrow 2005, 123-124). Thinkers at that time were aware of its influence, and thus Hobson once stated, 'English people are habituated to conceive and express the "desired" and "the desirable" in terms of utility; and even philosophers, like the late Professor Green, who are stoutest in repudiating Utilitarianism, invariably return to that terminology to express their final judgment on a concrete moral issue' (Hobson 1902, 4-5).

Hobhouse was also influenced by utilitarianism to a large extent, being clearly aware of his indebtedness. Throughout his life, Hobhouse regarded politics not so much as the arena of power struggle among classes and parties, but as the activity of realizing the moral goals of society valuable for its members, that is, as 'subordinate to Ethics' (Hobhouse 1898, 143; Hobhouse 1922, 13-14). Hobhouse saw Bentham's utilitarianism as the forerunner among liberals of such a view, praising the 'principle of utility' – the maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain as the standard of actions and institutions – as '[having] the merit of clearly and avowedly subordinating politics to ethics, and attempting to apply a simple and comprehensive theory of the good as the

touchstone of all personal and social relations alike' (Hobhouse 1922, 14).

What Hobhouse thought especially highly of in Bentham's utilitarianism was that it included a strong logic of criticism directed against the conception of the absolute right of private property. Distinguishing the sphere of law from that of ethics, Bentham limited his argument on rights to the former, rejecting the conception of innate and unchangeable natural rights as lacking any ontological basis and even politically harmful because of its potential justification of anarchism (Schofield 2003). On this basis, Bentham argued that the moral goal of politics would be to realize the happiness of both the individual and society in a fair and maximizing way. Accordingly, the right of private property was taken to be a subordinate concept, being able to be legitimate only in so far as it enhances such happiness. Hobhouse found here a strong argument for defending social reform, stating that 'no more effective weapon could have been devised for an attack upon vested interests' (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 133). Thus, he proposed, the spirit of utilitarianism be re-appraised in this very period when the alleviation of poverty and unemployment through state intervention was on the agenda of social reform.

On the other hand, Hobhouse was also critical of Bentham on three points. The first point was aimed at Bentham's 'hedonism' which attributed happiness to the sum of pleasure. While agreeing with Bentham in seeing the moral purpose of politics as the realization of happiness of the individual and society, Hobhouse nonetheless emphasized the qualitative difference between happiness and pleasure. It is true that both of them are necessary for a good life, and that pleasure is a component of happiness. However, in contrast to pleasure, which can be described as a temporal feeling acquired through the fulfillment of a certain desire, happiness indicates a more long-standing and stable feeling, obtainable only through the pursuit of a consistent moral purpose of life:

Pleasure, both in ordinary language and in technical philosophic discussion, has generally meant a passing and partial condition, intense or languid as the case may be, but not depending for its intensity on any permanent conditions. The real value of life we feel to be deeper than this. We may feel a deep-seated unhappiness through the pleasure which is meant to distract us, and we may be sensible of an inward happiness triumphant over discomfort and pain. This happiness is not a matter of additions or subtractions, but rather of some stable relation in which we feel a profound and assured satisfaction (Hobhouse 1922, 17-18).

Hobhouse thus stressed that happiness could not be acquired by pleasure alone, because it constantly required the power of 'the Will' (Hobhouse 1921, 45), which can connect the chain of pleasure-bringing experiences and thereby give a consistent meaning to one's life. The Will is itself the mass of ideas, impulses and feelings integrated and organized by 'reason', making one's thought both logical and consistent. When the real meaning of life is given by the Will, one's mind acquires the condition of 'inner harmony' (Hobhouse 1921, 97), a stable condition of mind created by the integration of pleasure and experiences. Seeing happiness as being brought only by internal harmony, Hobhouse criticized Bentham's indifference to this distinction between happiness and pleasure. As will be seen below, the distinction let Hobhouse approach J.S. Mill, who combined happiness with the development of individuality.

The second and third points against Bentham were directed against his assumption of what constitutes the relationship between the individual and society. For Bentham, the moral legitimacy of actions and institutions should be determined by the criterion of the extent to which they promote the happiness of the whole of society. Bentham understood that such happiness would be an aggregate of the happiness of

each individual. Hobhouse found such an assumption problematic in two ways. First, it seemed to him to contain two mutually contradictory opinions with respect to the morality of individuals. Hobhouse argued that the principle of utility demanded of each person a certain altruistic moral consciousness which orders her to care about the happiness of other members of the community, as well as of her own. Such an order derives from Bentham's assertion that everyone should be counted for one and nobody for more than one. On the basis of this assertion, it becomes obligatory for everyone to regard others as the same human beings as oneself, having the equal entitlement to happiness and consideration. Hobhouse thus described utilitarianism as an ethical theory embodying the spirit of the Christ: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' (Hobhouse 1922, 18).

However, Bentham also regarded the happiness of society as consisting of the mere aggregate of individual happiness. The idea incorporates the logic of 'pure egoism' (Hobhouse 1922, 19), that is prioritizing the happiness of oneself, for which other individuals could become mere instruments. Of course, a certain action which reduces the happiness of the whole would be rejected as against the principle of utility. However, Bentham suggested that the restriction of such an action be performed not by the improvement of actors' morality, but by various external sanctions: legal, religious and social. For Bentham, it was a matter of institutional reform. The contradiction between 'altruistic' and 'egoistic' aspects remains untouched.

Hobhouse's third criticism was directed towards the relationship between 'individualistic' and 'socialistic' aspects of Bentham's utilitarianism (Hobhouse [1911]1994 (hereafter LIB), 32-3). The individualistic aspect endorses, as shown above, the pursuit of each individual's happiness. But the utilitarian principle also asserts that maximizing the happiness of 'the whole' is its more primary obligation. This might logically justify the happiness of the many at the expense of that of the few. Pointing out

the inconsistency, Hobhouse insisted that such a 'socialistic' assumption 'does not at bottom commend itself to our sense of justice' (LIB, 34).

To sum up, Hobhouse identified Bentham's utilitarianism as one of the core theoretical elements of liberalism: the promotion of social reform based on the endorsement of individual happiness. However, Hobhouse rejected the hedonistic aspect in Bentham's notion of happiness as well as its 'socialistic' viewpoint which prioritized the happiness of the whole over that of the individual. It was Mill's modified utilitarianism which Hobhouse found particularly useful for overcoming these problems in refining the ethical theory of liberalism.

3. J.S. Mill and Social Harmony

Democracy and Reaction (1904) constitutes a milestone in Hobhouse's work. In the book he makes his commitment to liberalism clear for the first time. It is noteworthy that in one of its footnotes, Hobhouse describes T.H. Green as J.S. Mill's 'true successor' (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 224n). Hobhouse praised Mill's *On Liberty* as having an 'imperishable value' (*ibid*, 223) for its recognition of the autonomous development of personality as the essence of well-being. Green's notion of liberty, 'the right of a man to make the best of himself' (*ibid*, 224n), Hobhouse contended was an inheritance from Mill's. Such a favorable opinion of Green shows a clear contrast with his severe criticism of the alleged statist and authoritarian aspect of British idealism.⁴⁵ What was it that Hobhouse found valuable in Mill and Green in common?

In short, it was their rejection of Benthamite hedonism by putting the development of 'personality' or 'moral character' at the center of their political theory. As Stefan Collini points out, 'one of the most distinctive features of the political

⁴⁵ See chapter 5.

argument of this period seems...to be the independent and overriding value assigned to the fostering of “character” as a primary aim of politics’ (Collini 1979, 28). In another paper, Collini further indicates that the idea of the moral perfection of ‘character’ dominated late-Victorian debate on social reform across the ideological spectrum, that is, from Alfred Marshall’s neo-classical economics through to Helen Bosanquet’s casework approach, to Sidney Ball’s early Fabian Socialism (Collini 1985, 31).⁴⁶

Hobhouse considered that one of the turning points for liberalism to redirect itself towards moralism was when Mill connected the idea of liberty to the ‘growth’ or ‘development’ of personality (LIB, 53).⁴⁷ For Bentham, liberty or freedom meant mere absence of external constraints,⁴⁸ and so its ethical priority was secondary to the maximization of happiness. Mill, on the other hand, while acknowledging the value of such a ‘negative’ aspect of liberty, regarded the concept as an essential means for the growth of personality. This led Mill to emphasize the intimate connection between liberty and personality, and so the value of liberty became more crucial. Hobhouse stated the importance of Mill’s notion of liberty as follows:

The foundation of liberty on this side, then, is the conception of thought as a growth ...flourishing in the movement of ideas as guided by experience, reflection and feeling... To find vent for the capacities of feeling, of emotion, of thought, of action, is to find oneself. ...The self so found has as the pivot of its life the power

⁴⁶ Richard Bellamy also argues: ‘Green’s moralism has often been ascribed to his reliance on German metaphysics and contrasted with the sound common sense of the English empirical tradition. Yet this attitude clearly belonged to the prevailing spirit of the age and was prominent in thinkers holding very different epistemological positions. Spencer and Mill, no less than Green, Gladstone, and Bright, all gave character pride of place among the citizenly virtues as (to quote Spencer) “the end which the statesman should keep in view above all other ends”’ (Bellamy (eds.) 1990, 133).

⁴⁷ Gladstone in turn was seen by Hobhouse as a liberal moralist in the realm of ‘practice’ (LIB, 51).

⁴⁸ Throughout the thesis, I will use liberty and freedom interchangeably.

of control. *To introduce some unity into life, some harmony into thought, action and feeling*, is its central achievement... Individuality [thus composed] is an element of well-being, and that not only because it is the necessary consequence of self-government, but because...the common life is fuller and richer for the multiplicity of types that it includes... (LIB, 53-4, my italics)

Here, Hobhouse summarizes Mill's perception of liberty from two perspectives: (1) liberty improves the personality of individuals, and (2) such a personality realizes the moral development of community as a whole. Indeed, that Mill based social progress on the free development of personality could lead to 'the organic conception of the relation between the individual and society' (LIB, 60). Besides this, Hobhouse understood that Mill had regarded liberty as an inner 'unity' as well as a medium between the individual and society, and thus the 'harmony' of one's thought, action and feeling is given attention. As shown before, such inner 'harmony' of individuals was what Hobhouse proposed as a substitute for Benthamite hedonism. It can thus be assumed that Hobhouse derived its basic idea from Mill's conception of liberty. His description of Mill, as 'span[ning] the interval between the old and the new Liberalism' (LIB, 51), can also be considered as his awareness of intellectual indebtedness.

Hobhouse was thus especially complementary to Mill among past liberal thinkers.⁴⁹ However, he also differentiated the new liberalism from Mill's liberal ethics by articulating crucial points of difference. Hobhouse's main criticism was aimed at Mill's formal distinction between 'self-regarding' and 'other-regarding action' (LIB, 58). From the fully organic conception of society, which assumed that the development of 'the whole' and 'parts' was possible, only when 'parts' mutually helped each other, Mill's social ontology seemed not very far from Benthamite atomistic individualism.

⁴⁹ In fact, on the issue of liberty, Hobhouse assesses 'Mill's argument cuts deeper than that of Green' (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 224n).

Hobhouse rather emphasized a mutual dependency between society and the individual. Society was seen to be able to develop by the growth of the personality of individuals, while the life, status and capacity of the individual were the products of various social relations surrounding oneself: 'By language, by training, by simply living with others, each of us absorbs into his system the social atmosphere that surrounds us' (LIB, 60). In order for each personality to be connected to social progress, then, it thus needs to develop in the direction of mutual harmony. Hobhouse claimed that not only inner 'harmony' of each individual alone, but 'social harmony' (Hobhouse 1922, 70) among different individuals should also be taken into account. The exploration of this 'social harmony' was nothing but 'the fundamental postulate of social ethics' (Hobhouse 1911, 86).

On the basis of this multi-layered conception of harmony, Hobhouse pointed out that Mill's argument had one more problem. Hobhouse thought highly of Mill's distinction of higher and lower pleasure and the identification of the former with 'social feelings' such as sympathy and altruistic spirits, thus admitting that '[t]he theory of harmony stands in close relation on the one side to the Utilitarian principle as developed by J.S. Mill' (Hobhouse 1921, 137). However, Mill, like Bentham, still maintained a type of hedonism, seeing the production of pleasure as the ultimate standard of action, and so Mill did not fully consider the another aspect, *i.e.*, actions directed to others regulated by 'reason' or the rational sense of moral obligation. It was a sense of fairness which ordered an agency to take into account the good of others as well as of herself, the sense derived from a logical inference regardless of whether it would eventually produce pleasure. Hobhouse claimed that human nature had such rational as well as emotional aspects: 'action is not determined solely by desire, nor desire by anticipation of pleasurable feeling, but a rational appreciation of an intrinsically good life plays its part, and this life is not only the basis of happiness but has its own distinctive character

as a harmonious development of human activities' (Hobhouse 1921, 141).

Thus, one's inner harmony and social harmony were mutually complementary, incorporating emotional and rational dimensions and making action pleasurable, logical and fair. While Mill's liberal utilitarianism also illuminated them to some extent, Mill did not proceed as far as to incorporate the rational aspect of human nature into his ethical principle.⁵⁰ This, Hobhouse argued, was the fundamental limit of liberal utilitarianism, the limit derived from its basing the ethical principle on the augmentation of pleasure. Just as Hobhouse described inner harmony as the product of the rational will, the social dimension of harmony must also be related to reason in addition to the feeling of happiness.

4. Concepts of Rights and Welfare

Having found Mill's argument lacking in the conception of the socially situated individual, able to choose an action on the basis of a rational recognition of moral obligation, Hobhouse attempted to construct an ethical theory of 'social harmony' as a substitute for the principle of 'pleasure'. A key concept in this attempt was 'rights'. Social harmony, on the rational side of human nature, was supposed to be possible only through the internalization and practices of moral rights and duties. Recognizing on the basis of a psychological observation that human nature more or less accompanies an ability to choose action rationally,⁵¹ Hobhouse argued that reason enables one to make a judgment from a view point of an 'impartial observer' (LIB, 61; Hobhouse 1911, 197).

⁵⁰ Hobhouse's interpretation of Mill is contestable, since Mill's utilitarianism clearly incorporated a view of human nature as rational, assessing the ways of maximizing pleasure. The difference in the views of human nature between Hobhouse and Mill should thus be found not in whether or not they posited reason at the core of their arguments, but in how they understood the rational character of human nature.

⁵¹ The understanding was based on his findings in *Mind in Evolution* (1901). See chapter 6.

The 'impartial observer' is a viewpoint of an inner 'other' predicting the consequence of an action and judging what kind of influence the action gives to others and whether it would interrupt their good. A moral right is defined as one's 'expectation' or 'claim' judged morally legitimate by this inner observer. Moral duties of others and of society, in contrast, reside in respecting and promoting these moral rights (Hobhouse 1911, 196-7). In this respect, a person's right has a moral power to regulate the action of others for protecting his or her own good, having a function similar to what Ronald Dworkin calls one's 'trump' (Dworkin 1984).

As we can assume from Hobhouse's approval of Bentham's criticism of natural rights, Hobhouse's notion of moral rights could not be the same as that of natural rights. Here, it is helpful to look at his characterization of an impartial observer:

If my claim is of right it is because it is sound, well grounded, in the judgment of an impartial observer. But an impartial observer will not consider me alone. He will equally weigh the opposed claims of others. He will take us in relation to one another, that is to say, as individuals involved in a social relationship. Further, if his decision is in any sense a rational one, it must rest on a principle of some kind; and again, as a rational man, any principle which he asserts he must found on some good result which it serves or embodies, and as an impartial man he must take the good of every one affected into account. That is to say, he must found his judgment on the common good. (LIB, 61)

It is revealed here that the ethical principle on which the impartial observer relies is 'the common good'. Hobhouse attributed the origin of moral rights to certain social relations and thus rejected the 'pre-social' (Freeden 1991, 27) notion of natural rights. He thus once remarked, 'there are no absolute or abstract rights of the individual independent of

and opposed to the common welfare' (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 124).

What did Hobhouse mean by the term 'common good' then? The term has recently been used by communitarian political philosophers as 'the good of a community' embodied in social conventions and cultural traditions. But Hobhouse was strongly against an idea that the state or the whole community should direct the promotion of good, understanding that a good should rather be related to individual freedom. Here, the concept of freedom contains double meanings, described as 'positive' and 'negative' freedom (Hobhouse 1922, 48-50). 'Positive' freedom, on the one hand, addresses self-determination based on the rational will's pursuit of inner harmony. Hobhouse argued that an individual would find a good in the combination of the feeling of happiness and the development of personality both brought by this self-determination. On the other hand, self-determination also requires 'negative' freedom as 'the absence of constraint from without' as its precondition. The promotion of the good by the coercion of the state should thus be rejected on the basis of these two notions of freedom:

If we refrain from coercing a man for his own good, it is not because his good is indifferent to us, it is...because it cannot be furthered by coercion. The difficulty is founded on the nature of the good itself, which on its personal side depends on the spontaneous flow of feeling checked and guided not by external restraint but by rational self-control. To try to form character by coercion is to destroy it in the making. Personality is not built up from without but grown from within... (LIB, 69)

Seeing the good as unable to be promoted by external coercion, Hobhouse carefully avoided putting a concrete content in the concept of the common good. As a result, the

common good was defined as neither the sum of individual goods nor another kind of the good separated from individuals, but as ‘the harmony of which each individual good is a constituent’ (Hobhouse 1922, 30). Here, the common good can be interpreted as showing the same idea as ‘social harmony’, since, as we have seen, Hobhouse defined the latter as the harmonious relationship of various individual goods. The realization of both the individual good (or inner harmony) and the harmonious relationship of various individual goods (the common good or social harmony) is possible only when individuals make rational, altruistic and co-operative relationships with others. On such an occasion, Hobhouse firmly stated, ‘he finds his own good in the common good’ (LIB, 61). He saw that such rational and altruistic relationships were the motor of ‘organic’ society, the ‘fundamental postulate’ of which was that human beings have innate capacities to develop their personalities in the harmonious relationship consciously created with others. No doubt there is an *a priori* optimistic belief in human nature here. But as we will see in chapter 6, Hobhouse saw that this belief has both empirical and philosophical bases, gradually recognized by the 1910s through his commitment to comparative psychology and the metaphysics of evolution.

On the basis of the formula ‘the common good = social harmony’, the claim and practice of moral rights and duties – along with the altruistic ‘social feelings’ – are situated as the central means for the realization of the common good. Thus, the quotation shown above continues, ‘[t]here are no absolute or abstract rights of the individual independent of and opposed to the common welfare. Rights are relative to the well-being of society, *but the converse proposition is equally true that the well-being of society may be measured by the degree in which their moral rights are secured to its component members*’ (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 124-5, my italics). Here again, ‘the well-being of society’ is not understood as something beyond individuals, but as based on the security of ‘their moral rights’. The common good is constituted by the good of

each individual, that is the development of personality. Moral rights, whose legitimacy is determined by its contribution to the common good, are also defined as the means and conditions for the development of personality:

Rights and duties, then, are conditions of social welfare, or as we define such welfare, of a life of harmony. ...Rights and duties thus rest on the same ethical foundation. The fulfillment of each personality is a constituent element of the common good, and the individual may justly claim the conditions necessary to it, the forbearance of others, and their aid in so far as the general conditions of the community allow. ...In general terms, a true right is an element in or condition of the real welfare of its possessor, which on the principle of harmony is an integral part of the common welfare. (Hobhouse 1922, 39, 41)

Here the 'life of harmony' and 'the fulfillment of personality' are redefined by the term 'welfare'. In short, Hobhouse understood moral rights as the necessary conditions for individual and social 'welfare', *i.e.*, the fulfillment of personality and social harmony. Hobhouse's rights theory may thus also be understood as the theory of 'welfare rights': here rights are the means for individual and social welfare. Based on the idea of social harmony, the term 'welfare' contained a positive dimension (the development of personality) as well as a social dimension (mutual support and consideration).

5. The Critique of T.H. Green's Theory of Rights

So far I have examined how 'rights' and 'welfare' were conceptually connected in Hobhouse's new liberal ethics of harmony. It is noteworthy that his argument had much in common with that of T.H. Green. Indeed, the organic conception of society Hobhouse

proposed had been shared by many idealist philosophers including Green, and the notion of the common good as the co-operative development of one's capacities, with the concept of moral rights as its means, was also presented by Green before Hobhouse. Indeed, when criticizing British idealism, Hobhouse tended to exonerate Green to a degree.⁵² Consequentially, Hobhouse's concept of welfare also had a substantially idealist characteristic in comparison with the one used by his new liberal counterpart, J.A. Hobson. For Hobson, 'welfare' (or 'well-being') addressed not only one's spiritual side, expressed as moral consciousness and intelligence, but also physical, physiological and cultural 'needs', expressed concretely as health and hygiene, food, clothing, shelter, recreation and so forth. As Michael Freeden notes, '[f]or Hobson, physical, moral and intellectual aspects of well-being were all closely interconnected' (Freeden 1978, 71). For Hobhouse, on the other hand, the essence of one's 'welfare' was, as we have seen, primarily spiritual, in that it was thought to be constituted by the feeling of happiness, the development of personality and the co-operative relationship with others built by one's moral consciousness. This idea corresponds to Green's separation of 'good things of the soul' from 'the good things of the body', regarding the former as the source of the common good while the latter as merely relatively good.⁵³ Hobhouse himself recognized that his ethical principle of harmony has much in common with Green's ethics of 'self-realization' (Hobhouse 1921, 141). In his assessment, then, 'T.H. Green' was one 'in whom we get most of the cream of Idealism and least of its sour milk' (Hobhouse 1922, 43n).

However, Hobhouse also criticized Green's idealist ethics in two ways. First, he argued that while emphasizing the role of the moral and rational will of human beings,

⁵² See, for instance, Hobhouse (1918, 118-123).

⁵³ Thus, referring to 'a conception of good things of the soul as having a value distinct from and independent of the good things of the body', Green saw the former as 'the only good which is really common to all who may pursue it, ...that which consists in the universal will to be good'. Green ([1883]1997, sect. 243, 244).

Green regarded the feeling of pleasure as having only secondary importance. Identifying the good with inner harmony between reason and feeling, Hobhouse saw Green's view as one-sided as that of hedonistic utilitarianism, though in an opposite direction: 'The good is nothing if it does not appeal to feeling, just as feeling is nothing if there is no object to excite it' (Hobhouse 1921, 142). Secondly, Hobhouse noted that Green's self-realization often seemed to assume 'too optimistic a solution of fundamental ethical difficulties' of the relationship between the good of society and that of the individual. In actual society, Hobhouse emphasized, 'harmony' between society and the individual could only be partial, often putting an individual (or a group of individuals) in the situation of 'self-sacrifice' for the sake of the maintenance of social order. Hobhouse regarded Green's apparently optimistic assumption as based on the Hegelian metaphysics, which saw the actual world as the representation of 'the spiritual principle'. Instead, he suggested looking at the various external conditions which bring 'disharmonies' to certain individuals in actual society (Hobhouse 1921, 145). As will be explored in chapter 5 and 6, notwithstanding some notable misunderstandings of idealist philosophy, Hobhouse did have a more realist ontology than idealists such as Ritchie and Bosanquet, leading him to criticize idealist metaphysics as confusing the ideal and the actual.

The realist aspect of Hobhouse's ontology led to the critique of the crux of Green's rights theory, *i.e.*, the notion of 'social recognition' as a requirement for a right to exist introduced in *Principles of Political Obligation*. Recent scholars point out the subtlety this concept embodies. According to Rex Martin, for instance, 'social recognition' was used by Green to mean an authoritative acknowledgement or affirmation within a society, judging a certain action or treatment as desirable or something that should be given permission (Martin 2001). Darin Nesbitt, in turn, focuses on Green's distinguishing rights produced at a political level by the recognition

of the state and thereby institutionalized as a legal right, from those produced at a more informal level by a mutual recognition in various social interactions (Nesbitt 2001). Similarly, Peter Nicholson points out that Green was aware of 'implicit' moral rights produced by a mutual recognition of personality, even under the lack of legal protection (Nicholson 1990, 83-94). To sum up these interpretations, Green's idea of social recognition may be defined as an awareness of one's certain moral rights, by not necessarily all, but rather by a certain number of the members of a community around him/her.

What Hobhouse could not accept was that Green seemed to attribute the legitimacy of one's moral rights to this subjective 'recognition' of others virtually all the time. With a conviction that 'the community may misjudge the common good' (Hobhouse 1922, 40n), Hobhouse argued that 'Green is apt to confuse the social character of rights with the recognition of rights' (Hobhouse 1918, 118). His concern was that, by confusing the concept of the common good with that of recognition in the generation of rights, the former might lose its universalistic character and be reduced to merely a good of a particular community. Hobhouse thus did not accept the idea that a right subordinating to the principle of the common good *also* depends on the recognition of others or of the whole community. He instead proposed to keep the concepts clearly separate. 'If any one can prove that some specific condition is in fact requisite to the realization of a good life', Hobhouse asserted, 'then that condition is scientifically demonstrated to be a right' (Hobhouse 1918, 120). He thus stressed the existence of 'a true moral right' as a right 'justifiable by relation to the common good, whether it is actually recognized or not' (Hobhouse 1922, 40). These statements seem to reflect his Millite interest in the protection of individual freedom from the intervention of society, as well as his Kantian belief in a universal moral law existent beyond the concrete actuality of nature and mind. Hobhouse found in Green's confusion of the

common good and the social recognition a danger of weakening the strength to criticize the actual world from the viewpoint of such a universal moral law. While highly esteeming Green's provision of useful ethical concepts for social reform, he remained critical of the latter's apparently Hegelian metaphysical presupposition. The following statement represents Hobhouse's ambivalent attitude towards Green:

His [Green's] living interest was in practical life, the strength of his grasp lay upon the hard problems of social reform. He was at best in working through practical issues to the principles guiding them. As he receded from these principles to the ultimate theory of ethics and metaphysics, his grasp grew weaker and his meaning is often lost in obscurity and confusion. (Hobhouse 1918, 122)

The relevance of Hobhouse's critique, however, needs a more careful examination. First of all, Hobhouse here does not seem to attach enough importance to a staunchly Kantian aspect of Green's ethical theory presented in *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Drawing on Kant's conception of categorical imperative, Green insisted that both 'the good will' and 'the common good' be considered 'the unconditional good' or a 'universal law' beyond the concreteness of the actual world:

If, on being asked for an account of the unconditional good, we answer either that it is the good will or that to which the good will is directed, we are naturally asked further, what then is the good will? ...[W]e say that it is the will to conform to a universal law for its own sake or because it is conceived as a universal law; for the recognition of the authority of such a universal law must be founded on the conception of its relation to an unconditional good. (Green [1883]1997, sect. 194.)

In fact, Green clearly separated the question of the actual and of the ideal, thereby refusing hedonistic utilitarianism, which Green argued had regarded what is *desirable* as the acquisition of what a person *desires*, *i.e.* pleasure. Drawing on Kant, Green instead argued that only the acquirement of a moral will or moral character, rather than of mere pleasure, was an ethical end:

By a moral ideal we mean some type of man or character or personal activity, considered as an end in itself. But, according to the theory of Hedonistic Utilitarianism, no such type of man or character or personal activity is an end in itself at all. ...[T]his ideal becomes, in Kant's language, an imperative, and a categorical imperative. It will command something to be done universally and unconditionally, *irrespective of whether there is in any one, at any time, an inclination to do it.* (Green [1883]1997, sect. 194, 196, my italics)

Consequently, Green well separates two conceptual dimensions when dealing with rights: while recognition is surely taken to be necessary for making and acknowledging a right, such a right a person comes to have and maintain in an actual community cannot yet be said to satisfy ethical righteousness, for the righteousness of a right can only be judged from the independent criterion of the common good. The extent of the goodness of a particular community could thus be judged not from whether its members obey what the community imposes on them, but from whether they endeavor to possess and act on the moral will directed towards the common good, *i.e.*, the harmonious development of capacities together with others. Green saw that the promotion of the common good could be realized when members of a community take into account the good of other members and of the whole community. It is a moment when they find their own 'interests in the good of those other persons, interests which cannot be

satisfied without the consciousness that those other persons are satisfied' (Green [1883]1997, sect. 199). Thus, Green understood that a social relation may become an ethical relation only when the recognition of a right acquires moral legitimacy by its connection to the universal principle of the common good. In such an occasion, a social relation between individuals might rightly stand against authority produced by actual laws or customs: 'Whatever force may be employed in maintaining custom or law, however "the interest of the stronger"...may be concerned in maintaining it, only some persuasion of its contribution to a recognized common good can yield that sort of obedience to it which...forms the social bond' (Green [1883]1997, sect. 202).

Thus, notwithstanding Hobhouse's critique, Green clearly distinguished the dimension of recognition and that of the common good in his discussion of rights: while the recognition thesis was posited as a theory about how one comes to have rights, the principle of the common good was postulated separately as the justification for particular rights, that is any particular right has to satisfy the criterion that it contributes to the common good.

In fact, Hobhouse's own theory, which we have explored in this chapter, was not as distant from Green's as he himself thought, for we can now see that Hobhouse's notion of 'an impartial observer' has exactly the same function as Green's idea of social recognition.⁵⁴ Like Green, Hobhouse insisted that in order for a moral right to exist, it must be *recognized* by such an internal observer; and like Green, Hobhouse saw that the moral legitimacy of the observer's recognition resides in its moral will towards the

⁵⁴ In this respect, I agree with Peter Nicholson, who argues: 'Hobhouse is not in fact as far removed from Green's position as he believes. ...Hobhouse's requirement of "proof" [of the condition for the common good] is itself an instance of what Green means by social recognition; it involves shared forms of argument and shared moral values, and plainly these are relative to particular societies.' But I do not agree with his final sentence 'these are relative to particular societies', for it seems to me that both Green and Hobhouse base the idea of recognition on the common good as a universal moral law rather than on conventional ideas in a particular society. See (Nicholson 1990, 92).

common good, *i.e.*, the harmonious development of personality. A difference remains, however, in the fact that while Green considered one's rights always requiring the recognition of others, and thus taking the generation of rights to be innately relational, Hobhouse thought that recognition of rights could be complete even within the moral judgment of one person, thus relatively showing a more individualistic standpoint than that of Green:

Moral action is action in conformity with an inward principle, an action that the agent considers to be right and performs *because he believes it to be right*. ...[W]hat morality will teach him is that the law which is right for him must in principle be a law of universal application, holding for all men similarly situated....Nevertheless, he is in the end to stand by his judgment of the nature of the common good and the means by which it is to be realized. (Hobhouse 1918, 92, my italics)

It may thus be concluded that though Hobhouse's critique of Green's rights theory was somewhat partial by its neglect of a Kantian element in the latter's principle of the common good, still there was a good reason for Hobhouse to have an impression that Green, by putting social recognition as a pre-requisite of rights, unnecessarily subordinated ethics to the actual social relation.⁵⁵

The idealist conception of rights was, however, only a part of what Hobhouse criticized in the philosophical movement. In *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (1918), he built a systematic critique of this philosophical group in a more comprehensive manner. In order to properly identify the intellectual distance between

⁵⁵ If we attempt to defend Green against Hobhouse, we might ask whether a right can really be said to exist if no one but only its claimant believes it exists.

As we will see in chapter 5, a similar difference of opinion can be seen between Hobhouse and Bosanquet in their arguments of the state.

his new liberalism and British idealism, it is necessary to carefully examine this text, which will be undertaken in chapter 5.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Hobhouse's ethical theory of 'harmony' was constructed on his critical inheritance of Bentham and Mill's utilitarianism and Green's idealism. To some, it may look like a result of eclectic choices of some theoretical elements, rather than the proper understanding and integration of utilitarianism and idealism. Considering a seemingly obvious gap between his emphasis on the inevitability of 'disharmonies' in the actual world and his putting 'harmony' at the center of ethical thought, Hobhouse's liberal ethics does seem to contain theoretical ambiguities.

Nevertheless, Hobhouse did maintain a clear standard and philosophical demeanor when integrating the elements of these schools. In short, it was a kind of 'individualistic' attitude, attempting to realize the integration of individual happiness and social order not by the coercion and interference of the state and the community, but primarily by the autonomous expression and organic relation of the morality of individuals. Hobhouse inherited only those aspects from utilitarianism and idealism which could theoretically reinforce this point. An 'individual', however, was never considered an atomistic being, but essentially a social and moral being, directed towards interaction with others. This focus on the autonomous development of individual morality was the very essence of Hobhouse's new liberal ethics.

Two points can be raised as to the relation with other chapters. First, while previous chapters illuminated several significant commonalities between Hobhouse and the Webbs on the issue of social reform, it should be noted that at the level of ethical theory, Hobhouse's view explored in this chapter had a notable difference from that of

the Webbs, especially of Sidney. As Mark Bevir demonstrates, there had been a considerable degree of ethical collectivism in Sidney's socialism throughout his life, consistently emphasizing the duties rather than rights and happiness of individuals to discharge their social services towards the greater whole (Bevir 2002). While Hobhouse also talked about one's social duties to others and the community, his organic conception of harmony posited that such duties must also keep a balance with the fulfilment and maintenance of one's rights and happiness for the autonomous development of personality. Hobhouse would have felt uneasy with Sidney Webb's following more ethical collectivist statement: '[t]he perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the great social machine. We must abandon the self-conceit of imagining that we are independent units, and bend our jealous minds, absorbed in their own cultivation, to this subjection to the higher end, the Common Weal' (Webb 1889, 58). Hobhouse would have criticized such a statement as making the individual too subservient to the community. Thus, while Sidney Webb thought that society determines what the individual should do, Hobhouse maintained that society should be sustained and can develop only by the autonomous development of the personalities of individuals.

Secondly, Hobhouse's ethics of harmony proposed not only where one's morality should be directed, but also provided a theoretical basis for social reform aimed at securing material conditions for the development of morality. More concretely, on the basis of new liberal ethics explored in this chapter, Hobhouse further constructed a principle of distributive justice which all the agencies committed to social reform, such as the state, the market and voluntary organizations, ought to follow. Indeed, his theory of distribution was another important contribution to the new liberal thought on social reform from an ethical perspective. Its characteristics will now be explored.

Ch. 4 Property, Function and Justice: Hobhouse's Theory of Distribution

1. Introduction

The previous chapter investigated the core elements of Hobhouse's new liberal ethics. In terms of its theoretical relation to his thought on social reform, examined in the first chapter, a direction towards which individual morality should be developed was indicated. Social reform was seen to be the means for the enhancement of individual character towards citizenly morality, which was understood to be the internalization and practice of inner and social harmony. In this sense, Hobhouse's theoretically sophisticated conception of morality underpinned new liberal proposals for collectivism social reform.

There was, however, another way in which his ethical theory was linked to the question of social reform: by way of the issue of wealth redistribution. From the beginning of his intellectual career in the 1890s, Hobhouse continuously showed an interest in this issue. Indeed, as we saw in the first chapter, the proposed association of wealth redistribution with the enhancement of liberal morality was the reason why his overall thought should be situated in the new liberal camp.

Considering the amount of attention Hobhouse devoted to the issue of distribution, however, there has been a curious lack of its exploration in existing literature. Attention has often been paid by historians to J.A. Hobson in the context of his welfare macro-economics.⁵⁶ Stefan Collini is an exception in giving a substantial amount of consideration to Hobhouse's views on distribution. But his assessment is somewhat negative. Thus, compared with the present distributive theories, such as of John Rawls,

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Backhouse (2010).

Collini concludes that Hobhouse's is 'not a pure example of such a theory' because of its lack of theoretical clarity and comprehensiveness (Collini 1979, 136).

Against such a view, this chapter reappraises Hobhouse's theory of distribution, the characteristic of which can well be understood when associated with the new liberal ethics examined in the previous chapter. The philosophical foundation of new liberal ethics provides the rationale why the principle of the common good (or social harmony) requires firm wealth redistribution for its realization. Hobhouse's distributive theory thus theoretically bridged new liberal ethics and the practice of collectivist social reform.

2. The Fabian Theory of Rent and *The Labour Movement*

In his preface to *The Labour Movement*, R.B. Haldane stated, '[i]ts writer belongs to a school which is rapidly growing, a school the leading tenet of which is that the problem of today is distribution and not production' (Hobhouse 1893 [hereafter LM], xi). As the statement indicates, Hobhouse in the 1890s already showed an interest in the issue of distribution, being aware of a necessity to set a normative standard as to how wealth should be distributed among different producers. In this early stage, he owed the outline of his analysis to the Fabian economic theory of rent, considering the main source of wealth to be the 'rent', or what he called 'surplus', generated by the gap of productive power between the margins (that is the least productive agencies) and others in every factor of production (LM, 55-79). In this theory, workers at the marginal position of a particular industry were considered to receive an income just enough to reimburse the exertion of their labour (otherwise they would not be able to continue their work). A total amount of wealth created in the industry would then always be more than that required for the minimum reimbursement to all workers. Hobhouse defined surplus as

the remaining wealth after the deduction of this minimum reimbursement, pointing out that every kind of economic activity produces a certain degree of it.⁵⁷

As to the normative question of how the surplus should be distributed, however, Hobhouse's view was subtly different from that of the Fabians. In order to see their theoretical difference clearly, it is worth briefly investigating the main characteristics of the Fabian theory of rent, by addressing in particular two leading thinkers of the Fabian Society: Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw.

It was Sidney Webb's article of 1887, 'The Rate of Interest and the Laws of Distribution', which marked the beginning of the Fabian interpretation of rent. Webb himself did not intend to attack the capitalist system at this stage (as noted in the second chapter) and was somewhat reluctant to draw any normative views from his analysis of rent. But his theorization of interest and profits provided other Fabians with the logic of extending the Ricardian and Henry Georgian critique of land rent to other forms of incomes. In this article, Webb refused the neo-classical assumption that the saving and the subsequent supply of capital were dependent on the rate of interest. Indeed, Webb observed, economic history had always seen 'the other motives for thrift, which led, for instance, the French peasant up to 1871 and the Maltese cottager up to 1886 to hoard metallic currency without the inducement of interest at all' (Webb 1888, 190). Instead of capital supply being induced by the rate of interest, Webb saw that it was mainly the supply of temporarily monopolized fixed capitals, such as factories, machines, ships, etc., which had often enabled its possessors to demand interest and profits as apparently legitimate rewards. The central thrust of Webb's argument was that this 'temporary monopoly' of capitals was usually neither due to capitalists' own effort nor ability, but to mere 'opportunity and chance' they had happened to enjoy by luck. He thus saw

⁵⁷ 'The existence of this surplus depending on the inequalities in human and non-human nature, it must remain in existence as long as human industry persists' (LM, 60)

incomes drawn from the fixed capitals as forms of unearned income. Calling them ‘rent of opportunity’, Webb concluded,

‘Mere priority and proximity are constantly found to be as effective guards of *temporary* monopoly as a patent or a favorable site. The profits of business depend largely upon seizing those frequently recurring separate advantages; and though this may be claimed as an element of business ability, it is so much a matter of chance that many of these “windfalls” must be put down as adventitious advantages of the possession of capital, in a certain form, at a particular point of time and space. This “rent of opportunity” forms a considerable part of “economic interest”’. (Webb 1888, 203)

It is noteworthy, however, that Webb did not take ‘rent of opportunity’ as the sole factor of rent. He indeed retained neo-classical economist F.A. Walker’s concept of ‘rent of ability’,⁵⁸ understanding that the generation of rent was due not only to opportunity but also to the difference of ability among employers and workers. Webb indeed praised the latter type of rent, contrasting ‘one great class’ which ‘contribute[s] to social production’ by its “rent of ability” and “economic wages”, with ‘other persons’ who ‘live on tribute of some kind, usually...upon economic rent or interest’ (Webb 1888, 200). It may be said that such a view was sustained by Webb’s meritocratic convictions that the

⁵⁸ Indeed, Webb’s motive was not to abandon Walker’s theory of distribution, but to attempt to supplement it by offering a fuller analysis on interest: ‘President Walker, indeed, holds that the doctrine of “rent of ability” itself furnishes the last link that was wanting to the completion of the theory [of wealth distribution], and that it “yields, in conjunction with well-approved theories of rent, interest, and wages, a complete and consistent body of doctrine regarding the distribution of wealth...” While fully accepting this statement...I venture to think that some further development of the doctrine of interest on capital will be necessary before the problem of income distribution is completely solved.’ (Webb 1888, 188) Walker’s article which Webb here quotes is: ‘The Source of Business Profit’, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 1 (1887).

differential reward based on ability is morally legitimate, and that industrial progress depends on appropriate rewards for competent employers and workers, as well as on weeding out incompetent, or ‘parasitic’, industries.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) also theorized ‘rent of ability’. Unlike Webb, however, Shaw refuted the argument which regards the reward based on ability as desirable. Although entering the Fabian Society as a Marxist, Shaw soon discarded the labour theory of value and adopted marginalist theory from the middle of the 1880s, as a result considering ‘rent of ability’ to be determined by the supply and demand of the market (Bevir 1992). Shaw associated the view with his critique of capitalism, seeing the kinds of ability demanded by the capitalist economy as often lacking social value.⁵⁹ He also had a somewhat sociological view, namely that the main causes of ‘rent of ability’ were economic and educational inequalities derived from birthplace, and that it would disappear as the equalization of society proceeds (Ricci 1969, 114-115). In short, Shaw applied the logic of criticizing ‘rent of opportunity’ implied in Webb’s argument, to ‘rent of ability’.

Such variation within the Fabian theory of rent resulted in different normative views as to redistribution. Although opening a way to regard interest and profits as unearned income, Webb at some point of the early 1890s turned away from the abstract theorization of rent and started to endorse the principle of national minimum in the context of his historical studies of trade unionism and local government.⁶⁰ Shaw, on the other hand, maintained the Jevonian-cum-egalitarian standpoint and supported the equalization of income through the expropriation and redistribution of rent by the state.

Turning back to Hobhouse, it is possible to say first that his normative proposition

⁵⁹ ‘[I]t may be said that our capitalists pay men of ability very highly to devote their ability to the service of Capitalism; and the moment society begins to outgrow the capitalistic system, it is no longer permissible to assume that ability devoted to the service of Capitalism is serviceable to society, or, indeed, that ability which can only flourish in that way is, from the social point of view, ability at all.’ (Shaw 1909, 13)

⁶⁰ See also chapter 2, sect. 3.

at the time of *The Labour Movement* was closer to that of Shaw, in the sense that Hobhouse also suggested the gradual expropriation and redistribution of surplus by the state.⁶¹ What is noteworthy, however, is that his proposition was not based on moral condemnation of interest and ability. In contrast to Webb, for instance, Hobhouse admitted that interest was legitimate remuneration for the ‘services that have been rendered’ by capitals (LM, 74). The reason why he still endorsed public control of interest was somewhat practical. It was because, Hobhouse observed, ‘a great quantity of Rent is practically indistinguishable from Interest on Capital’ (LM, 75): even though particular interest might be just as a payment to useful capital, once its recipient dies or hands over his/her property rights to someone else, typically his/her children, the interest becomes ‘unearned’ for the new recipients.⁶²

Thus, while criticizing inheritance as unearned, Hobhouse distinguished it from capital, interest and the income based on ability in principle. In short, there was room in his argument, already apparent in *The Labour Movement*, to affirm a certain unequal distribution of wealth. As will be seen below, this particular point later became more theoretically sophisticated, exhibiting a clear contrast with the egalitarian viewpoint of Shaw.

After years of commitment to the empirical studies of psychology and sociology and the issues of foreign policy and imperialism, Hobhouse’s interest in distribution reappeared in the 1910s, this time evoked by the so-called ‘Liberal Reform’ undertaken

⁶¹ ‘We may indicate the principles on which the problem of Rent and Interest as a whole may be, and probably soon will be, dealt with by the State, in furtherance of the collective control of industry and its products by the community, which...is the underlying idea of all forms of the Labour movement.’ (LM, 76)

⁶² ‘If capital is first created by human skill and forethought, the heirs of capital may be wise or foolish, able or incompetent, but as long as their capital stands in their names they will get the same rate of interest proper. In the case, then, of the majority of the rent and interest paid by society no compensatory social services need be rendered in return.’ (LM, 74)

by the Liberal government from 1906 to 1914.⁶³ Developing his ideas in such texts as *Liberalism* (1911), 'The Right to a Living Wage' (1913), 'Equality of Income' (1913) and 'The Historical Evolution of Property' (1913), he finally systematized a theory of distribution in *The Elements of Social Justice* (1922). There were three key concepts continuously appearing in these texts, closely linked together and sustaining the theory as a whole: 'property', 'function' and 'justice'. From the next section, then, each of them will be explored in turn, with an attempt to identify their conceptual interrelationship.

3. Property

In 'The Historical Evolution of Property', Hobhouse examined the necessity of private property from a philosophical as well as historical perspective. What should be noted first is that he compares Plato's and Aristotle's views of private property and considers the latter to be philosophically superior. Against Plato's 'Communism' which had rejected private property as leading to greed of the individual and collapse of social unity, Aristotle had had 'the conception that property is among the external good things which are necessary to the full expression of personality' (Hobhouse 1913a [hereafter HEP], 24). On the basis of Aristotle's view, Hobhouse posited that a morally good life realizes the autonomous development of personality, considering a community constituted by individuals having such lives 'the true community' (HEP, 24). The good as the development of personality pointed to the enhancement of individual's various internal capacities. In his own words, it is 'a development proceeding by the widening of ideas, the awakening of the imagination, the play of affection and passion, the strengthening and extension of rational control' (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 63). Private

⁶³ On the details of the Liberal Reform in this period, see Hay (1975).

property was considered indispensable for all these aspects of developing personality. Since '[m]an cannot live without material things', Hobhouse argued, one's life without these disposable things cannot help being a 'life...dependent upon...others' (Hobhouse HEP, 24). He thus regarded private property as 'permanent means of subsistence or enjoyment', being thus 'an integral element in an ordered life of purposeful activity' (HEP, 8-9).

The statement does not, however, mean that Hobhouse gave an unconditional affirmation to private property. In fact, from Aristotle, Hobhouse further drew two 'Radical' arguments (HEP, 28). First, if private property is a necessary condition for a good life, the existing unequal distribution which concentrates wealth on a limited number of people and leaves the majority without any substantial property, must be seen to be in a situation far from that of 'the true community'. Provided such a moral community is where all its members are able to have good lives, more equal distribution of wealth must be secured for its realization. Secondly, if the rationale for private property resides in its role as the means for the development of personality, any form of private property which prohibits such development must be morally rejected. Indeed, Hobhouse observed that too much private property not only has a negative effect on the possessor's morality, but also embodies a power of controlling others and so prohibiting their development. He pointed out that under the capitalist economy, the wealth of propertied classes, such as land-owners, entrepreneurs and financiers had caused 'the entire dependence of the masses on land and capital which belong to others' (HEP, 21). While propertied classes can expect regular incomes in the forms of rent, profit and interest, many ordinary workers cannot help obeying any harsh working conditions out of the fear of unemployment. Observing the unequal structure of distribution under the capitalist economy, Hobhouse conceptually divided wealth into 'property for power' and 'property for use': the former is those incomes such as rent, profit and interest used

for controlling the life and employment of workers and their families; the latter is those used for developing possessors' personalities. On the basis of this distinction, Hobhouse concluded that one of the essential aims of social reform was 'securing "property for use" to the individual, and retaining "property for power" for the democratic state' (HEP, 31).

Two questions arise from this. First, it should be noted that the distinction of 'property for use' and 'property for power' is apparently based on the distinction according to how acquired wealth is being used. Hobhouse, however, also seems to be criticizing, somewhat in contrast to what he argued in *The Labour Movement*, incomes such as profit and interest, as well as land rent, according to the 'source' of wealth. The question is: what did Hobhouse think about the relationship between the 'source' of wealth and its 'use'? Secondly, considering that the concept of 'property for use' is relied upon as the logic for the redistribution of wealth from the rich to ordinary workers and the poor, it should be further examined concretely to what extent redistribution should take place. His views on 'function' and 'justice' give answers to these questions.

4. Function

Hobhouse did recognize, in fact, that the distinction of wealth according to its 'source' is as important as that according to its 'use'. Moreover, he regarded them as closely related to each other. Hobhouse distinguished the sources of wealth on the basis of whether the activity which had produced wealth was 'functional' or not, that is, whether the activity had rendered a 'service' to the whole society apart from the material wealth itself: 'the first business of a sound economic system is to secure work that is good and useful to society, not work that is pretentious or bad. The man who is doing good work,

whether he is producing food which will nourish and not poison, or a newspaper which will tell the truth and not distort it, is performing one of the thousand functions necessary to the life of society (Hobhouse 1913b, 68). A 'functional' activity thus gives legitimacy to the wealth it produces, whereas the wealth produced by an activity not performing any service to society is morally rejected. An example of the latter is a 'mere speculator who enters into the business of buying and selling with a view to the chances of the market'. Hobhouse critically observed that such a speculator 'fulfill[s] no function, but only...aggravate[s] fluctuations of prices which makes the reward of the producers the more uncertain' (Hobhouse 1922, 170).

The moral legitimacy of the source of wealth thus derives from a function it accompanies. From here, Hobhouse asserted that a person who produces wealth by undertaking a function has a legitimate property right to that wealth. He draws on John Locke's theory of labour value here:

[W]e find in Locke the basis of a view which is at once a justification of property, and a criticism of industrial organization. ...[Locke argues] in a society where men produce for exchange, labour is a social function, and the price of labour its reward. Locke's doctrine would then amount to this, that the social right of each man is to a place in the economic order, in which he both has opportunity for exercising his faculties in the social service, and can reap thereby a reward proportionate to the value of the service rendered to society. (HEP, 27)

Workers who are in the situation of poverty can therefore be said to be refused the wealth they are legitimately entitled in two ways. First, from an Aristotlean view, they are prevented from enjoying an opportunity to develop their personalities. Secondly, from a Lockean view, they are denied legitimate remuneration for their functional

labour. On the basis of these views, Hobhouse strongly criticized current industrial society which had failed to provide 'honest and industrious workers' and their families with 'a primary condition of healthy social life'. It was not only 'fundamentally an ill-organized society' but also 'one which...is dead to its responsibilities'. (Hobhouse 1913b, 64)

Hobhouse thus gave legitimacy to the possession of wealth from both its 'use', related to the 'development of personality', and its 'source', related to 'function'. Now the question arises: how did he theoretically relate these two aspects? Three perspectives should be taken into account for its explanation: capital, the state and the organic conception of society.

First, while criticizing those incomes acquired by entrepreneurs and financiers as 'property for power', Hobhouse nevertheless recognized a moment when capital becomes socially useful. Personal initiative and enterprise led by entrepreneurs would often bring innovation to industry, and investment would provide the capital necessary for an effective undertaking of such 'functional' enterprise (Hobhouse 1922, 176-177; Hobhouse 1912, 122). A wise investment furthermore would direct an industry toward the production of a socially useful good when it is deficient (Hobhouse 1922, 170). These indicate that Hobhouse did not wholly reject the capitalist system of industry. In other words, he found the cause of the power relation existent among social groups not in the working of capital *per se*, but in the extreme form of income inequality. He thus thought that when the working class manages to weaken the control of the propertied classes by possessing the amount of wealth sufficient for the autonomous development of personality, and when the propertied classes in turn undertake socially useful enterprises, capital then becomes 'functional' for its effective augmentation of socially useful wealth.

Secondly, Hobhouse recognized that the state also has a certain right to property

thanks to the functions it performs of use to its citizens. The state has a function of securing 'social freedom' (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 43), that is, personal freedom under the limitation of the Millite 'harm principle', by the enforcement of law. The state, moreover, manages to improve the quality of the lives of its members by social and labour legislation (Hobhouse 1911, 166-184). He also points out that society, as well as the individual, contributes to the production of wealth to a great extent. All those social aspects, such as the increment of productivity by the division of labour; the control of supply and demand through the market; the accumulation of knowledge and infrastructure of which individuals can make use, form the 'social' basis of wealth (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 90). In short, '[t]here is a social element in value and a social element in production' (*ibid*, 92). Hobhouse thus asserted that securing a financial basis for undertaking these functions by taxation would be a legitimate right of the state.⁶⁴

Thirdly, the concept of 'function' was related to Hobhouse's idea of personality development by way of his organic conception of society mentioned in the previous chapter. It sees that an individual, never existing away from others and society, is able to form and develop her personality only when she receives direct and indirect support from them. On the basis of the insight into such mutual dependency, or organic relation of the individual and society, Hobhouse saw it as impossible for individuals to fully develop their personalities without harmonious relationships with all other members of society: 'such a fulfillment or full development of personality is practically possible not for one man only but for all members of a community. There must be a line of development open along which each can move in harmony with others' (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 61-62). The co-operative pursuit of the development of personality can thus

⁶⁴ The idea of the social basis of wealth seems to have been drawn from Hobson's theory of surplus. As is well known, Hobson constructed his theory of organic surplus in his *The Industrial System* (1909), stating that it is the organic relation of individuals which produces surplus in their economic activities. On Hobson's theory of organic surplus, see Allett (1981).

be considered the common good of society. What is noteworthy here is that Hobhouse regarded contribution to the common good as the most general meaning of ‘function’:

[T]he common good is maintained by the services of its members. ...It is in turn bound to maintain all the functions which serve it, and restrain actions which harm it... Every one of whom a given function is required may claim on his side the conditions necessary to its performance... This condition is the maintenance of the functions upon which the common good depends. (Hobhouse 1922[hereafter ESJ], 110, 111)

Every individual thus has a general moral duty as well as a right: a duty to perform functions which contribute to the development of the personality of her own and others (that is the common good), and a right to claim on the state and others support and material conditions necessary for the performance of functions. Such a reciprocal relationship of right and duty over the concept of function was one of the central elements of Hobhouse’s new liberal ethical theory.

In conclusion, the fundamental meaning of ‘function’ for Hobhouse resided in its contribution to the common good, *i.e.*, to the harmonious development of the personality of individuals. At this level, the ‘use’ and ‘source’ of wealth come to be interrelated, with the common good being the interface between the two: possession of wealth becomes legitimate when it is either acquired by an activity of, or used for, enhancing the personality of self and others.

5. Justice

As we just saw above, the new liberal ethics of social harmony (or the common good)

explored in the last chapter was laid at the basis of Hobhouse's distributive theory. In *Liberalism*, he further indicates that the principle of the common good, together with the organic conception of society, provides the criterion of what the 'just' distribution is:

If the existence of millionaires on the one hand and of paupers on the other is just, it must be because such contrasts are the result of an economic system which upon the whole works out for the common good, the good of the pauper being included therein as well as the good of the millionaire; that is to say, that when we have well weighed the good and the evil of all parties concerned we can find no alternative open to us which could do better for the good of all. ...[T]his is the position which according to the organic or harmonic view of society must be made good by any rational defense of grave inequality in the distribution of wealth. (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 63)

The statement indicates that Hobhouse assumed certain inequality of distribution would be considered just, on the condition that (1) the good of all members of a society is equally taken into consideration, and that (2) the good of the society is maximized by such distribution. While being aware of the difficulty of putting the standard into practice, Hobhouse still attempted in *The Elements of Social Justice* to formalize the idea by giving it more theoretical sophistication. Defining distributive justice as 'equal satisfaction of equal needs, subject to the adequate maintenance of useful functions' (ESJ, 111), he first divided its components into a threefold structure: (1) the civic minimum, (2) allowance given to those who are unable to perform sufficient functions, and (3) remuneration paid proportionately to the amount of worker's effort and ability.

(1) The 'civic minimum' (ESJ, 134, 137, 147n, 174, 175) means the lowest remuneration to the least capable worker among those who contribute to the community.

In his own words, the civic minimum is ‘the lowest standard required to harmonize the interests of the worker and the community’ (ESJ, 134). That is, when it is paid to the least capable worker, ‘the community is not poorer’ because of the worker’s function, while its amount should be enough to keep the worker in a condition of ‘full civic efficiency’, *i.e.*, not only in physical health but also ‘in a position to develop and exercising his faculties, to enter upon marriage and parenthood, and meet whatever costs of a normal family are not undertaken by the community’ (ESJ, 134). The civic minimum is thus posited at the border of ‘charity’ and ‘remuneration’. The idea of the least legitimate remuneration to function is based on the reciprocal right and duty between the individual and society which we explored above. Being independent of the market principle, society has a duty to secure this amount of minimum to all the workers who perform a certain function regardless of how much wages they actually receive at work. Hobhouse estimated that around ninety to ninety-five percent of the workers would be entitled to the civic minimum (ESJ, 137n). Moreover, against a potential objection that the civic minimum principle contradicts with industrial progress by damaging the efficiency of the free market, Hobhouse argued that, with a close affinity with Webbs’ idea of national minimum, the civic minimum would actually improve the performance and productivity of workers:

[T]he better remuneration of the worker not only improves his personal efficiency and that of his children, but also modifies the industrial organization. In a system which is still in the main competitive, it eliminates the methods which only pay with low wages and substitutes higher organization. It causes, as we might expect, a certain shifting of values all through the productive system, and a general increase of production. (ESJ, 135)

The idea of ‘fair wage’ shown in *The Labour Movement* was thus theoretically finessed in *The Elements of Social Justice* and given its minimum standard.

(2) Hobhouse also referred to those to whom the payment of the civic minimum will not be beneficial to the community, that is, those who do not have sufficient capabilities or motivation for performing a function. Among them, however, securing the civic minimum to those who, although not being able to perform a function at the moment, are likely to perform it in the future or have already performed it in the past, is still considered to be the duty of society. The civic minimum in this case would be paid in the forms of old-age pensions, an additional allowance for a child to parents’ wage and the provision of free education (ESJ, 93, 158).

As to ‘subnormal’ workers who are either ‘partially disqualified by disease or accident’ or ‘simply stupid or slow workers’, that is, those who are not sufficiently functional to meet the standard of the civic minimum, Hobhouse insisted they be still able to continue to work and receive a certain amount of wages as remuneration rather than being out of work and wholly dependent on public allowance, for such remuneration would stimulate the development of their personalities as well as would increase the wealth of the whole society. The amount of the payment to them would be lower than that of the civic minimum so that the community would not become poorer by the payment, being decided by each employer under the supervision of the ‘Trade Boards’ (ESJ, 137n, 138n).

Finally, as to ‘the helpless, the defective, the idler’ who completely lack capability and motivation for work would still be given a state’s ‘allowance’ for sustaining a healthy life. Sustenance of a healthy life is indeed considered to be one of the ‘prime needs’ to which everyone has a right regardless of whether they perform a function. These primary needs include ‘a certain minimum of food, clothing, etc.’ as well as ‘the conditions of full physical, mental, and spiritual development’ (ESJ, 109). Indeed,

Hobhouse did have a conception similar to universal human rights. There are rights, he argued, which do not require any desert: 'if some rights are contingent on services or liable to forfeiture by crime or neglect, there are others which attach to a member of the community, or even to a human being as such' (ESJ, 100). To the security of primary needs, Hobhouse thought that all human beings have 'an equal claim'.

This does not, however, mean that the civic minimum is fully secured for this 'functionless' category of individuals. The state allowance would not be allowed to be their private property. As '[t]hey are dependents', Hobhouse stated, 'their expenditure may be so far supervised' by a public authority. Furthermore, he propounded a eugenic view, indicating that their rights to form a family and have children, an essential component of the civic minimum, also be restricted. (ESJ, 138-139)⁶⁵

There is, in fact, a theoretical problem in Hobhouse's concept of 'function' at this point. As we have seen, he drew a line between those who perform a function through paid-work and those who do not, seemingly acquiescing in the exclusion of the latter from the full enjoyment of rights to private property and a family life. Hobhouse does not explain, however, why the meaning of function has to be equated with paid-work, when the question of distribution is on the agenda. As seen in the previous section, the concept of function was originally given a more general meaning, associated with the contribution to the co-operative development of personality. That Hobhouse occasionally associated function with paid-work seems to echo a view of most contemporaneous socialists in the Labour party, who emphasized the importance of maintaining the balance between workers' right to relief and their simultaneous duty to labour (Thane 2000).

(3) Finally, as to those entitled to more than the civic minimum thanks to their valuable functions, Hobhouse suggested that remuneration be proportionate, based on

⁶⁵ On Hobhouse's view on eugenics, see chapter 7, section 2.

the principle of 'equal desert' to 'equal satisfaction'. 'Desert' is here divided into 'effort' and 'achievement and ability'. As to the former, since an additional effort requires the consumption of more 'vital costs' (ESJ, 139), a just distribution would be the one which takes this additional effort into account. Here, however, Hobhouse points to a 'real difficulty': since the term 'vital costs' indicates an amount of physical energy consumed in the work, a payment proportionate to the cost could mean that those doing physically taxing works, such as coal-mining and agricultural work, should be able to receive more income than those committed to less physically taxing, though possibly more value producing, work, such as intellectual, managerial and professional occupations. Hobhouse points out that if those committed to these professions could be satisfied with the amount of remuneration just enough to maintain their 'vital costs', that would be fine. No more remuneration would be required. He realized, however, that '[a]s a matter of psychology', such a 'stoical conclusion' would be difficult in most actual societies, and that very often the remuneration proportionate not only to effort but also to 'achievement and ability' would be required for giving a worker a 'motive' for a further performance of function: 'if we take human nature as it is..., some measure of remuneration by achievement as distinct from effort does directly or indirectly promote achievement' (ESJ, 142). Hobhouse thus affirmed a distribution proportionate to achievement, from a viewpoint of incentive stimulation.

The central elements of Hobhouse's theory of distributive justice can be summarized as follows: distributive justice, first, 'consists in the supply of needs and maintenance of functions (a) by meeting all the vital costs of productive effort in full; (b) by the provision of increased remuneration for increased effort and for special ability' (ESJ, 147). On this basic principle, it is further argued that the life of those who lack ability or motivation for performing a function is also secured by a public allowance, though its expenditure is supervised by a public authority. Furthermore,

those 'unearned incomes' such as land rent and inherited wealth, and the wealth created by 'socially useless or injurious effort' are both considered 'functionless wealth' (ESJ, 147, 163, 165), being objects of taxation for financing state's functions, *i.e.*, public services.

Hobhouse's theory of distribution based on the concept of function had much in common with Hobson's theory which suggested that the surplus generated by land, capital and ability be used for the promotion of socially useful production (Allett 1981). The difference between them resided in this: while Hobson connected his theory of distribution to the theory of under-consumption for the structural analysis of capitalist economy, Hobhouse focused on the relationship between the theory of distributive justice and the development of moral personality. The distinctive characteristic of his new liberal theory of distribution is to be found in this essentially moralistic approach.

Some criticisms have been formulated against his distributive theory by both contemporaneous thinkers as well as posthumously. The most conspicuous among the former was, in fact, G.B. Shaw. On the basis of his strictly egalitarian standpoint, insisting on securing an equal amount of income to all regardless of their needs and functions (Jackson 2007, 60-62), Shaw attacked, in the *Nation*, Hobhouse's theory of distribution as unpractical. Seeing it impossible to compare different qualities of work quantitatively and determine the amount of the remuneration according to effort and achievement, Shaw insisted that the distribution of wealth can be done either by the market principle or by perfect equalization (Shaw 1913). Admitting the difficulty of determining an ethically just amount of distribution quantitatively, Hobhouse replied that Shaw's view was opportunistic and neglected the question of justice. Indeed, Hobhouse's focus was not so much on the concrete quantitative determination of remuneration as on presenting a principle of distribution as an ethical standard which every policy should attempt to follow as much as possible. He emphasized that an

effective moral critique against the actual market principle can never be drawn from ‘equal treatment to the man who uses his opportunities and the man who neglects them’ (Hobhouse 1913c, 24 May).

More recently, John Seaman has criticized Hobhouse’s affirmation of the proportionate remuneration according to achievement as fundamentally drawing on ‘classical liberal morality’ which sees human beings as essentially ‘materially self-seeking’ beings, requiring some ‘hope of material reward’ as an ‘inducement to the exertion of their energies’ (Seaman 1978, 800). Similarly, Stefan Collini notes that Hobhouse’s theory of justice is inadequate because he almost exclusively focused on the satisfaction of need at the bottom and so regarding the level above the minimum ‘left himself as open as ever to the change [*sic*] of simply reflecting the existing distribution of bargaining power in the market’ (Collini 1979, 136-137).

From the discussion of this chapter, we can see that these allegations are not sufficient descriptions of Hobhouse’s distributive theory. Above all, both Seaman and Collini seem unfairly to neglect, if not completely ignore, an importantly moralistic aspect in it, which envisioned a possibility of developing moral personality through social reform. While admitting that the majority of individuals need material incentives for exertion in the actual society, Hobhouse pursued a moralized society where ‘the best and ablest men could...be content to ask nothing but so much as would sustain them in the performance of their function’ (ESJ, 143-144). As well as the various forms of social reform, he saw the regulation of distribution itself as effective in restraining the materially self-seeking side of human nature, thus suggesting a legally set maximum limit to personal income with the following rationale:

[S]o long as it remains possible for a certain order of ability to earn £50,000 a year, the community will not obtain its services for £5,000. But if things should be so

altered by taxation and economic reorganization that £5,000 became in practice the highest limit attainable, and remained attainable even for the ablest only by effort, there is no reason to doubt that that effort would be forthcoming. (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 96-97n)

Views on the interaction between social institution and individual morality and their reciprocal transformation, which Hobhouse articulated in *The Labour Movement*, can again be observed here. To sum up, his theory of distributive justice had multi-perspectives: while the theory was constructed on the basis of human nature observed in the current capitalist society, it also presented a means and direction to transform such human nature through gradual social reform.

6. Conclusion

This chapter explored the characteristics of Hobhouse's theory of distribution, pointing out that the theory was founded on his new liberal ethics of harmony explored in the previous chapter: private property was endorsed as a means for the development of the moral personality of the individual; individuals were considered to have a moral duty to perform unique functions in society contributing to the harmonious development of self and others' personalities; a just distribution was such that remunerates the performed functions of each individual, expressed primarily in the form of paid-work, proportionately according to his/her effort, achievement and ability. In short, Hobhouse's view of distribution had a strong consequentialist characteristic, as it took justice as the matter of the contribution to the common good. The utilitarian element of his liberal ethics, which we saw in the previous chapter, was thus clearly reflected in his distributive theory.

Hobhouse's theory of distribution filled the final part of the three elements of his new liberal thought on social reform: the most fundamental element was his ethical theory of harmony, which regarded the good of the individual as the attainment of inner harmony and the common good of the community, *i.e.*, the harmonious development of its members' moral personalities; the second element was his pluralist endorsement of trade unions and co-operative societies, explored in the first chapter, arguing that the participation in these organizations would enable individuals to develop their morality, *i.e.*, the internalization of liberal ethics; the final element was the theory of distribution, analyzed in this chapter, set as a normative standard which the various agencies of wealth distribution, *i.e.*, the state, private companies in the market and voluntary organizations, ought to follow. It can be said that these elements were the 'trinity' of Hobhouse's new liberal thought on social reform. It made an intellectual contribution to the new liberalism from the perspective of ethical theory, in the sense that it systematically demonstrated on what kind of liberal ethics the practice of social reform should depend.

Hobhouse's new liberal ethics, however, had one more aspect to give it theoretical force: sociology. In fact, his sociology in turn was the other significant area where he provided a theoretical contribution to the new liberalism from an ethical perspective: sociology presented a more concrete view of a welfare society, where the principle of new liberal ethics is fully realized. Welfare society was considered to be where each member would be able to pursue his/her well-being while also contributing to the well-being of others and the whole society. Hobhouse's sociology had, however, not only an ethical but also a particular philosophical basis, and here also, the intellectual influence of British idealism upon him was fundamental. Thus, examining the relationship between his philosophy and that of British idealism is a necessary starting-point for the exploration of his comprehensive sociology.

Ch. 5 *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* Re-examined: The Critique of Bosanquet's Political Philosophy

1. Introduction

Although Hobhouse admitted indebtedness to T.H. Green in his new liberal ethics of harmony, the intellectual relationship between his new liberalism and British idealism in the realms of metaphysics and political philosophy has often been seen to be mutually antagonistic. One of the main factors for this view is the continuous hostility Hobhouse showed against idealism in these fields. As to the metaphysics of idealism, Hobhouse referred to the 'fallacy' of idealism already in his first philosophical volume, *The Theory of Knowledge* (1896). He argued that the fallacy can be found in a premise of idealism 'that consciousness must in some way sustain in its existence the reality that it knows, that what exists for knowledge exists only by our knowledge' (Hobhouse 1896, 539), and argued that it was Bernard Bosanquet's *The Essentials of Logic* (1895) which had most typically expressed this view:

The transition from the truism [that all the known world comes within the sphere of the mind] to the fallacy is excellently illustrated by Mr. Bosanquet when he tells us that the common-sense theory assumes a world existing 'outside *mind*', and proceeds to refute it by showing that what is 'outside *perception*' is 'out of reach' (*loc. cit.* p. 10, the italics are mine [Hobhouse's]). Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: 'Existing outside mind' means to common sense, 'existing whether known to exist or not'; 'existing outside perception' means, 'in a world beyond the scope or reference of perception'. That these two meanings coincide is the whole sum and substance of the fallacies of idealism. (Hobhouse 1896, 539)

Hobhouse's critique was underpinned by his enthusiasm to rescue 'the scientific spirit' seeking for the empirical and objective knowledge of the nature, a spirit developed by 'Bacon and Locke to Mill and Spencer', which had been under a fierce attack by idealism for a few decades in the field of metaphysics (Hobhouse 1896, viii).

His critique was, however, not only raised by a purely philosophical motivation, but deeply related to his political concern about the potential consequences of idealist metaphysics. Hobhouse argued that idealists, who believed reality is a product of the mind, whether of past or present individuals or of a more mystifying rational being, could easily slip into a conservative attitude of seeing the whole nature of the world as the manifestation of an underlying rationality. Any attempt to reform the existing social structure would then be considered redundant, and unwise. He pointed out that one of the intellectual roots of the current reactionary atmosphere of British society could be found in the permeation of such an idealist world-view:

[I]n the main, the idealistic movement has swelled the current of retrogression. It is itself, in fact, one expression of the general reaction against the plain, human, rationalistic way of looking at life and its problems. Every institution and every belief is for it alike a manifestation of a spiritual principle, and thus for everything there is an inner and more spiritual interpretation. ...Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that the effect of idealism on the world in general has been mainly to sap intellectual and moral sincerity..., to soften the edges of all hard contrasts between right and wrong, truth and falsity, to throw a gloss over stupidity, and prejudice, and caste, and tradition, to weaken the bases of reason, and disincline men to the searching analysis of their habitual ways of thinking. (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 78-9)

Such a critical view of idealism was intensified into a feeling of clear hostility during the First World War. This time, Hobhouse devoted a whole book, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (1918), to criticizing idealist political philosophy by focusing on Bernard Bosanquet's most important work in this realm: *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899).⁶⁶ In fact, describing Bosanquet as Hegel's 'most modern and most faithful exponent' (Hobhouse 1918, 18), Hobhouse regarded Bosanquet's political philosophy as the most systematic doctrine of Hegelian state-absolutism which had been influential in Britain during the war.

Hobhouse's relationship with idealist philosophy is, however, more ambiguous than it looks. Stefan Collini has an important insight on this issue. By examining Hobhouse's *Development and Purpose* (1913), Collini points out that the teleological conception of reality which characterized this work 'was heavily Idealist in origin', and concludes, 'there can be no doubt that at the most fundamental level his own theory came to rest upon a recognizably Idealist metaphysics' (Collini 1979, 241, 242). Collini's argument is valuable in that it refers to a closer link between Hobhouse and idealism than has often been argued. Collini, however, does not explore how this linkage can be explained in relation to the seemingly much more antagonistic aspects in political philosophy. Nor does he examine where Hobhouse's teleological conception of reality itself could be situated in the complex camp of idealist metaphysics, provided it can be considered idealist *bona fide*.

This all indicates that there is work still to be done in order to understand Hobhouse's relationship with British idealism. The next two chapters will thus be dedicated to re-considering the theoretical 'distance' or 'closeness' between Hobhouse and British idealism. In this present chapter, I will focus on Hobhouse's *The*

⁶⁶ Thus, the title of Hobhouse's book is an obvious allusion of Bosanquet's.

Metaphysical Theory of the State, comparing his critique of Bosanquet's political philosophy with what Bosanquet had actually said. Several studies of British idealism have already indicated some errors in Hobhouse's understanding of Bosanquet (Nicholson 1990; Boucher 1994; Sweet 1997; Panagakou 2005), but no works have yet fully compare their arguments. By doing so, this chapter attempts to provide a clearer view of to what extent Hobhouse's new liberalism was close to British idealism, particularly in the field of political philosophy. The first part of the chapter explores Hobhouse and Bosanquet's arguments on methodology, with a special focus on the former's allegation that idealism confused a scientific question of *what is* with an ethical question of *what ought to be*. The second part investigates Bosanquet's theory of the general will alongside Hobhouse's critique that such a theory denied the value of individuality. The final part discusses Bosanquet's theory of the state together with Hobhouse's argument that Bosanquet considered the state as a supreme organization and thus rejected both moral restraint and the idea of international organizations.

2. Ethics and Social Science: Methodological Debate

Just as many scholars have criticized Hegel's notorious phrase 'What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational' (Hegel 1952, 10), one of Hobhouse's main arguments against British idealism was that it did not clearly distinguish a scientific question of *what is* from a normative or ethical question of *what ought to be*. He argued that while social science and ethics commonly investigated social institutions and the interactions of individuals, their methodologies were qualitatively different: a scientific approach focuses on 'the endeavour to ascertain the relations of cause and effect', while an ethical study builds 'a theory of ends or values...providing the standard by which all human relations are to be judged' (Hobhouse 1918 [hereafter MTS], 11-12). Failure to

make this distinction could lead to the consideration of what was happening in actual society as *already* happening in a ‘rational’ (and so desirable) way. Hobhouse therefore alleged that idealism had fallen into this confusion:

The foundation of this theory is the belief that the ideal is realized in the actual world...that the world at large...is... an incarnation or expression of the ideal... The problem will be neither ethical nor scientific. It will start by a repudiation of the distinction...and its task will be to state the nature of society in terms revealing the ideal elements... This, then, is the metaphysical theory of the state. It is the endeavour to exhibit the fabric of society...as the incarnation of something very great and glorious indeed, as one expression of that supreme being which some of these thinkers call the Spirit and others the Absolute. There is no question here of realizing an ideal by human effort. We are already living in the ideal. (MTS, 17-8)

Hobhouse found two problems here: idealism does not consider the methodological distinction between social science and ethics; and so it falls into a justification of *the status quo* by seeing the actual society and the state as expressing a divine or ideal order. He argued that these confusions had led to the fundamental conservatism of idealism, whose intellectual influence could be seen in the decline of individual freedom, as well as the increase of the state authority during the First World War.⁶⁷

However, several qualifications can be noted in Hobhouse’s criticism. First of all, it does not seem to be accurate to argue that idealism was unaware of this methodological distinction. In the second chapter of *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet refers to the difference between Comtean positivistic sociology and

⁶⁷ For Hobhouse’s concern on these issues, see the second chapter of Freedon (1986).

Greek social philosophy: while the former focuses on the clarification of ‘laws and causes’ of society, the latter attempts to answer a question of ‘what is the completest and most real life of the human soul’ (Bosanquet [1899]2001 [hereafter PTS], 17). This seems directly to parallel Hobhouse’s distinction between the scientific and ethical study of society.

But it is noteworthy that when Bosanquet mentioned ‘the completest and most real’, he did not simply mean an ideal view of society, for Bosanquet also remarked that ‘[t]he object of political philosophy is to understand what a State is, and it is not necessary for this purpose that the State which is analyzed should be ‘ideal’, but only that it should be a State’ (PTS, 232). Yet it is also important to examine what Bosanquet meant by ‘to understand what a State is’. It did not merely mean an empirical exploration of actual states, which he regarded as a task of sociologists. Bosanquet’s concern as a social and political philosopher was rather to identify their essential ‘nature’: the characteristics which all actual states commonly and potentially possessed. This perspective was derived from Aristotle:

[T]he term ‘nature’...can indicate not only what we are born *as*, but what we are born *for*, our true, or real, or complete nature. Thus the great thinkers of every age have been led to something like Aristotle’s conception, ‘what a thing is when its growth is completed, that is what we call its nature’. (PTS, 142)

The ‘nature’ of states was what would be observed when their ‘growth is completed’. Bosanquet called this methodology ‘teleological’, which ‘recognize[s] a difference of level or of degree in the completeness and reality of life, and endeavours to point out when and how, and how far by social aid, the human soul attains the most and best that it has in it to become’ (PTS, 49). In short, the teleological perspective was a

philosophical attempt to clarify the possible functions of actual states.⁶⁸ Bosanquet emphasized that philosophy was not purely about the ideal, but should also provide a ‘description’ of the actual in the same way as a physiologist described the nature of a human body (PTS, 232).

Bosanquet warned, however, that in this teleological perspective, the ‘nature’ observable in the actual would be always partial and in a process of gradual growth.⁶⁹ Henry Jones, another philosopher of the second generation of British Idealists, elaborated this view: ‘[m]orality... postulates a good that is absolute, an ideal which alone is in the full sense real; and yet it represents the good as in course of being attained, real only while in process, and the process as endless’ (Jones 1910, 207). Jones refuted Hobhouse’s identification of idealism with conservatism by pointing out that their teleological perspective had always endorsed ‘the constant transformation’ of social and political institutions and thus made ‘Idealism...the most radical of all social and political theories’ (Jones 1910, 215-216).

It can now be said that Hobhouse’s criticism that idealists saw the actual as the realization of the ideal addressed only a half-truth. They clearly thought that there were *elements* of the ideal in the actual, but the extent of its appearance would be various and never complete. The Idealists’ philosophical project was thus to clarify these elements, or the ‘nature’ of the world, which were only partially identifiable in the actual world.

It is interesting if we compared this idealist perspective with Hobhouse’s own methodological standpoint. While emphasizing a distinction between scientific and

⁶⁸ This perspective was widely shared by idealist thinkers. Henry Jones, for example, expressed it with a concept ‘evolution’: while the nature of a thing was immanent in each of its evolutionary stages, its most perfect form could be revealed only at the final phase, which might never be realized in actual society. See Boucher and Vincent (1993, 67).

⁶⁹ ‘It is needless to observe that such a representation [of the nature]...is imperfect, since every set of institutions is an incomplete embodiment of life; and any given system of life is itself also incomplete’ (PTS, 115).

ethical approach, Hobhouse also suggested sociologists incorporate ethics. He identified three points as the central problems of sociology: (1) the enquiry into the nature of the good, a discussion of values; (2) the enquiry into the actual relations of human beings, a discussion of facts; (3) the enquiry into the means of utilizing our knowledge of the facts in the service of the good, the application of ideals of value to the discovered truth as to facts, the art of social improvement. (Hobhouse 1966, 28) While the first and second point address questions of ethics and social science, the third point refers to the combination of the two. Hobhouse thought that this combination could work in two ways. The first was by using the knowledge of the facts for 'a discussion of values'. He stated that in order to realize social improvement, such ethical thinking had to take into consideration of the conditions of the actual world:

The ideal, though it has never been realized and perhaps may never be realized, must grow out of reality. It must be that which we can become, not that which is utterly removed from the emotions and aspiration which have grown up within us in the actual evolution of mind. The ethically right...must be sociologically possible. (MTS, 14-15)

Hobhouse thus proposed to limit the range of ethical principles to what could be realized in actual society. This limitation was based on his awareness of the danger of 'abandoning the interest in actual society altogether and amusing ourselves with the construction of Utopias' (MTS, 12). It would mean the loss of the contact with the actual world and the indulgence in the abstract world of logic. In order to present useful suggestions for social improvement, a broad understanding of facts and consistent and feasible views of the ideal would be required. This was what he meant by 'the ethically right must be sociologically possible'.

Secondly, Hobhouse also addressed the reverse possibility for ethical principles becoming the cause of social change:

[I]f we start with the most rigid determination to adhere to facts, we shall find that ideals are a part of the facts, and if we say that nevertheless we will treat them as facts without examining their truth, we shall find it hard to adhere to that position because their consistency and coherence, which are intimately relevant to their truth, deeply affect their practical efficiency. (MTS 14)

Hobhouse argued that the more ideas about ethical principles became consistent and coherent, the more they would permeate the moral consciousness of individuals and affect the pace and direction of social change. Thus, he thought of the roles of sociologists as twofold: to find ethical principles as the components of an ideal society; and to present their realizability by examining the changing process of actual society. What underlay this was his strong belief that social progress towards the ideal depended on the individuals' awareness of and incessant efforts towards these principles. 'History', he described as, 'a record of the process by which elements of value and rational purpose have come to make themselves good by organized coherence' (Hobhouse 1898, 146).

It can now be said that the relationship between Hobhouse and Bosanquet in terms of their methodology, was not as straightforward as Hobhouse had claimed. Bosanquet could evade Hobhouse's critique by asserting that his argument was teleological, which examined the essential characteristics or 'nature' of society and the state. In addition, their methodologies, in fact, had many things in common: both had certain ideas concerning ethical principles and attempted to find their partial appearance in the actual world; both examined the concrete process of social change with the aim of

utilizing it for the justification of their ethical principles. In short, their methodology was based on the subtle interrelationship between fact and value, which often seems to be neglected by the mainstream of contemporary sociology and political philosophy.

3. Denial of Individuality? : The Real Will and the General Will

Hobhouse's second criticism was aimed at how Bosanquet discussed individuals. His main point was that Bosanquet denied the value of individuality, which was for him the fundamental source of social progress. Drawing on J.S. Mill, Hobhouse stated this view in his *Liberalism*:

Under self-guidance individuals will diverge widely, and some of their eccentricities will be futile, others wasteful, others even painful and abhorrent to witness. But, upon the whole, it is good that they should differ. Individuality is an element of well-being, and that not only because it is the necessary consequence of self-government, but because, after all allowances for waste, the common life is fuller and richer for the multiplicity of types that it includes, and that go to enlarge the area of collective experience. (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 54)

Two normative views are presented here: (1) self-guidance (or self-government) is ethically good because it brings 'an element of well-being' to each; (2) the divergence of individuality as a result of (1) is also good because it makes the life of the whole society fuller and richer. Hobhouse argued that these were the crucial elements of liberal political philosophy because 'Liberalism is the belief that society can safely be founded on this self-directing power of personality, that it is only on this foundation that a true community can be built' (Hobhouse [1911]1994, 59). In contrast, Bosanquet's whole

argument seemed to him to be dedicated to the denial of individuality and the worship of the state. Hobhouse argued that Bosanquet's 'metaphysical theory of the state' contained three steps for these purposes:

Of these three the first is that true individuality or freedom lies in conformity to our real will. The second is that our real will is identical with the general will, and the third...is that the general will is embodied more or less perfectly in the state. (MTS 71)

Hobhouse criticized each of these concepts – the real will, the general will and the state – on the basis of his conviction that they were all conceptually confusing and practically dangerous.

First, as to the real will, Hobhouse summarized Bosanquet's definition as follows: the real will is the most complete (thus normatively desirable) will realizable for each of us only when our 'actual will' – what we actually will at every moment – is corrected by (1) what we want at all moments and by (2) what others want. Hobhouse argued these elements were both problematic. First of all, it would be not only paradoxical but also dangerous to call a particular will of which a person is neither aware nor exerting at this moment his/ her 'real' will. For it would lead to the justification of compulsion on that person with a plausible reason that such compulsion is necessary in order to make him/her recognize what his/her 'real' will is. Hobhouse thus rejected the distinction and suggested using 'the real will' in the same sense as 'the actual will'. He considered this identification logically relevant and practically safe. Is it not though, in the end, ridiculous to call what I am not clearly aware of 'the real'?

Bosanquet consistently ignored Hobhouse's criticisms,⁷⁰ but if he had done, he

⁷⁰ On Hobhouse's *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet once remarked, 'I am interested to hear about Hobhouse's characterisation of me, or is it the reviewer's? It

would have responded that the distinction would be necessary in order to contemplate what individuals could will when they reached the most rational stage in the development of their moral character. When individuals reached this stage, a harmony would be achieved within his/her will. This harmonious will should be conceptually distinguished from what is actually willed at each moment, as it would tell us both the possible and desirable 'nature' of human beings towards which social reform should be directed.

As seen in the previous section, Bosanquet recognized the incompleteness of the actual world. The point was that he did not consider the realization of harmony beyond human nature. Bosanquet thought this was potentially attainable through 'self-criticism and self-interpretation, in part by trial and error and in part by conscious insight and adjustment' (PTS, 136). Such a criticism continuously tells us that some of our actual will is not what we really want, and 'that what we really want is something more and other than at any given moment we are aware that we will'. After this statement, Bosanquet added emphatically, 'the wants which we are aware of lead up to it at every point' (PTS, 134). This shows his strong conviction that the continuous criticism of one's own will, rather than the affirmation of *the status quo*, would enable a person to become a rational being, whose co-operation with others would eventually bring a harmonious society as a whole.

Hobhouse might have maintained, however, that the term real will could still be misused, through its identification with 'the general will'. Again, Hobhouse summarized how Bosanquet explained this identification:

[Bosanquet's] assumptions are (1) There is in me a real self, my real will, which is

doesn't matter. I don't think I shall read his book – I don't feel I learn much from him, and books are expensive since the war began; and time is not cheap.', quoted in Muirhead (ed.) (1935, 203).

opposed to what I very often am. (2) This real will is what I ought to be as opposed to what I very often am. (3) There is in you a real will and in every other member of society a real will. All these real wills are what you and every other member of society ought to be. In quality and character these real wills are indistinguishable. They are therefore the same. (4) This sameness constitutes of all the real wills together one self. (MTS, 50)

Hobhouse rebutted the consequence of these assumptions by emphasizing the uniqueness of one's experiences, reflected in memory, expectation, feeling, emotion and thought, which all comprised the will. One's individuality was brought by this uniqueness of experience and will. The idea of the general will would lead to the rejection of this uniqueness, and thus of individuality. Bosanquet mistakenly considered, Hobhouse argued, 'characteristic differences between you and me...not such as to interfere with our fundamental sameness' and so dissolved '[t]he very sense of personality...into a phase or expression of the general will' (MTS, 55n, 32).

It is noteworthy that Hobhouse was well aware of the opposite danger too, 'that the emphasis on personality might be exaggerated to the point of depreciating the common life' (MTS, 26-7). From this viewpoint, Hobhouse admitted the usefulness of some components of the term 'general will': the idea of the common good; and of a common will, a shared will towards the common good; and of 'a certain social mentality' implied in social institutions and traditions (MTS, 123-5). As seen in the third chapter, what separated Hobhouse from past liberal thinkers, such as Bentham and Mill, was this emphasis of the interrelation of individuals, through their wills, which formed their society as a whole. Hobhouse called this view 'the true organic theory' (MTS, 129). It was an assumption of 'a whole constituted by the interconnection of parts which are themselves maintained each by its interconnection with the remainder' (MTS, 132).

The point is that Hobhouse thought this organic conception could also form the basis for a critique of Bosanquet's notion of 'the general will'. Unlike the former, which assumed the interaction between the part (the individual) and the whole (society), the general will seemed to imply an existence of 'a particular unity' which would one-sidedly determine thoughts and actions of individuals and turn them into monotonous parts. Not only did this concept deny the value of individuality, Hobhouse concluded, but it also justified sacrificing parts for the sake of the whole.

However, Bosanquet would have rebutted these criticisms. First, Bosanquet never accepted the existence of a will apart from the wills of individuals. He emphasized that '[t]here is no social brain other than and separate from the brain of individuals' (Bosanquet [1894]1895 [hereafter RGW], 321). His theoretical problem was rather to solve 'a paradox', namely that the general will had to be based on these separate wills of individuals.⁷¹ Bosanquet attempted to solve this paradox by two psychological assumptions. First, he argued that the will of each person contained various groups of ideas, which could be connected and organized by what Bosanquet called 'logical capacity' (RGW 323). It was one's ability to determine which group of ideas could guide and arrange other groups in a systematic way. A group of ideas thus chosen by logical capacity would be 'dominant ideas', and become the standard of thoughts and actions. When a person's will to something is guided by these dominant ideas, that will becomes her 'real' will.

Secondly, Bosanquet assumed that this logical capacity would take into account its relation to the external environment too, for ideas 'are the inside which reflects the material action and real conditions that form the outside' (RGW, 323-4). As a result, 'the common life shared by the members of a community involves a common element in

⁷¹ 'What we have got then, so far, is a problem or a paradox: the idea of a will whose sole aim is the common interest, although it can exist as a will only in the minds of the human individuals who make up the community, and all of whom are for the most part occupied with their own individual interests.' (RGW, 320-1)

their ideas...especially in the dominant or organizing ideas which rule their minds' (RGW, 324). Bosanquet identified a distinctive characteristic of human nature here, that individuals were innately social beings. One's ideas would receive the influence of social customs, institutions and the ideas of others. To what extent ideas could be arranged according to this logical capacity would vary in individuals and societies, but in its ultimate 'nature', dominant ideas would enable them to co-operate with their environment and thus to attain the general will:

[T]he general will itself is the whole assemblage of individual minds, considered as a working system, with parts corresponding to one another, and producing as a result a certain life for all these parts themselves. (RGW, 325)

Again, this remark shows that Bosanquet did not regard the general will as a super-personal entity separated from the will of each individual. It was rather a *harmony* or a *system* of many 'real' wills, realizable only when the will of each came to be guided by its dominant ideas.

But what about individuality? Granted, Hobhouse might have maintained, that the general will was not an entity independent from the wills of individuals, would it not be the case that it could be realized only by making their 'real' wills identical in character? Bosanquet shows his answer in the seventh chapter of *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, emphasizing that how each mind reflects its environment should be diverse, and so it would produce 'a plurality of human beings' (PTS, 173). Bosanquet's image of the social whole was not something composed by monotonous individuals obeying the same 'dominant ideas', but the one in which each person receives the influence of the environment in its own way, thereby developing individuality and contributing to the social whole. Bosanquet exemplified this image by a school. Teachers, pupils, managers,

parents and the public all have distinct characteristics, play their own functions but still are guided by certain ideas which make their grouping a school as a whole. And so '[n]o school could be made of teachers alone or of pupils alone; nor, again, could a school be made with teachers who were all the same, or with pupils who were all the same' (PTS, 171). The social whole, formed by the general will, 'would be a whole consisting of psychical dispositions and their activities', and such a 'whole can, in practice, only be complete in a plurality of individuals' (PTS, 173).

It is now clear that far from denying the value of individuality, Bosanquet regarded it as an indispensable component of the social whole. Real wills, whose inter-harmony would compose the general will, were not considered identical. The real will was the product of a person's consideration of others and the environment in her own way. Society made by such individuals was a functional society, in which their inter-relationship would be like the relation between 'the screw and the nut' (PTS, 171). Bosanquet called this stage 'the attainment of the true particularization, which does justice to the maximum of human capacity' (PTS, 176).

We can now conclude that the criticisms Hobhouse made against Bosanquet's notion of the real and the general will were not germane. Here again, what seems even more interesting is that Hobhouse's new liberalism actually approached Bosanquet's conception of the general will in many points. Indeed, 'harmony' among individuals was a central concept of his liberal ethics and the organic conception of society:

[A] fulfilment or full development of personality is practically possible not for one man only but for all members of a community. There must be a line of development open along which each can move in harmony with others. ...[T]he impulse to establish harmony in the world of feeling and action...is of the essence of the rational impulse in the world of practice. To move towards harmony is the

persistent impulse of the rational being, even if the goal lies always beyond the reach of accomplished effort. (LIB, 62)

Despite the essential commonality between this remark and Bosanquet's notion of the general will, Hobhouse would have still insisted on a fundamental difference between their political philosophies. After all, Hobhouse's primary motivation to write *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* was to demonstrate the logical contradictions and dangers contained in Bosanquet's discussion of the state and society. We now need to examine this final aspect of his criticisms.

4. The State as a Moral Society

4-1. Ethics, Politics and Society

Hobhouse strongly criticized Bosanquet's conception of the state. In his view, 'the central fallacy of the metaphysical theory of the state' (MTS, 77) resided in two kinds of confusion: the confusion between 'the political' and 'the ethical' and between 'the state' and 'society'. First, Bosanquet's identification of the general will with the state seemed to Hobhouse to make any ethical argument impossible. As we saw in the previous section, Hobhouse accepted the usefulness of the concept of the general will, in so far as it meant a common will towards an ethical principle of the common good. In this situation, an activity according to the general will would have moral legitimacy, for the common good was the ultimate principle in Hobhouse's liberal ethics from which moral rights and duties arose. As Bosanquet identified the general will with the state instead of the common good, the state could therefore not only escape from moral constraint, but even worse, '[t]he state has become...an end in itself' (MTS 73).

To this criticism, Bosanquet would have first replied that it was simply wrong to

assume that he took the state as an end in itself. Just like Hobhouse, Bosanquet also set 'the best life' or 'the common good' as an ethical end from which the legitimacy of state activity should be judged. Bosanquet stated that 'the best life' was realizable for a person only when she developed her capacities as a rational being through practicing the real will in a harmonious relationship with others.⁷² Bosanquet was well aware that an actual state could act in opposition to the common good. In such cases, it was subject to a moral criticism.⁷³ This is why, when regarding the general will as 'expressed in law', he emphatically added, "'in so far as" law is what it ought to be' (PTS, 124-5).

On the other hand, it is true that Bosanquet often seems reluctant to separate the ethical from the political. This can especially be seen in his discussion of 'rights'. While differentiating himself from legal positivists such as Bentham by stating that 'a right...has both a legal and a moral reference', Bosanquet also departed from Hobhouse by stressing that these two aspects should be always connected together, since 'rights...are claims recognized by the State' (PTS, 193). This remark seems inconsistent with his statement above at first sight. Is it not contradictory to say that rights require the recognition of the state while maintaining that they still have a moral reference?

Bosanquet would have answered this question as follows, namely that if a right was founded merely on a person's desire to do something, such a right remained so subjective that it would be indistinguishable from a mere arbitrary wish (PTS, 201).⁷⁴ Bosanquet worried about an occasion where a person or a minority group possessing power professed their egoistic wishes as legitimate without sufficient care for the rest of

⁷² '[T]he best life is the life which has most of this general character – the character which, so far as realized, satisfies the fundamental logic of man's capacities' (PTS, 179).

⁷³ '[T]he means adopted by such a supreme power [of the state] to discharge its responsibilities as a whole, are of course subject to criticism as respects the conception of good which they imply and their appropriateness to the task of realizing it' (PTS, 287)

⁷⁴ See also, Green ([1895]1997, sect. 144); Sweet (1997, 63, 75).

the members. In order for a claim to be a right, then, its legitimacy had to be based on the affirmative 'recognition' of others. This is why Bosanquet once stated, though seemingly contradictory to his previous statement, 'a right...is a *claim* recognized by *society*' (PTS, 196), latter italics is mine).

However, Hobhouse would have still asked: what about the tyranny of the majority? After all, the main reason why Hobhouse dismissed the notion of recognition was because of the fallibility of actual society, as well as of the majority opinions.⁷⁵ As seen in the third chapter, Hobhouse emphasized that 'the community may misjudge the common good' (Hobhouse 1922, 40n) and may oppress the morally superior spirits of certain individuals. The death of Socrates would have been avoided if Socrates had sufficiently realized the fallibility of community with a clear distinction between ethics and politics. In such a case, Socrates could have chosen to escape from the prison and still remained loyal to the ethical righteousness which the majority of Athenian citizens did not recognize at that time.⁷⁶

As seen in the previous section, Bosanquet was well aware of the incompleteness of the actual world. The reason why he maintained recognition as the basis of rights was precisely because he thought that a good society could not be realized without the development of the moral character of each person. What underlay this latter claim was

⁷⁵ See especially his *Democracy and Reaction* (1904), where Hobhouse points out the possibility for democratic institutions to be supportive of imperialism.

⁷⁶ This example is actually R.M. MacIver's, who also criticized Bosanquet and other modern Hellenic philosophers (Rousseau and Hegel in particular) in very similar ways to Hobhouse. See MacIver (1909, 82): 'It is first to be noted that, even when the law does come as an external command, *i.e.*, where it is felt by the subject to be alien or antagonistic to his ethical sentiment, it may still be fulfilled in accordance with the ethical principles. Under the Hellenic conception this would, of course, invariably happen, for if "the goodness of the citizen is relative to the state," it must be expressed in obedience to the state. This theory is perfectly brought out in Plato's "Crito", where Socrates, regarding himself as unjustly condemned, yet refuses to avail himself of the means of escape put within his reach, because so to thwart the law would be to deny the *ethical* principle. ...Whether Socrates 'did well to die' or not, he died true to the Hellenic doctrine of the state.'

his idealist conviction that a society was primarily ‘a structure of intelligences’ (PTS, 199). Society thus would not develop unless individuals used such ‘intelligence’ and understood how they could contribute to society. Bosanquet called those various places where individuals contributed to society their ‘positions’: a ‘position’ was one’s place in society suitable for ‘a unique contribution to that best life’ (PTS, 195). The contribution made from these positions was a ‘function’, and Bosanquet stated that it was the conceptions of ‘position’ and ‘function’ which were the very source of the moral imperative:

Such places and functions are imperative; they are the fuller self in the particular person, and make up the particular person as he passes into the fuller self. His hold on this is his true will, in other words, his apprehensions of the general will. (PTS 195)

What is crucial here is that ‘[i]t is impossible to argue that the position may exist, and not be recognized’ (PTS, 200), for individuals’ positions can never be clear unless they understand what kind of society they live in. In order to understand their society, they need to be engaged into ‘a relation of minds’ where they exchange various ‘attitudes...receptive, co-operative, tolerant, and the like’ with others. ‘Recognition’ is this very exchange of conscious attitudes, through which a person can come to ‘recognize’ her own ‘position’ in society as well. To sum up, recognition is a process of mutual understanding among individuals. It enables an agent to recognize how she can develop her capacities in a way contributing to the community she belongs to, as well as to the whole society. Bosanquet argued that any moral legitimacy had to be based on this development of capacities and the contribution to the whole society.

This shows why Bosanquet identified recognition as the basis of rights. A claim

could have moral legitimacy as a right only when it contributed to ‘the maintenance of conditions favourable to the best life’ (PTS, 193). Since a person’s ‘best life’ was brought about by the function of her ‘position’, and since finding functions and positions required mutual recognition, such recognition was also necessary in order to determine what kind of rights should be secured for the support of those functions and positions. Bosanquet thus concluded, ‘If I desire to assert an unrecognized right, I must show what ‘position’ involves it, and how that position asserts itself in the system of recognitions which is the social mind... In other words, I must show that the alleged right is a requirement of the realization of capacities for good and, further, that it does not demand a sacrifice of capacities now being realized...’ (PTS, 201)

In sum, Bosanquet did not confuse the ethical with the political, for he thought that law, government and other political institutions which comprised a state were the means to an ethical end, *i.e.*, the common good. The ethical should rather be connected to the *social*, *i.e.*, to mutual recognition or conscious social interactions. In order to transform the abstract conception of the common good into the more concrete ideas of positions, functions and rights, such interactions were necessary because only they could make individuals concretely ‘recognize’ the contents of these concepts in the end.

4-2. The State and International Society

Now, Hobhouse could have still insisted that this whole argument did not escape Bosanquet’s confusion of the state with society, for it could not explain why Bosanquet identified the general will with (and considered rights as based on) the state rather than society. Indeed, he pointed out that Bosanquet gave two definitions to the state: the state as ‘the entire social fabric’ (MTS, 75) or ‘the entire hierarchy of institutions by which life is determined’ by ‘a complete idea of the realization of all human capacity’ (PTS 156, quoted in MTS, 74); and the state as an authoritative organization endowed with

legitimate ‘force’ or ‘power’. Hobhouse insisted that it was misleading to regard the state as simultaneously containing these two aspects.⁷⁷ First, it was possible and desirable to imagine ‘the entire social fabric’ which would not require any use of force. Secondly, it was clear that many ‘institutions’ were cutting across state boundaries. He thus concluded: ‘Underlying Bosanquet’s account...there is a serious confusion between the state and society’ (MTS, 75-6).

Of course, Hobhouse realized the necessity of laws enforced by the state for social order and the maintenance of rights and duties. But he also insisted that force was ultimately in opposition to the principle of freedom, individuality and spiritual morality because it demanded uniform obedience of agencies regardless of their thoughts and spirit (MTS, 77).⁷⁸ What was needed, then, was not only to ask on what conditions such conformity would be required, but also to search for elements which would make good wills, rather than compulsion, be the ground of the state. When dispensed with the use of force, the state would ultimately become a moral *society*, where individuals and institutions act according to their good wills.⁷⁹ Of course, Hobhouse admitted that the full realization of such a moral society had remained a utopia,⁸⁰ but at the same time he attempted to find its elements in his sociological research of communities and set this

⁷⁷ In Bosanquet’s own words, ‘the State...is the Society which is recognized as exercising compulsory power over its members’ (PTS, 181).

⁷⁸ Cf. ‘[W]hen performed under compulsion they [functions] lose their moral and spiritual value’ (Hobhouse 1911, 188).

⁷⁹ ‘If will not force is the basis of the state, that is because only that society is a state which is based not on force but on will. ...In every organized society there are other elements than force sustaining the general conformity to law, and in the higher organization of society conditions are realized in which force recedes further and further into the background, good will at each step taking its place. Only societies which have made some sensible progress in this direction deserve the name of states. This definition would seem to be justified by the comparative study of political institutions.’ (MTS, 122)

⁸⁰ ‘The hope to eliminate force altogether from the State is Utopian, because it implies that the will to conform to the conditions of common life should become not merely general but rigidly universal. A single pervert altogether uncontrolled could work endless mischief.’ (Hobhouse 1924, 53)

ideal as a criterion of social progress.

It is noteworthy that this rather utopian view of the state parallels Bosanquet's first definition in their emphasis of the wholeness and the moral character of the state. One of their contemporaries, the sociologist R.M. MacIver, indeed identified this commonality and criticized Hobhouse and Bosanquet together:

Hellenistic writers such as Hobhouse and Bosanquet often speak as if they were still living in an Aristotelian state four thousand citizens strong – as if a single centre of interests were still possible and the stations and duties of the individual could be determined simply in terms of citizenship in the State. Such a view is wholly inadequate, not only because the modern state is too vast to serve such an end, but also because it is too much differentiated. (MacIver 1911, 40-1)

Whether or not MacIver was right in his assessment that their 'view is wholly inadequate', is a separate question. What is important here is that MacIver considered their visions of the state theory as not in conflict with each other, but conversely sharing the 'Hellenistic' or 'Aristotelian' view. Both had a broad conception that the state was a society *as a whole* in which all the citizens consciously aimed at the common good. What Hobhouse could not accept was that Bosanquet seemed to believe such a moral society always required the use of force.

On this latter point, however, Hobhouse missed the links in Bosanquet's argument: while claiming that the state 'is necessarily force' (PTS, 157), Bosanquet shared with Hobhouse an idea that compulsion fundamentally had negative effects on individuality and character 'because their nature is contradictory to the nature of the highest self-assertion of mind' (PTS, 179).⁸¹ Nevertheless, it is true that Bosanquet

⁸¹ Bosanquet also stated, 'every act done by the public power has one aspect of encroachment, however slight, on the sphere of character and intelligence...' (PTS

considered force of the state necessary in actual states. This was because human nature had never been good enough to overcome the elements of ‘animal nature’ or ‘animal limitations’, which narrowed down their perspectives, making their wills ‘rebellious against the common good’ (PTS, 158, 179). This fallibility and limited scope of human nature made compulsion indispensable in order to remind us of moral duties ‘which we have not the least desire to neglect, but which we are either too ignorant or too indolent to carry out apart from instruction and authoritative suggestion’ (PTS, 158).

Bosanquet thus did not argue that force should be regarded as an essence of the state *a priori*. It was required only ‘in as far as...minds are inert’, or ‘so long as the knowledge and energy of the average mind are unequal to dealing...with all possible conjunctions in which necessary conditions of the common good are to be maintained’ (PTS, 158). In other words, state force was required only when its members were incapable of considering certain conditions for the good of others. Between the two definitions identified by Hobhouse, the first was more essential, *i.e.*, the state as a moral and comprehensive society directed towards the common good. Provided all members managed to overcome their ‘animal nature’, that state would be able to sustain itself without the use of force, which was fundamentally a desirable thing.

We have seen that there was a significant overlap between Hobhouse and Bosanquet in their state theory. After the First World War, however, Hobhouse appeared to be in a dilemma between, on the one hand, his strong belief in state intervention for the guarantee of social welfare and, on the other hand, the unprecedented scale and illiberal characteristics of state activity during the war. It was at least clear that ‘the optimistic and sometimes naïve attitude of the new liberalism to the state evaporated rapidly’ (Freedman 1986, 27). One of its theoretical results was Hobhouse’s newly developed attention to various international organizations, from which he could

construct theoretical models against Bosanquet's endorsement of the state. Hobhouse's main point was that social relations were never confined within a state territory:

Organized relations of many kinds do exist at present outside the boundaries of the state, commercial relations, religious relations, the more ideal relations of community of thought, literature, art and the rest. ...Moral relations exist as between all human beings, if not between all living beings, that come into any sort of contact with one another. ...The vice of the idealist theory of the state is that it denies the need and even the possibility of such transcendence of state limits. (MTS, 111-2).

Hobhouse declared that his organic conception of society presented an alternative view of a moral society to Bosanquet's by incorporating the whole human race.⁸² His idea was that various transnational organizations could be potential agencies for such an ideal society. One particular model was what he called 'a Guild Congress' (Hobhouse 1922, 201), an international congress for workers composed by the guilds of various industries. Both in the Congress and guilds, workers could develop their knowledge about the situation of other workers, found their common interests and lay down general conditions for their activities. Parallel to the argument on trade unions discussed in the first chapter, Hobhouse thought these guilds would be better than the state for the cultivation of workers' public spirit and the ability of self-government, since the issues discussed there would be more familiar to them than those discussed in the national

⁸² 'Each individual is a member of many societies. He is one of a family; he belongs to a church, to a corporation, to a trade union, to a political party. He is also a citizen of his state. In so far as the world becomes one, that is to say, as social relations arise which interconnect human beings all the world over, Humanity becomes the supreme society, and all smaller social groupings may be conceived as constituent elements of this supreme whole'. (Hobhouse 1911, 88)

parliament.⁸³ In short, the ‘Guild’ idea was a more suitable way for realizing democracy in spiritual as well as institutional senses.

Of course, these guilds would not completely replace the role of the state. The state should still undertake certain functions within its territory, especially for the maintenance of individual rights and the adjustment between various organizations. It would also be the case that the feeling of patriotism would remain ‘as one loyalty among many to which human beings are called’ (Hobhouse 1922, 204). Nevertheless, Hobhouse believed that the state would (and should) lose its position as the primary and exclusive organization for the cultivation of democratic spirits of its members.

It was by this perspective that Hobhouse found another problem in Bosanquet’s state theory. Bosanquet once called the state the supreme unity, or ‘the sole organizer of rights and...guardian of moral values’ (Bosanquet 1917, 278, quoted in MTS, 112), which no other organizations could replace. Hobhouse considered this totally wrong, both empirically and ethically. Empirically, ‘there is no such thing as a unity of experience as between the members of a state contrasted with the lack of unity as between members of different states’ (MTS, 103); ethically, it was against the ideal of humanity by not giving any room for the development of individuality outside state territories. Hobhouse concluded that Bosanquet’s argument ‘sets the state above moral criticism, constitutes war a necessary incident in its existence, condemns humanity, and repudiates a Federation or League of Nations’ (MTS, 25).

On international relations, however, Bosanquet clearly stated that his theory would assume the co-operative interstate relationship.⁸⁴ As long as each state was

⁸³ ‘[M]ost of the interests of mankind transcend state boundaries, and to give to such interests international organization is a sound element in the “Guild” idea’ (Hobhouse 1922, 202).

⁸⁴ ‘It follows from our theory...that the normal relation of states is co-operative. ...[T]he maintenance of this normal relation, or its attainment where unattained, depends on the right discharge by states of their internal function – the maintenance of rights as the conditions of good life. War, as Plato showed, is not of the essence of states,

‘doing with fair completeness its local work of organization, and recognizing...the world-wide relations which pass through them’, Bosanquet admitted, there would be no reason why international society ‘should not result in a world as peaceful as one under a more unitary system, and much richer in quality’ (Bosanquet 1917, 296). The point was, again, that states in Bosanquet’s idealism were not merely *actual* states but states in their *nature*, or, in his words, ‘states *qua* states’. They were seen to be ideal whole societies, realizable only if sustained by the general will of their members towards the ethical principle of the common good. Bosanquet deplored the fact that many critics failed to see this point by addressing the ‘defects’ of actual states, which his state theory in fact attempted to remove.⁸⁵ Examples of the ‘defects’ of states were ‘war, exploitation within or without, class privilege, arbitrary authority, discontent directing ambitions to foreign conquest and to jealousy of other states’ (Bosanquet 1917, 276). Thus, Bosanquet professed that Hobbes’ conception of international anarchy was ‘far removed from the philosophy of which we are speaking’ (Bosanquet 1917, 277n).

Nevertheless, Hobhouse seems to be correct in that Bosanquet remained dubious about, if not condemned, the conception of humanity. This originated in his subtle view of the relationship between the ideal and the realizable: Bosanquet surely accepted the notion of humanity as an ideal,⁸⁶ but at the same time he could not see its realization as empirically possible. Humanity as the unified moral society seemed to him out of reach for the current international society:

I do not suggest that larger units than nation-states can never come to fulfil these

but has its causes in their internal disease and distraction, leading to policies of ‘expansion’.’ (Bosanquet 1917, 277-8)

⁸⁵ It was a ‘confusion of the character of the state with the vices of states’ (Bosanquet 1917, 311).

⁸⁶ Bosanquet regarded ‘devotion to humanity as a best, as a supreme quality’ and declared that every state ‘includes a whole distinctive attitude to life and humanity’ (Bosanquet 1917, 288, 278).

conditions [for humanity]; only that, if they do, they must have achieved a unity comparable to that which we now experience in nationality alone. I do not say this is impossible to be realized at some remote period even in a world-state. But in so far as it is not realized, any unitary authority which it may be attempted to set up will be superficial, external, arbitrary, and liable to disruption. (Bosanquet 1917, 294)

As the final sentence implies, Bosanquet was particularly concerned about the current tendency to establish a world organization which lacked the basis of the general will. Such an organization would become alienated from members of each state and suppress their moral sentiment and individuality. Here, Bosanquet introduced an analogy of a universal language. If it replaced national languages, ‘it would mean a dead level of intelligence unsuited to every actual national mind, the destruction of literature and poetry’ (PTS, 290). In order to maintain the cultural diversity, people from different language backgrounds should learn languages of others when they want to communicate. In this occasion, ‘there would be a common understanding no less firm, and a vast gain of appreciation and enjoyment, a levelling up instead of levelling down’ (PTS, 290).

But why, Hobhouse might ask, should it be only the state which was the guardian of a whole moral world? Would it not be the case that international organizations, if not the world-organization, could also have the same kind of moral roles?

For Bosanquet, the state enabled its members to do what no other social groups could: to share ‘a common sentiment’, evoked by ‘a very high degree of common experience, tradition, and aspiration’ which only the state could produce (Bosanquet 1917, 292, 294). It would promote mutual understanding and sympathy beyond the divisions between their self- and class-interests. In short, it would enable them to realize mutual ‘recognition’ and would bring them the sense of wholeness, *i.e.* the general will.

Bosanquet would have rebutted Hobhouse's idea of the replacement of the state by guilds in its function of the moral cultivation, insisting that a sense of identity made by these organizations would necessarily be partial and sectional as they were formed in accordance with certain exclusive interests of their members. There was also no guarantee how a world organization could adjust different interests and produce a sense of mutual respect, sympathy and solidarity. It was only the state, as the provider of common tradition, culture and experiences, in which a person could find a shared identity with others as a citizen, and thus could form a moral society together.

It might be pointed out that Bosanquet's standpoint had some affinity with that of so-called liberal nationalism, while Hobhouse approached a more cosmopolitan view. The theoretical difference between them in this point derived from the difference of how they observed and evaluated the situation of contemporary domestic and international politics: while Hobhouse paid more attention to the oppressive aspects of actual states as well as the rise of new social movements, such as guild socialism, Bosanquet identified the primary origin of social solidarity and empathy in the sense of national citizenship. What should be noted again is, however, that against Hobhouse's own understanding, he shared an ethical conception of the state with Bosanquet. The state was fundamentally taken as a moral society in which individuals could pursue the common good in their own ways, *i.e.*, the development of capacities and the co-operative development of their own community. It can now be concluded that Bosanquet's political philosophy had much more liberal elements than Hobhouse had understood, sharing many common elements with Hobhouse's new liberalism.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Hobhouse's critique of three central elements of Bernard

Bosanquet's idealist political philosophy: methodology, the theory of will and state theory. Comparing his attacks on Bosanquet with what Bosanquet actually argued revealed not only the misunderstandings implicit in Hobhouse's critique, but also some fundamental unexpected similarities between Hobhouse's new liberalism and Bosanquet's idealism. The foundation of their arguments was a conviction that the moral character of individuals was the fundamental element of a good society, and that co-operative social interactions were the essential factor for its development.

Their emphasis on the morality and sociability of individuals may seem to have, as some scholars note, some affinities with the modern political philosophy of communitarianism (Simhony and Weinstein eds. 2001). But I do not think Hobhouse's and Bosanquet's standpoints were identical with this philosophical movement, since they strictly defended the conception of the common good as the universal principle. Any contingent historical traditions, institutions, conventions and other particularistic cultural values of a community, which communitarian critics of liberal universalism have often defended, were seen to be subject to this principle. On the other hand, Hobhouse and Bosanquet also seem to differ from modern liberals such as John Rawls. Their ethical standpoint was based on a more perfectionist and organic conception of individuals and society than the latter. They endorsed the rational development of individuality and the spirit of mutual aid with an understanding of individuals and society as mutually interdependent. Considering these fundamental similarities, it may be possible to put them in the same category of political philosophy, which I propose to call 'idealist liberalism'.

There was, however, a notable difference between their political philosophies: while Bosanquet regarded the actual nation state as a place where the general will is most likely to develop, Hobhouse focused more on voluntary organizations, in both domestic and international society. In fact, Hobhouse, at one point, showed considerable

reluctance to use the term ‘general will’ and suggested the term ‘social will’ or ‘social mind’ instead, basically because the term ‘general will’ seemed to be unable to grasp the complexity of actual societies (Hobhouse 1911, 97n). Hobhouse’s focus was on the fact that there were many institutions, including voluntary organizations, within and beyond the state. Thus the ‘social will’ or ‘social mind’ – which gives individuals the sense of belonging to a community – can never be a single homogeneous unity which the term ‘general will’ implies, but always some multi-layered unities:

In the more complex societies there are for example many institutions, each with its distinct ethos, and the existence of this ethos means that the institution lays a plastic hand on all who enter it, and with greater or less thoroughness moulds their life and actions. As an individual may and probably does belong to more than one institution, he is subject to influences of this kind from more than one quarter. There is thus in a sense more than one social mind that claims him, and this alone will suffice to warn us against the supposition that the social mind is necessarily something common, for example, to all members of the same political community. ...By the social mind, then, we mean not necessarily a unity pervading any given society as a whole, but a tissue of operative psychological forces which in their higher developments crystallize into unity within unity, and into organism operating upon organism. (Hobhouse 1911, 97-98)

Compared with Bosanquet’s vision of the state where its members perform diverse functions, but on the basis of the sense of a national identity generated from a common historical and cultural background, it can be argued that Hobhouse’s vision of the moral (or welfare) society presumed somewhat looser, but still harmonious relations of individuals. As individuals belong to various social organizations and thus possess

various social identities at the same time, Hobhouse saw that it would be unnatural to prioritize only one of them, *i.e.*, national identity, and make it the basis of the moral bonds of individuals. Rather, Hobhouse thought such bonds should be generated autonomously from the diverse forms of organic relationships pervading the whole society, often even beyond a national border, analogous to a vast spider's web.

Thus, it can be said that Hobhouse's perspective, in his pursuit of the welfare society, was of a *sociologist* examining the concreteness and complexity of actual society as well as of a *political philosopher* envisioning citizens acting morally for the welfare of the community they belong to. As a sociologist, then, Hobhouse searched for how the principles of new liberal ethics could be embedded into actual society and what society would look like when this happens. These formed the ultimate aims of his sociology. In order to illuminate its key characteristics, the next chapter will turn to the two key philosophical conceptions on which the whole of his sociology depended: an organic conception of society and a teleological conception of reality. Here again, the intellectual encounter with British idealism was crucial for the development of Hobhouse's own standpoint.

Ch. 6 Evolution and the Organic Conception: The Philosophical Basis of Hobhouse's Sociology

1. Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapters, the organic conception of society and the individual was at the heart of Hobhouse's new liberal ethics, basing the development of personality on the inter-dependency of individuals in society. In his sociology too, where Hobhouse concretized his vision of a welfare society, the organic conception was its main philosophical basis.

Looking at an intellectual context, it can be said that seeing society as something 'organic' had two major intellectual precursors at the turn of the century. One of them was indeed that of sociology. After being proposed by August Comte in the 1830s, the concept of sociology was imported into Britain by way of several thinkers' such as J.S. Mill and Frederic Harrison, including the introduction of Comte's positivist philosophy (Wright 1986). By the end of the century, sociology had attracted the attention of those who had been disillusioned by classical economics and sought for a new discipline which could bring an empirical, concrete and yet comprehensive understanding of society (Renwick 2012, 19-42).

What gave this newly developed discipline a theoretical basis was biology in particular. Biological forms of explanation had established intellectual dominance in the late nineteenth century, for which Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) was surely a, if not the sole, significant factor. Mainly through the works of Herbert Spencer, the discourse of biology provided sociology, as well as other disciplines such as politics and economics, with the analogy of a living organism for the analysis of society.⁸⁷ The

⁸⁷ For more details of Spencer's sociology, see chapter 7, section 3.

consequent conception of organic society gave political and social thinkers certain ideas about the relation between the individual and society, such as the interdependency of individuals in society, the dynamism of the individual and society as evolving beings, the oneness of nature and human being, and so forth.

British idealism had provided the other key source for the organic conception of society in the same period. From the 1870s until the 1920s, when leading philosophers such as F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet all passed away, idealism had been dominant in British philosophy as an alternative to empiricism and utilitarianism. Like sociology, which had relied on biological analogy, idealism emphasized the ‘bond’ between the individual and society, but it focused more on their spiritual side, as expressed in their collective will and moral consciousness (Meadowcroft 1995, 48-49). The individual was thus taken to be a moral and rational being, conscious of her position and duties in society and committed to the perfection of self as well as to the public good. Society was also understood to be innately of a spiritual nature, where ‘the general will’ (in Bosanquet) is gradually formed and put into practice.

The idealist view of social organism was deeply linked with its teleological perspective of reality. In the case of Green, who laid a philosophical foundation for subsequent idealists, the full realization of an organic society was what the actual history of human society embodied. Green was aware, however, that the actual consciousness of individuals is only insufficiently rational, as it is always fragmentary and ‘varies from moment to moment’ in ‘what may properly be called phenomena’ (Green [1883]1997, sect. 67). This led Green to ontologically assume the existence of an over-arching ‘eternal consciousness’, a spiritual system which makes the nature of the world not only organically coherent but also intelligible to the actual consciousness of human beings. This assumption had a religious motivation which in the case of Green was connected to an attempt to rescue Christianity from its organisational and

intellectual crisis. Thus, the eternal consciousness was proposed as a rational version of God, as an alternative to more orthodox Christianity (Richter 1964; Vincent and Plant 1984). Green identified this divine consciousness as existing immanently, rather than transcendentally, and so the actual process of history was to be interpreted as a teleological process in which God, as the spiritual principle of organic society, gradually realizes itself in this temporary world through human consciousness.

In the process of formulating his own conception of an organic conception of society, Hobhouse was deeply influenced by both of these intellectual strands. The conception was thus located at the core of both his sociology and philosophy. Considering that his interest in sociology was generated after decades of attempting to construct a metaphysical view of reality and that his sociology came to be firmly based on its findings, it would be useful to examine first how the organic conception developed in his metaphysics. Hobhouse developed the conception through three stages in particular: an initial commitment to epistemology in the mid-1890s, whose result was published as *The Theory of Knowledge* (1896); a following empirical study of the evolution of animal psychology in the late-1890s and the early 1900s, published as *Mind in Evolution* (1901); and his philosophical attempt to integrate his previous findings in *Development and Purpose* (1913). In this chapter, I will explore each of these three stages, which consequently laid the philosophical basis of his sociology. Considering the depth and scope of these texts, however, the full exploration of Hobhouse's discussions would be far beyond the capacity of just one chapter. Here I will only focus on the aspects which are directly related to his organic conception of society. Through all of the three stages, it will be shown that the relationship with the idealist teleological perspective was a crucial factor for the theoretical elaboration of his ideas. Hobhouse's attitude towards idealist metaphysics changed through the key texts above, making it finally incorporated, though with some notable conditions, into his

organic conception.

2. *The Theory of Knowledge:* The Principles of Mechanism, Teleology and Organism

Hobhouse's first philosophical volume, *The Theory of Knowledge* (1896), was written with the intention of criticizing idealist metaphysics from a realist standpoint. Its aim was to find a possible synthesis of philosophy and science in the field of epistemology, *i.e.*, to seek, in his own words, 'the broad, fundamental conditions on which our knowledge and belief in general are founded' (Hobhouse 1896 [hereafter TK], 3). For this purpose, he thought it particularly necessary to rescue the philosophical tradition of empiricism, which had now been degraded by the dominance of idealism in British philosophy. In the introduction, Hobhouse argued:

The reaction against the scientific spirit, so characteristic of our generation, has shown itself in the philosophic world in the decay of what has been called the English school. Along with many defects and limitations, that school, from Bacon and Locke to Mill and Spencer, has had the merit of dealing...in a sympathetic spirit with the problems and methods of the sciences. ...[T]he danger at present seems to be that the real services of the English school should be forgotten. (TK, viii)

The first chapter of the book was wholly devoted to this recovery of 'the scientific spirit'. For this purpose, Hobhouse saw it as crucial to distinguish different levels of human cognition, such as apprehension, judgment and inference, as the starting-point of his analysis. He saw that dividing components of knowledge into parts and to examine

each in an inductive way was exactly ‘what every science does’ (TK, 36-7).

Such a conceptual distinction accompanied a criticism of idealist metaphysics. In order to see the point of Hobhouse’s critique, it may be worthwhile look briefly at the work of T.H. Green. Green himself had perceived a philosophical danger in the scientific or naturalistic explanations of human cognition. His main target was the so-called associationists, represented by John Locke and David Hume. For these philosophers, to create an idea in one’s mind depended on the working of sensations, themselves driven by the stimuli of external objects. Mind was considered a passive entity, or, as Locke put it, *tabula rasa*, where ideas, after being created by sensations, gathered together and form knowledge as a whole. Green found such a naturalized view of human cognition seriously problematic, for it seemed to be making both moral philosophy and the free will redundant (Tyler 2010: 46-47). He thus rebutted this view by insisting that sensations or feelings presuppose an autonomous self-consciousness existent prior to them: ‘[t]heir feelings *are* facts; but they are facts only so far as determined by relations, which exist only for a thinking consciousness and otherwise could not exist’ (Green [1883]1997, sect. 48, italics by Green). ‘Relation’ was the watchword in his epistemology, indicating the generalization and articulation of external objects by the working of understanding within self-consciousness. Since relations can always be observed to function in human cognition, Green argued, a process of creating ideas itself showed that mind was not only a part of nature, but also its composer: ‘an understanding...irreducible to anything else, “makes nature” for us, in the sense of enabling us to conceive that there is such a thing’ (Green [1883]1997, sect. 19). Green thus regarded the human mind, or ‘thinking consciousness’, as an autonomous being continuously rearranging external nature as more orderly and intelligible. Human mind was seen to be capable of this cognitive process because, as indicated earlier, Green saw it as the location where the ‘eternal consciousness’ realizes itself.

By distinguishing various levels of human cognition, Hobhouse presented a different view from Green's, partly by approaching Locke and Hume. He argued that whilst complex cognitive acts, such as judgment and inference, did include 'relations' in their recognition of the external world, apprehension, the most primitive level of human assertion and equivalent to Locke's sensation, would not require them, pointing it out as 'the mistake of any subjective idealism...to assume that the object is first given as inward' (TK, 537). Hobhouse understood apprehension as a process of 'the physical stimuli acting upon the sense-organ' (TK, 30), and insisted, '[t]hought relations never constitute a content of immediate apprehension. Such contents do stand in manifold relations which are unfolded by judgments about them; but the apprehension of them is not the thought of their relations, nor does it depend for its existence in consciousness upon these relations. ...Apprehension, therefore, does not depend on any hitherto assigned mental activities' (TK, 31). Instead, the content of apprehension should be understood as an external *fact* existing independently of human cognition: 'the fact itself *as apprehended*, if we confine ourselves strictly to what is apprehended, is never altered and never unreal' (TK, 35, italics by Hobhouse). From such a realist perspective, Hobhouse presumed an objective nature working on human consciousness externally.⁸⁸

Hobhouse's realism was, however, far from a simple one. His critique of idealism was accompanied by a counter-argument against the 'mistake' of what he called 'natural or intuitive realism', which he saw had assumed that 'the independence of the percept is immediately given' (TK, 537).

...[W]e contend that an external reality is the fact present to the apprehending

⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that Hobhouse often supports his argument by drawing on contemporaneous psychologists, such as Wilhelm Wundt and William James, as if indicating that the distinction of epistemology and psychology would never be clear-cut. Indeed, he declares in the introduction, 'I do not wish to draw an academic distinction between logic and psychology. I mean for my own part to draw on psychological results whenever possible' (TK, 5).

consciousness. ...[T]hough this is so, apprehension cannot, on our principles, be aware that it is so. There is no intuitive perception of the externality of the object. There is 'intuitive', *i.e.* direct, perception of objects which are in fact external, but not intuitive knowledge that they are so. This knowledge is gained by a system of inferences from the relations and behavior of the contents themselves. (TK, 535)

When it comes to more complex forms of cognition – inference and judgment – Hobhouse affirmed the conceptual validity of 'relations', pointing out that the interpretation of the question 'Is this real?' could be equivalent to 'In what relations does it stand', as 'better expressed or defined...by Green' (TK, 35n). It can thus be said that Hobhouse's realism is here modified to a certain degree by his compromise with idealism.

On the basis of such a partial reception of idealism, towards the end of the book, Hobhouse turned his attention from the structure of knowledge to the metaphysics of reality. For this purpose, he pointed out that the wholeness of reality requires the re-integration of once analytically divided parts of knowledge,

The one thing ultimately and completely 'substantial' or self-subsistent is reality as a whole, and to the conception of this whole we are led by many converging lines of thought. ...The goal of knowledge, then, is a system in which (a) all parts are united to others by universal sequences; (b) the laws of those sequences are themselves so connected by all-embracing uniformity that each necessitates the rest; (c) while the relation of many of these sequences to one another in space or time varies, this variability is determined by the constructive necessities of the whole to which all belong. (TK, 577, 581)

In order to find such ‘all-embracing uniformity’ of knowledge, Hobhouse examined the validity of scientific mechanism and idealist teleology, pointing out that there are deficiencies as well as usefulness in both of them. First, defining the mechanical explanation of reality as the resolution of the whole reality into intelligible elements with causal relationships, Hobhouse concluded that, though useful in identifying the characteristics of parts and their interrelations, ‘mechanism can come to no result at all’ in the end (TK, 582). For it lacks an insight into an aspect of the whole determining ‘all its elements’, nor can it grasp a complex interaction between nature and human consciousness.

Idealist teleology, on the other hand, explains reality from either a result or a purpose of something that has happened. Referring to the ‘ambiguities of meaning’ in the concept, Hobhouse still found some use here for the idea, especially in the sense that attention to a result leads to the consideration of a ‘function’ performed in reality. Furthermore, as far as an interaction between consciousness and action is concerned, there is a moment when an expected purpose affects the actual occurrence of an event. Teleology was thus an effective way of grasping a complex inter-relationship between function/purpose and what was actually happening/chosen.

Hobhouse emphasized, however, that purpose neither explains the whole of reality, nor that reality is composed by an over-arching purpose. He thus argued:

[C]ertain forms of teleological conception may be put aside at once. That existence is a realized idea, a comprehensive plan, or even a purpose unfolding itself throughout the ages, seems to be expressions without meaning, if intended to characterize reality as a whole. ... A purpose, an end, cannot characterize reality *as a whole*. There may be something or some one striving towards an end, but if so, the end must be but one element in reality, and not its final omnipresent essence.

(TK, 584-5, italics by Hobhouse)

Hobhouse thus rejected the idealist view of the actual world as the representation of rational consciousness. As we saw in chapter 3, he addressed elements of ‘disharmony’ incompatible with planning or purpose. The statement above thus indicates Hobhouse’s dissatisfaction with idealist teleology, for its seeming neglect of such disharmonious elements of reality. Such elements were seen to be part of a more mechanistic perspective which tended to limit the scope and effect of any purpose given by consciousness. Thus, in his critique of idealist teleology, Hobhouse concluded,

[T]he process by which the end is realized seems fixed by some definite constitution of reality in which the nature of the end itself is only one factor among others. Teleology, in short, is as one-sided and relative a category as mechanism. Both alike are explanations by reference to something else, and are therefore *ipso facto* incapable of standing as expressions of the full nature of the whole. (TK, 585)

Instead of mechanism and teleology, Hobhouse proposed a perspective of ‘organism’, since it was ‘the least unfit to express the notion of the whole’ in reality (TK, 586). Though drawing this perspective from the then most popular scientific discipline, *i.e.*, biology, Hobhouse nonetheless saw it as useful for looking into what scientific mechanism often overlooks, that is, the interdependency of parts and the whole. It would also analyze an organic wholeness even when it lacks a moment of genuine teleology, *i.e.*, a valuable end fully recognized by consciousness. In such a case, the wholeness would be considered to have a moment of ‘quasi-teleology’ (TK, 587), for every part of it would still play a certain function for the whole, though without a

purposive consciousness, such as its own sustenance. Hobhouse referred to a human society whose life is sustained by 'a competitive system of industry' (TK, 588) as an example of such a quasi-teleological wholeness. Such a society could be considered organic, for in it 'the average man works for his own profit, and yet he produces...for the use of others, and the general benefit of society'. But just because everyone 'works for his own profit', the organic wholeness could not be considered a genuine teleological system, which required parts being conscious of their valuable end. In sum, Hobhouse asserted that idealist teleology was not a sufficient perspective for exploring organic systems existing in this actual world.

Thus, in *The Theory of Knowledge*, Hobhouse thought more highly of the organic conception than the mechanical and teleological, regarding it as incorporating both of the latter themes. It was regarded as the most suitable conception for exploring every aspect of reality, ranging from a biological system up to a most developed human society. The theoretical relationship between organic, mechanical and teleological conceptions postulated in this book changed, however, after he started to associate the organic conception with the most popular discourse of the period: evolution.

3. *Mind in Evolution*: The Distinctiveness of Human Mind

Mind in Evolution (1901) is arguably the most unique work in Hobhouse's intellectual life. It is basically a study on comparative psychology, but composed by a mixture of three different elements: (1) a theoretical analysis of the mental (and occasionally physical) structure of all kinds of 'animals' from the protozoon to human beings by drawing on leading contemporaneous physiological and psychological works, such as Max Verworn, William Preyer, George Romanes, Edward Thorndike and C. Lloyd Morgan; (2) a collection of findings on animal intelligence based on several

experiments that Hobhouse himself conducted with his own cat and dog, as well as some other species such as monkeys and elephants at the Belle Vue Gardens in Manchester; and (3) a philosophical argument about the higher development of human mind in society. The purpose of the book was posited as sketching ‘the main phases of mental development’ (Hobhouse 1901 [hereafter MI], v). For this general purpose, philosophical contemplation, as well as an empirical research, was considered necessary, owing to the lack of sufficient empirical data as to human psychology at that time.⁸⁹ Such an eclectic characteristic of the book seems to have confused some contemporaneous readers. One reviewer thus complained that Hobhouse’s discussion of ‘evolution’ was ‘the least valuable feature...of the book’ because of its ‘general descriptive formulations’ which would be interesting only ‘from the point of view of general philosophy’ (Baldwin 1903, 665).

It is noteworthy that Hobhouse’s attempt to trace the process of mental evolution had an underlying motivation to provide an alternative evolutionary theory to so-called social Darwinist thought, which had been dominant at that time explaining the process of social change by the Darwinian biological concepts, such as natural selection and struggle for existence.⁹⁰ Thus, the main proposition in *Mind in Evolution* was that the

⁸⁹ Hobhouse himself admitted this limit, stating in Preface that ‘a hypothesis is propounded as to the general trend of mental evolution, and an attempt is made to test this hypothesis so far as animal intelligence and the generic distinction between animal and human intelligence are concerned. For the rest, that is to say in all that relates to the higher development of the human mind in society, the outline is left to be filled in upon a future occasion.’ (MI, v)

⁹⁰ On social Darwinism at the turn of the century, see Crook (1994) and Hawkins (1997). Already in *The Labour Movement* (1893), Hobhouse referred to this social Darwinist thought as against his own standpoint as a social reformer, crisply summing up its characteristic as follows: ‘The chief of these arguments is an application to human progress of ideas derived from the organic world at large. The struggle for existence among plants and animals is continually eliminating the majority of those which are born, and survivors are only able to maintain their ground by superiority to the remainder in strength, swiftness, cunning, endurance, or some similar quality. Hence the natural result of the struggle is the survival of the fittest, which is the means of the gradual evolution of higher from lower forms. So in human life success is to the strong,

‘higher’ evolution observed in mental development is the very process where natural selection is gradually qualified and replaced by the working of consciousness. In other words, in the course of mental development, mind gets less and less reliant on the law of biological evolution, in which certain types which are merely contingently suitable for surrounding environments survive and give their dispositions to the next generation. Hobhouse named such a ‘higher’ evolution, observed in mental development, an ‘orthogenic’ evolution. The term was first used by a German zoologist Theodor Eimer, meaning ‘evolution through use-inheritance and the organic transmission of acquired characters’ (Lloyd Morgan 1903, 104). Hobhouse, however, dropped the Lamarckian connotation in this original usage and instead defined it as ‘an advance towards a higher organization, a development of the organic principle’ (MI, 374). The organic conception thus reappears here, now in association with the concept of evolution.

In order to see how Hobhouse used the terms ‘organic principle’ in the book, it may be useful briefly to trace the outline of the orthogenic evolution of mind formulated there. It is divided into six stages: (1) The most primitive form of mind can be seen in an animal’s automatic or impulsive reaction to an external stimulus typically seen in a reflex action, e.g., eyelids closing for protection. At this unconscious stage, there is no chance for a purposeful mind to work, but the response is undertaken mechanically, the way of which is usually ‘formed under the influence of natural selection, where it is in general beneficial to the organism to respond’ (MI, 39). (2) The next stage is an action determined by instinct, ‘the abiding [inner] state directing action to the attainment of

the swift, the cunning, and the patient. Let natural forces play, and these shall inherit the earth, the weak and feeble being rooted out. In this way by slow degrees we attain to a higher type. But if by artificial means we preserve the impotent and the helpless, we hinder this beneficent natural process. We prolong the misery of their extinction and lower the average of human excellence. Happiness and perfection are reached by men and by other organisms when they are thoroughly well adapted to their environment, and the supreme law of progress is that the ill-adapted being should be left to die.’ (Hobhouse 1893, 90-91)

certain results...fixed by heredity', such as 'the young mammal to suck its mother's breast' (MI, 79, 47). Instinct is understood as a bridging point between automatic reaction and intelligence. (3) After intelligence grows out of instinct in the mind of animals, they manage to 'correlate' past experiences and the responses to the circumstances. At a most primitive stage, this can be seen where 'actions are modified by the pleasure or pain immediately resulting', such that a burnt puppy dreads the fire (MI, 85). (4) Some animals, such as cats, dogs, otters, elephants and chimpanzees, have higher intelligence, managing to make use of 'practical judgment', *i.e.*, drawing inferences, anticipating a consequence and making use of the data gained from the past experience, for the choice of their future action. This is the highest stage of intelligence animals can reach, where action is no longer tied to an external stimulus, but determined by 'a correlation between experienced perceptual relations on the one hand, and the adoption of means to a practical end on the other. Action is not merely modified by, but based on applied experience' (MI, 135). (5) Animals' 'practical judgment' is thus tied to a concrete experience of the past, and so there is no consciousness of generalization. Human beings, on the other hand, are able to use language which enables them to acquire a generalized conception by detaching ideas from concrete experience and recombining them. In other words, language is a tool of 'conceptual thinking', connecting detached concepts together into a 'world of ideas', which is 'the distinctive property of humanity' (MI, 299). Such systematic ideas are institutionalized into morality, custom and law, whose explanatory functions enable human beings to make a 'universal judgment' about experience, which is out of reach for any other living organisms (MI, 308-9, 296). (6) The final stage of the orthogenic evolution of mind is yet to be reached even by the 'common knowledge' of human beings, which has still remained somewhat 'loose and ill organized', tolerating 'a good deal of contradiction' (MI, 329). The direction of the further evolution in mind resides in the development of

morality and intelligence at a personal level, as well as of ethics and science at a social level, the goal of which being ‘not indefinitely remote a stage of knowledge’. In this final stage, Hobhouse concludes, the ‘human species should come to understand its own development, its history, conditions, and possibilities, and on the basis of such an understanding should direct its own future, just as an individual who thoroughly understands himself and the conditions of his life may mark out his career for himself’ (MI, 336). It is the highest stage of mental development, whose perfection makes human beings seek ‘not mere adaptation to circumstances, but the domination of the rational spirit in the world’ (MI, 372).

From this brief outline of Hobhouse’s orthogenic evolution in mind, a few points can be made as to his organic conception used in the book. First, *Mind in Evolution* illuminates Hobhouse’s ambivalent attitude towards the difference between human and animal minds. On the one hand, he seems to emphasize the continuity as living organisms, between them by drawing one particular ‘orthogenic’ line of evolution. The substantial amount of argument in the middle of the book is thus devoted to the findings of various experiments on animal psychology, demonstrating that many kinds of animals do share a sophisticated form of intelligence with humans (MI, ch. 8-11; Renwick 2012, 107-110). Moreover, the organic conception itself penetrates Hobhouse’s whole analysis, used for describing their shared characteristics in contrast with machines – that is living organism’s interdependency of parts and the whole and its capacities of self-maintenance by the adaptation to external environment. In this sense, it is right to say that Hobhouse, like another new liberal theorist J.A. Hobson, differed from T.H. Huxley’s dualism between nature and mind (Freeden 1978, 81-6).⁹¹

This leads to the second point. By associating organic conception with evolution, Hobhouse in *Mind in Evolution* introduced dynamism into its meaning. The conception

⁹¹ For more argument on Huxley, see next section.

is now divided into two parts: the animal organisms susceptible to the biological law of natural selection in the course of their self-maintenance, and human beings which escape from such a law by its ability of adjusting the surroundings by the use of intelligence and morality. Moreover, in Hobhouse's theoretical framework, the former was associated with 'mechanism' while the latter with 'teleology'. Orthogenic evolution was thus considered to be the gradual process of mind as an organic unity changing its fundamental quality from the one drawing on mechanism, *i.e.*, the automatic reaction and adjustment to the biological law, to that on teleology, *i.e.*, the purposeful action working on the surroundings towards a consciously recognized end. Human beings were thus seen to have the higher level of intelligence and morality present in their minds, enabling them to adjust 'its environment to its own needs' instead of 'adjusting itself to its environment' (MI, 402, 403). In short, the evolution of the human mind could be called a purposive, 'self-conscious evolution' (MI, 399, 400).

It may be concluded that through empirical research and philosophical thinking of mental evolution, Hobhouse in *Mind in Evolution* came to regard teleology as the unique function of human intelligence and morality. It was a notable departure from his view in *The Theory of Knowledge*, where teleology was still thought of less highly compared with, and rather separately from, the organic conception. In a Greenian way, Hobhouse now incorporated the teleological perspective into his organic conception, considering human intelligence and morality as organic *and* teleological capable of rearranging nature according to their ethical ends, the goal of which would be 'the mastery by the human mind of the conditions, internal as well as external, of its life and growth' (MI, 402).

4. *Development and Purpose*: Comparison with Ritchie and Bosanquet

The re-appraisal of teleology as the essence of human mind in *Mind in Evolution* changed Hobhouse's evaluation of idealist metaphysics as well. In *Development and Purpose* (1913), a philosophical volume which Hobhouse described as one that 'completes a scheme which has occupied the writer for twenty-six years' (Hobhouse 1913 [hereafter DP], xv), he reflected the critical attitude he had had to idealist teleology when writing *The Theory of Knowledge*, and explicitly stated that it was an 'error':

[B]efore beginning the systematic study of evolution several years were given to an examination of the *Theory of Knowledge* (1896). Working with the ideas of mechanical causation in this book, I was led to the conclusion that these ideas themselves imply at the end what might be called an organic conception of reality as a whole. But the organic seemed to me then as distinct from the purposive on the one hand as from the mechanical on the other. Not long after the book was published, however, some new considerations occurred which convinced me that this was an error, and that however much I might object to the form of their reasoning there was an element of substantial truth on this head in the reasoning of the Idealists. (DP, xxvi)

Indeed, Hobhouse realized that the line of mental development he traced in *Mind in Evolution* had an affinity with what idealist philosophers, such as Green, argued for in terms of the gradual realization of the spiritual principle. Thus, while remaining hostile to idealist political philosophy, Hobhouse admitted that 'Green's permanent self-consciousness...if it is not a spiritual principle, eternal or timeless, is an empirical

fact within the world of time'. He also commented that 'the Hegelian conception of development possessed a certain rough, empirical value' (DP, xix). In this sense, Collini seems to be right to conclude that 'there can be no doubt that at the most fundamental level his own theory came to rest upon a recognizably Idealist metaphysics' (Collini 1979, 241, 242).

However, even in *Development and Purpose*, there still remained an element of qualification in his acceptance of idealist metaphysics. In order to understand what it was, it is useful to compare Hobhouse's views on evolution in this book with the views of two leading idealists who were also committed to the issue of evolution: D.G. Ritchie (1853-1903) and Bernard Bosanquet. As Michael Freeden points out, by the turn of the century, 'any socio-political theory failing to come to terms with evolutionary thought would have lost its intellectual credibility and its vitality as a solution to the great questions of the time' (Freeden 1978: 77), and so these so-called 'second generation' idealists also had to take this issue, as well as the dominance of biological explanations of society very seriously. Like Hobhouse, far from rejecting evolutionary social thought as a naturalistic dogma, they attempted to reconcile Darwinian notions, such as natural selection and the struggle for existence, with their own Greenian metaphysics.

For measuring the theoretical distance between Hobhouse, Ritchie and Bosanquet over the issue of evolution, it might be worthwhile first to look at the arguments of two notable non-idealist evolutionary philosophers: T.H. Huxley (1825-1895) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Though a friend and admirer of Darwin, Huxley proposed conceptually to separate the natural process of *evolution* from the ethical process of *progress*:

Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of

which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest...but of those who are ethically the best. (Huxley 1893, 33)

On the basis of this separation of spirit from nature, Huxley argued that society is a product of human spirit rather than a part of the natural process of evolution. Huxley's standpoint was polemical, for it was proposing a strict dualism suggesting that the reason and morality of individuals are the entities existing independently from nature, an argument which could go as far as to insist that individual agency is the only source of social progress.

Herbert Spencer strongly criticized this view, arguing that Huxley 'is practically going back to the old theological notions, which put Man and Nature in antithesis' (Duncan 1908, 336). The main purpose of Spencer's sociology was to present the idea that the development of social organization, and the modification of the human mind, had both followed the cosmic process of evolution, which he described as the process of functional differentiation.⁹² In a rather Hayekian sense, Spencer remained deeply sceptical about a rationalist idea that any political action could speed up this cosmic process, although it could do much to hinder it (Taylor 1992, 71).

It may be suggested that one of the main features of the views of Hobhouse, Ritchie and Bosanquet on the notion of evolution was that they attempted to find the middle way between Spencer's naturalistic monism and Huxley's moralistic dualism. Accepting evolution as a useful concept for understanding the processes of social change, they all aimed at demonstrating that evolution empirically indicates the gradual realization of Green's ethical principle in the actual world. While Green himself refused to locate the origins of consciousness in the evolutionary process of nature, they reinforced Green's metaphysical foundation by resorting to empirical perspectives.

⁹² On Spencer's social theory, see also next chapter.

Where and how to locate themselves between the two poles of monism and dualism, however, differed among these thinkers. Of the three, Ritchie had a view most sympathetic with the naturalist arguments of evolution.⁹³ Against Alfred Russel Wallace, who, like Huxley, attributed the development of morality and higher intellectual capacities to the workings of a 'spiritual world', Ritchie argued that they can sufficiently be explained by the logic of natural selection: '[c]onsciousness, reflection, language, are all obviously advantages in the struggle for existence to the beings possessing them; and it is much the simplest hypothesis to ascribe the origin of all of them to natural selection, instead of postulating a mysterious intrusion from without' (Ritchie 1901, 101). Ritchie observed that the social instincts of human beings had replaced the struggle between individuals by the one between groups. In the latter, consciousness, reflection and language are all advantageous because they have the capacities to substitute the interaction of ideas for the mere physical struggle, to identify what contributes to the goodness of the group as a whole and to direct the thought and action of its members towards it. Defining morality as 'the conscious and deliberate adoption of those feelings and acts and habits which are advantageous to the welfare of the community', Ritchie asserted that '[n]atural selection...is a perfectly adequate cause to account for the rise of morality' (Ritchie 1893, 62). He thus viewed natural selection as empirically justifying Hegel's philosophy of history, since it demonstrates 'this seeming non-rationality of nature as itself a form of the rational' (Ritchie 1893, 58). Nature is essentially rational, and so it drives human beings as rational and moral beings as well. Such a conviction led Ritchie to a unique combination of Burkean conservatism and Greenian radicalism: while the existent institutions have proved its social usefulness by its survival in the struggle for existence, still their value has to be continuously tested

⁹³ Of course, idealist philosophers, including Ritchie, criticized naturalistic forms of evolution for their explanation of the higher by the lower. Ritchie attacked Spencer in particular for his failing to learn the lessons Aristotle taught, namely the true nature of a thing is to be found 'not in its origin but in its end' (Ritchie 1891, 44).

by ever-changing circumstances and be reformed if they turn out to be harmful to the welfare of society (Boucher and Vincent 2000, 129-130).

Like Ritchie, Bosanquet also presumed that human beings are embedded into the law of natural selection. Nature, as ‘a system in space and time’ (Bosanquet 1912 [hereafter PIV], 371), exists as an externality to which animal organisms, including human beings, have to adapt themselves in order to survive. Bosanquet added, however, that what is unique to human beings is their power of mind: ‘Mind (or its inseparable concomitant the nervous system) is an adaptive variation sustained by natural selection’ (Bosanquet 1913 [hereafter VDI], 83). Unlike naturalistic philosophers, Bosanquet understood that the development of mind makes the relationship between nature and humans more interactive and mutually complementary. Nature is ‘fragmentary or disconnected’ by itself, if self-existent, and it is the power of mind which can bring ‘the active form of totality’ into it (PIV, 367). On the other hand, ‘Nature teaches us what are the ends of the universe’ (PIV, 370). Finite minds thus identify the purposes of our lives by interpreting and responding to the external conditions which nature imposes on us.

There is, however, an ambiguity in Bosanquet’s treatment of the term ‘nature’. His argument becomes slightly confusing when asserting that mind itself should be regarded as a ‘second nature’, conditioning another mind as ‘the spiritual environment’ (VDI, 83, 84). When stating that ‘Mind is the environment of Mind’ (VDI, 84), Bosanquet seems to be making the distinction of nature and mind less clear. Furthermore, he affirmed that mind can modify and restrict the working of natural selection through its functions of reflection, suggestion, language and the institutions it forms (VDI, 84, 88). All this tells us that Bosanquet’s primary concern was not so much in the working of natural selection on human beings as in the ‘social selection’, a process of mutual recognition between individuals in society conditioning the purposes

and functions of one's social life.⁹⁴

Whether mind is treated as one's environment or the source of one's agency, Bosanquet followed Green by arguing that natural selection points to the gradual revelation of the principle of the Absolute. It is the most rational yet never-reachable stage where contradictory aspects of nature are removed and particular experiences are rearranged into the harmonious unity: 'a perfect union of mind and nature, absorbing the world of Nature by and through the world of selves' (PIV, 382). Against the potential misunderstanding that the Absolute is something separate and over/above finite beings, Bosanquet emphasized that it can be approached only through our day-to-day moral practices: '[by] moulding our daily business with a self-consistent purpose or solving an economic problem, or discerning the reality of beauty through the appearance of ugliness, or the lovable through the apparent failings of character, we find from day to day how contradictory aspects blend into harmony as linking and distinguishing contents come into view' (PIV, 376).

Compared with these idealists, Hobhouse was, somewhat paradoxically, considering his empiricist aspect, more cautious about applying the biological notion of evolution to the explanation of society, warning that the naturalistic term 'evolution' could indicate any form of organizational and functional growth, regardless of moral values it possesses. In fact, the view was the very starting-point of his study in *Mind in Evolution*:

Evolution is a natural process, moving without regard to human judgments of what is good or bad, right or wrong. ...The term itself, indeed, suggests a growing

⁹⁴ Bosanquet himself seems to be aware of this ambiguity and explains rather awkwardly that social selection can be understood as part of natural selection: 'social selection might be called relatively artificial or more than natural... But on the whole it is well to regard it as natural, in the sense in which the whole activities of Society, as representing the necessities of man's nature and surroundings, are natural and necessary.' (VDI, 89)

fullness of existence, the unrolling of latent powers, a tendency towards perfection, the process by which a thing comes to be that for which it was destined. ...Unfortunately for the biological enthusiast, the perfection which Nature seeks is not always a perfection which man as a rational being can welcome or love. (MI, 1)

The point was Hobhouse did not assume that the process of evolution automatically corresponds to the advancement of 'progress', an ethical betterment of nature and society. Nor did he think of such progress to be caused by a natural process of evolution. Progress was not predestined to take place, for 'the historical record showed that it was the fact, that the higher type may often be beaten by the lower, and beaten to extinction so far as its achievements in civilization are concerned' (DP, xxi). Hobhouse argued that progress rather depended on the moral will and intelligence of human beings, directed towards the harmonious rearrangement of the external conditions – geographical, biological and sociological – into 'an ultimate unity of the organic kind' (DP, 336). He thus concluded:

Reality, as far as it is intelligible, would fall within one system, and from this it would be deducible that it would form an organic whole, with a development determined by purpose and moving towards more perfect harmony of organization. Such a system, it may be said, is real, and to discover and understand it is the goal of our rational endeavour. (DP, 340-341)

The view expressed in the statement somewhat resembles that of Bosanquet, who also stated that the working of mind brings totality into nature. Unlike Bosanquet's reciprocal interpretation of nature and mind, however, Hobhouse took a further step

closer to Huxley, emphasizing the 'sheer dualism' in reality (DP, 336). On the side of nature, there exist the elements of 'disharmony': 'disharmony or discord...is not merely an empirical fact but a natural consequence of the mechanical principle which runs through the real order' (DP, 350). Hobhouse understood that such disharmonious elements had permanently existed, hindering the full realization of a rational and ethical order in nature. The essence of mind, on the other hand, resided in its 'impulse towards harmony' and its functions in 'transform[ing] the conditions limiting or thwarting it, and render[ing] them subservient to its ends' (DP, 350). Progress was thus identified with the process of moral and intelligent minds consciously working on mechanical and often disharmonious conditions of nature for the attainment of a harmonious organic whole. While Hobhouse was aware that such harmony remains an ideal and might remain so, he was also convinced that such an idea itself becomes a motive of the moral will to proceed. He did not think his confidence to be groundless, for the findings of *Mind in Evolution* indicated that such progress towards an organic whole did occur in the mind of living organisms, and that human mind had a sufficient intellectual and moral capacity to gradually bring the same kind of harmonious organic whole into reality.

Towards the end of the book, Hobhouse is mentioning the logical possibility of the existence of Hegelian 'Mind' beyond individual minds. 'Such a Mind must be a permanent and central factor in the process of Reality' (DP, 365). However, he remained reluctant to develop a metaphysical line of inquiry on this point, stoically stating that 'how in detail its relation to reality in general, and the individual mind in particular, is to be conceived is a question about which it is best frankly to confess ignorance' (DP, 365). Even at a point of considering a Greenian identification of 'the permanent mind' as 'God', Hobhouse still suggests focusing on the spirit of concrete human beings, stating that 'God is that of which the highest known embodiment is the distinctive spirit of

Humanity' (DP, 371).

In relation to idealist philosophy, it can be concluded that Hobhouse's acceptance of its teleology was somewhat conditional. Teleology was associated with the actual wills in individual minds against nature, and so never considered to be embedded into the whole reality itself as an over-arching spirit.⁹⁵ In this sense, Hobhouse retained a realist perspective which he had first shown in *The Theory of Knowledge*.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Hobhouse's organic conception in relation to idealist metaphysics. It turned out that after introducing an evolutionary framework, his organic conception came to incorporate an idealist teleological perspective, focusing on the gradual realization of harmony (the content of which we saw in chapter 3) in reality by the workings of the moral, intellectual and purposeful minds of individuals. Unlike idealists who tended to see reality itself as rational in nature, however, Hobhouse retained a realist and dualist perspective to contrast the ethical and rational nature of human mind with disharmonious conditions of external environment. In this sense, Hobhouse's philosophical standpoint may be called 'quasi-idealist' or an 'idealist-inclined' realism.

After tracing the process of the development of his organic conception of nature and mind, it is worth noting again that such a metaphysical perspective laid the philosophical foundation of Hobhouse's sociology. Among contemporaneous thinkers who were involved in the establishment of British sociology in the early twentieth century, Hobhouse came to have a unique theoretical standpoint because of this

⁹⁵ In fact, Bosanquet criticized Hobhouse in his review of *Development and Purpose*: 'Is not the mechanical principle rather a contribution to the purpose than a condition external to it? Is not, after all, the whole of reality spiritual?' (Bosanquet 1913, 386)

philosophical background. We should now turn to his sociology in the next, final chapter and see how his sociological theory applied his organic conception of mind and nature. By doing so, the characteristics of a welfare society concretely presented in his sociological research, will also be illuminated.

Ch. 7 Sociology and the Vision of Welfare Society

1. Introduction

In the last chapter, we saw that Hobhouse retained a dualist perspective between nature and mind, while incorporating a certain aspect of idealist teleology. On the basis of this metaphysical framework, society was put in a rather ambivalent position, for it was seen, on the one hand, as one of an external environment conditioning individual minds, and on the other hand as that which minds (and consequent actions) consciously or unconsciously create. This double-character of society and the reciprocal relationship between society and the individual was at the core of Hobhouse's sociological theory.

Furthermore, the teleological framework enabled Hobhouse to associate his empirical research of the changing processes of society with his new liberal ethics. The concept of 'orthogenic evolution' used in the study of mental development was consequently applied to the study of society as a line of 'progress', which can be differentiated from a variety of all the possible lines of social evolution. Thus, Hobhouse once stated,

The application of ethical principles to the social structure...is merely the effort to carry one step further that guidance of life by rational principles which constitutes the essence of orthogenic evolution. (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 116)

A vision of a welfare society was postulated as the goal of this 'orthogenic evolution' of 'social structure', the elements of which Hobhouse identified both in his new liberal ethics of harmony and in the actual process of social change. In other words, a welfare society was what Hobhouse envisioned as the reflection of his new liberal ethics of

harmony. This chapter attempts to grasp its whole view through exploring his evolutionary and comprehensive sociology. The discussion will be divided into three parts. First, I will attempt to grasp the general characteristics of Hobhouse's sociology in theory and methodology, especially by focusing on its relationship with a more influential school in the Sociological Society: That is eugenics. Secondly, the essence of Hobhouse's sociology - illuminated in the first section - will be compared with that of the most important originator of early British sociology: Herbert Spencer. Despite a widely shared notorious image of Spencer as a 'social Darwinist', a careful comparison will suggest that Hobhouse's sociology had much in common with that of Spencer, and thus the section concludes that Hobhouse can be said to be a successor of Spencer's comprehensive and evolutionary sociology. Thirdly, a sociological principle of citizenship – an outgrowth of Hobhouse's Spencerian sociology – will be explored. It will be shown that citizenship was viewed as the very principle of an idealized welfare society, the elements of which Hobhouse discovered in the various institutions of modern society. The chapter ends by addressing some theoretical characteristics of his vision of the welfare society drawn from this principle.

2. The General Characteristics of Hobhouse's Sociology: Encounters with Biological Sociology

2-1. Biology and Sociological Methodology

Although early British sociology was certainly dominated by the discourse of evolutionary biology,⁹⁶ there were nevertheless various tendencies within the early Sociological Society – in method and theory – which relativized the naturalistic perspective of biological sociologists. Den Otter points out, for instance, that while it is

⁹⁶ For the latest survey of the influence of biology on early British sociology, see Renwick (2012).

true that the Society postulated sociology as a part of 'science', the term was 'often used not to designate 'science' in the order of the physical or natural sciences, but more generally as systematic and precise study' (Den Otter 1996, 135). Hobhouse was the representative of such a view, claiming that sociology is the comprehensive study of society which should never be reduced to a single perspective.

Hobhouse did not, however, wholly reject the perspective of biology. In his inaugural lecture given at the London School of Economics in 1907, he named biology as one of the four roots of sociology alongside political philosophy, philosophy of history and various specialized empirical researches, such as demography, social statistics, social survey and social anthropology. Knowledge of biology was essential for sociologists because it tells them the physical conditions imposed on individuals, such as the operation of heredity, reflex action and impulse. Hobhouse thus admitted, 'we are bound to regard biology and all the physical sciences as one of the roots of sociology, for notwithstanding all that has been said, man is an animal, and as an animal he does fall within the sphere of biological enquiry (Hobhouse 1966 [hereafter SP], 13)'.

However, as already seen in the last chapter, he was generally critical of his contemporaries' tendency to explain the whole process of social change by the terms of evolutionary biology. Understanding social change as 'evolution' had had various intellectual origins such as anthropology and German romanticism since the early nineteenth century (Burrow 1966; Hobhouse 1911 [hereafter SE], 17), and 'progress' had been a watchword across the intellectual spectrum at the turn of the century (Collini 1979). But biological terms, created by Darwin and Spencer, such as 'natural selection', 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest' had become so influential among social thinkers during the latter half of the century that Hobhouse felt the newly launched science of society had already become subordinate to evolutionary biology by the time he was appointed to his chair in 1907 (SP, 11).

The main problems Hobhouse found in this 'biological sociology' were twofold. First, he pointed out that fact and value were frequently confused in its use of the term 'survival of the fittest'. The term is, according to Hobhouse, tautological and ethically groundless because it does not tell us what type of human beings or society ought to be called the 'fittest'. It merely assumes that the 'fittest' should mean the one which happens to survive in a contingent form of competition. He argued that a standard of value, or a standard of 'progress', should instead be determined by an independent ethical argument so that we can identify which traits of human nature should be morally encouraged (SE, 7-12).

Secondly, Hobhouse pointed out that focusing merely on biological factors would make social explanations unsatisfactory and biased. In *Social Development* (1924), he introduced three other factors of social change, environmental, psychological and sociological. The environmental factor is a physical and non-human factor, such as geography. The psychological factor concerns the condition of mind, such as each individual's strength or weakness of will, consistency or inconsistency of impulse and relationship between emotion and reason. Finally, the sociological factor concerns the consequence of interaction of different minds as well as the influence of cultural, historical and institutional conditions working on the choices and personality of individuals. Social change is thus a product of these complex factors, of which the biological is only one. (Hobhouse 1924, 95-129)

One of Hobhouse's main tasks as a sociologist was therefore to draw a line within the study of society over which biological explanation should not cross, and the task of building a theory and methodology which could be called uniquely sociological. Hobhouse stated, '[a] complete sociology would...embrace a social philosophy and a social science. But it would be a synthesis, not a fusion, of the two enquiries' (SP, 29). What he meant by this was that sociologists should always keep three approaches in

mind. The first was to discover the logic of social integration by empirical studies such as the historical study of communities and the comparative study of cultures and institutions without any value judgment. Hobhouse called such empirical approaches the study of 'social development' and 'social morphology', both of which he himself undertook in *Morals in Evolution* (1906). The second was what he called 'social philosophy', an attempt to find ethical principles which both the actions of individuals and the organization of social institutions ought to follow in order to realize good human nature and society. Finally, sociologists need to identify what the effective social reform would be by utilizing those two kinds of knowledge, namely, by identifying possible choices of institutional reform which would meet both empirical feasibility and normative desirability. Hobhouse called this final task 'the art of social improvement' (SP, 28).

These three approaches might all seem odd to the students of contemporary sociology. Nevertheless, his classification reflected a certain tendency of social thinkers who were involved in the Sociological Society in Britain in the early twentieth century. Biological social theorists such as Karl Pearson and Benjamin Kidd would happily confess to undertaking the empirical study of social development (or in their own words, 'social evolution') along with civic sociologists and social anthropologists, such as Patrick Geddes and Edward Westermarck. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in turn, would not have disagreed if their works were understood as 'the art of social improvement', utilizing empirical findings for institutional reform, although their commitment to ethical theory was somewhat minimal.

However, enthusiasm for 'social philosophy' quickly diminished a few years after the establishment of the Sociological Society.⁹⁷ Perhaps this was one of the reasons

⁹⁷ Apart from the first and second volumes of the Society's journal, the *Sociological Papers*, which included panel discussions on 'the Relation of Sociology to the Social Sciences and to Philosophy' and on 'the Relation between Sociology and Ethics', the

why in 1911, Hobhouse resigned as editor of the journal (by then named the *Sociological Review*) and came to distance himself from the Society (Abrams 1968, 110). In sum, what was unique in Hobhouse's methodology was that empirical study occupied only half of his whole system of sociology, and that the purpose of sociology was to contribute to the gradual realization of an ideal society, whose ethical principles may be discerned only by the other half, social philosophy. Hobhouse inherited this integration of science and ethics, in a critical manner, from Herbert Spencer. But before turning to the relationship of Hobhouse's sociology with Spencer's, it is important to look at its theoretical side, the general characteristics of which can also be seen in his argument against a variant of biological sociology: eugenics.

2-2. Eugenics and Sociological Theory

The unique methodology of Hobhouse's comprehensive sociology, seen above, was combined with his unique sociological theory, the characteristics of which can be most clearly seen in his arguments against the school of eugenicists in the Sociological Society. It was a school first formed under the charismatic leadership of Francis Galton (1822-1911). In the paper entitled 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims', given at a meeting of the Sociological Society in 1904, Galton illustrated how eugenicists understood the criteria of social progress and the means to meet such criteria. Focusing on the conceptual difference between 'goodness in the several qualities' and '[goodness] in that of the character as a whole', Galton pointed out that it is fruitless to explore the latter, since the question of what a morally good character is must differ among societies. From such a moral relativist viewpoint, Galton instead claims that eugenics ought to focus on individual 'good qualities', as it is much easier to acquire a consensus as to

journal ceased to undertake any philosophical theme from its third volume. For the historical details of the establishment of the Society, see Abrams (1968) and Renwick (2012).

what they mean:

Though no agreement could be reached as to absolute morality, the essentials of Eugenics may be easily defined. All creatures would agree that it was better to be healthy than sick, vigorous than weak, well fitted than ill-fitted for their part in life. In short, that it was better to be good rather than bad specimens of their kind, whatever that kind might be. (Galton 1905, 46)

It is noteworthy that Galton is here mentioning one's fitness to her 'part in life', along with physical traits such as health and vigour, as an element of 'good qualities'. Galton exemplifies this claim by various forms of adaptation to social roles, such as 'artistic faculties' for artists, 'fearlessness of inquiry' for scientists and 'religious absorption' for mystics. That Galton regarded one's 'fitness', or adaptation to society, as a good quality leads to the idea of seeing an individual as a social being contributing to society. Indeed, the final purpose of eugenics for Galton was not merely the promotion of one's physical and biological strengths, but rather the creation of 'better members of a community' (Galton 1905, 46). Hobhouse would find this aspect of eugenics acceptable. In fact, as will be seen below, Hobhouse did not wholly reject the eugenics movement, and so it is important to clarify in which aspects he criticized and in which he accepted their arguments.

By what means, then, should individuals with good social and biological qualities be created? Galton's answer was by encouraging competent individuals to marry and give birth, *i.e.*, so-called 'positive eugenics'. In the paper 'Hereditary Talent and Character' (1865), Galton already argued that an offspring inherits its 'talent and character' from its parents. After many years of observing actual phenomena of heredity in plants and human beings and attempting to clarify their patterns by statistical

methods, Galton introduced the word 'eugenics' in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883). What is noteworthy is that by defining eugenics as 'cognisance of *all influences* that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have', Galton opened a way for eugenics to be a discipline of potentially very broad scope (Galton 1883, 25n, my italics). According to the definition, eugenics could have become a study focusing on the effects of environment, as well as hereditary character, on the formation of personality. In fact, Galton himself was rather reluctant to accept a view which reduces the importance of environment (Abrams 1968, 121-2).

Nevertheless, a trend of biology in the late nineteenth century directed eugenicists' attention away from environmental factors. A pivotal event was August Weismann's germ plasm theory. Proposed against the Lamarckian idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristic in the 1880s, the theory made eugenicists believe that heritable 'germ cells' are immutable and that they are far more crucial than environmental factors in the formation of one's character and abilities. Thus, Karl Pearson (1857-1936), a disciple of Galton who became the first chair of a Galton Professorship of Eugenics at the University of London in 1911, argued against the extension of collectivist social legislation on the basis of Weismann's findings:

[The] conclusion of Weismann's...radically affects our judgment on the moral conduct of the individual, and on the duties of the state and society towards their degenerate members. No degenerate and feeble stock will ever be converted into healthy and sound stock by the accumulated effects of education, good laws, and sanitary surroundings. ...The suspension of that process of natural selection which in an earlier struggle for existence crushed out feeble and degenerate stocks, may

be a real danger to society... (Pearson 1900, 26-7)

It does not mean that Pearson believed in the minimal state with the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. Being sympathetic to Marx's economics, Pearson identified himself as a socialist and proposed to reinforce the whole nation physically, intellectually and militarily through the organization of a strong socialist state. As to the issue of eugenic policies, however, Pearson's focus was on 'negative eugenics', *i.e.*, the discouragement of the reproduction of the 'unfit', rather than Galtonian encouragement of the 'fit' to reproduce. Pearson thus proposed the closing of casual wards, the expatriation of criminals and foreigners and the exclusion from the workhouses of the chronic poor (Semmel 1960, 48). It was a distinctive series of policy proposals for social progress, but it was one that Hobhouse found very hard to accept.

Hobhouse provided a substantial amount of argument against eugenics in one of the eight lectures he gave at Columbia University in the US in 1911. Existing literature has never fully examined this text, but it reflects some essential characteristics of Hobhouse's sociological theory. Entitled 'The Value and Limitations of Eugenics', it first criticizes contemporaneous eugenicists' opposition to social legislation. Hobhouse's main point was that those eugenicists lacked a theoretical understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. As a result, they saw the division of social classes as directly reflecting the quality of individuals or social groups. Eugenicists thus believed, Hobhouse argued, that the pauper class be considered a 'stock' of 'the unfit', whose multiplication would degenerate the whole society. They would also argue, as Pearson did, that the inferiority of this class is innate and hereditary, and so the improvement of environment through social legislation would be no use, indeed it would be harmful, for taking them out of the under-class. Poverty, crime, disease and squalor were not only the results of their inferiority, but also worked as

natural prevention of their population growth.

Against such views, Hobhouse argued that it is wrong to attribute one's social class only to her innate traits, emphasizing instead environmental factors, such as the inheritance of property and the endowment of social privileges. The latter can adversely affect one's social position. Moreover, it is not always true to say that poverty is the result of bad qualities, for poverty could also be a cause, preventing one's good qualities flourishing. Thus, Hobhouse contended, before the coming of the equality of opportunity, 'the eugenic criticism is wholly beside the mark' (SE, 75). He used the term 'equality of opportunity' broadly, encompassing freedom of thought and expression regardless of social grouping such as gender and race, freedom from violence and fraud, political rights as well as material equalization. In short, 'political and civil liberty, social and economic justice, are the most eugenic of agencies' (SE, 53).

It is noteworthy, though, that the statement does not mean that Hobhouse refused to use the word 'eugenic' positively. Indeed, he accepted its basic idea of encouraging 'good qualities' and discouraging 'bad qualities'. The more the process of opportunity equalization proceeds, Hobhouse thought, the more the eugenic knowledge would become important for 'the art of social improvement'. Thus, he admitted that if one 'stock' is found hereditary, and if it turns out to generate more harms than merits to society, 'it is desirable that that stock should not be perpetuated' (SE, 75). In short, he proposed sociologists to explore both individual 'qualities' and social environment. In this sense, his perspective was similar to that of his contemporary Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), who also held that the study of individual character and that of environment were complementary (Renwick 2012, 70-97).

Unlike Geddes' relative lack of interest in theorizing the inter-relationship between social environment and individual character, the analysis of such relationship was at the very core of Hobhouse's sociological theory. Its characteristics can well be

understood if we compare them with Galton's eugenics. First of all, as we saw above, Galton avoided identifying 'goodness of the character as a whole', focusing instead on individual 'qualities' such as health, vigour and adaptation to society and proposed policies which encourage mating and childbirth of those who have 'good qualities'. Hobhouse, on the other hand, suggested that each individual be taken as a holistic being, possessing various traits simultaneously, whose 'qualities' should be considered as a whole. A person might have a 'bad quality' in one sense, but she may also have a 'good quality' in another sense, whose merits may offset the disadvantages of the former. Tuberculosis, for instance, might be found to be a hereditary disease in the near future, and if so, it may occur to eugenicists to propose that the parentage of its patients be prohibited. However, Hobhouse asked, 'if we stamp out the tubercular tendency, what other qualities are we stamping out along with it'? (SE, 44) He thus implied that eugenicists would never fully justify Pearsonian 'negative eugenics', for it seemed unlikely for them that they would advance their knowledge enough to cover all the complexities of the biological system of human traits. '[I]nstead of eliminating the tubercular stock', Hobhouse asserted, it is much better to focus on the advancement of hygiene and medical technology for 'eliminating the tubercle', as it would far more easily be justified and even encourage further scientific advancement (SE, 45).

Secondly, Galton's eschewal of considering 'character as a whole' was also attributable to his moral relativism, which in turn allowed Galton to argue that one of eugenically 'good qualities' is the adaptation to one's social 'part'. As we saw above, Hobhouse, on the other hand, placed the normative consideration of the individual and society, or 'social philosophy', as a core element of sociology, insisting that sociologists clarify the moral criteria of good social roles and individual qualities in advance. Any forms of social adaptation would be taken by Galton as the indication of 'good qualities', but they are not necessarily morally good. Thus 'the art of social

improvement', including eugenics, must presuppose a vision of a 'good society' which can only be attained by normative social philosophy.

Thirdly, it should be noted that Hobhouse developed a somewhat constructivist view on the relationship between the individual and society:

[G]iven a genuine freedom of competition and full equality of opportunity, the qualities which bring men to the top are not necessarily social qualities. Some qualities by which men get on are good, some indifferent, and some bad. Which of these will predominate depends on the character of the social organization. The financial abilities which bring men to the top today may come to be regarded by our descendants much as we regard the qualities of a robber baron who prospered under medieval conditions. (SE, 47)

The statement on the one hand reinforces Hobhouse's endorsement of 'social philosophy': even when the equality of opportunity is fully secured, thus enabling people to be convinced that one's success in society is now solely dependent on hereditary 'good qualities', it is still not sure whether such qualities are ethically good as well. This, again, is why social philosophy was necessary in order to clarify in what kind of society the 'successful' qualities can be identical with the ethically good.

On the other hand, the statement makes another point: Hobhouse is here saying that how we evaluate 'qualities' differs from society to society (or from time to time), and that it is more or less dependent on 'the character of social organization'. Now, it seems possible to say that Hobhouse introduces at this point an idea concerning the so-called 'social constructivity' of understanding. Much depends here as to how we interpret the statement. Thus, is it 'the character of social organization' which *influences* or even *determines* the content of its members' value judgment? Would this apply to

such apparently morally suspect qualities as those of the ‘robber baron’?

If we interpret the statement in this way, however, it is easy to argue that the two issues raised here – the need for social philosophy and the social constructivity of our understanding – are not theoretically compatible. If our consciousness is determined by society, it seems possible to say that our moral criteria of a good society, given by social philosophy, are also within the limitation of some specific social factors, that is, political discourse, cultural conventions, and so forth. What is more, the incompatibility seems to eventually bring us back to Galton’s moral relativism and rejection of any normative argument.

Hobhouse thought, however, that it would be possible to, or at least worth attempting to, mediate these two issues within his comprehensive sociology. While maintaining a perspective that our ‘social structure’ (SE, 56) – social institutions, political discourse, cultural conventions and geographical environment – influence our ways of thinking, Hobhouse still affirmed the existence of some universal moral principle and thought it possible for human beings to gradually recognize and practice it along the ‘orthogenic evolution’ of mind and society. How then did Hobhouse explain their compatibility? In other words, how did he theorize the relationship between our consciousness and social structure?

An answer is partly given in his eugenics lecture. Drawing on the argument of the idealist philosopher Henry Jones, Hobhouse described the relationship between social structure and individual consciousness as forming ‘an organic union’. ‘The relation’, he states, ‘between the individual and society is far more intimate’ than the common view taken within eugenics (SE, 56). We have already seen in the last chapter that Hobhouse’s organic conception was formed by his recognition of the reciprocal relationship between human consciousness and external environment in his metaphysics. He applied this framework to his sociological theory. While the social environment

conditions human consciousness, the ethical and purposeful ideas of human consciousness reflexively work on the environment and modify it according to its end.

To sum up. Hobhouse's critique of eugenics was composed mainly of three points: (1) his holistic perspective of the individual, (2) his claim for social philosophy (or ethics) and (3) his focus on the reflexive relationship between social structure and human consciousness. As will be seen in the remainder of this chapter, these all composed the central characteristics of Hobhouse's sociological theory.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that despite these criticisms, Hobhouse still accepted the basic idea of eugenics, *i.e.*, the improvement of human 'quality' through policy implementation. At one point, he even went further, referring to the 'feeble-minded' people as 'the strongest' case 'for forbidding parentage' (SE, 45). Hobhouse acknowledges this point in a clear account of his eugenic thought:

We must be certain that the stock which we seek to eliminate is so vicious that its removal is a net gain. We must be sure that the vice is irremovable and not dependent upon conditions which it is within our power to modify. ...On these grounds the case of the feeble-minded becomes perhaps the strongest for the application of eugenic methods. We have here a type which it is becoming possible to identify with fair precision. ...On grounds of humanity we have good reason to undertake the care of this class, and we have a right to demand in return the separation of the sexes. We are dealing with people who are not capable of guiding their own lives and who should for their own sake be under tutelage, and we are entitled to impose our own conditions of this tutelage, having the general welfare of society in view. (SE, 45-6)

Such a strikingly eugenic view may be explicable both in historical and theoretical ways.

Historically, as Michael Freedman argues, eugenics formed a significant intellectual background for both progressive and anti-collectivist thinkers in early twentieth century Britain (Freedman 1979). Major progressive liberals and socialists such as J.A. Hobson, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, G. Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Harold Laski, William Beveridge and J.M. Keynes, were all supportive of, and more or less committed themselves to, the eugenics movement. In this context, Hobhouse's statement above was by no means unusual. It may even be said that his support of eugenic thought was one of the most reluctant ones among progressive thinkers at that time.

Nevertheless, Hobhouse's view of ethics reveals why he proposed mentally handicapped people as the target of negative eugenics. Hobhouse considered such people to be 'not capable of guiding their own lives', because of their alleged lack of the power of reason, assuming that they were not capable of possessing rational wills and contributing to society as moral 'citizens'.

Yet is it not possible to find an opposite argument in Hobhouse's sociology, which could restrain, and thus could be seen to be somewhat incompatible with, the logic of the social exclusion of the 'feeble-minded' people from the category of 'citizen'? The question is deeply related to the one as to how Hobhouse understood the idea of the 'citizen', *i.e.*, how he theorized the idea of 'citizenship'. Since the association of this essentially ethico-political concept with sociology was an outgrowth of his encounter with the comprehensive and evolutionary sociology of Herbert Spencer, we must now turn to the theoretical relationship between them.

3. The Critical Inheritance of Spencer's Sociology

3-1. Political Consequences of Biology

With respect to the intellectual relationship between Hobhouse and Spencer, it should be first noted that Hobhouse generally seemed to regard Spencer as a virtual guru of biological sociology. Thus, he stated in his inaugural lecture,

The work of Herbert Spencer in particular did much to popularize the conceptions of sociology in this country, but at the same time gave a great impulse to the tendency to subordinate the new sciences to biology. Whatever the divergences of biologists among themselves as to the factors of organic evolution, they were at one in applying biological principles to social data. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Spencer's chief critics in biology – the disciples of Weismann – are more Spencerian than Spencer in their dealings with social progress. (SP, 11)

Hobhouse's view is that the conflict between Spencer and August Weismann over the factor of evolution, namely between Spencer's Lamarckism and Weismann's insistence on Darwinian natural selection, did not matter much when it comes to the dominance of biological argument in sociology. As a result, biological sociologists all came to see that 'the struggle for existence, natural selection and the survival of the fittest, were the key to all possible progress upon earth' (SP, 11).

The reason why Hobhouse made so much effort to criticize biology's influence on sociology was not only because of its theoretical insufficiency shown in the previous section, but also, and even more importantly, because of its political implications. Two points were especially anathema to Hobhouse's new liberal standpoint. One was its support of Britain's imperial war on the grounds that an inter-state war is the very

process of the struggle for existence among communities, an inevitable and desirable process towards social evolution (Semmel 1960). Hobhouse felt that such a reactionary view had become so influential that it had coloured the whole intellectual atmosphere in the period of the Boer War,

What has filtered through into the social and political thought of the time has been the belief that the time-honoured doctrine 'Might is Right' has a scientific foundation in the laws of biology. Progress comes about through a conflict in which the fittest survives. (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 85)

The second consequence was on the issue of social legislation within Britain such as state intervention into the market, private property and social welfare. Here, Hobhouse named Spencer as the key figure connecting biology to conservatism, arguing that 'the social implications of natural selection were...so far accepted by Mr. Spencer as to be made the basis of an uncompromising economic individualism.' (Hobhouse 1913 [hereafter DP], xvi-xvii)

This is where Hobhouse and Spencer have been most often contrasted (Abrams 1968; Collini 1979; Taylor 1992; Offer 2006). Indeed, the distance between their views about the state's role is clear at a glance, while Spencer was against any state intervention into labour relations, sanitation, education and the relief of the poor, limiting the role of the state to the protection of property and person, Hobhouse endorsed state legislation of the minimum wage, worker's compensation, working hours, state provision for public health, free public education, public transport, labour exchange, non-contributory old age pensions and social insurances for sickness and unemployment, state taxation on incomes, land, inheritance and speculation and finally the replacement of the free market by municipal socialism and the voluntary

co-operative organizations. Spencer was more libertarian than Cobden, who supported free education and the regulation of child labour, whereas Hobhouse was more 'socialistic' than the Liberal government in the period of the Liberal Reform. The contrast between Spencer's 'individualism' and Hobhouse's 'collectivism' seems obvious here. A question is, however, to what extent such a contrast holds in their sociology.

3-2. Social, Philosophical and Ethical Bases of Spencer's Individualism

When examining the question of the relationship between their views on the state's role and their sociology, several points should be noted. First, it is misleading to see Spencer's economic individualism as simply reflecting his adoption of biological theories to explain social phenomena, identifying the elimination of the weak through industrial competition as the driving force of social evolution. Spencer's individualism was sustained by more sophisticated theories of society and ethics, both of which were the essential components of his comprehensive sociology.

The first of these theories can be found in Spencer's distinction between two types of society, 'militant' and 'industrial'. While admitting that actual societies have possessed the elements of both types, Spencer observed a general shift in their ratios from the 'militant' towards the 'industrial' in the historical process of social change. The militant types, represented by ancient Mexico, ancient Sparta and pre-modern Japan, are sustained by centralized authorities whose control pervades every aspect of social life in proportion to the frequency of warfare. Social structure is based on the principle of hierarchical 'status' with little social mobility. In this society, 'its members exist for the benefit of the whole and not the whole for the benefit of its members' (Spencer 1897, 563).

The 'industrial' type, on the other hand, represented by ancient Athens, Hansa

Towns, modern Britain and the United States, is organized by the principle of ‘contract’, meaning that social relations are now maintained by the free will of individuals rather than authority’s order and citizen’s subordination. In fact, ‘there arises the doctrine the will of the citizens is supreme and the governing agent exists merely to carry out their will’, the doctrine limiting the function of the state to the legal protection of property and person. In proportion to the limitation of state activities, citizens’ activities become more multifarious, and here ‘[t]he co-operation by which the multiform activities of the society are carried on, becomes a voluntary co-operation’ (Spencer 1897, 568-9). On the basis of this distinction, Spencer expressed his economic individualism in *The Man versus the State* with clear normative endorsement of the industrial type. Socialistic legislation, such as the nationalization of land, railways and post office, would result in nothing but encouraging the reverse of this historical process, oppressing the freedom of individuals for the sake of society as a whole.⁹⁸

The second point is that the distinction of the two social types was itself a part of Spencer’s more general philosophy of evolution, which would cover every aspect of the universe including the world of animals and human society.⁹⁹ The essential features of it are as follows: the universe is ruled by a natural law of growing complexity, in which the elements of the universe continuously experience the process of transformation from homogeneity to heterogeneity. As heterogeneity increases in the components of those elements, they diversify their functions against each other. The process of evolution of an element is thus the continuous process of functional differentiation in its components.

⁹⁸ ‘If...he has to labour for the society, and receives from the general stock such portion as the society awards him, he becomes a slave to the society. Socialistic arrangements necessitate an enslavement of this kind; and towards such an enslavement many recent measures, and still more the measures advocated, are carrying us.’ (Spencer 1902, 35)

It is noteworthy that Spencer’s industrialism also rejected the tendency of imperial expansion including the Boer war as indicating Britain’s ‘re-barbarization’ (Peel 1971, 207; Wiltshire 1978, 243-5).

⁹⁹ I mainly owe my interpretation of Spencer in the next two paragraphs to Taylor (1992, 71-99).

Functional differentiation then makes components coherent and inter-dependent with each other. Spencer called this the 'First Principle' of evolution.

The transformation from the militant to the industrial type of society can also be situated within this general process. Divorce of the industrial system from the authoritative state is thus a result of the functional differentiation, leaving the function of the state more specialized and narrower along with other components of society such as family, church, the market and other voluntary associations. Compared with the time of militarism, these institutions have freer hands in their activities. As a result, functional specialization brings stronger ties and mutual dependency among individuals, making a coherent and organic social structure as a whole. That Spencer set the general philosophy of evolution as the basis of his sociology tells us that his theory of social evolution was not based on biological theories *per se*. As Taylor points out, '*biological theories were simply special cases of the cosmic process Spencer set out to describe*' (Taylor 1992, 85, author's italics).

Moreover, when arguing for his concept of 'social organism', which has been often seen as indicating the biological basis of his social theory, Spencer emphasized that social organisms were *not* identical with animal organisms, although they had parallels in some respects. Thus, while their commonalities can be found in a mutual dependence of parts and in the general evolutionary process from homogeneity to heterogeneity, their fundamental difference may be acknowledged in the fact that the social organism lacks any central 'sensorium' like a brain. This difference was fundamental because it enabled Spencer to reconcile the conception of social organism with his individualism,

Hence, then, this is the cardinal difference in the two kinds of organism. In the one, consciousness is concentrated in a small part of the aggregate. In the other, it is

diffused throughout the aggregate, all the units possess the capacities for *happiness* and misery, if not in equal degrees, still in degrees that approximate. As, then, there is no social sensorium, the *welfare* of the aggregate, considered apart from that of the units, is not an end to be sought. The society exists for the benefit of its members; not its members for the benefit of the society. (Spencer 1897, 461-2, my italics)

Finally, as the terms ‘happiness’ and ‘welfare’ imply in this statement, Spencer held an ethical theory which underlay his theory of social evolution. Weinstein calls this the principle of ‘liberal utilitarianism’ (Weinstein 1998). This is a version of ‘indirect’ utilitarianism realized through individuals’ mutual respect of moral rights. Moral rights are maintained by the expression of moral sentiments which recognize ‘the law of equal freedom’, meaning ‘[e]very man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man’ (Spencer 1871, 121). Spencer gave a psychological basis for this principle of justice, observing that the full exercise of faculties brought by equal freedom leads to the growth of happiness in individuals, which in turn strengthens their further desire to practice freedom. Spencer thus employed a psychology-based ethical principle in an attempt to reconcile justice and utility.

For Spencer, then, the triumph of industrialism was the result of the fuller realization of equal freedom. What is noteworthy is that functional differentiation leading up to this industrial society was also understood as a growing process of the spirit of altruism. Far from the society characterized by the struggle for existence, Spencer was concerned with the industrial society where competition is alleviated by co-operation and mutual aid. Spencer observed that individuals innately have both egoistic and altruistic moral sentiments. As society evolves towards industrialism,

individuals gradually come to find the source of happiness in the pleasures of others as well as in their own (Weinstein 1998, 45-50; Peel 1971, 139). He called an action produced by altruistic sentiments, such as sympathy, 'positive beneficence'. Spencer's ethical principle of justice was therefore composed of three elements, by the restraint of invasion into the freedom of others (equal freedom); the restraint of action which reduces the happiness of others (negative beneficence); and the promotion of action which increase the happiness of others (positive beneficence) (Spencer 1871, 83-4).

All these aspects show that Spencer's vision of economic individualism was not primarily sustained by the biological theories of natural selection. It was rather based on his general philosophy of the cosmic law of evolution which illuminated the continuous movement of functional differentiation. There was also an element of teleology in his theory of social evolution, expressed in his ethical principle of liberal utilitarianism. In short, the whole system of his sociology was founded on three components, the empirical study of social evolution, the ethical study of happiness, freedom and moral rights, and the general philosophy of evolution, all implying that society *ought to be* and *actually is* heading towards the ideal stage of society where individuals enhance their own happiness through the mutual co-operation with others.

3-3. Hobhouse's Departure from Spencer

The overview of Spencer's sociology tells us that Hobhouse's sociology had more in common with it than has been assumed by the existing literature. First of all, like Spencer's distinction between militarism and industrialism, Hobhouse set out three 'ideal types' as the theoretical framework of his evolutionary sociology. These are the principles of kinship, authority and citizenship (Hobhouse 1915, 38-69; SE, 126-48). The relationship between them is analyzed somewhat dialectically. First, the principle of kinship is commonly seen among the 'simplest' or 'most primitive' societies.

Individuals there enjoy a relatively high degree of equality in government and in social and economic status, whereas the efficiency of organization and production remain undeveloped. When a society grows in scale, the principle of authority becomes more prominent, increasing the degree of efficiency by the differentiation of function through class structure and the subjection of members to a single ruler or a ruling class. The degree of equality in turn lessens and the freedom of members remains restrained as the authoritative relationships penetrate the whole social structure. Finally, the principle of citizenship advances freedom and equality of its members by the development of their moral sentiments of rights and duties. Here, the structure of the laws and the acts of the state rest not so much on the authority of a ruler or a ruling class as on the consent of members, who are now considered free and responsible citizens. While democracy is introduced into the central government, local government and voluntary associations also develop and increase the degree of the division of labour as well as the mutual co-operation among individuals.

Although Hobhouse denied any linear process in actual history, he confirmed that the principle of citizenship tends to grow out of the authoritarian society, which in turn often develops from the kinship society. Regarding the modern nation state as a potential form of citizenship, Hobhouse assessed it as ‘the most complete reconciliation yet achieved on the large scale of social cooperation with the freedom and spontaneity of the component individuals, localities, and nationalities’ (SE, 148). As we saw in chapter 3, such reconciliation was the core element of his new liberal ethics of harmony. Like Spencer’s liberal utilitarianism, Hobhouse saw that social harmony can be attained only through mutual recognition of moral rights and duties, individuals’ inner-development of moral sentiments such as sympathy and altruism, and finally the free exercise of their capacities. Hobhouse called them self-development or the development of personality. They bring happiness to the life of individuals in a way

which helps the self-development of others too. In sum, Spencer and Hobhouse shared many aspects both in their theoretical framework of social evolution and their principle of liberal ethics. In this respect, it seems not too bold to say that Hobhouse was the true successor of Spencer in the field of early British sociology.¹⁰⁰

If Hobhouse's sociology had such theoretical structure in common with Spencer's, then, why did they come to have opposing views on the role of the state? One possibility is that there is no necessity in the connection between Spencer's sociology and economic individualism. Indeed, it seems that Spencer could logically have regarded social reform as an *institutionalized* form of mutual co-operation and the spirit of altruism, by which all members including the weakest could be adaptable to the environment and exercise their faculties.¹⁰¹ A comparable logic can indeed be seen in the argument of Beatrice Webb, who used Spencer's social theory of functional differentiation in association with her collectivist reform proposals (Webb 1926, 37).

The reason Spencer did not take this route may be attributed to his staunch Victorian moralism of self-help, assuming that state welfare would reduce individuals' incentive to develop their morality and faculties for adapting themselves to the external environment. As Peel points out, Spencer opposed welfare legislation not because he thought the weakest must 'go to the wall' but because it would 'prevent people adapting themselves *through their own efforts* so that their improvements become 'organic' in the race. For the character of a whole society depends on the characters of all its constituent units aggregated together.' (Peel 1971, 148, my italics) While endorsing voluntary charity as reflecting the spirit of altruism, Spencer warned that it be given only to those whose destitution is no fault of their own rather than a result of their idleness (Taylor

¹⁰⁰ In the Sociological Society, Patrick Geddes was another figure who was greatly influenced by Spencer's organic analogy. See Renwick (2009). But Geddes' sociology lacked a historical perspective and an insight into moral philosophy, both of which were at the core of Spencer's and Hobhouse's sociology.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, Richard Titmuss later saw altruistic motivation as the ethical basis of the post-war welfare state in Britain. See Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship* (1970).

1992, 94).

Interestingly, Hobhouse had a similar view about the relief of poverty, saying '[i]dleness would be regarded as a social pest, to be stamped out like crime' (Hobhouse 1893, 13). As seen in the previous chapters, Hobhouse argued that social progress is based on the moral character of individuals as much as on social reform. In return for being able to claim moral rights to others and the legal rights to the civic minimum to the state, then, they have to discharge moral and civic duties to others and to society, the centre of which is the duty to work.

However, while Spencer did show a perfectionist aspect in his argument of industrialism and liberal ethics, he did not focus on what Hobhouse put at the centre of his sociology, the minds of individuals. As we saw in the last chapter, this was what Hobhouse inherited from idealist philosophy, giving him a philosophical rationale for the support of collectivist social reform.

The difference can be vividly seen in their argument over Malthus's population theory. In contrast with Malthus himself, both Spencer and Hobhouse integrated it within their non-biological explanation of society. Their respective foci were, however, somewhat different from each other. Spencer, on the one hand, understood population pressure as one of the major external causes which forces individuals to be more efficient in their social organization, more co-operative in their activities and more altruistic in their moral sentiments, all because these are more adaptive to the constraining environment, 'From the beginning, pressure of population has been the proximate cause of progress. It produced the original diffusion of the race. It compelled men to abandon predatory habits and take to agriculture. It led to the clearing of the earth's surface. It forced men into the social state; made social organization inevitable; and has developed the social sentiments.' (Peel eds. 1972, 37) Here the causal relationship is essentially unidirectional, the external environment *forces* individuals to

adapt to it, and the whole process eventually leads to social evolution.

Spencer's theory of social evolution was, therefore, a product of a compromise between mechanism and teleology. Social evolution was, in one sense, understood as having being brought mechanically by the external pressure of environment and the survival of adaptable individuals. But Spencer also presumed that the process is ultimately destined, unless obstructed by regressive interference by the state, to approach the ethical ideal of liberal utilitarianism. This formed an aspect of his conservatism. The actual industrial society he was observing was understood not only as the result of adaptation by the past individuals, but also as the new environment to which the current members of the society have to adapt themselves. Collectivist social reform was understood as unnatural because it opposed the principle of industrialism, consequently reducing the incentives of individuals for such adaptation. Here, individuals were taken as passive objects of the external environment as well as of Spencer's own ethical principle.

Hobhouse, on the other hand, took the relationship between the external environment, including Malthus' population pressure, and individuals rather more interactively. For Hobhouse, individuals are not passive beings who are merely forced to adapt themselves, but more 'reflective' beings capable of 'deliberate action which we call the action of will' (SP, 38). In order to cope with the conditions given by the external environment, the will of each individual has to be directed towards possessing *collective* purposes which he/she shares with other members of society. In contrast with Spencer, Hobhouse denied that the society of 'higher' types of mind – more rational, more co-operative and more altruistic – always survives if various types of 'struggle' are still prevalent, '[e]ach race of man that made some advance in ideas, in industry or the social arts had to fight for its place. There was no *a priori* reason to suppose that it would survive.' (DP, xxii) Hobhouse's understanding of the mind in social progress was,

therefore, inclined to be idealist in that the minds of individuals are to be not only co-operative and altruistic but also conscious of their collective purposes. While admitting that the full realization of such collective purposes remains to be ideal, Hobhouse attempted to demonstrate in his researches into animal and human psychology (in *Mind in Evolution*) and the historical development of morality (in *Morals in Evolution*) that human beings have innate capacities for, as well as the actual history of, gradually approaching this ideal.

To sum up: while inheriting the essential framework of Spencer's comprehensive and evolutionary sociology, Hobhouse distanced himself from the overarching influence of Spencer by articulating an idealist perspective which focused on the function of purposive mind actively reformulating external environment. A society based on the principle of citizenship in particular was one where such a purposive mind ought to be directed. It was a form of welfare society where its members harmoniously developed their moral personalities. Hobhouse saw modern society as its imperfect model. From his analysis of it, then we can find the concrete vision of this ideal society. The remainder of the chapter will further explore Hobhouse's sociological research on citizenship.

4. Citizenship as the Sociological Principle of Welfare Society

Morals in Evolution (1906) was a pivotal study in Hobhouse's sociology, not only because it decisively heightened his fame in the academia of early British sociology, but also because it was the most thorough, if not the sole, empirical case study of society on the basis of his idealist-inclined metaphysics of evolution.¹⁰² The book demonstrates what kinds of moral consciousness and moral norms sustained a variety of human

¹⁰² A simpler version of his sociological application of the philosophical idea of harmony can be found in his *Social Evolution and Political Theory*.

actions and social institutions in different communities at different times. Hobhouse saw that from this diversity of communities, a line of progress can be drawn, as he did in his study of mental development. Progress meant the very process of moral consciousness gradually extending its sphere of rationally controlling the internal and external conditions. And we saw in the previous section that Hobhouse, following Spencer, set three ‘ideal principles’ of society according to the extent of *social* progress: kinship, authority and citizenship. Society was thus seen to follow the process of progress when transforming itself from one founded on the principle of kinship to one premised on authority, then finally to one based on citizenship.

Among the three, it is the principle of citizenship which should be the main focus of this section. It is first noteworthy, however, that citizenship was not a kind of concept frequently used by self-styled sociologists in the Sociological Society at that time. It had though long been one of the key concepts in the field of political philosophy, led mainly by idealist or utilitarian thinkers in the early twentieth century (Freedman 2003). Thus, at the most general level, Hobhouse also defined the concept in ethico-political terms, basically drawing on his new liberal ethics of harmony. Citizenship thus primarily addressed an organic relationship between the state as a moral community and its members. Under this principle,

[t]he generic character of the state...is that of a community whose structure and character depend on the good-will of the bulk of its members, and whose welfare rests accordingly on their loyalty and public feeling, while it is for them the source and guarantee of the free exercise of their rights as citizens. Thus, the citizen is a fully responsible agent with assignable rights and duties as member of a community. (Hobhouse 1915 [hereafter ME], 63)

Political philosophy or ethics was, however, a part of Hobhouse's comprehensive sociology, the framework of which we saw in the second section, and the very uniqueness of his sociology resided in its application of this essentially ethico-political concept to empirical research, thereby exploring what kind of social relations and institutions contribute to the attainment of a harmonious society. Here, Hobhouse followed Green, considering the realization of harmony to remain always imperfect in actual society. Harmonious society was an ideal towards which social reform and the change of social institutions and personal relations ought to be directed by the purposeful and collective minds of individuals. Nevertheless, through comparative surveys of various communities, with huge indebtedness to contemporaneous anthropological works such as of F. Boaz, J. Frazer, E.P. Tylor and E. Westermarck, Hobhouse found that it was in the modern society and the modern nation state where elements of harmonious society had been recognized in concrete forms. As one crucial element of harmonious society is the welfare of its members and the whole society, his vision of harmonious society can also be called that of welfare society.

In order to grasp how he visualized those elements in concrete social relations and institutions, it is crucial to turn to Hobhouse's empirical survey of modern society. I will focus on two social groups and related institutions to which he paid particular attention in *Morals in Evolution*: criminals/law and women/marriage. Through his sociological study of these groups, some additional theoretical characteristics, besides his new liberal ethics, were articulated as components of his vision of the welfare society.

4-1. Legal Institutions and the Criminals

In *Morals in Evolution*, Hobhouse saw modern law as founded on the two-tier system of civil and criminal law: the former managing social relations of citizens and the latter aiming at the maintenance of social order. The modern legal system regards adult

individuals as rational beings possessing legal rights and duties and being capable of taking responsibilities for their choice of action. Legal institutions are supposed to represent impartial justice, guaranteeing rights to individuals and forcing them to discharge of duties. Hobhouse saw that these legal institutions had gradually developed out of pre-modern institutions such as the blood feud between kinships or clans, trial by ordeal, arbitrary legislation by a ruling person or class and the maintenance of order by cruel punishment.

Hobhouse paid special attention to how the social perception of criminals differs among the communities with different principles. Where a community was based on the principle of kinship, a misdeed such as murder and breach of marriage was often regarded as bringing disgrace to the whole family group to which its victim belongs. Punishment was undertaken in the form of private retaliation, such as blood feud, and its target was very often not only a person who had committed the misdeed but also other members of his/her kin or clan. In such a community, the social recognition of the 'individuality' of both criminal and victim was strikingly weak. Under a larger community which bound different kin groups together, it is observed that the maintenance of order and safety often became a central concern of its members. In such a circumstance, community tended to develop a public legal system for arbitration. Hobhouse here brings to the fore a Hobbesian interpretation, namely that such a collective concern for order and safety often led to the transformation to the principle of 'authority'. A criminal in this context tended to be perceived as a serious threat to social order, often facing a cruel punishment intended to be a deterrence. In the society under the principle of authority, therefore, criminals were refused social membership, both legally and culturally.

In modern society, on the other hand, development of 'the humane method of criminal treatment' (ME, 127) can be seen, whose main factor can be found in prison

reform movements led by the ‘Society of Friends, French Rationalists, English Utilitarians and the Evangelicals’ (ME, 125). Criminals are not to be excluded from their community anymore, becoming the objects of social re-inclusion through ‘the regeneration’ of their moral character. While they are considered to be rational agents with duties to receive punishment, it becomes a community’s duty to take into consideration psychological and social ‘conditions’ as important factors of the crime. In short, a crucial element of citizenship can be found in the modern system of law in its recognition of criminals as ‘citizens’ who possess certain moral and legal rights. As Hobhouse comments, ‘[t]he criminal, too, has his rights – the right to be punished, but so punished that he may be helped in the path of reform’ (ME, 130).

4-2. Marriage and the Position of Women

Alongside the system of law, Hobhouse understood marriage as one of the essential institutions seen in almost all the human communities. The general process of its historical change in the pre-modern era was understood to be such that the union of family became more and more strengthened due to the increased legal and customary regulations put on divorce, while the power of women against men in the meantime deteriorated due to ‘the development of the patriarchate’ (ME, 149). It does not mean, however, that Hobhouse understood the position of women to have weakened in the process of civilization. He rather emphasized the disadvantage of women in the public sphere throughout the whole pre-modern era. Admitting ‘[a] handful of exceptions’, such as ‘the forest tribes of Asia and Africa’, a general tendency was such that ‘in the great majority of uncivilized peoples the position of woman is in greater or less degree inferior to that of man in point of personal rights’ (ME, 177, 171).

As the statement indicates, Hobhouse analyzed the position of women in history from the viewpoint of their entitlement to moral and legal rights. This led to a critique

of his future colleague at the LSE, Edward Westermarck, who focused more on the privilege of women given by the division of labour and the consequent power they had possessed over husbands in the household,¹⁰³ Hobhouse rebutted Westermarck's view, emphasizing the inequality of ethical and legal status in the public sphere: '[i]n a relationship so personal and subtle as that between men and women, *de facto* influence and power may develop to the highest pitch, without in the least affecting the recognized rights or status of the sex....The power to influence and recognized ethical equality are not only different, but have no necessary tendency to pass into one another' (ME, 172n). Moreover, he thought that the division of labour itself had been the very cause of structural inequality rather than a source of power for women, pointing out that 'on the whole...the more toilsome and least esteemed work tends to fall on the women' (ME, 172n).

As seen above, Hobhouse did not regard civilization itself as having contributed to the improvement of the position of women, if of men owing to its patriarchal characteristics. In the early Roman family, for instance, 'the paternal power is nowhere more strongly developed, nor does the position of wife and children anywhere approach in law more nearly to that of slaves, owned by the paterfamilias, and except as a matter of grace, incapable of owning anything themselves' (ME, 206). While recognizing the contribution of Christianity, from the early Catholicism to the Reformation, to the partial improvement of the position of women in various ways, such as its introduction of the conceptions of consent and contract into the marriage institution, Hobhouse pointed out that the subjection of the wife remained until the nineteenth century.

¹⁰³ Westermarck argued, 'we must distinctly and emphatically reject as erroneous the broad statement often met with that the lower races, taken as a whole, hold their women in a state of almost complete subjection. Among many of them the married woman, although in the power of the husband, is known to enjoy a remarkable degree of independence, to be treated by him with great consideration, and to exercise no small influence upon him. In several cases she is even stated to be his equal, and in a few his superior.' (Westermarck 1905, 151)

Drawing on William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769), he focused on the lack of independence of personality as well as the lack of rights on the side of a wife against her husband, both on legal and in social terms:

Her personality is merged in his. The law does not hold her responsible even for crimes committed in his presence, and therefore it is presumed under his influence and authority. ...She can bring no action without his concurrence, nor be sued without making him a defendant. In criminal cases she may be convicted and punished separately, but she is considered as acting under his orders' (ME, 219-220).

Considering the vast amount of materials he addressed, some readers might feel uncomfortable to find an element of over-generalization in his argument regarding the position of women in the pre-modern era. It is, however, important to recall that one of Hobhouse's basic motives in writing *Morals in Evolution* was normatively to endorse an ideal society based on the principle of citizenship. Since the elements of the principle were to be found in the modern society, there is no wonder why he often tended to (over-)contrast it with the preceding stages of society.

Accordingly, the essence of the marriage institution in the modern era was seen to be in its turning the whole process into an issue of contract between free agents, with unique and independent personalities and equal rights. Marriage has now become 'a relation which binds two parties together without annulling the legal personality of either, and is terminable by the fault of either' (ME, 231). The focus was on the improvement of women's autonomy, in the sense of legal and social positions they acquire: 'woman must be a responsible agent', and 'her special talents and qualities must have all the scope which freedom gives to come to the fullness of their

development', for nothing but '[s]uch freedom is the basis of marriage' (ME, 232).

Hobhouse's organic conception, however, did not stop his argument here. He found the ideal of marriage in the mutual enhancement of moral personality between husband and wife,¹⁰⁴ identifying the core of marriage under the principle of citizenship in its moral, rather than legal, aspect. At this ideal stage,

marriage is the fruition of perfect love, in which, at its best, men and women pass beyond themselves and become aware through feeling and direct intuition of a higher order of reality in which self and sense disappear. If it is not given to all to obtain this best, yet the humbler lessons of unselfishness and mutual aid are learnt by ordinary men and women in greater or less degree from marriage, and seldom effectually learnt from other sources.¹⁰⁵ (ME, 231)

In sum, Hobhouse thought of marriage under the principle of citizenship not only as a legal partnership between free, equal and autonomous agents, but also as the reflection of an organic unity teleologically envisioned in his 'orthogenic evolution'. It was seen to be primarily a spiritual unity tied and strengthened by the moral will of wife and husband, simultaneously cultivating and enhancing the other's as well as their own personalities.

4-3. Theoretical Characteristics of Welfare Society

From Hobhouse's conceptualization of citizenship and its application to several social groups and institutions, it is now possible to draw some theoretical implications in relation to his vision of the welfare society.

¹⁰⁴ I have not found any reference in Hobhouse's texts to a homosexual relationship.

¹⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that this last statement seems to somewhat contradict his endorsement of intermediate organizations as an essential source of cultivating the spirit of mutual aid. See chapter 1.

First, it is clear that Hobhouse did not regard citizenship as a static concept which simply sets a clear line between citizens and non-citizens, but as a more dynamic concept always associated with the conception of progress or the orthogenic evolution of society. By this conceptual association, citizenship was considered gradually to extend its sphere of social inclusion. Thus, the actual history of modern society was always seen as a process of the gradual extension of citizenship. Such a view was built on Hobhouse's empirical observation, namely where various minority social groups, such as criminals and women, gradually came to be socially recognized in terms of their moral and legal rights, as well as their independent personalities and capacities. Hobhouse even took into account the possibility that the sphere of citizenship could extend as far as to encompass all the human beings, as the principle of the global community. In this ultimate stage, 'each nation' comes to be regulated by 'international law' as 'a member of the family of nations which constitute humanity' (ME, 268). Thus, at a micro level, moral rights as mutually recognized between individuals become what may be called universal 'human rights'. At an international level they are something that we may all 'share simply as human beings' (ME, 264, 64).

Secondly, citizenship is not only about how the state legally treats its members but also about how individuals morally recognize each other in the social sphere. That is, being a citizen means obtaining a moral character with a duty to enhance other people's self-development as well as a right to receive similar support from others. Such can be said to be the harmonious relationship aimed at the common good, in which citizens may find the true source of their happiness. Hobhouse observed elements of such a reciprocal relationship in modern society where individuals' moral consciousness gradually becomes aware of ethical principles such as justice, equality, fraternity and moral rights. For individuals, it is a process to obtain 'social personality' (ME, 63), aimed at mutual aids in their daily private and public lives. For society as a whole, it is a

process of approaching a 'civic community or state' whose 'structure and character depend on the good-will of the bulk of its members, and whose welfare rests accordingly on their loyalty and public feeling' (ME, 63). For the relationship between individuals and society, ultimately, is organic, in which individuals find their happiness in the pursuit of the development of herself, others and society, whereas society gives them external conditions for such development.

Finally, two points raised above illuminate an important tension, if not inconsistency, within Hobhouse's welfare thought, especially when they are compared with his apparent endorsement of excluding certain social groups from the sphere of citizenship. His rationale for the exclusion was that some groups, most typically the mentally handicapped, lack the will and capacity of contributing to the common good, that is, to enhance their own and other individuals' capacities and moral character.¹⁰⁶ The notion clearly conflicts with his first point above, namely that many culturally-specific beliefs, justifying social exclusion, eventually gave way to the extension of citizenship when the intelligence and morality for those excluded gradually improved. Hobhouse's endorsement of the expansion of citizenship does not seem to support his argument against those who may seem incapable of contributing to a specific society at a specific time. Moreover, the second point above indicates that 'citizens' are those who are morally capable of finding happiness not only in their own development, but also in helping the development of others. Citizens have a moral right to receive such a help from others as well as a duty to support others' happiness and self-development. Now, such a reciprocal relationship seems to sustain an argument that even those who are not physically and mentally capable are still *morally* or *socially* capable of contributing to others, even by just being there, expecting others to care for themselves. It is possible to assume that under certain conditions, individuals are

¹⁰⁶ See his argument on eugenics in the second section of this chapter.

capable of feeling happiness and contentment and realizing self-development through the action of caring, including the care of those who are handicapped.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, it seems possible to argue that Hobhouse's theory of citizenship does not logically prevent any person from having a moral right to care and respect from others, regardless of their mental and physical capacities.

From these three points, it can be concluded that Hobhouse's principle of citizenship illuminates a final element in his vision of welfare society. As we saw in chapter 3, the concept of welfare meant for him one's realization of self-development in a harmonious relationship with others by way of mutual respect of moral rights and the public support from the state and other intermediate associations. Hobhouse's welfare society was also one where its members may feel happiness, for true happiness was seen to be realized only through such moral relations with others and society. His theory of citizenship therefore reinforces the argument by indicating that nobody will be logically excluded from the entitlement to happiness and moral rights. While Hobhouse's new liberal ethics clarified the conceptual relationship between happiness, rights and morality, his sociological research of citizenship demonstrated that the gradual realization of such welfare society was empirically possible for all the human beings. He saw that it would be brought by the moral and institutional extension of the principle of modern society.

¹⁰⁷ A clear example would be those parents who feel the fulfilment of their life by having and caring for their handicapped children. As Engster points out, there is a moment when 'caring is a good in itself': 'Many parents consider the care they provide for their children to be the most fulfilling and meaningful activity in their lives. Individuals who devote themselves to the care of a sick or disabled spouse, friend, child, or stranger sometimes arrive at a new, almost spiritual understanding of themselves and their connection to others. Even just performing a simple act of caring for another can stimulate a temporary sense of contentment'. (Engster 2007, 243)

5. Conclusion

Up until today, early British sociology, where Hobhouse played a crucial role, has been often negatively assessed by historians. They have often argued that the ‘failure’ of early British sociology is attributable mainly to its theoretical barrenness rather than other possible factors such as the lack of economic and human resources or the conservatism of existing universities. They have pointed out that British sociology never produced a proper ‘sociological’ or structural perspective comparable to Emile Durkheim’s concept of ‘social facts’ or Max Weber’s theorization of social interactions. By maintaining atomistic individualism derived from classical political economy, early British sociology failed to grasp the complexity of social realities (Parsons 1937; Annan 1959). Alternatively, some scholars have argued that the obsession with the biological conception of evolution made early British sociology ‘dull’, ‘superficial’ and ‘essentially conservative’ (Soffer 1982, 793, 801).

Even a brief examination of Hobhouse’s sociology indicates that these views are not well-founded. This chapter has shown that his sociology was by no means based on the philosophy of ‘atomistic individualism’, nor did his sociological theory itself lack a coherent perspective on social structures. Rather, Hobhouse’s sociology was constructed through his continual observation of the interaction between individuals and the physical, biological, cultural and social features of the external environment. In other words, it focused on how those external factors form a ‘structure’ as a whole and constrain the thought and action of individuals. On the other hand, he also addressed the question of how such ‘structures’ were affected and modified by the interaction of minds. In short, Hobhouse’s sociology had a clear theoretical perspective on the complex relationship between structure and agency, which may be called an insight into social reflexivity. He developed this perspective through the critical inheritance of

Spencer's comprehensive and evolutionary sociology, as well as idealist metaphysics.

The conception of citizenship and its application to various social institutions in Hobhouse's sociology not only concretized his new liberal ethics of harmony, but also added a theoretical element to his vision of welfare society, *i.e.*, the point he made that citizenship is a dynamic conception, incorporating a gradual extension of its boundaries, directed towards the encompassment of the whole human being. The welfare society he envisioned was thus one where the principles of universality and autonomous individuality were tightly integrated together through his organic conception. Individuals in the society were seen to have moral and legal rights as universal human rights, the security of which were considered necessary for acquiring certain external conditions for autonomously developing their personalities. What would sustain such an organic relationship was expected to be the liberal and sociable morality of individuals towards the common good, the partial development of which he could observe in the modern society we live in.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the multifarious aspects of Hobhouse's arguments, ranging from political theory, social and economic thought, ethics to metaphysics, show a considerable degree of consistency, if seen as the parts of his more general welfare-based thought, *i.e.*, an intellectual project to envision an ideal welfare society. In relation to the political theory of the new liberalism in particular, it provided several unique contributions by articulating systematic ethical and social theories as part of the extended rationale for collectivist social reform. It is no surprise in this context that Hobhouse's ethical and social theories were given as much significance and attention, in the camp of the new liberalism, as the economic thought of J.A. Hobson and the philosophy of T.H. Green. As a conclusion to the thesis, this section summarizes the discussion of each chapter and draws attention to five particular points as indicating the general overall characteristics of his welfare thought. They are: the intellectual legacy of Hobhouse's welfare thought, the uniqueness of his ethics of harmony, his intellectual relationship with British idealism, the notion of a global welfare society and the theoretical limitation and yet intrinsic value of his welfare thought.

1. Intellectual Legacy: Through a Comparison with T.H. Marshall

The legacy of Hobhouse's new liberalism and sociology examined in this thesis can be most clearly seen in the influence his ideas had on T.H. Marshall (1893-1981), one of the leading protagonists of the post-war British welfare state. When Marshall looked back at his career as a sociologist at the London School of Economics, he confessed his indebtedness to Hobhouse explicitly:

In my first years as a sociologist I was, very naturally, almost totally under the influence of Hobhouse, as interpreted by Ginsberg. I was impressed by the way he manipulated historical data by methods which were simultaneously analytical and comparative. I made much use of his threefold categorization of kinship, authority and citizenship as the basic principles of social order... (Marshall 1973m 406-407)

Several notable commonalities may indeed be found between Hobhouse's social and political thought and Marshall's argument in his well known essay, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1949). First, Marshall adopted an evolutionary framework in the essay, tracing the historical process of the gradual extension of the principle of citizenship in modern society. This was very much reminiscent of Hobhouse's treatment of citizenship in his evolutionary sociology, though Marshall focused more on the empirical exploration than Hobhouse, who had independently postulated the content of citizenship in his ethical study. The difference reflected their respective realms of expertise, in addition to sociology: Marshall as a Cambridge-trained historian and Hobhouse as a political thinker and philosopher.

Secondly, Marshall nevertheless combined his empirical study of citizenship with his own normative standpoint, which had a notable commonality with Hobhouse's new liberalism. His essay was intended to support the establishment of the post-war welfare state from a social democratic standpoint. A key theoretical perspective, in this context, was a notion of 'social rights', defined as the rights to protection against various life-related risks such as illness, aging, unemployment and poverty, as well as to educational opportunities. This conception justified the provision of material resources and various welfare services via the state. In this sense, the idea succeeded Hobhouse's endorsement of a moral and legal right of individuals to external conditions for

self-development and a consequent duty of the state to provide them.

Thirdly, though the emphasis was shifted from duties to rights (Freeden 2003, 285; Vincent 2001), Marshall still combined the security of social rights with ‘the corresponding duties of citizenship’ (Marshall and Bottomore 1992, 41), which had been institutionalized in modern society in the form of taxation, national insurance, participation in education and the military service. As Stuart White points out, a view on such a reciprocal relationship of rights and duties in Marshall’s citizenship theory overlaps with Hobhouse’s new liberalism to a considerable extent (White 2003).

Therefore, there seems to be a good reason why Marshall regarded Hobhouse as ‘the most famous and original of British sociologists since Spencer’ (Marshall 1981, 159), and why present scholars often relate and describe them as leading figures who laid the intellectual foundation of the British welfare state. Nevertheless, there were some notable differences in their views, indicating particularly the theoretical and historical uniqueness of Hobhouse’s welfare thought.

First, from chapter one of this thesis, we can see that Hobhouse had a more pluralist perspective than Marshall, endorsing economic activities of voluntary organizations in civil society, such as trade unions and co-operative societies. The legal power of the state was considered necessary for the universal security of rights and the provision of public services, but state intervention was conditioned by an assumption that it would make individuals capable of fully participating in the activities of voluntary organizations. In this sense, Hobhouse had an acute insight into what may be called the ‘mixed economy of welfare’, which may be differentiated from Marshall, who focused more exclusively on state-led social policies.

Secondly, there was a notable lack of any moralistic perspective in Marshall’s thought, which, in turn, had been central in Hobhouse’s work. As we saw in chapter 2, Hobhouse shared with Bosanquet and the Webbs the idea that the ultimate aim of social

reform should be the development of the moral personalities and capacities of individuals. In terms of Hobhouse, the crucial element of morality was an ability to both recognize and practice a moral duty to facilitate the self-development of others, as well as a moral right to claim support. Combined with the first point, such a grasp of the morality of individuals was understood to be developed and enabled through social interactions in voluntary organizations, where the feelings of altruism and fellowship could be cultivated. Marshall, on the other hand, did not include an argument on moral rights and duties in his citizenship theory. While considering the possibility of 'the general obligation to live the life of a good citizen, giving such service as one can to promote the welfare of the community', Marshall immediately negated the usefulness of such an idea, by arguing that 'the community is so large that the obligation appears remote and unreal' (Marshall and Bottomore 1992, 45).

The pluralist and moralistic perspective of Hobhouse's welfare thought can thus be situated in a specific intellectual context at the turn of the century, the characteristic of which may be described as an 'ethical welfare pluralism'. While a few later defenders of the welfare state, such as R.H. Tawney and Richard Titmuss, did develop their social democratic thought from a moralistic standpoint, there was a shift in the whole intellectual atmosphere to what may be termed 'Keynesian consumerism' or 'private libertarianism' under the post-war welfare state. It was thus proposed in the conclusion of chapter 2 that a further investigation of the 'ethical welfare pluralism' is necessary in order to fully understand the intellectual basis of the 'mixed economy of welfare' in early twentieth century Britain.

2. Ethical Theory: The Major Contribution to the New Liberalism

Within this specific historical context, the uniqueness of Hobhouse's thought resided in his construction of an ethical theory of harmony, which became his major contribution to the political thought of the new liberalism. As we saw in chapter 3, it was an outgrowth of the critical inheritance of Bentham and J.S. Mill's utilitarianism and T.H. Green's British idealism. By associating his ethical theory with their thoughts, Hobhouse could safely place his argument in the tradition of nineteenth century liberalism. One of the concepts Hobhouse paid particular attention to was 'welfare', posited as one's simultaneous realization of happiness brought about by the pursuit of self-development and through harmonious relationships with others. This was a process focused on mutual recognition as well as the practice of moral rights and duties. In terms of the former point, Hobhouse's ethical theory had a notably 'individualistic' element, in that it primarily endorsed the autonomous development of one's morality, personality and capacity. It could thus be differentiated from Sidney Webb's moral collectivist view. By introducing the concept of social harmony, on the other hand, Hobhouse also set out the nature of the moral relationships with others, as the necessary condition for such self-development. The conception of welfare which was built on this double perspective of self-development and social harmony, was the crux of Hobhouse's new liberal ethics.

As we saw in chapter 4, his ethical theory of harmony was posited not only as an ideal towards which the development of morality should be directed, but also as a foundation of his liberal theory of distributive justice. The theory was constructed as a criterion which the various agencies of wealth distribution, *i.e.*, the state, private companies in the market and voluntary organizations, ought to follow. Hobhouse posited just distribution as one capable of maintaining the performance of functions,

which was, in turn, understood in principle as an activity contributing to the self-development of others. A just distribution was seen primarily therefore as the remuneration proportionate to the 'vital cost' consumed in the performance of function.

In sum, Hobhouse contributed to the political thought of the new liberalism from a staunchly moralistic perspective: by (1) showing a direction towards which, and a process of how, the morality of individuals should be developed and (2) constructing a criterion of wealth distribution on the basis of the concept of function. The ethical basis of Hobhouse's liberalism thus underpinned his unique and significant role in new liberal theorizing.

3. Was Hobhouse an Idealist Liberal and a Liberal Idealist?

This thesis has paid particular attention to the intellectual relationship between Hobhouse and British idealism. The exploration is important for measuring the consistency of Hobhouse's welfare thought, since there can be, as argued, some often quite contradictory interpretations in the literature. While, as some scholars have noted, Hobhouse fiercely rejected aspects of idealist political philosophy, others point to the similarities between idealism and his ethics and metaphysics. The conclusion of our analysis in chapter 3 and 5 was that, despite Hobhouse's critique of T.H. Green's rights theory and Bosanquet's political philosophy, there has been some considerable misunderstanding in his interpretations of idealist ethics and political philosophy. Indeed many of his arguments actually had notable elements in common and overlapped with those of Green and Bosanquet. In these domains, therefore, Hobhouse's could well be described as an 'idealist liberal'. It is noteworthy, however, that Hobhouse's pluralist and cosmopolitan perspective turned his attention to the realization of the common good in the social sphere within and beyond national borders. This embodied a sharp contrast

with Bosanquet's endorsement of the nation state as the primary sphere for the development of individual morality.

Whether we can also categorize Hobhouse as a 'liberal idealist' thinker, that is, whether his philosophical standpoint can also be considered idealist, is a different question. In contrast with Collini's conclusion that Hobhouse firmly rested on idealist metaphysics, we found in chapter 6 that his absorption of idealist metaphysics was limited to a part of its teleological perspective, and that Hobhouse retained a realist perspective on the basis of a dualism between nature and mind. The human mind was seen as innately rational, working on external, and often disharmonious, nature for the attainment of an ethical end.

It may thus be concluded that Hobhouse was clearly intellectually influenced by British idealism, consciously or subconsciously, in every aspect of his thought, ranging from ethics, political philosophy to metaphysics. Whether or not we can categorize him as an idealist *bona fide*, however, depends on which field of his thought we are addressing. If it is about his ethics, view of social evolution or political philosophy, we can probably admit the overlap. But if it is about his metaphysics, it seems better to say that he remained in the philosophical position of realism, though a kind of realism inclined to or sympathetic to idealism.

4. Towards a Global Welfare Society

The fact that Hobhouse was committed to sociological research theoretically deepened his welfare thought. His teleology-and-realism thesis formed the metaphysical foundation. It connected his new liberal ethics of harmony with his sociology. It also introduced an evolutionary perspective to the latter and created the groundwork for the realization of individual and social welfare, or a 'welfare society', as the goal towards

which the ‘orthogenic evolution’ of society would be directed. ‘Orthogenic evolution’ was, however, by no means taken to be determined, but had to be brought about by the conscious effort of the moral and teleological wills of individuals.

In chapter 7, we saw that such evolutionary sociology was formed by Hobhouse’s critical inheritance of Spencer’s sociology, and that its theoretical characteristics are evident in his critique of eugenics. The core of his sociological theory was a profound grasp of the reflexive relationship between the individual and society: while social structure influences, or even constructs, the ways of thinking of its members, their minds have an ability objectively to understand and gradually modify such structures according to their rational wills.

On the basis of such a reflexive view, Hobhouse’s sociology traced the process of the ‘orthogenic evolution’ of society, finding some concrete views of an ideal welfare society in the various institutions of modern society. In the welfare society, individuals were seen to build ‘citizenship’ with others, which is brought by the mutual recognition and practice of moral rights and duties, the mutual care based on the feeling of altruism and fellowship, and the respect of independent personality and the capacity for self-development. Hobhouse identified its realizability in the gradual inclusion of social minority groups, such as criminals and women, into the sphere of citizenship in modern society. Citizenship was thus taken to be a dynamic concept, gradually extending its sphere in the process of orthogenic evolution, as far as to incorporate, in the end, the whole of humanity as the principle of a global welfare society. Moral rights were then seen to overlap with universal human rights, entitling all individuals, through their co-operative relationships, to the full realization of individual and social welfare.

5. Limitations and Values of Hobhouse's Welfare Thought

Finally, several limitations within Hobhouse's welfare thought should be noted. A considerable drawback would be that there was a certain inconsistency between his ethical thought and practical arguments. The most conspicuous case is his view on the role of women. We saw that in his ethical-sociological argument on citizenship, Hobhouse had emphasized the full equality of rights. Thus, it was envisaged that there should be an equality of opportunity of autonomous self-development between men and women. But, as Gal Gerson points out, when it comes to a more practical issue such as a desirable amount of payment for women, Hobhouse collapsed into a gendered view of division of labour, implying that 'female workers are either single or subsidiary family breadwinners' (Gerson 2004, 719). Such a view should probably be understood in the context of the late Victorian era when there was a social consensus among the middle and working classes over 'the desirability of [mother's] devotion to domestic duties if it were financially possible' (Harris 1993, 81).

It can thus be seen that Hobhouse's gender norms were socially created by the dominant discourse at that time. Gerson, however, seems to be going too far when he argues that such a gendered view was attributable to Hobhouse's 'communitarian liberal' standpoint, where 'favoring community often means favoring specific communities' (Gerson 2004, 721). For Hobhouse explicitly notes that the community he endorses in his ethical thought is by no means a specific one, but 'one ultimate community, which is the human race', *i.e.*, the global welfare society where all human beings have full rights to their own happiness and self-development and duties to support those of others (Hobhouse 1922, 199). This is a highly formal argument, but its formality avoids presupposing any contingent norm, custom or culture. Thus, while we may point out some inconsistency in Hobhouse's ethical thought and his more practical

views, we should be careful not to conclude that the latter is the direct application of the former.¹⁰⁸

Some scholars have also criticized the lack of attention in Hobhouse's sociology to the deep conflicts of interest within societies (Weiler 1972; Soffer 1982). It is true that his empirical study took a functionalist view of social organization, rather than one focused on the aspects of social or class division. The criticism should thus be relevant to the extent that one limits the focus to Hobhouse's empirical studies. If, however, his sociology is understood in relation to the whole system of his welfare thought, it will be seen that his central concern was to construct an ethical principle of the ideal welfare society, and that sociology was undertaken primarily as an essential part of a concrete vision whereby the principle could be identified in the actual society. The systematic understanding of Hobhouse's welfare thought clearly demonstrates why he did not pay much attention to social conflict in his sociology.

A positive implication of Hobhouse's thought, on the other hand, would be that it presents the possibility of integrating a moralist-and-pluralist welfare based argument with a more state-oriented one. Since the rise of new right theory and policy in the 1980s, the former has been often used for attacking the post-war welfare state. This can be seen particularly in a wide range of conservative critics, such as Douglas Hurd and David G. Green. They re-emphasized the value of the Victorian morality of self-help, autonomy, provision of welfare services by family, local community and voluntary organizations (Hurd 1988; Green 2000). We have seen that Hobhouse did possess a similar moralist-and-pluralist view in his welfare thought, but at the same time he

¹⁰⁸ Another example of inconsistency can be found in Hobhouse's argument on international relations. While he endorsed a democratic empire in which each nation enjoys autonomy and harmonious relationships with other nations in principle, he simultaneously showed an ambiguous attitude that some non-Anglo-Saxon nations may not be treated equally in this way, stating, for instance, that '[i]n India the English have doubtless done great work, and how far or in what sense the idea of self-government is applicable to Oriental peoples is a difficult question...' (Hobhouse [1904]1972, 156)

combined it with the endorsement of the collectivist social and economic reform by the state. Hobhouse's welfare thought thus indicates that those who want to encourage the civic morality of individuals do not have to reject the welfare state. Further, social policies by the state are necessary, in this argument, for securing each person the legal and material conditions for fuller participation in autonomous activities in civil society, from which civic morality can be cultivated.

Last but not least, Hobhouse's strikingly consistent welfare theory presents several views which have often been considered mutually conflicting by contemporary political theorists. He not only integrated an idea of the welfare state with that of a pluralist welfare society, but he also combined the liberal value of individual autonomy with a communitarian view of social relations, as essential for human nature. Furthermore, he managed to associate the political and sociological conception of citizenship with an ethical conception of human rights. All these give us an opportunity to reflect on and re-appraise some leading theoretical presuppositions affecting our current understanding of politics. It is thus a core argument of this thesis that a close and critical reappraisal of the classic works of Hobhouse may provide contemporary readers with a range of fresh insights into the theoretical problems of our own time. This makes him well worth reappraising in a contemporary context.

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