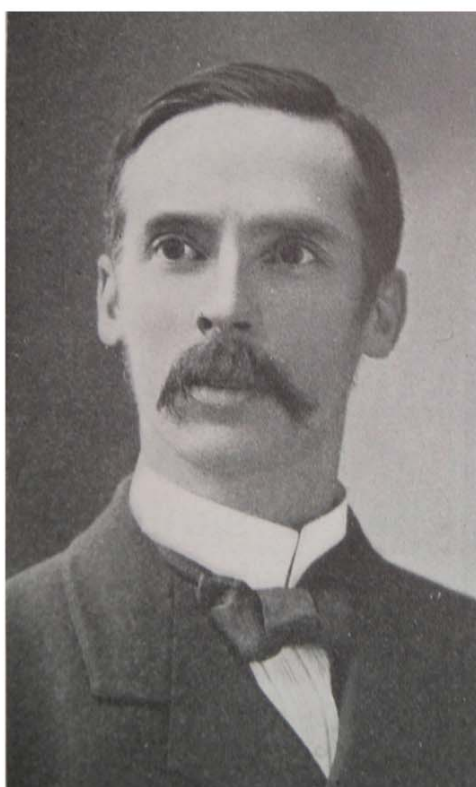


Timo Särkkä

Hobson's Imperialism

A Study in Late-Victorian
Political Thought



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ABSTRACT

Särkkä, Timo

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Finnish summary

Diss.

This study explores J. A. Hobson's (1858–1940) paradigm of Imperialism, its content, intentions and, finally, its limitations. The author argues that when the Victorian periodical press (weeklies, reviews and magazines) is analysed in its original communicative context, it reveals a more appropriate environment in which to study Hobson's political thought in terms of the history of ideas. Thus, quite conversely to the previous studies concerning Hobson, the principal sources used in this study are journal and periodical articles, reviews and commentaries that Hobson wrote by the time his seminal *Imperialism: A Study* was published in the autumn of 1902. By analysing these journalistic sources, this study provides a reappraisal of Hobson's Imperialism. The assessment made is discussed, side by side, with Hobson's works and the previous assessments made of them. The study reveals that Hobson's thesis of Imperialism can be seen as paradigmatic of the 1890s radical-liberal understanding of Imperialism.

Keywords: history, Hobson, Britain, British Empire, Victorian, Imperialism, liberalism

PREFACE

Despite the fact that the term 'Imperialism'¹ has been rehabilitated and liberated from its Marxist connotations in the course of the past two decades, dictionaries of political science hardly recognise any other political concept which can raise such strong feelings and prejudices as Imperialism does. Just recently, at the time of the War in Iraq, critics of the American war policy (e.g. the late postcolonial theorist Edward Said) have reminded Americans of the *hybris* [*hubris*] of Imperialism (following Rudyard Kipling's poem *Recessional*) while supporters (e.g. Niall Ferguson) have encouraged Americans to perform the civilising task which the British Empire carried out in its heyday. The division between postcolonial theorists, commonly inspired by a neo-Marxist theory of Imperialism, and Liberal Imperialists, the proponents of the Western civilising task, seems to be as deep as ever.

For J. A. Hobson (1858–1940), the most prominent theorist of Imperialism, Imperialism was a product of capitalism. However, his perspective was neither Marxist nor socialist but liberal. What Marxists saw as natural, an evolving capitalist society with an imperialistic tendency, was for Hobson something that had to be challenged and reformed within capitalist society.

For the British Liberals of the late 1890s Imperialism referred particularly to South Africa, where the two Boer Republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State waged a bitter three year war (1899–1902) against the British. A century after this war, historians have re-evaluated some of the old interpretations of the war, its impact and participants. In these studies, the focus has been on the question of how convincing Hobson's line of argument was. Less has been said about what sort of theory his theory of Imperialism in fact was, let alone how this theory was related to liberal political theory in general.

This study explores Hobson's paradigm of Imperialism, its content, intentions and, finally, its limitations. Traditionally scholars have been more interested in the Empire's impact upon the world than in its impact upon Britain. The case was quite the opposite for Hobson who widely discussed Imperialism's impact upon Britain's democratic institutions, her economy, her politics (in which foreign policy dominated at the expense of social policy) and the influence of Imperialism upon the British mindset.

The plan of this study is as follows. First, the theoretical framework is introduced to the reader. Methodologically this study is one on the history of ideas, and its methods are based on Skinnerian contextualism. Second, the intellectual context of Hobson's thesis of Imperialism, the liberal and socialist theorising about Imperialism against which Hobson was defining his argument, is discussed. Special attention is paid to London Radical-Liberal societies in the 1890s, the Ethical Societies, the Rainbow Circle and small groups on the

¹ This term, in its political-theoretical sense, was normally spelt with a capital 'I' by contemporaries, and I choose to follow this practice.

periphery of the Liberal Party in which the Progressives, who later became known as New Liberals, moulded their views on Imperialism. Third, the South African War against the background of which Hobson was defining Imperialism is discussed. Finally, Hobson's thesis of Imperialism is analysed in relation to these theoretical findings and historical contexts. Even though this is a work of history, the historical sources used are not only appreciated as such but are intended to underpin theoretical findings on the relationship between liberalism and Imperialism.

So far researchers, in studying Hobson's views on Imperialism, have almost exclusively focused on his published books, namely on *The War in South Africa* (1900), *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901) and *Imperialism: A Study* (1902). His rich journalistic work has often been considered almost ephemeral. However, it is the contention of this study, contrary to the positions taken by some of the previous researchers, that an analysis which concentrates on periodical articles, reviews and commentaries provides a far better opportunity to analyse the content of his writings and their logic as well as the reception the writings met with. Hobson's journalistic work was intimately related to his role as an advocate of social reform and therefore it is quite impossible to separate these two aspects of his life both of which require to be handled at the same time.

I will focus on three points to support the argument being made. First, the three books do not represent the whole corpus of his published texts dealing with the issue of Imperialism but rather choices made by the author or the publishers, James Nisbet and Grant Richards. Second, they represent the conclusions Hobson drew rather than the ways and means by which he came to these conclusions. Finally, books are silent sources for the researcher, who wishes to grasp the reception by the reading public of the assertions Hobson made. In this study I am focusing on reviews and commentaries that discuss not only the content, structure and argument of the books but the ideological assertions made by the author and thus offer, I believe, valuable insights into the British mindset of the late 1890s and the early 1900s.

When analysed in their original settings, Hobson's journalistic texts can be seen as a series of battles over his political, social and economic beliefs. As the purpose of this study is to provide a reassessment of Hobson's Imperialism, and not the whole corpus of British attitudes to Imperialism, the questions under analysis are mainly seen through Hobson's eyes. However, an intellectual context is required. Otherwise one would run a risk of completely failing to understand Hobson's place in the history of late-Victorian political thought. Yet it should be stressed that since Hobson worked largely outside the mainstream of thought on his subject, the task of comparing his views with others, is a delicate one.

To the best of our knowledge, any attempt to write a detailed life of Hobson has to rely on a small number of scattered, unpublished manuscript materials written by Hobson himself. The most relevant archives collection is that of the J. A. Hobson Papers (Brynmor Jones Library, Hull University) which

however offers a restricted amount of information about his personal life. Furthermore, Hobson's intellectual life was so intense that any attempt to write a biography tends to become almost a bibliographical essay on Hobson's works. In fact there is a notable absence of any comprehensive biography of Hobson and the restricted nature of the information available to us about his personal life also makes difficult any attempt at an analysis which tries to place Hobson's intellectual life in its context.

For a student of Hobson's intellectual life, there is more than enough to work on. 52 published books and several hundred articles, pamphlets, letters and diverse journalistic writings make him one of the most productive social critics of his era in Britain. A great deal of the material I have consulted is at the British Library of Political and Economic Science (the London School of Economics and Political Science), to whose librarians and archivists I owe my gratitude for their constant assistance. I am also indebted to the Ethical Society Library (Conway Hall, London), whose staff members have always shown me kindness and provided helpful guidance. Furthermore, the Conway Hall Humanist Centre also kindly offered me a work place during my visits and for this I am grateful. Working in the same room where Hobson gave his lectures on so many occasions was both inspiring and exciting. I am also grateful to the staff members of the British Newspaper Library (Colindale, London), the John Rylands Library (University of Manchester), the Brynmor Jones Library (University of Hull), the Bodleian Library (University of Oxford) and the Wisconsin Historical Society Library (Madison, Wisconsin) for their assistance.

The substance of the present study draws on my previous theses, namely Licentiate thesis in history and Master's thesis in political science. Even though the licentiate thesis was written at a very early stage in my studies, and left me with more questions than answers, it made me want to understand more about Hobson's texts and thus laid a basis for this study. In my Master's thesis in political science I got acquainted with the more theoretical aspects of Hobson's thought and, even if the study in hand is a work of history, without these theoretical orientations the outcome would have been less convincing than, I hope, it now is.

The main findings of this study have already been presented to an international audience of specialists. Two conference papers, one presented at the 2006 Conference of the Historical Society of Boston University on the theme, 'Globalization, Empire, and Imperialism in Historical Perspective' and the other at the 10th Annual International Conference on Conceptual History held in 2007 at the Istanbul Technical University, Turkey, with the title 'Transnational Concepts, Transfers and the Challenge of Peripheries',² discussed the problems I have been investigating, the theories applied, the data collected and analyzed as well as the main findings of the study. I am grateful to the organisers of these

² Särkkä, Timo, 'Imperialism. Hobson's Paradigm' in *Transnational Concepts, Transfers and the Challenge of the Peripheries*, Gürcan Koçan (ed.), Istanbul Technical University Press, Istanbul 2008, pp. 160-181.

meetings and to other conference participants for providing me with the opportunity for stimulating and extremely useful discussion.

I have been very fortunate to have had an opportunity to work in a scholarly, inspiring environment in the Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland first as a Junior Research Fellow of the Emil Aaltonen Foundation, then as an Assistant in History and at the moment as a Researcher in the Academy of Finland research project 'The rise, fall and re-emergence of business organizations'. The University, the Aaltonen Foundation and the Academy of Finland have also been the greatest financial supporters of my studies for which I am grateful. I also would like to express my gratitude to the Anna-Lyydia Vilpponen Foundation, the Ellen and Artturi Nyysönen Foundation and the Finnish Graduate School of History in the University of Tampere and the Centre of Excellence in Political Thought and Conceptual Change in the University of Jyväskylä for their minor but equally welcome financial assistance and display of faith in my study.

Over the years I have received mentoring and tutoring from many inspiring and capable teachers in the department. Professor Seppo Zetterberg's support and encouragement have been of paramount importance for my work. His wide knowledge of history and Academia made my research not only feasible but also enjoyable and I wish to express my sincere gratitude. In the early stages of my study I greatly benefited from the guidance of Dr Anssi Halmesvirta, who encouraged me to concentrate on Hobson in my thesis. His researches and knowledge in the field of intellectual history have also given me important insights into my own work. Furthermore, Professor Pasi Ihalainen has provided tutorial support and mentorship for me in various seminars and conferences for which I would like to express my gratitude. I would also like to thank Dr Markku Hokkanen for being a supportive friend and, when needed, a critical colleague in matters of imperial history. To itemise all the other researchers, colleagues and friends that I have been privileged to work with over the years is a task beyond my capabilities. I would like to use this opportunity to thank them collectively.

In Professor Michael Freeden and Professor Dr Jörn Leonhard I have been fortunate to have extremely thorough and distinguished reviewers. I would like to thank them for criticism and suggestions on the manuscript.

Besides the aforementioned, I would like to thank Dr Robert Bell, who read different versions of my manuscript and made many helpful suggestions on both content and language. Furthermore, Dr Bell and Mrs Bell showed me most kind hospitality while I was their guest during my stays in London. That hospitality gave me not only an opportunity to consult source materials but also to explore the truly magnificent city which was once the heart of the Empire.

Timo Särkkä
St. John's Wood, London - Jyväskylä
May, 2008 - March, 2009

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Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Rudyard Kipling, *McClure's Magazine*, February, 1899.

Rudyard Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' is based upon the most audacious perversion of the truth that has ever tainted a fine poetic form.

J. A. Hobson, *Ethical World*, February 18, 1899.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study of Imperialism

In “post-colonial theory” the relationship between the capitalist (Western) world and the ‘three continents’ (Latin America, Africa and Asia) is considered to be an unequal one in terms of political, economic and cultural relationships. In order to analyse this inequality of relationships or, as it is defined by Edward Said (1978), this discourse of domination, certain research concepts have been developed, Said’s ‘orientalism’ being one of the most distinguished. In the colonial discourse analysis historical anti-Imperialism provided a starting point for a post-colonial critique, while the post-colonial theorists’ ultimate goal lay in a post-imperial age. Hobson’s *Imperialism: A Study* has also been interpreted as part of this cultural, moral and economic anti-colonial movement.³

Historians have criticised post-colonial theory for its lack of historical and cultural contextualisation and of its emphasis on discourse analysis which they regard as an unsound process.⁴ They have further argued that orientalism and Imperialism were not parallel phenomena. This argument is in contradiction to Said’s assertion that empire was created by philosophical and imaginative processes at work and that the Western discourse on the Orient paved the way for colonial power. Postcolonial theorists have answered the historians’ critique by arguing that by separating themselves from the study of history, they have gained a new means of understanding and studying colonialism and

³ Young, Robert J. C., *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Malden, Oxford, and Carlton 2001, pp. 27, 57–58, 73–84, 98–99, 383–389.

⁴ See, for example, Mackenzie, John M., *Orientalism. History, Theory and the Arts*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1995, pp. xii, xv, xxi, 8, 15, 37–39. Mackenzie also criticises directly Said’s idealistic view of Hobson. ‘Hobson’s critical concern with the export of capital and his underconsumptionist theories have little to do with Said’s vision of radically liberal anti-Imperialism. Indeed his fierce anti-Semitism (which goes unmentioned) runs directly counter to it.’ (*op. cit.*, p. 36)

Imperialism.⁵ Most of the disagreements concerning the study of Imperialism can be derived from these differences of opinion.

It was not until the 1960s that Hobson's thesis of imperialism became a matter of serious interest to historians. The first study which analysed his political thought in a more detailed manner was Bernard Porter's *Critics of Empire* (1968) which put Hobson into the context of turn-of-the-century radicalism in Britain.⁶ A decade later, Michael Freedon's *New Liberalism* (1978) presented the more theoretical aspects of his thinking.⁷ John Allett's *New Liberalism. The Political Economy of J. A. Hobson* (1981) was the first published monograph on Hobson.⁸ However, Alan Lee's unpublished Ph.D. thesis *A Study of the Social and Economic Thought of J. A. Hobson* (University of London, 1970) is still the most thorough study of Hobson. What is important in Lee's study is that it emphasises a consistency which is to be found in Hobson's thought. As Lee pointed out in 1970, and it is a view which holds true even today, far too often this consistency of his method of investigating social phenomena has been overlooked in subsequent fragmentary studies. Hobson developed his own system of 'welfare economics' to formulate a consistent policy of social reform.⁹

More detailed perspectives on Hobson's intellectual life are to be found in the two volumes, *Reappraising J. A. Hobson: Humanism and Welfare* (1990) and *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years: Freethinker of the Social Sciences* (1994), both of which display multiple and even contradictory views on his economic, political and social thought.¹⁰ More recently, P. J. Cain's *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism, and Finance, 1887-1938* (2002) has indicated the life-long evolving nature of Hobson's political and economic thought.¹¹

Two methodological traditions can be discerned in previous studies of Hobson. Contextual analysis has leaned heavily on Quentin Skinner's seminal definition of the history of ideas. For example, Peter Clarke has stressed in his *Liberals and Social Democrats* (1978) that his approach is drawn from the history of ideas rather than a logical analysis of Hobson's works.¹² Clarke criticises logical analysis for separating Hobson from his intellectual context and for

⁵ Young, *Postcolonialism*, pp. 18-19, 389-392.

⁶ Porter, Bernard, *Critics of Empire. British Radical attitudes to colonialism in Africa 1895-1914*, Macmillan, London 1968.

⁷ Freedon, Michael, *New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978.

⁸ Allett, John, *New Liberalism. The Political Economy of J. A. Hobson*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 1981.

⁹ Lee, Alan, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London 1970, pp. 2-3, 12. Methodologically Lee's thesis is a study in the history of ideas. (*op. cit.*, p. 15)

¹⁰ *Reappraising J. A. Hobson: Humanism and Welfare*, Freedon, Michael (ed.), Unwin Hyman, London 1990; *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years: Freethinker of the Social Sciences*, John Pheby (ed.), St. Martin's Press, New York 1994.

¹¹ Cain, P. J., *Hobson and Imperialism. Radicalism, New Liberalism, and Finance 1887-1938*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002.

¹² Clarke, Peter, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1978, p. 2.

concentrating on the inner logic of his work.¹³ Such logical analysis has been favoured, for example, in the works of P. J. Cain, who, however, in his most recent study *Hobson and Imperialism* is using a more 'Skinnerian' approach.¹⁴ Both methodological traditions agree that Hobson's theory of Imperialism needs to be analysed within the context of his general economic and social thought. The focus of studies drawing on these traditions has been, however, markedly different – the logical approach concentrates on Hobson's texts, especially his books, while the Skinnerian one pays greater attention to the wider contexts of his political thought.

The question of whether Progressive thinkers should be analysed within the framework of contemporary discourse rather than seeking to place them within the history of progressive movement, is one that has been discussed intensively by scholars. Traditionally historians have placed Hobson in his life-long context and analysed his thought as part of a political discourse which David Blazeer sees as a 'progressive tradition' pursued from 1884 to 1939.¹⁵ By doing so, they have been able to show both the consistency as well as the maturity of Hobson's social philosophy.

In this study I shall analyse in detail, following Skinner's definition of the history of ideas, the ideological foundations of Hobson's political thought.¹⁶ According to Skinner the appropriate strategy should begin not by abstracting leading ideas or events, but rather by 'describing as fully as possible the complex and probably contradictory matrix within which the idea or event to be explained can be most meaningfully located.'¹⁷ Contexts do not offer causal explanations for an idea but at best help us to interpret the nuances and concepts of political thought.¹⁸

¹³ Clarke, P. F., 'Hobson, Free Trade and Imperialism', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. XXXIV, no. 2 (May 1981), p. 308.

¹⁴ Cain, P. J., 'Hobson's Developing Theory of Imperialism', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. XXXIV, no. 2 (May 1981), pp. 313–316; Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, pp. vi, 9, 12–13.

¹⁵ Blazeer, David, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition. Socialists, Liberals, and the Quest for Unity, 1884–1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 19, 25–26, 31, 196–197. Blazeer questions the very usefulness of terms 'Individualism' and 'Collectivism' because these terms are so widely used and abused. His solution to the terminological problems seems underestimate contemporaries' understanding of the meanings of the terms. As Stefan Collini has pointed out in his *Liberalism & Sociology* it is essential to recapture what contemporaries thought that they were discussing (Collini, Stefan, *Liberalism and Sociology: L. T. Hobhouse and political argument in England 1880–1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983 [1979], p. 14). If Blazeer's solution was extended to the term 'Imperialism', which is arguably one of the most controversial political terms in history, a historian would run the risk of analysing such aspects of imperial thinking which contemporaries did not associate with 'Imperialism' at all.

¹⁶ The word 'ideology' represents here thought in response to a situation rather than thinking about timeless essences. Cf. Minogue, K. R., 'Method in Intellectual History: Quentin Skinner's Foundations', *Philosophy*, vol. 56 (1981), p. 548.

¹⁷ Skinner, Quentin, 'The Limits of Historical Explanations', *Philosophy*, vol. XLI, no. 157 (July 1966), p. 213.

¹⁸ Skinner, Quentin, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1969), pp. 42–44, 46; Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. I: *The Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979, pp. x–xi.

More recently, Skinner has re-emphasised the importance of the concept of 'context' in his work. He has stressed that the texts consulted address some specific problems within their society and that the context emerges as a result of these specific concerns. Furthermore, Skinner has re-emphasised the importance of analysing past concerns in their own right. From this it does not follow that the subject matters being studied cannot be socially important and relevant today but that they should be treated and discussed only in their historical context and not subjected to or involved with current political debate.¹⁹

R. G. Collingwood, the late Oxford philosopher, has argued that in history, of all the sciences, exist no timeless questions. Human thought communicates poorly temporally and spatially and thus it should always be analysed in its context. Therefore, it is the task of the historian to reconstruct the questions of the time rather than try to seek any ready-made answers.²⁰ This formulation suggests that Hobson's thesis of Imperialism is also meant to answer some of the questions of its time.

The modern concepts of 'empire' and 'imperial' were derived from the Latin term *imperium* but their usage has varied at different times in history and in different places.²¹ Similarly, the term 'Imperialism', used either to proclaim or to denounce imperial rule, communicates poorly both temporally and spatially.²² Therefore, one should not discuss Imperialism as such but rather paradigms of Imperialism. According to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 'traditional' and 'modern' connotations can be separated in relation to Imperialism. The traditional connotations were synonymous with despotism. The modern connotations emerged in the 1880s and referred to imperial rule.²³ From the modern point of view an Imperialist was therefore simply a person who respected imperial rule. Furthermore, specific national connotations can be separated in relation to Imperialism and they should be interpreted in their national political contexts.

In Britain the traditional connotations of Imperialism emerged in the 1860s and were defined for example by Whig-liberal C. W. Dilke in 1868, as a form of despotic government: '[...] but virtually, in annexing any Eastern country, we destroy the ruling class, and reduce the government to a mere imperialism, where one man rules and the rest are slaves'.²⁴ From the British point of view the closest and the most obvious example of despotic rule was to be found in

¹⁹ Sebastián, Javier Fernández, 'Intellectual History, Liberty and Republicanism: An Interview with Quentin Skinner', *Contributions to the history of concepts*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2007), pp. 105, 118–119.

²⁰ Collingwood, R. G., *An Autobiography*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987 (1939), pp. 30–32, 62–63, 67–68.

²¹ Koebner, Richard, *Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961, pp. 18–19.

²² Arrighi, Giovanni, *The Geometry of Imperialism. The Limits of Hobson's Paradigm*, NLB, London 1978, pp. 2, 24.

²³ Walther, Rudolf, 'Imperialismus' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-socialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Band 3, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta 1982, pp. 175–181.

²⁴ Dilke, Sir Charles Wentworth, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-speaking Countries during 1866 and 1867*, 5th ed., Macmillan, London 1870, p. 544.

France where supporters of the Emperor Napoleon III were named 'Imperialists'. However, as with Dilke, despotic forms of government were generally seen as a symptom of Imperialism, even in India. During Benjamin Disraeli's Conservative administration (1874–1880) the British Empire had a more expansive standing and direction but it did not yet open an ideological link between the Empire and Conservatism. The modern, more positive connotations first emerged in the 1880s²⁵ and were defined in 1902 by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1898–1905), in one of his budget speeches. For Curzon Imperialism was synonymous with imperial pride: 'I am myself, by instinct and by conviction, an Imperialist, and I regard the British Empire not merely as a source of honourable pride to Englishmen, but as a blessing to the world'.²⁶ However, as the modern usage of the term became more typical, the traditional pejorative connotations did not entirely disappear but lived on especially in radical-liberal political thought.

Within a broader context, Cannadine has named the overall economic explanation of Imperialism,²⁷ which economic historians have supported, as monocausal.²⁸ One of the major reasons for this over-emphasis on inner logic and an overall economic explanation of Hobson's works has lain in historians' lack of interest in and knowledge of the literary contexts in which Hobson developed his thesis of Imperialism. It is therefore essential to stress that Hobson's thesis is anything but monocausal, a point which it is possible to make when the focus is shifted from Hobson's books to the rich, multifarious and even contradictory periodical articles and other journalistic texts Hobson had written by the time he published his major study.

The present interpretation differs from the post-colonial studies of Imperialism, in that these studies begin from the Marxist analysis of Imperialism, and find Hobson's chief shortcoming in his failure to understand capitalism in this light, while I have taken Hobson's presumptions as given. In turning to historical studies, it is apparent that the authors have brought out a number of the elements of Hobson's thesis, and on most points the present study is in agreement with them. However, I have sought to go more deeply into the origins and the consequences of Hobson's thesis, and to bring hitherto

²⁵ For a detailed discussion see Richard Koebner's seminal study. Koebner, Richard & Schmidt, Helmut Dan, *Imperialism. The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1965 (1964), chs. I, V, VI and VII. See also Eldridge, C. C., *England's Mission: the imperial idea in the age of Gladstone and Disraeli, 1868-1880*, Macmillan, London 1973.

²⁶ Curzon, Lord, 'Fourth Budget Speech' (Legislative Council at Calcutta, March 26, 1902). In *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor-General of India 1898-1905*, Sir Thomas Raleigh (ed.), Macmillan, London and New York 1906, p. 107.

²⁷ E.g. Cain, P. J. & Hopkins, A. G., *British imperialism: innovation and expansion, 1688-1914*, Longman, London, New York 1994 (1993).

²⁸ Cannadine includes in these explanations that of Hobson as well as that of Lenin. See Cannadine, David, *History in Our Time*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1998, pp. 144-146, 150-154. Hobson also regretted that a belief in economic determinism in historical writings gained such a strong hold after the First World War (Hobson, J. A., *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1938, p. 63). Also refer to Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p. 94.

less consulted primary sources, new modes of reading sources and new perspectives on interpretation to strengthen the points being made.²⁹ By analysing these journalistic sources, it is possible to argue that Hobson's thesis can be seen as paradigmatic of the 1890s radical-liberal understanding of Imperialism.³⁰

However, the historical sources consulted are not only appreciated as such but are intended to underpin theoretical findings on the relationship between liberalism and Imperialism. The most detailed study of liberalism's illiberal elements has been performed in the field of 'governmentality', which 'seeks to distinguish the particular mentalities, arts and regimes of government', as Mitchell Dean defines the term.³¹ This definition runs back to Foucault's redefinition of government as the 'conduct of conduct', that is a means of directing how we behave and act, and has been used in studies which have applied the question of 'how' to the process of governing, for example *how* we govern and *how* we are governed in relation to the government of ourselves, the government of others and the government of the state.³² While the methodologies of the history of ideas are at the centre of this study, governmentality is used as a detailed perspective to analyse issues of liberal government in relation to imperial government. Source criticism forms another methodological approach of this study.

1.2 Study of Hobson's Imperialism

P. J. Cain has examined the evolution of Hobson's ideas on the economics of Imperialism between 1898 and 1914 and places him in the sequence of Radicals and Liberals who, from the American War of Independence onwards, associated Imperialism with the politically dominant landed elite. Cain holds that later Radicals such as J. A. Hobson did not differ in any significant degree from this earlier radical tradition. In Cain's analysis they looked at the revival of Imperialism in the late nineteenth century as the result of a betrayal of liberalism by the industrial capitalist who had bought himself into the still politically dominant landed aristocracy and had allied himself with the jingoistic masses of the cities.³³

²⁹ In these respects I have followed Koselleck's formulation of three strategies for writing history defined by Palonen. See Palonen, Kari, *Quentin Skinner: History, Politics, Rhetoric*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 3–4, 26–28.

³⁰ In this respect my orientation differs from some of the earlier ones. See, for example, Lloyd, Trevor, 'Africa and Hobson's Imperialism', *Past & Present*, no. 55 (May, 1972), pp. 131ff.

³¹ Dean, Mitchell, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi 1999, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

³³ Cain, P. J., 'J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898–1914', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. XXXI, no. 3 (August, 1978), pp. 565–567.

Cain discerns three phases in Hobson's imperial thinking. Until 1891 Hobson is basically seen as a Social Imperialist whose concern was with the welfare of the English poor. 'This emphasis tended to push him in the direction of protectionism and even Imperialism, since he felt that the traditional English policy of free trade might have deleterious consequences for the poor. While admitting that free trade increased total national wealth, [Hobson] maintained that this benefit could be outweighed by the harm done to the most vulnerable part of the working class. [...] After 1891 Hobson never made an outright plea for protection, but his Ruskinite distaste for the effects of *laissez-faire* often made him hostile to free trade because it helped to accelerate the progress of industrialism he deplored.' According to Cain's analysis Hobson began the task of portraying Imperialism as a direct product of 'finance capital' in his *Contemporary Review* article 'Free Trade and Foreign Policy' (1898) in which he for the first time identified Imperialism as one of the elements of this distasteful industrialism. Once Hobson had attacked Imperialism, he was also forced to repudiate protection, because it obviously played a part in imperialist politics.³⁴

Hobson's first stance was to deny the workability of Jean Baptiste Say's Law of Markets (that is to argue that production creates its own demand). According to Say's Law new markets could have no effect upon the general level of profit because savings were assumed to find complete and immediate investment in the home market;³⁵ consequently, a deficiency in effective demand was considered an impossibility. Hobson agreed with Say that production and consumption were ultimately bound together. He also agreed with Say that when saving and consumption rates were in balance, there would be full employment.³⁶ However, these market principles were true only in theory while economic realities proved to be a different matter. Hobson argued that since the British economy suffered from an uneven distribution of income, there was no 'effective demand'. Those who had the power to demand commodities for consumption had not the desire, since their material needs were abundantly satisfied, while those who had the desire had not the power. As a result, those who owned an excessive proportion of the goods that were produced tried to find markets for the surplus abroad. In order to remedy the poor working of Say's Law and to solve the problem of Imperialism, the imbalance between productive effort and consumption must be corrected. This could only be achieved by the restoration of a rational and democratic control of the economy for social ends. Hobson thus for the first time concluded that the existing economic system was the barrier to social progress and aligned himself with the tradition of radical anti-Imperialism and Little-Englandism.³⁷

³⁴ Cain, P. J., 'International trade and economic development in the work of J. A. Hobson before 1914', *History of Political Economy*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall, 1979), pp. 407, 412ff, quotations taken from pp. 408, 411.

³⁵ Winch, Donald Norman, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, Bell, London 1965, pp. 81-87.

³⁶ Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 9, 101-102.

³⁷ Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, pp. 72-76; Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 484-487. Whether or not this was a step towards socialism is discussed in the concluding chapter.

However, the South African War set this back and in *Imperialism: A Study* Hobson returns to the old radical obsession with the financier as demon king. The systemic theory is replaced by a conspiratorial one; scholarly sober analysis disappears and loose journalistic speculation prevails. However, according to Cain's analysis, this was only a temporary setback. By 1911 when Hobson published *An Economic Interpretation of Investment*, he had already left behind the claims made in *Imperialism: A Study* and returned to his earlier Cobdenite faith according to which foreign trade was the road to prosperity and protectionism was linked with Imperialism.³⁸

Peter Clarke has criticized Cain's logical approach whereby Hobson is presented as a systematic thinker. Cain's logical question is: now what can this mean? Clarke asks a question in the tradition of the history of ideas: now what did Hobson mean? According to this historical approach of Clarke Hobson developed diverse insights which were 'sometimes deeply original, sometimes embarrassingly trite, and not seldom at odds with [his] previous approaches'. Clarke makes his most powerful argument when he deplores Cain's view of Hobson's increasing tendency to link Imperialism with the development of finance capital. Hobson's intention was not to postulate an economy controlled by finance capital which needed Imperialism. As seen from the example of the South African War only the financiers needed Imperialism, not capital itself.³⁹ By taking a historical stand Clarke wishes to place Hobson at odds with Lenin, to see Hobson as an 'innovative ideologist' (Skinner's words) rather than a systematic theorist.⁴⁰

To Cain's mind, Clarke's criticism appears to be that Hobson's position was simply 'spatchcocked' together as a direct response to a contemporary debate. Even if Hobson did not directly claim so, his concerns are similar to those of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and James and J. S. Mill and can be thus analysed in this sequence of earlier Radicals. If severed from this tradition, Hobson seems to have been too involved in current argument and contemporary political excitement and his greater economic analysis suffered as a consequence. Although Cain admits that Hobson could not understand English capitalism by reference to the American view since the structure of the British economy was very different, he did in fact develop a general structural analysis of capitalism. The most notable example of this is in his *Contemporary Review* article 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa' (1900), where Hobson actually connects overseas investments with 'the scramble for Africa'. That Hobson supplemented this systemic view of capitalism with the

³⁸ Cain, 'J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898-1914', pp. 568-569ff.

³⁹ Clarke, 'Hobson, Free Trade, and Imperialism', pp. 308-311.

⁴⁰ 'I portrayed the innovating ideologist as someone essentially engaged in the act of manipulating a normative vocabulary by a series of sleights of hand.' (Skinner, Quentin, 'Rhetoric and Conceptual Change', *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 1999, vol. 3, SoPhi, University of Jyväskylä 1999, p. 67) Cf. Skinner, Quentin, 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action'. In *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, James Tully (ed.), Polity Press, Cambridge 1988, p. 112.

conspiratorial theory, does not mean that Hobson was repudiating his earlier position altogether.⁴¹

According to Cain, Clarke fails to see the developmental nature of Hobson's theory of Imperialism. First, he had not adequately equipped himself with a reading of Hobson's writings on international economics and Imperialism after 1902. Second, his attempt to place Hobson in his immediate historical context is limiting in the sense that he fails to appreciate the abstract and philosophical aspects of Hobson's thought. Cain wishes to see Hobson not as an author of muddled articles but rather as the composer of outstandingly analytical studies.⁴²

To many Hobson is still almost solely remembered for *Imperialism: A Study*. To remedy this, in his *Hobson and Imperialism* Cain has analysed Hobson's works in the context of his life-long economic, social and political thought. By doing so, he has revealed the development of Hobson's attitudes and thoughts towards Empire, finance and international trade. Cain's work is essentially a synthesis of his earlier findings. Although a number of important contributions have been published since the early 1970s, when Cain for the first time studied Hobson's works, he discovered that any comparison of *Imperialism: A Study* with Hobson's other writings on Imperialism had still to some extent been neglected. Thus in *Hobson and Imperialism* his context was Hobson's life-long thinking on economic Imperialism, from the late 1880s until 1938, two years before his death in 1940. The emphasis is placed not only on *Imperialism: A Study* but also on Hobson's early writings as well as on his later development of his thinking on the matter. By doing so, Cain hopes to overcome the flaws of his earlier analysis.⁴³

Perhaps the most important contribution of Cain's seminal work is, as he clearly states, that it challenges subsequent scholars to evaluate his findings. My contention is different from Cain's in three aspects. First, I have been particularly interested in Hobson's journalistic and other ephemeral writings, which Cain only consulted when it seemed imperative to do so.⁴⁴ Cain sees some of the Hobson's works such as *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (1894) as fine examples of analytical thinking, but some, such as *Imperialism: A Study*, as merely polemical and hastily put together, while others such as *Work and Wealth* (1914) are the outcome of long thought. For me *Imperialism: A Study* is not the starting point of my analysis but rather its end; this study is not of Hobson's book as such but of the ideas behind his periodical articles and other journalistic texts. However, that is not to argue that there are not ideas behind Hobson's books, contexts to discuss or applications to make. There are and they might well be as much worth studying as the ideas behind his periodical articles but they are just not the same ideas, contexts, or applications that I examine in this

⁴¹ Cain, 'Hobson's Developing Theory of Imperialism', pp. 313-315.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁴³ Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, pp. 1-5. See also Johnson, Valerie, Review of *Hobson and Imperialism: radicalism, New Liberalism, and finance, 1887-1938* by P. J. Cain, *Economic History Review*, vol. LVII, no. 4 (2004), p. 805.

⁴⁴ Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, p. 12.

study. Here I have analysed Hobson's books only to the extent that it seemed to serve my overall purpose and to illustrate the reception that Hobson's ideas met with.

Second, there is also a difference in our methods. Even though Cain hopes that his latest work shows more Skinnerian traces than the previous ones, I do not think he entirely succeeds in that. Cain claims that there are meanings in texts beyond those intended by the author, and he is right to claim so. But these meanings surely cannot be Skinnerian ones. The logic of what Cain uses as his method, seems to be rather the opposite of Skinnerian method and is the one Skinner criticises in his methodological texts. To analyse meanings in texts beyond those intended by Hobson, a method is required different from the Skinnerian one.

Finally, Cain's temporal context is much longer than that what is analysed here. It should be noted at the outset, however, that there are numerous excellent articles written by Cain as well as by other scholars that focus on this same period. Furthermore, as already pointed out, there are numerous excellent studies which have focused on Hobson and his times and have linked him with some other broad subjects of the time such as anti-Imperialism or analysed his thought in relation to a gallery of other liberal and socialist thinkers. This study is not to deny their value. On the contrary; on many points it is in agreement with them and builds on their findings. It is, however, asserted here that Hobson's thinking deserves to be discussed in its own right.

This study is a book-length treatment of Hobson's Imperialism as it developed before *Imperialism: A Study* was published in the autumn of 1902. However, the persuasiveness of Hobson's theory of Imperialism depends on a prior acceptance of his economic and social theories and beliefs and it is thus imperative that these are to some extent discussed as well. However, the main purpose of this study lies in the field of the history of ideas rather than in any discussion of Hobson's merits and deficiencies in the field of economic and social theory.

However, the approach need not necessarily be one concerning the history of ideas. As Bernard Porter has pointed out in the introduction to the second edition of his seminal *Critics of Empire* (2008) Hobson's capitalist theory of Imperialism has its value today because even if the empires he discusses have died, Imperialism did not die with them. The durability of Hobson's position and that of other critics of empire demonstrates how each generation has recycled their views and found them illuminating for their own time. One only needs to substitute the words 'the United States' for 'the British Empire' and 'oil' for 'gold' in order to demonstrate how Hobson's turn-of-the-century critique is still applicable in the world of today.⁴⁵ As Porter points out, however, presenting such a critique is not a task that historians should lightly undertake.

⁴⁵ Porter, Bernard, *Critics of Empire. British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, 2nd ed., I. B. Tauris, London and New York 2008, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

1.3 Study of Victorianism

Studies of history are expected to discuss specific historical times and places. The study of Victorianism is vaguer than this. The term 'Victorian' is commonly used as a blanket term covering the whole of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ In order to grasp the true nature of Victorianism, some researchers have emphasised the importance of the years following the Napoleonic wars⁴⁷ whereas others have stressed that the years between 1845 and 1860⁴⁸ or between 1830 and 1870⁴⁹ are paramount in this respect. To many of them the discourse of the 1890s no longer displays true Victorian ideas and attitudes but rather the decadence of late-Victorianism. Moreover, some researchers have maintained that Victorianism did not end with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 but lasted well beyond the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The mere heterogeneity of such definitions displays the fact that Victorianism is not something that can be measured quantitatively or confined to an exact period of time. Herbert Tingsten, a Swedish author, who in 1965 published a compilation of essays on Victorian figures and characters, has pointed out that the term 'Victorian' is best defined as a period of history when people, at least in some respects, possessed similar patterns of behaviour, shared common ideas and understood the existing reality in similar ways. These common elements in ideas, attitudes and culture together represent Victorianism and the people described as 'Victorians'.⁵⁰

A list of virtues, which an ideal Victorian would have possessed, a Weberian ideal type, can be found in many examples of Victorian studies. Tingsten cites the love of freedom, justice and humanity for which the British Empire is said to have fought the two world wars. Similarly, belief in British technical and administrative superiority, efficiency, inventiveness and independence are considered to be typical Victorian values. In particular, a belief in progress and in the notion that England was the leader of humanity is a key Victorian conviction.⁵¹ This conviction is said to be the paramount element in British Imperialism, a belief that England is the chosen nation, not by accident but because she deserves to be.⁵²

⁴⁶ Gay, Peter, *The Cultivation of Hatred. The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*. vol. III., W. W. Norton, New York and London 1993, p. 3, note 1.

⁴⁷ E.g. Trevelyan, George Macaulay, *British History in the Nineteenth Century, 1782-1919*, Longmans, Green, London 1922.

⁴⁸ E.g. Young, G. M., *Victorian England. Portrait of an Age*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1936.

⁴⁹ E.g. Houghton, Walter E., *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1963.

⁵⁰ Tingsten, Herbert, *Viktoria ja viktoriaanit*, translated from Swedish into Finnish by Katri Ingman-Palola, WSOY, Porvoo and Helsinki 1966 [Swedish ed. *Viktoria och viktorianerna*, 1965], pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 17-20, 23.

⁵² This study adheres to the use of the terms 'England' and 'Britain' as synonyms, a usage that prevailed throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. To maintain that the consciousness of Britain was predominantly English at this period is not to deny an enhanced sense of difference within the different

In many respects Hobson can be regarded as a typical Victorian.⁵³ Although his most famous presentation of the subject matter, *Imperialism: A Study* was not published until the autumn of 1902, the first year of Edward VII's reign, the study was engendered by concerns which were essentially Victorian. Hence the subtitle 'A Study in Late-Victorian Political Thought'.

Controversial research results have been achieved in the studies concerning the role and meaning of Imperialism in the Victorian society. In recent years historians of imperial culture, producing for example the *Studies in Imperialism* series and John Mackenzie in particular, have argued that British culture and society became deeply permeated with the idea of Empire in the course of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ However, some researchers, most notably Bernard Porter, have dissented from this argument and have asserted that the British developed their Empire, following the famous words of Sir John Seeley in 1883, 'in a fit of absence of mind'. For his widely discussed study *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (2004) Porter gathered an extensive literature of printed ephemera and biographies to support his argument that the value and significance of allusions to the Empire in British culture have been exaggerated. Besides this exaggeration on the part of historians, Porter further argues, scholars of culture and literature in particular have failed to grasp an accurate understanding of the cultural frameworks of the Victorian audience.⁵⁵ Thus, according to Porter's thesis, there exists no such thing as a unitary British cultural experience of the Empire.

Studies of how cultural or political propaganda was actually received by the public are still quite rare. There is, of course, an extensive existing literature available on Victorian intellectual life, but in the case of late-Victorian political thought in particular there is a notable lack of genuinely systematic research on the content of textbooks, sermons, political speeches or periodical and daily press. In fact, the mere amount of source material available for researchers means that all attempts to define Victorian intellectual life must remain limited. At best the materials available can display mere fragments of how people thought or behaved, or, at worst they can provide a quite misleading guide to the lives of British people in the late nineteenth century. Frequently, a few leading texts by a few leading characters of the period are introduced as representative of British intellectual life. This is often done without sufficient explanation of why. I do not wish to deny their value or their importance for

nationalities of Great Britain. Refer to Stapleton, Julia, 'Political thought and national identity in Britain, 1850-1950'. In *History, Religion, and Culture: British intellectual history 1750-1950*, Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore & Brian Young (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, pp. 245-269. The term 'Victorian' rather than 'English' or 'British' throws light on the cultural aspects of the 'British' nation more evenly since it refers to the bourgeois experience that was not solely associated with the British nation.

⁵³ Cf. Porter, Bernard, 'Hobson and internationalism'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁴ See, for example, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, John M. Mackenzie (ed.), Manchester University Press, Manchester 1986.

⁵⁵ Porter, Bernard, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004.

the period and the questions being researched. In this study of the late-Victorian political thought of Hobson I am using the eminent texts of leading scholars and thinkers as well as minor texts, sometimes by minor thinkers but I am arguing that these minor texts can be as revealing and as worth noticing as the texts that are most often referred to and used simply because they also can engender new points of view.

1.4 Theories of Imperialism: When Lenin's Idea Prevailed

Imperialism: A Study is the first book-length discussion of the topic of Imperialism in modern times. Following its publication in the autumn of 1902 other studies soon followed. Building on Hobson's study, Lenin published his own views on the subject in 1917 under the title *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (A Popular Outline)*. Whereas for Hobson Imperialism constituted an epoch of history, for Lenin it was a system. Imperialism was not merely caused by capitalism; it was a particular, and indeed the final stage of capitalism.⁵⁶ Thus the fight against Imperialism also necessarily meant for Lenin and for the Marxist-Leninists a fight against capitalism. Hobson was both a critic of Imperialism and a liberal bourgeois thinker and this was for Lenin a contradiction in terms.⁵⁷ Lenin considered Hobson's liberal bourgeois analysis of Imperialism only partial since it believed in social reform within a capitalist society. He believed that the modernity crisis could only be solved by destroying capitalist society. Failure to take account of this distinction between Hobson's and Lenin's theories has caused endless confusion amongst students of Imperialism and colonialism.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, taking a neo-Marxist stand against the global forms of political, economic and cultural hegemony which they named *Empire*, have asserted that it was Lenin who first realised that Imperialism is related to the modernity crisis, the issues of poverty and unemployment and the question of 'the condition of the people' in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸ However, Imperialists such as Cecil Rhodes had already realised that expansion offered an opportunity to secure a nation state's sovereignty and to prevent

⁵⁶ It should be noted at the outset that this notion is useful in so far as it acts as a reminder of the differences between Hobson's approach and that of Lenin. Hobson too was aware of the emergence of monopoly capitalism at the turn of the century but he did not elaborate this point in the way that Lenin later did. Sutcliffe, B., 'Conclusion'. In *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, Roger Owen & Bob Sutcliffe (eds.), 6th impr., Longman, London, 1980 (1972), p. 315. Allett has drawn the same conclusion. Cf. Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 135–136.

⁵⁷ Davis, Horace B., 'Hobson and Human Welfare', *Science and Society*, vol. XXI, no. 4 (Fall, 1957), p. 307.

⁵⁸ Lenin drew this conclusion from reading Hobson and he eagerly admits this in the foreword to his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. See [in Finnish] Lenin, V. I., *Imperialismi, kapitalismin korkein aste*, Vapauden kirjapaino, Mikkeli 1941, p. 7. In English see Lenin, V. I., *On Imperialism and Imperialists*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1977 (1973), p. 160, note 13.

social disorder or even civil war.⁵⁹ Being the paragon of the Imperialist for Hobson, it was Rhodes whose words illustrated the expansionist dynamics of the late nineteenth century.

'The world is [...] nearly parceled out, and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered, and colonised. To think of these stars [...] that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far.'⁶⁰

Since expansion was believed to be an element of capitalism's internal working dynamic, Lenin argued that the modernity crisis could only be solved without the existence of capitalist nation states.⁶¹ For Lenin empire was not the ultimate goal but an inevitable stage as the nation state evolved. As the capitalist nation states tried to solve the modernity crisis by expanding, they entered into mortal combat amongst themselves in 1914.⁶² Besides Lenin a number of other Marxist theorists, R. Hilferding, R. Luxemburg, K. Kautsky, N. Bukharin among others, presented capitalist expansion in terms of economics.⁶³ Yet what makes Lenin's analysis unique in relation to the other Marxist thinkers is that his focus was always on political activity.⁶⁴ This political orientation springs from the historical context in which Lenin discussed and analysed capitalism.

Did Hobson's theory then include all empires of all ages? The answer must be in the negative. In contrast to Lenin, who developed his theory of Imperialism in order to define the Imperialism practised in all empires,⁶⁵ Hobson focused on the Imperialism of the British Empire from c. 1870 to 1901. Both Lenin and Hobson discussed and analysed Imperialism within the capitalist market system. Unlike Lenin, however, Hobson wanted to reform this system rather than destroy it. In order to do this, Imperialism needed to be properly defined.

The success of Lenin's polemic ensured that his version of the theory prevailed. Between the two world wars, "Hobson-Lenin theory" became a

⁵⁹ Chamberlain, M. E., 'Imperialism and Social Reform'. In *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, C. C. Eldridge (ed.), Macmillan, London 1984, p. 148.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Brantlinger, Patrick, *Rule of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 1988, p. 248.

⁶¹ Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London 2001, pp. 221-225, 228-233.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 229-233.

⁶³ Hobson was certainly known to them but he seems to have exercised only a slight influence over them. See Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, p. 489.

⁶⁴ Hardt & Negri, *Empire*, pp. 231-232. The 'political' represents for Hardt and Negri - following Thomas Hobbes - the foundation of every social relationship. (*op. cit.* pp., 463-464, note 6)

⁶⁵ It should be noted that Lenin had not always held an economic theory of Imperialism. Already in 1900 he (V. I. Uljanov), writing in the social-democrat *Iskra* (*Spark*), saw the South African War as a struggle between democracy and monarchy and as an example of British Imperialism. *Iskra*, no. 1 (December, 1900). See also Davidson, Apollon & Filatova, Irina, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town 1998, pp. 190-194. The first number of *Iskra* was printed in Leipzig, Germany but in April 1902 Lenin arrived to London in order to set up publication of *Iskra* there.

standard explanation of European Imperialism.⁶⁶ Hobson's study of the mentality of those who promoted Imperialism in the 1880s and the 1890s was felt to be acutely relevant again in 1939.⁶⁷ After the Second World War political theorists' definitions of Imperialism became quite moderate, even if one recognises the value of Hannah Arendt's *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*. Band II: *Imperialismus* (1951).⁶⁸ In spite of these new orientations, in 1968 Stanley Unwin pointed out that even though Hobson's book was long considered to be out of date, there was no other work that had quite taken its place.⁶⁹ This argument seems to hold true even today.⁷⁰

In terms of helping to produce more ethically valid imperial politics, the extent of this thesis' influence is more debatable. Edwardian imperial politics were oriented towards making the Empire more united as well as more efficient. The South African War had brought many latent doubts and feelings of insecurity to the surface; photographs of the terrible war scenes, reproduced in numerous publications, were reminiscent of the dark days of the Crimean Campaign.⁷¹ After the South African War, Britain, endowed with 'surplus' population, superior technology and naval power, kept India and the self-governing parts of the Empire within the imperial system, and the First World War strengthened the imperial ties rather than shattered the Empire into pieces.⁷² Thus it may be argued that the significance of *Imperialism: A Study* lies not in the impact it made on late-Victorian and Edwardian society but rather on the minds of a future generation of critics of empire.

⁶⁶ Wesselink, Henk, 'Overseas History'. In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Peter Burke (ed.), 2nd ed., Polity, Cambridge 2001 (1991), p. 85.

⁶⁷ Burns, Delisle C., Review of *Imperialism* by J. A. Hobson, *Ethics*, vol. XLIX, no. 2 (January, 1939), pp. 234-235.

⁶⁸ Arendt, Hannah, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, Band II: *Imperialismus*, Ullstein, Frankfurt 1975 (1951).

⁶⁹ Unwin, Stanley, 'Publisher's Note'. In Hobson, J. A., *Imperialism: A Study*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1968 (1902), p. v.

⁷⁰ More recently, the imbalance between liberal principles and colonial discourse has been re-asserted by Uday Singh Mehta in his *Liberalism and Empire* (1999) which argues that Imperialism is an inner part of liberalism's working dynamics. Mehta, Uday Singh, *Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1999, pp. 6, 9, 20. See also Semmel, Bernard, *The Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire. Theories of Imperialism from Adam Smith to Lenin*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1993.

⁷¹ Searle, G. R., *The Quest for National Efficiency. A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914*, Blackwell, Oxford 1971, pp. 34-37.

⁷² E.g. Morrow, John H., *The Great War. An Imperial History*, Routledge, London and New York 2004, pp. 3, 5-9.

2 THE VICTORIAN PERIODICAL PRESS AND HOBSON

In the eighteenth century it was still possible for the leisured classes to read and master the limited output of books. However, in the nineteenth century the book began slowly to lose its previous status as a source of information and conversation. As its status waned, the new and more democratic means of reaching the masses, newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals and other various printed ephemera, began to displace books.

The foundations of the Victorian periodical press were laid in fertile ground. A growing middle-class was eager to acquire the education it lacked and to question traditional thought and values. The importance of Victorian reviews, of which the *Edinburgh Review* founded in 1802, was the first example, lies in the fact that they shifted the focus from the book reviewed to what it suggested. Typical circulation figures in 1860 varied from 1,000 to 10,000 but the actual readership was obviously larger.⁷³ Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that a journal published was not necessarily a journal read, and an article read was not necessarily an article with which the reader agreed. Thus, circulation is quite unreliable as an indicator of influence.⁷⁴

A number of the working patterns of periodicals were originally copied from newspapers. Anonymity emerged quickly as a characteristic of periodicals because it had obvious advantages over signed articles. Anonymity provided the writer with an opportunity to express his views more openly and perhaps more honestly. In some cases it increased the weight given to an author's views because anonymity made the producers of the periodical collectively responsible for the text. When a single author expressed his views in a series of

⁷³ Houghton, Walter E., 'Periodical literature and the articulate classes'. In *Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and soundings*, Shattock, Joanne & Wolff, Michael (eds.), Leicester University Press and Toronto University Press, Leicester and Toronto 1982, pp. 4-7.

⁷⁴ Cf. Galbraith, John S., 'The Pamphlet Campaign on the Boer War', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 1952), p. 112.

articles, which was a quite normal practice, anonymity provided an opportunity to avoid the accusation that the periodical was the mouthpiece of a single person or some small clique. However, as individualism got hold of Victorian society during the late nineteenth century, periodicals began to adopt more commonly a policy of publishing signed articles.⁷⁵

For scholars, as of course for the readers of the time, anonymity raises problems because without any knowledge of the contributor it is almost impossible to fully appreciate the significance of the article in question. Therefore, a full scale investigation is needed in order to decipher pseudonyms and to make valid judgements on the authors behind the initials and unsigned articles. Furthermore, a scholar needs to locate the actual journals to which the writer or writers in question contributed. For these purposes indexes provide an indispensable companion for scholars. However, while many of the British monthlies and quarterlies are indexed, weeklies have usually been left without indexes because of the vast number of articles they contained.

Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff have pointed out that the 'Victorian periodical press' is more than a collective term for those magazines to which our interest in particular figures and topics direct us. This is to argue that the Victorian periodical press is worthy of study in its own right. Victorian Britain was the first 'journalizing' society, and the mass media can be interpreted as the ideological environment of the modern world.⁷⁶

Since the 1960s the Victorian periodical press (weeklies, reviews and magazines) has been considered one of the most important historical sources in analysing Victorian ideas and attitudes. One of its most important characteristics is that writers adopted attitudes and described the situation at a given moment and therefore they provide a suitable source for studies intended to analyse something in detail over a quite short span of years.⁷⁷

For contemporaries, the Victorian periodical press was a channel by which to challenge some older interpretations of political thinking and political concepts as well as to start a debate, to criticise the opinions of others and to seek support for one's own views. Periodicals were published more often than books, in weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly editions and their further advantage over books for our present purposes is that writing for the periodical press provided writers an opportunity to express ideas which were designed for immediate debate.⁷⁸

A good, even if not complete, collection of Hobson's writings can be found in a compilation entitled *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years* (1994), which identifies a span of Hobson's books, articles and reviews from 1886 to 1939. Its bibliography lists most of the journals and newspapers, including weeklies and

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii-xix.

⁷⁶ Shattock, Joanne & Wolff, Michael, 'Introduction'. In *Victorian Periodical Press*, p. xiv.

⁷⁷ Houghton, Walther E., 'Introduction'. In *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, Walther E. Houghton (ed.), vol. I, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1966, p. xv.

⁷⁸ Maidment, Brian, 'Readers Fair and Foul: John Ruskin and the Periodical Press'. In *The Victorian Periodical Press*, pp. 29-31, 34-40.

dailies, to which Hobson contributed during his early years in London. The most detailed and systematic list of Hobson's published works can be found in Alan Lee's unpublished Ph.D. thesis *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*. It lists books and pamphlets as well as reviews of Hobson's books. Furthermore, Lee includes in his bibliography articles, letters to newspapers, reports and speeches, most of which are absent from the bibliographies of published studies on Hobson. Strikingly, Hobson's London letters for the *Derbyshire Advertiser* and his work as a correspondent to the *Manchester Guardian* seem to have been little noticed in most of the studies of Hobson. The speeches and lectures Hobson gave during his long career are also barely touched on by scholars.

There is a striking similarity between the literary career of Hobson and that of John Ruskin. They both held negative views on popular journalism because of the poor quality of its production standards, its sensationalism and its over-production, their creation of false ideologies and their theft from true productive labour. Periodicals were crucial for both men's literary careers. '[The] notion that the author had a *choice* of readers is an extremely important one for the understanding of Ruskin's work [as well as Hobson's] as he strove to *create* kinds of readerships not available even to the periodical market.' Ruskin and Hobson were thus ultimately driven to establish their own forms of periodical. Financial gain was also a spur to writing contributions to magazines. In this respect, however, Ruskin's case was unusual among late-Victorian authors since he had no financial risks to run, and already had a huge reputation. He thus, at least in part, was freed from the constraints of periodical writing.⁷⁹

Alon Kadish has pointed out in his thorough article 'Rewriting the *Confessions*: Hobson and the Extension Movement' (1990) that teaching and lecturing provided Hobson opportunities to formulate and reformulate his thinking and to win over audiences to his views and ways of thinking and writing. The audience was not merely a passive listener at which the lecturer aimed his words but also a potential commentator on the subjects involved. Hobson indeed considered himself not as a teacher but as a chairman who helped to create an atmosphere in which the formation of critical opinion was possible.⁸⁰ In many ways Hobson's practice as a teacher and lecturer recalls his efforts as a periodical writer to win over support for his views on Imperialism. This pattern is clearly to be seen when his writings on that subject are looked at not as mere texts but as stimulators of dialogues. It is therefore possible to argue that only when one takes into account the original contexts of Hobson's lecturing and writing that his work can reveal his actual intentions and thoughts.

⁷⁹ Maidment, Brian, 'Readers Fair and Foul: John Ruskin and the Periodical Press' In *The Victorian Periodical Press*, pp. 34-35, 39, 41. It should be noted however that Ruskin too (until the 1870s), like Hobson (after 1897), lived largely on inherited money. Matthew, 'Hobson, Ruskin and Cobden'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Kadish, Alon, 'Rewriting the *Confessions*: Hobson and the Extension movement'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 140-141, 162-163.

Furthermore, periodicals played a creative role in the publishing of books. They made it possible for individuals to write articles that were too narrow in scope for more extensive treatment or that were beyond their power to treat at length.⁸¹ As with Hobson, the ongoing dialogue with other writers helped to form opinions and arguments and to create the publicity vital for selling books. Most of Hobson's books follow this practice and are in essence based on lectures and periodical articles.

For Hobson 'the tyranny of books' expressed itself in many forms. One of the most dangerous elements of books was that they seemed to enslave the mind of the reader. Books were used as thought-substitutes, especially in academic circles. As people borrowed phrases and sentences from the classics, or 'dead books' as Hobson referred to them, often doing so almost phrase by phrase, the generating of real discussion became almost an impossibility. Hobson, who wished to achieve practical solutions to social problems, was appalled by the idea that education could consist entirely of the study of books. For him the carefully cultivated society of living friends was incomparably of greater worth than the classics.⁸²

2.1 Early literary career 1886–1896: 'a Mental Climber'

Hobson's career was not an academic one and this has been the single most significant factor overshadowing his achievements as an economist. In fact, one of the tragedies in Hobson's literary career was his continuous effort to direct his writings to the world of academic economics and that world's continuous rejection of his 'heresies'. In turn Hobson's role as a social theorist has been overshadowed by his work as an economic theorist.⁸³

'Born and bred in the middle stratum of the middle class of a middle-sized industrial town of the Midlands, I was favourably situated for a complacent acceptance of the existing social order.' With these words Hobson clarified for the readers of his autobiographical *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (1938) the wealthy middle-class environment, in which he spent his Derby childhood. Interestingly, it seems that Hobson's childhood experiences explain only to a limited degree his future political awakening. 'But the real point of significance is that, though born and bred in an atmosphere of active Liberalism (our livelihood drawn from the conduct of a "Liberal" newspaper [the *Derbyshire*

⁸¹ Houghton, Walter E., 'Periodical literature and the articulate classes'. In *Victorian Periodical Press*, pp. 20–23.

⁸² Hobson, J. A., 'The Tyranny of Books.' (a lecture delivered before the South Place Ethical Society, 9.9.1900), *South Place Magazine*, vol. VI, no. 3 (December, 1900), pp. 32–36.

⁸³ Freedon, Michael, 'J. A. Hobson and Welfare Liberalism', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 69, issue 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1998), p. 442.

Advertiser and North Staffordshire Journal)), I had no idea, as a boy, that politics had anything to do with industry or standards of living.⁸⁴

There is only a limited amount of information available about Hobson's early literary career. In 1874 he attended the Reverend William Moore Ede's Cambridge University Extension lectures on political economy in Derby and read the economic and social studies of the time such as, for example, J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). However, due to the strong influence of orthodox Christianity on Hobson's childhood, his earliest writings were on religious topics published in the *Westminster Review*, a quarterly journal for Philosophical Radicals.⁸⁵ In 'Mr. Gladstone and Genesis' Hobson termed the Liberal politician Gladstone, in matters theological, 'a staunch Conservative', a statement which illuminates somewhat his use of the term 'religious heretics'. Hobson explained that in England liberalism signified a form of politics, whose end was the material welfare of the community. Unlike on the Continent, in England it was possible to be Liberal as a political thinker but Conservative or almost reactionary as a religious thinker.⁸⁶

Similarly, not much has been revealed about Hobson's years at Oxford in the late 1870s although he leaves the reader of *Confessions* with an impression that there is not much to be remembered. The Classical curriculum, which included the literary, historical and philosophical study of the Latin and Greek civilisations, offered little of the tradition of 'rational humanity' which attracted Hobson later on in the 1880s and the 1890s. This tradition embraced the works of the English Romantics, the early Socialists, and Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill. Yet Ancient scholars' texts as well as Oxford idealism had some influence on Hobson's thinking.⁸⁷ Indeed, 'Dr. Temple on religion and science' shows that the basis of his ethics was a Kantian one in that he held that 'the ethical conception of man demands that each man shall be regarded as an end'.⁸⁸ However, he soon abandoned Oxford idealism because of the incipient individualism contained in its concepts when applied to the work of social reform.

From 1880 onwards Hobson worked as a school teacher first in Faversham and then in Exeter where he got to know A. F. Mummery, a local business man, who first introduced him to the idea of 'fallacy of saving'. In *Confessions* Hobson called Mummery, who disappeared with two Gurkha climbers in the Himalayas in 1895 while attempting the famous mountain Nanga Parbat, as 'a mental climber'.⁸⁹ In using this expression Hobson tried to convey Mummery's

⁸⁴ Hobson, J. A., *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, Hassocks, Harvester Press 1976, pp. 15, 18. Subsequent references to this edition if not stated otherwise.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 23–24; Kadish, 'Rewriting the *Confessions*'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 137–139. See below notes 86 and 88.

⁸⁶ Hobson, J. A., 'Mr. Gladstone and Genesis', *Westminster Review*, new series, vol. LXIX, no. CXXXVII (January 1886), p. 119. See also Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 27–28.

⁸⁷ Hobson, *Confessions*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'Dr. Temple on religion and science', *Westminster Review*, new series, vol. LXVII, no. CXXXIV (April 1885), p. 385.

⁸⁹ Mummery, M. 'Introduction'. In Mummery, A. F., *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1936 (1895), pp. xiii, xxiii.

attitude not only to climbing but also to intellectual life. What Hobson respected in Mummery was his zealous attempt to find his own way, ignoring the disapproval of intellectual authorities. After failing to argue against ‘fallacy of saving’ by using orthodox economic weapons, Hobson gave up and collaborated with Mummery in *The Physiology of Industry* (1889).⁹⁰

The Physiology of Industry gives the first written evidence of Hobson’s early economic heresy. The essence of this heresy lay in the belief, contrary to orthodox economic thinking at the time, that ‘an undue habit of saving is possible, and that such undue exercise impoverishes the Community, throws labourers out of work, drives down wages, and spreads that gloom and prostration through the commercial world which is known as Depression in Trade; that, in short, the effective love of money is the root of all economic evil’.⁹¹ While it is apparent that Mummery was the prime mover behind the economic assertions made in this study, it is probable that he was the influential person, who most encouraged Hobson to study economic issues.⁹² Those who knew Mummery, have said that he possessed an ‘original, strong and keen intelligence’. In his own future efforts Hobson himself adopted Mummery’s role as ‘a mental climber’ being always zealous in his attempts to reach unoccupied mountain tops regardless of any earlier failures. It is difficult to estimate the extent of Mummery’s influence on Hobson’s future career, but it seems that his attitude to life, his refusal to walk ‘beaten tracks’⁹³ had a more profound personal influence on Hobson than on his views of economics.⁹⁴

Much of Hobson’s future reputation as an economic thinker derives from this work of collaboration with Mummery as well as on John Maynard Keynes’s comments on it in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).⁹⁵ Keynes, who brought the almost completely forgotten theory of underconsumption back into current economic debate, regarded *The Physiology of Industry* as representing ‘an epoch in economic thought’.⁹⁶ Even though Keynes appreciated the originality of Hobson’s thought, for him Hobson was a puzzle as an economic thinker. In a book review in 1913 Keynes stated that ‘one comes to a new book of Mr. Hobson’s with mixed feelings, in hope of stimulating ideas and some fruitful criticisms of orthodoxy from an

⁹⁰ Hobson, *Confessions*, p. 30; In 1896 Hobson admitted to his Fabian friend E. A. Pease that it took nearly two years for Mummery to convince him of the idea of underconsumption. (J. A. Hobson to E. A. Pease, November, 1896, 20 Holland Park Avenue, A 7/3, FF 37–39, Fabian Society Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, The London School of Economics and Political Science) I am obliged to Michael Freeden of this reference. See Freeden, ‘Introduction’. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 4.

⁹¹ Mummery, A. F. & Hobson, J. A., *The Physiology of Industry. Being an Exposure of Certain Fallacies in Existing Theories of Economics*, John Murray, London 1889, p. iv.

⁹² Clarke, Peter, ‘Hobson and Keynes as economic heretics’. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 112–113; Lee, A *Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 28–31.

⁹³ Mummery, ‘Introduction’. In *My Climbs*, p. xii.

⁹⁴ *The Physiology of Industry* remains Mummery’s only serious venture into that field.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of Hobson’s influence on Keynes’s work see Clarke, Peter, ‘Hobson and Keynes as economic heretics’. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 100–115.

⁹⁶ Keynes, John Maynard, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, Macmillan, London 1957 (1936), pp. 364–371.

independent and individual standpoint, but expectant also of much sophistry, misunderstanding, and perverse thought'.⁹⁷ Indeed, Hobson's originality as a thinker lay in the freshness of his ideas rather than in their careful presentation or logical sharpness.⁹⁸

In 1887 Hobson moved to West London to try his hand at journalism.⁹⁹ Hobson arrived in London at a time of great ideological turmoil in that huge metropolis of some six million inhabitants. In the 1890s Radical groups of every variety were producing innovative social theories expressed through journalism, freelance writing, lecturing, essays and political activism.¹⁰⁰

There were the 'old' Gladstonians on the Radical wing of the Liberal Party, many of whom belonged to minor groups like the Gladstone League against Aggressive Imperialism (in 1900 the name was changed as the League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism). The 'new' Liberals were grouped into small groups on periphery of the Liberal Party such as the Rainbow Circle. Then there were the main socialist organisations: the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation. Furthermore, a constellation of more ill-defined bodies: the Positivist, Ethical and Christian socialist organisations attracted London's Radicals.¹⁰¹

Economically dependent on his family, Hobson first started as a correspondent for the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, a liberal-unionist newspaper founded by his father William Hobson. Under the heading 'Our London Letter' he found an easy although not especially independent channel to express his views and to make himself familiar with London social life. As an Oxford MA he was also a valuable correspondent for the *Derbyshire Advertiser* because newspapers tended to favour Oxford graduates, who had the capacity to write as well as connections with economic and political circles.¹⁰² Hobson's journalism was confined to the *Derbyshire Advertiser* for almost a decade (from 7 October 1887 until 26 February 1897) and forms one of the most important sources for studying Hobson's early experiences of London's politics and culture as well as of its economic and social life. In spite of its impact, there is hardly anything of this experience in his *Confessions*. One might suggest that Hobson deliberately left that period of his life untouched.

⁹⁷ Keynes, J. M., Review of *Gold, Prices, and Wages* by J. A. Hobson, *Economic Journal*, vol. 23 (1913), p. 393.

⁹⁸ Freeden, Michael, 'Introduction'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Hobson lived first in Shepherds Bush, then in Notting Hill Terrace and Holland Park Avenue before moving to Limpsfield, Surrey in 1899. In 1914 he moved back to London, this time to Hampstead where he lived for the rest of his life.

¹⁰⁰ Freeden, Michael, 'Hobson, John Atkinson (1858-1940)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33909>, accessed 16 Oct 2007]

¹⁰¹ Schner, Jonathan, *London 1900. The Imperial Metropolis*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2001 (1999), pp. 162-171. At the time of the South African war many of the Radicals joined anti-war or pro-Boer bodies such as for example a Stop the War Committee led by the journalist W. T. Stead or the South African Conciliation Committee led by the Positivist Frederick Harrison to publicise their arguments. (*loc. cit.*)

¹⁰² Brown, Lucy, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985, pp. 76, 78-79.

In estimating Hobson's early intellectual orientations the influence of Florence Edgar, whom Hobson had met and married in Exeter, should not be ruled out. In 1888 Hobson, with his wife, made a six month trip to the United States aiming to contribute a book to emulate Alexis de Tocqueville's study of the United States constitution, *De la Démocratie en Amérique (Democracy in America, 1835, 1840)*. Nothing resulted from this effort but his travel letters, 'First Impressions of America' for the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, reveal that the trip had a thought-provoking influence on Hobson, who developed life-long contacts with the country.¹⁰³

Concurrently with his journalistic efforts Hobson applied for a lecturing post with the Oxford University Extension Movement. His first courses on English Literature and on Political Economy took place in 1888, and he continued to lecture on both topics until 1896.¹⁰⁴ However, the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching proved reluctant to add Political Economy to the subjects covered by Hobson's London Extension courses. The reason seemed to be the stigma which *The Physiology of Industry* had brought him.¹⁰⁵

The thesis of over-saving presented in *The Physiology of Industry* was quickly rejected by the holders of university chairs in economics.¹⁰⁶ As Hobson recalled in his autobiography, their theory of underconsumption was considered by academic economists to be 'as equivalent in rationality to an attempt to prove the flatness of the earth'. In classical economic analysis saving was considered the essential source of all industrial progress and therefore their thesis of over-saving was considered by the academic elite to be nothing but a hindrance to progress.¹⁰⁷

In the *Charity Organisation Review* of September 1890 it was suggested that the authors had failed to understand the nature of saving. The anonymous reviewer argued, quite in opposition to Mummery's and Hobson's argument, that the poorer classes' low consumption capacity was caused by their lack of opportunities for saving. Furthermore, the reviewer argued that saving itself increased effective demand as well as production.¹⁰⁸ In their reply the authors complained that the reviewer had failed to follow their line of argument and restated the view that saving can only be justified by a corresponding increase in consumption. 'Capital itself [the authors explained by quoting Ruskin] produces nothing [...] consumption is the root of production, and a nation is

¹⁰³ Schneider, J. A. *Hobson*, pp. 2-5.

¹⁰⁴ Kadish, 'Rewriting the *Confessions*'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 140-141. Hobson delivered a total of forty-two Oxford University Extension courses on English literature, economic history and theory, social thought and issues concerning working-class life and conditions. (*loc. cit.*)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-148.

¹⁰⁶ Edgeworth, F. Y., A Review of *The Physiology of Industry* by J. A. Hobson and A. F. Mummery, *Journal of Education*, new series, vol. XII (1891), p. 194; Hewins, W. A. S., A Review of *The Physiology of Industry* by J. A. Hobson and A. F. Mummery, *Economic Review*, vol. I (1891), pp. 133-134.

¹⁰⁷ Hobson, *Confessions*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., Review of *Physiology of Industry* by J. A. Hobson & A. F. Mummery, *Charity Organisation Review*, vol. VI, no. 69 (September, 1890), pp. 373-376.

only to be estimated by what it consumes'. Thus, depression in trade should be analysed in terms of under-consumption (over-saving).¹⁰⁹

Many of the workers for the Charity Organisation Society were also active members of the London Ethical Society (LES), which was founded by Oxford Idealists in 1886 and tried to define 'social morality' by means of publications and lectures on Ethical and Political Philosophy in connection with University Extension. Hobson, who had become a subscribing member of London Ethical Society in 1890, suspected that due to this heated disagreement over *The Physiology of Industry*, the Charity Organisation Society, which was planning at the time a lecture campaign upon economic subjects, withdrew their invitation to him to lecture on one of its Political Economy courses.¹¹⁰ However, Alon Kadish has shown that in reality no invitation to Hobson to teach was even made.¹¹¹ It appears that Hobson mixed up accidentally or on purpose the negative review in the *Charity Organization Review* and what appears to be an imagined lecturing invitation. Despite the triviality of this episode, it underlines the problematic nature of the *Confessions* as an historical source.

Hobson's first independent economic study *Problems of Poverty* (1891) hardly aroused such an outcry among the British academic elite as *The Physiology of Industry* had done.¹¹² In the 1890s the study of contemporary industrial facts was in its infancy and the results obtained were scattered through various articles, monographs, reports and the Parliamentary Blue Books. In *Problems of Poverty* Hobson tried to weld together these disjointed fragments of uncompleted research into the compact form of a University Extension manual.¹¹³ In dealing with 'Problems of Poverty' Hobson paid only slight attention to the forces which ultimately controlled these problems. Furthermore, his understanding of the term 'poverty' and the way he measured poverty were considered ambiguous. The book was considered appropriate for someone, for whom conclusions and practical remedies mattered less than methods and critical analysis.¹¹⁴ Despite this criticism, problems of poverty remained at the heart of Hobson's economic interests throughout the 1890s.

Hobson's first articles on economic topics originate from the early 1890s. Of particular interest are two articles in the *National Review* of April 1890 and March 1891, one entitled 'The Cost of a Shorter Working Day' and the other, 'Can England Keep Her Trade?'. These articles illustrate many of the economic concerns of Hobson but also his intellectual diversity in the 1890s. For instance, in 'The Cost of a Shorter Working Day', quite in opposition to the Socialists'

¹⁰⁹ Hobson, J. A. & Mummery, A. F., To the Editor of the *Charity Organization Review*, *Charity Organisation Review*, vol. VI, no. 70 (October, 1890), pp. 402-403.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹¹ Kadish, 'Rewriting the *Confessions*'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 166.

¹¹² Hobson, John A., *Problems of Poverty. An Inquiry into the Industrial Condition of the Poor*, Augustus M. Kelley, New York 1971 (1891).

¹¹³ E.g. 'Problems of Poverty', summer 1894, University Extension Lectures, LES.

¹¹⁴ Llewellyn Smith, H., Review of *Problems of Poverty: An Inquiry into the Industrial Condition of the Poor* by J. A. Hobson, *Economic Journal*, vol. I (September 1891), pp. 583-586.

arguments, Hobson himself argued that a shorter working day did not automatically produce more work opportunities.¹¹⁵

Published in each quarter, the *National Review* was founded by Conservatives in 1883 to match the two leading Liberal monthlies, the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century*. The *National Review's* political orientation is revealed by the roll-call of its early contributors which included many prominent Conservative names as, for example, the economist W. H. Mallock. However, political orientation was not necessarily the sole factor in the selection of articles. For example the *National Review's* founder and editor until 1893 Alfred Austin, especially valued his sub-editor, William Earl Hodgson, for his talent for buying articles at a reasonable rate.¹¹⁶

Another important periodicals for the display of Hobson's early economic arguments, proved to be the *Contemporary Review*, which had a quite different roll-call of contributors, compared with that of the *National Review*. Founded in 1886, the *Contemporary Review* attracted from the very beginning many prominent writers including Arnold, Gladstone, Huxley and Spencer. However, despite the *Contemporary Review's* liberal and tolerant tone, a more activist approach was not adopted until Percy William Bunting took over editorship in 1882. As a supporter of social reform and liberalism, the articles he included on foreign issues began to follow the same lines of argument, which had already been pursued in relation to social matters.¹¹⁷ Hobson's disapproval of intellectual authorities led often to controversial exchanges between him and other writers and readers of periodicals, including an exchange between Hobson and Mallock on the issue of poverty in the *Contemporary Review* in 1896.¹¹⁸

It did not take long for him to nurture these ideas before they were published in well known books. However, the publication of *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism: A Study of Machine Production* in 1894, one of his most influential economic studies,¹¹⁹ seemed to be more accidental than intended. Probably in connection with the LES, Hobson had become acquainted with one of the Fabian Essayists, William Clarke, who had been asked by Havelock Ellis, the editor of the *Contemporary Science Series*, to write a book on 'the Evolution of Modern Industry', a subject of great interest at the time. Apparently Clarke

¹¹⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'Problems of Living (No I): the cost of a shorter working day', *National Review*, vol. 15 (April 1890), pp. 190–202.

¹¹⁶ Houghton, Walter E., 'The National Review, 1883–1900'. In *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, vol. II, 1972, pp. 529–532.

¹¹⁷ Houghton, Walter E., 'The Contemporary Review, 1866–1900'. In *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, vol. I, 1966, p. 212. Hobson's first article was published in November 1893, entitled subsequently 'The Economy of High Wages', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXIV (November, 1893), pp. 811–827.

¹¹⁸ Hobson, John A., 'Is Poverty Diminishing?', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXIX (April 1896), pp. 484–499; Mallock, W. H., 'Mr. Hobson on Poverty', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXIX (June 1896), pp. 789–804.

¹¹⁹ Hobson, John A., *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism: a study of machine production*, Walter Scott, London 1894.

had not enough time to produce such a work, and passed the opportunity on to Hobson.¹²⁰

The Evolution of Modern Capitalism was Hobson's first independent contribution of serious importance to the development of economic study. The book concentrated on the development of trusts and other combinations. Compared to the other similar studies of the 1890s, such as for example *The Factory System and the Factory Acts* by R. W. Cooke-Taylor or *Trusts, Pools, and Corners, as affecting Commerce and Industry* by J. Stephen Jeans, Hobson's study was far less popular in its style.¹²¹ After the publication of the study, Hobson's reputation as an economist was established.¹²² The study is a combination of a wider philosophical survey of treatises on social evolution and a more focused study of modern machine production. By combining these two aspects Hobson wanted to stress the organic unity of modern industrial society.¹²³ *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* was also reviewed by the continental press¹²⁴ and formed a starting point for Hobson's future economic arguments and social schemes of the late 1890s. Furthermore, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* is one of the earliest sources for analysing Hobson's economics in relation to that of John Ruskin, one of the most distinguished social theorists and critics of the Victorian era, on whose intellectual contribution Hobson gave numerous lectures in the 1890s. In accordance with Ruskin's view, the end of Hobson's system was consumption. 'Life not work, unproductive not productive consumption must be regarded as the end.'¹²⁵ This particular brand of qualitative economics took Hobson into an hitherto unexplored terrain of thought.¹²⁶

The book is one of the best known and respected studies in Hobson's long literary career even though he was later forced to alter his views perhaps more in this case than in the case of his other economic studies of the 1890s. If it would be too much to argue that the entire idea and purpose of the book was altered, certainly the capitalist replaced the machine as the central concern. In the second, 1906 edition of the book, the idea of the formation of trusts represented now the highest achievement of capitalist evolution.¹²⁷ In the fourth, 1926 edition, Hobson pointed out how dramatically the First World War had altered the political boundaries in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and this in turn had affected industrial development and trade routes. As post-war difficulties exacerbated old problems it also created new ones in the field of

¹²⁰ Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, p. 56.

¹²¹ Price, L. L., Review of *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* by John A. Hobson, *Economic Journal*, vol. IV, no. 16 (December 1894), pp. 673-676.

¹²² Kadish, 'Rewriting the Confessions'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 149-151.

¹²³ Hobson, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, pp. v-vi.

¹²⁴ Bernstein, E., *Die Neue Zeit* (1894), pp. 504-507; Steed, Wickham, *L'Ére Nouvelle* (September 1894), pp. 82-92.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p. 49.

¹²⁶ Freedon, Michael, 'Hobson, John Atkinson (1858-1940)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹²⁷ Hobson, John A., *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism. A Study of Machine Production*, 2nd ed., Walter Scott, London 1906.

international finance, in the control of 'backward countries' and in the international sphere.¹²⁸

In 1896 Hobson published *The Problem of the Unemployed* in which he defined the still poorly recognised economic problem of unemployment and turned his interest back to home market issues. The term 'unemployment' had only been adopted by economic studies in the late 1880s. Even though Hobson's classification of types of unemployment was to a considerable extent based on previous works, especially on Hubert Llewellyn Smith's Board of Trade index of unemployment which dates from 1893,¹²⁹ his definition was broader than the previous classifications had suggested. From Ruskin's standpoint unemployment represented a waste of social wealth. In a similar way, Hobson meant by the term all kinds of involuntary leisure among the working classes, not just seasonal unemployment as the term was commonly understood. In arguing that the 'unearned' income of the landed classes was closely linked to the problem of saving, Hobson leaned on assertions made already in *The Physiology of Industry*.

By the time of the publication of his highly valued *John Ruskin; Social Reformer* (1898)¹³⁰ Hobson was obsessed with the need for the humanisation of economic science.¹³¹ *Unto this Last* (1862) and especially *Munera Pulveris* (1872) had affected Hobson in such a strong way that he started to study organic analogies in recognition of Ruskin. Previous monetary estimates of wealth, cost and utility were challenged; human benefits and satisfactions were taken into consideration but also confusion was created by Hobson's expressing economics in terms of human value.

In *Confessions* Hobson stated that the writing of the book served his need for 'the humanization of economic science'. By this expression Hobson meant interpretation of the terms 'wealth' and 'value' in their proper Ruskinian meanings of 'welfare' and 'vitality'. It also meant the introduction of the ethical standard of an 'ought' into the valuation of economic processes and results. It was Ruskin from whom Hobson drew the basic thinking for his subsequent economic writings, that is the necessity of going behind the monetary estimates of wealth, cost and utility to give them the 'real meanings' of human benefits and satisfactions. '[...] Human political economy [...] should take account of the

¹²⁸ Hobson, John A., *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism. A Study of Machine Production*, 4th ed., George Allen & Unwin, London 1930 (1894), pp. iii-iv.

¹²⁹ Backhouse, Roger E., 'Introduction'. In Hobson, J. A., *The Problem of the Unemployed*, Routledge, London 1992 (1896), pp. v-vi. Llewellyn Smith (1864-1945) and Hobson were already familiar with each other since the pair worked together on *Problems of Poverty* when Llewellyn Smith had helped him with collecting the material and revising proof-sheets of the study. (Hobson, *Problems of Poverty*, pp. v-vi)

¹³⁰ Hobson, J. A., *John Ruskin; Social Reformer*, 2nd ed., James Nisbet, London 1899 (1898).

¹³¹ White, Curator and Secretary of the Ruskin Museum of Sheffield, J. Howard Whitehouse from the Ruskin Society of Birmingham, and W. Sinclair, Honorary Secretary of the Ruskin Society of Glasgow, among others, applauded the work. (William White to J. A. Hobson, 7.11.1898; J. Howard Whitehouse to J. A. Hobson, 1898; W. Sinclair to J. A. Hobson, 13.12.1898, DHN 22, J. A. Hobson Papers (hereafter cited as JAHP), Brynmor Jones Library, Hull University. See also Ball, Sidney, Review of *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* by J. A. Hobson, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. IX, no. 3 (April, 1899), pp. 388-391.

related processes of production and consumption and should evaluate both processes in terms of human worth.¹³²

This humanist and ethical trend of Hobson's economic thought was temporarily put aside in *The Economics of Distribution* (1900), which was largely based on two articles published in 1891 in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, one entitled 'The Law of the Three Rents' and the other, 'The Element of Monopoly in Prices' and on lectures that were delivered at the newly-founded London School of Economics in 1897.¹³³ The central aim of his reform work was to redistribute the 'unproductive surplus' so as to maintain at least a living wage throughout the economy. The main tool of accomplishing this redistribution was the taxation of surplus income. Hobson, who developed his theory of distribution mainly in the framework of the Marshallian neo-classical analysis, maintained that the main defects of the economic system were to be found in distribution,¹³⁴ in spite of his belief that the underlying behaviour of the system depended on consumer demand. Hobson attacked the neo-classical theory of distribution represented by Alfred Marshall, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Cambridge, because the freely competitive industrial society, it suggested, simply did not exist.¹³⁵ It was an element of 'unreason' and inequality in the competitive conditions in many markets which led Hobson to first challenge the justice of the distribution of incomes.¹³⁶ Hobson intended the study as a textbook,¹³⁷ but in reviews the book was considered far too scientific for a common reader.¹³⁸ The study remained virtually unknown among the English readership although it was highly valued in the United States.

Hobson's studies of the ethical standards of the economic process of distribution were only just beginning when his interests and efforts were taken up by the issues of the Empire. From 1897 to 1902 he contributed frequently on the issue of Empire to several periodicals and newspapers, in some of which he played an active role as an editor. These periodicals and newspapers can be categorised as presentative¹³⁹ as they introduced new ideas and engendered new points of view. The presentative type of periodical and newspaper form the principal printed source material for studying the birth of late nineteenth

¹³² Hobson, *Confessions*, pp. 38–39, 42.

¹³³ Kadish, 'Rewriting the Confessions'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 161–162. The study was edited by Richard T. Ely, the leading American social and economic theorist of the time. Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 220–221. See also 'Law of the Three Rents', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 5 (1891), pp. 422–430; 'The Element of Monopoly in Prices', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 6 (1892), pp. 1–24.

¹³⁴ Hobson, John A., *The Economics of Distribution*, Macmillan, New York 1900, pp. v–vi *et passim*.

¹³⁵ Richmond, W. H., 'John A. Hobson: Economic Heretic', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 37, no. 3 (July, 1978), p. 290.

¹³⁶ Hobson, *Confessions*, p. 47.

¹³⁷ Kadish, 'Rewriting the Confessions'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 161.

¹³⁸ See, for example, 'Socius', *New Age*, 21.6.1900; Anon., *Manchester Guardian*, 19.6.1900; Anon., *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 27.6.1900.

¹³⁹ Wallace, Martin, *The New Age under Orage. Chapters in English Cultural History*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1967, p. 2.

century British progressivism in general and the birth of Hobson's progressivism in particular.¹⁴⁰

2.2 The Formative Years 1897–1902: 'an Innovative Ideologist'

The Rainbow Circle and the *Progressive Review*

In 1893 at the National Liberal Club Hobson met a group of Liberals, who were interested in the study of social questions. In November 1894 they first convened in the Rainbow Tavern from whence the name the Rainbow Circle is said to be derived.¹⁴¹ The founding members included Hobson, the Cambridge graduate journalist and Radical William Clarke (1852–1901), the Liberal MP J.A. Murray Macdonald (1854–1939), the journalist W. M. Crook (1860–1945), the civil servant Herbert Burrows (1845–1922), who was a founding member of the Social Democratic Federation and an early member of the Fabian Society, as well as J. Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937), the later Labour Prime Minister (1924, 1929–1935), who was the secretary of the Circle. The chairman was the wealthy city merchant Richard Stapley (1842–1920), whose house in Bloomsbury offered the Circle a place to convene from the beginning of 1895 until 1929.¹⁴²

The common characteristics of all the members were that they belonged to the younger generation of political Radicals of various kinds. Many of them were members of several London social and political associations and organisations of which the University Extension Movement, the Ethical Movement, the Fabian Society and the London School of Economics were the most important. This network of interlocking relationships wove them into a close-knit group. The Liberal Party was also a common interest even though not all of them were members of the party. The more enthusiastic Socialists tended to keep their distance from the Circle but from time to time found common interests in the other platforms of progressivism such as, for example, the Ethical Movement. The Circle's activities and debates are difficult to

¹⁴⁰ Michael Freeden considers the press, along with the mass-circulation book, as an important medium for the development of political theory precisely because it allowed dialogue between the intelligentsia and the common people. See Freeden, Michael, 'J.A. Hobson as a Political Theorist'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, p. 19. Letters to the editors of periodicals and newspapers can be considered one of the most important historical sources in analysing the reception of Hobson's progressivism.

¹⁴¹ The original building of the Rainbow Tavern, which stood near the Inner Temple Gate, had escaped the Great Fire of 1666 and was finally demolished in 1859. *The London Encyclopaedia*, Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (eds.), Papermac, Hong Kong 1988 (1983), p. 636. It remains unclear whether the Rainbow Tavern of 1894 stood at the same site.

¹⁴² This information is gathered from the *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924*, Michael Freeden (ed.), Camden Fourth Series, vol. 38, Offices of the Royal Historical Society, London 1989.

understand in isolation from those of other progressive groups. The Circle worked towards an appreciation of the interconnections between ethics, economics and politics but its cohesiveness broke down from time to time due to differences of opinion and of the political and ethical views to be found among its members.¹⁴³ In 1896 they experienced both ideological and personal disagreements concerning the question of British Imperialism. Differences in opinions and values divided the Circle into those in favour of Imperialism and those who were named 'Anti-Imperialists' or 'Pro-Boers'. Imperialists formed the majority in the Circle until the end of the war, while the most fervent Anti-Imperialists formed the opposition.

These disagreements are said to have led ultimately to the floundering of the *Progressive Review* (1896–1897),¹⁴⁴ which was the main publishing venture of the Circle.¹⁴⁵ The early Victorian reviews, especially the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Westminster Review* and the *Fortnightly Review* were not only in their subject matter but also in their literary efforts precursors of the *Progressive Review* which consisted largely of essay-criticism, articles and reviews which shifted the focus from the book being reviewed to the ideas it conjured up. Anonymity was adopted as a practice because it was felt that it made the periodical collectively responsible for the subject matter. Only the articles of well-known reformers were signed. The *Progressive Review* stressed the need for a policy of reform in the social, economic and moral conditions of life, which formed the unreformed core of 'the Social Question'. This policy depended on the development of a fuller and a more rational conception of the state as an instrument for social progress. New problems and challenges were caused by internationalism, which according to the *Progressive Review* demanded sager and more philosophical consideration than the mere methods of force. As the mouthpiece of the Rainbow Circle, the *Progressive Review* rejected the principles and the methods of the older radicalism as well as of the Liberal and Conservative parties. However, the example of mid-nineteenth century radicalism laid the basis for this new type of progressivism.¹⁴⁶

The story of the short-lived *Progressive Review* illustrates vividly the difficulties the radical periodicals faced in late-Victorian society. The publication of the opening number of October 1896 was delayed for several reasons, Firstly, the funding and finding of appropriate working premises proved most difficult. The funding of the paper depended mainly on the

¹⁴³ Freeden, 'Introduction'. In *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle*, pp. 2–4, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Freeden, *New Liberalism*, pp. 2–4, 7–8.

¹⁴⁵ There is no circulation information available but it was estimated to be 5,000 copies. Committee meeting, January 2, 1896, Coll Misc 545/1, the Rainbow Circle Papers (hereafter cited as RCP), British Library of Political and Economic Science, The London School of Economics and Political Science. Allett suggests that in reality the circulation number might have been less than 700 copies. (Allett, *New Liberalism*, p. 24)

¹⁴⁶ 'Introductory', *Progressive Review*, vol. I, no. 1 (October 1896), pp. 1–9. These objectives contradict those which David Blazeeer has suggested in his *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition*: '[...] the New Liberals were as anxious as Green had been to emphasise the continuity of their ideas with those of the earlier, individualist liberalism'. (*op. cit.*, p. 37)

donations of some of the Circle's wealthy members.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the Circle made an appeal to the Hutchinson Trustees who had already assisted the Fabian Society but it proved unavailing.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the *Progressive Review* Committee, because of the lack of funding, had difficulties in finding writers, particularly those who could deal with foreign politics. The issue of working premises was finally solved when the *Progressive Review* rented office space from the newly founded Christian liberal newspaper, the *New Age*, whose editor E. A. Fletcher supported the objectives of the Circle.¹⁴⁹

The second reason for the delay concerned the aspirations of Clarke and Hobson, who shared the editorship of the *Progressive Review*, to have a wider spread of contributions from across the radical field.¹⁵⁰ One of their ventures was to connect British radicalism with that of the United States. In order to have an American view represented in the *Progressive Review*, Hobson wrote to the American journalist and social-economic reformer, Henry Demarest Lloyd (1847–1903), with whom he had become acquainted through Clarke.¹⁵¹ In his letter to Lloyd, Hobson urged him to write an 'American Letter' for the first number, which was already to include anonymous articles by G. B. Shaw, Edward Carpenter and Hobson.¹⁵² However, shortly after this letter was sent, Hobson wrote another in which he expressed regret to Lloyd that they had been forced to postpone the first number until September 25.¹⁵³ It seems that the difficulties that the *Progressive Review* ran into were connected with the attempt to link British radicalism with that of the United States.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Richard Stapley and Herbert Samuel subscribed the most substantial sums. Committee meeting, 18 December 1895, Coll Misc 575/1, RCP.

¹⁴⁸ Committee meeting, 21 February 1895, Coll Misc 575/1, RCP; *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924*, p. 22, note 4.

¹⁴⁹ Committee meeting, 28.3.1895; 2.1.1896, Coll Misc 575/1, RCP; Wallace, *The New Age under Orage*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁰ Committee meeting, March 19, 1896, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP; Committee meeting, January 8, 1896, Coll Misc 575/1, RCP; Freedon, Michael, 'Introduction' In *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924*, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ Allett argues that Lloyd and Hobson had already met in America and builds on Lloyd's analysis of trusts in *Problems of Poverty*, pp. 209–215 (Allett, *New Liberalism*, p. 91). Allett quotes in his study the second edition of *Problems of Poverty*, which was published in 1895. By this time Hobson was already familiar with Lloyd's *Wealth against Commonwealth* (1894) which had an influence on his own analysis. In the first, 1891 edition Lloyd's name is not mentioned.

¹⁵² Hobson to Lloyd, February 1896, 20 Holland Park Avenue, London W., Correspondence, General, Reel 7, P70–2716, H. D. Lloyd Papers (hereafter cited as HDLP), Historical Society Library, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. The plan of anonymity was however abandoned since Carpenter wrote a signed article on 'Wagner, Millet and Whitman: In Relation to Art and Democracy' (*Progressive Review*, vol. I, no.1, October 1896, pp. 63–74). Hobson's article on 'Ethics of Empire', published under the pseudonym 'Nemo', was postponed till August 1897.

¹⁵³ Hobson to Lloyd, 23 February, 1896, 20 Holland Park Avenue, London W., Correspondence, General, Reel 7, P70–2716, HDLP.

¹⁵⁴ But it is difficult to know whether the hardships of the *Progressive Review* were connected with the editors' failure to maintain the review's status as an advocate of the Progressive Movement in Britain as well as in the United States. Herbert Samuel has suggested in his *Memoirs* that a personal quarrel between Clarke and J. Ramsay MacDonald led to the sudden end of the review. (Samuel, Herbert, *Memoirs*, Cresset Press, London 1945, p. 24. Refer also to Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 165–166)

Lloyd, who was already well known for his *Wealth against Commonwealth* (1894), considered that monopoly capital formed a direct threat to American democracy. 'Liberty produces wealth, and wealth destroys liberty' was one of his famous phrases with which he tried to clarify the state of American democracy at the end of the 1890s.¹⁵⁵ Hobson considered this study 'by far the most powerful and convincing exposure of the natural working of developed Capitalism that has appeared' but confessed in his letter to Lloyd that he had some reservations about Lloyd's line of argument.¹⁵⁶ It appears that Hobson had sent an open letter to the editor of the *Social Economist*, George Gunton, a well known American economic journalist and a supporter of strong business, who used Hobson's reservations to attack Lloyd's analysis. Lloyd, who already regarded Hobson as his friend and was familiar with his similar arguments in *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, was surprised at this new turn of events. This dispute, however, was soon settled as Hobson denied that he had written anything that could be taken as an attack on Lloyd's findings.¹⁵⁷

In his anonymous 'Progressive News Letters' of October 1896, January, May and September 1897 Lloyd re-stated his view that wealth worked against labour in the United States. Powerful trusts were developed in secret especially in the oil industry. Of these trusts the one based on the Rockefeller family was the most striking example.¹⁵⁸ In his review of *Wealth against Commonwealth* Hobson showed a considerable acceptance of Lloyd's analysis,¹⁵⁹ which bears a close resemblance to his own analysis of the South African mining industry, an analysis that reached its mature form some five years later. 'I am thoroughly with you in the fight against the monopolies, and shall, if I live, prove this in the next five years,' he wrote to Lloyd in 1896.¹⁶⁰ However, by the end of 1897 the story of the *Progressive Review* was already over and this forced Hobson to transfer his efforts to another set of journals.

The Ethical Movement: the *South Place Magazine* and the *Ethical World*

In 1890 Hobson had joined the London Ethical Society which had been founded in 1886 and whose activities included University Extension classes and a strong

¹⁵⁵ Lloyd, Henry Demarest, *Wealth against Commonwealth*, Harper & Brothers, New York 1894, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Hobson to Lloyd, 22 February, 1895, 10 Notting Hill Terrace, London W., Correspondence, General, Reel 6, P70-2715, HDLP. Both Hobson and Lloyd held that the monopolised form of capital formed a direct threat to democracy. The almost simultaneous publication of Lloyd's *Wealth against Commonwealth* and Hobson's *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* in 1894 appears to have been a coincidence.

¹⁵⁷ Lloyd, Caro, *Henry Demarest Lloyd, 1847-1903. A Biography*, vol. I, C. P. Putnam, New York and London 1912, pp. 208-211; Gunton, G., A Review of *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* by J. A. Hobson, *Social Economist* (September, 1895), pp. 81-87.

¹⁵⁸ Lloyd, Caro, *Henry Demarest Lloyd, 1847-1903. A Biography*, vol. II, pp. 351-364: a list of the writings of Henry Demarest Lloyd.

¹⁵⁹ Anon. [but Hobson], A review of *Wealth against Commonwealth* by H. D. Lloyd, *Progressive Review*, vol. I, no. 1 (October 1896), pp. 88-92.

¹⁶⁰ Hobson to Lloyd, 8 January, 1896, 20 Holland Park Avenue, London W., Correspondence, General, Reel 7, P70-2715, HDLP.

devotion to the idealistic philosophy of T. H. Green. The LES group did not believe in the autonomy of ethics but that religion was a fundamental element in human life and thus endowed Green's teachings with religious consciousness. The essential work of the Society lay in organising classes for the study of economics, social history and philosophy, in particular idealism, in collaboration with the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching. Hobson was subsequently a director of a few LES courses while in most other cases the director was one of the leading figures of the Society such as Bernard Bosanquet or J. H. Muirhead.¹⁶¹ In March 1897 the LES was dissolved and in the following autumn it was transformed into a London School of Ethics and Social Philosophy, a body which also dissolved in the spring of 1900 following the collapse of its fund-raising.¹⁶²

By the mid-nineties Hobson had found the London Ethical Society's philosophy too individualistic and turned to the South Place Ethical Society, for which he served as an appointed lecturer from 1900 till 1934. The South Place Ethical Society evolved from a group of Christian Nonconformists, who already in 1793 had banded together in rebellion against the doctrine of eternal hell. Under the leadership (1888-1891) of the American ethicist Stanton Coit, the term 'ethical' was added to their title, and the Society moved in the direction of political radicalism.¹⁶³ The first official organ of the Society was the *South Place Magazine* (1895-1909), which consisted largely of résumés of Sunday debates. The wide-ranging secular sermons which were given first at the South Place chapel and then at the Conway Hall, Holborn were a sounding board for many of those concerns which were of interest to Hobson in the 1890s and after.¹⁶⁴

Stanton S. Coit (1857-1944) was a student of Emersonian idealism who wished to fulfil Emerson's desire to found a new church based on moral science. In 1883 Coit enrolled in the University of Berlin where he submitted a doctoral dissertation and was converted to socialism. He was invited by Moncure Conway, the minister of the South Place Religious Society, to become his successor in 1887. However in 1891 the Society evidently turned its back on Coit over the issue of neo-Malthusianism following which he set about establishing new Ethical Societies in different parts of London.¹⁶⁵

Under Coit's influence the number of London's local Ethical Societies increased rapidly in the course of the 1890s. Their birth also engendered a

¹⁶¹ Hobson was however a frequent deliverer of Sunday lectures. Kadish, 'Rewriting the Confessions'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 143-144, 150-151, 160-161.

¹⁶² MacKillop, I. D., *The British Ethical Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, pp. 83, 93-97; Weiler, Peter, *The New Liberalism. Liberal Social Theory in Great Britain 1889-1914*, Garland, New York and London 1982, pp. 79-80.

¹⁶³ Reynolds, W. J., 'The Story of South Place', *Reformer*, vol. I, no. 9 (November 15, 1897), pp. 258-259; MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, pp. 58-65.

¹⁶⁴ Until 1895 the résumés were gathered in volumes named *Discussions*. On *South Place Magazine's* demise due to the lack of funds in 1909, the name was changed to a more modest *Monthly Lists* which was again changed in 1920 to the *Monthly Review*. The present *Ethical Record* was born in 1965. For further information consult South Place Ethical Society Papers (hereafter cited as SPESP), The Ethical Society Library, Conway Hall, London.

¹⁶⁵ MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, pp. 62, 99-103, 107, 138-141.

greater variety of aims among local bodies. The Streatham/Brixton Ethical Institute in South London, for example, formulated the following objectives: 1) To develop the social nature of man by bringing reason, knowledge and sympathy to bear upon conduct. 2) To organise and conduct discourses on religion, literature, art and science (particularly sociology). 3) To provide music. 4) To promote and maintain lectures, classes and social clubs for children and adults. 5) To make greater use of the libraries, museums, galleries and other institutions supported by public funds. 6) To co-operate with other organisations having similar objects. 7) To issue publications.¹⁶⁶

The East London Ethical Society was founded in 1889 to organise Sunday evening lecture-meetings, week-night discussions and Sunday schools. However, the working people of the district had no interest in Plato and Locke or ethical theory. Gradually some of the more fiery members drifted into a local branch of the Social Democratic Federation. The West London Ethical Society (the Ethical Church, Bayswater), the largest of Coit's new Societies, was founded in 1892. Its music and its discourses on religion, literature and the ethical questions of the day at the Princess Hall in Piccadilly proved a great attraction. The South London Ethical Society was founded in the same year and the North London Ethical Society soon followed in 1895.¹⁶⁷ In 1896 the local ethical bodies federated in the Union of Ethical Societies which changed its name in 1920 to the Ethical Union which became the official body of British ethicalism.

After the closure of the *Progressive Review* Hobson was left without the editorship of a radical newspaper or periodical which would allow him to express his thoughts freely. This need was finally met in April 1899 when he joined Coit in the editorship of the *Ethical World*, a Saturday weekly of sixteen pages. The *Ethical World* was an independent ethical journal founded by Coit in 1898. Between April 1899 and February 1900, the period when Hobson was a co-editor, the journal became known for its political concern with the political implications of ethics. At this time Hobson also composed many of its anonymous notes on current affairs. In January 1900 Coit announced in the *Ethical World* that the paper was henceforth to be committed to socialism and started to back Labour papers as well as the revisionist Marxism of Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), the German Social Democrat who lived in exile in London. Coit's ultimate goal was to form a 'Democratic Party' into which disillusioned Liberals like Hobson could have thrown themselves. However, the elections of October 1900 led to the postponement of these plans until January 1901 when the paper's title was changed to *Democracy: In Religion, Education, Art, Industry and Politics – An Organ of Ethical Progress*. In October 1900 the title changed yet again, this time from *Democracy* to *Ethics*.¹⁶⁸

In 1898 Hobson wrote a set of 37 articles for the *Ethical World*, which were published between March and November 1898 under the heading 'The Social

¹⁶⁶ F. J. G. [Gould], 'The English Ethical Societies', *Reformer*, vol. I, no. 8 (October 15, 1897), pp. 223-225.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, pp. 108, 111-113.

Question. A Study of Work and Life'. These articles, largely based on six lectures delivered to the London branch of the Christian Social Union in April 1896, were afterwards re-written and published in 1901 under the title *The Social Problem*. Its purpose was 'to enforce the recognition of the organic unity of the problem of social progress by showing the interactions of the many concrete "questions" and "movements" which divide the attention of social reformers'. The subject matter was first presented from an economic viewpoint because Hobson felt that its bearings on economics displayed the problem most clearly. In this respect *The Social Problem* leaned on his previous economic studies. The study itself was based on social utilitarianism which gave recognition to 'the higher needs and satisfactions of man in society.' The Ruskinian antithesis between *work* (function) and *life* (nutrition) was examined in physical, economic and moral contexts and the study intended to 'yield a scientific harmony of the claims of Socialism and Individualism.' The laws of social utility were tested in terms of 'right economic distribution, population, public industry and imperial expansion'¹⁶⁹ but differed from the economic analysis of distribution which was presented in *Economics of Distribution*.¹⁷⁰ *The Social Problem* is considered to be one of the most comprehensive studies of the social issues of the 1890s. However, only the radical journals and newspapers paid any serious attention to the study.¹⁷¹

The Social Problem reflected many of the concerns of Hobson in the 1890s. First, it formulated a conception of the social which Hobson had so fervently tried to define in connection with the ethical and radical societies throughout the decade. Second, it reformulated utilitarianism in qualitative terms. Finally, it explored the idea of society as an organism. These concerns were bound together by the holism which connected Hobson to the methodologies of British idealism then being expressed, for example, by J. S. Mackenzie.¹⁷² Holism was an important element in postulating Hobson's view of welfare as a combination of physical, psychological and mental factors which he had postulated already in *The Social Problem* but did not reach a more mature form until in *Work and Wealth: A Human Valuation* (1914) and *Wealth and Life: A Study in Values* (1929). Indeed, Michael Freeden has seen Hobson's expressions of opinion on welfare and his claim that he was subsuming the purpose of economics under broader social ends as the real heresies of his thinking rather than his dissenting economic views in themselves.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Hobson, J. A., *The Social Problem: Life and Work*, James Nisbet, London 1902 (1901), pp. v-vii.

¹⁷⁰ These two distribution theories were finally put together in *Work and Wealth*. See Hobson, J. A., *Work and Wealth. A Human Valuation*, Macmillan, New York 1914.

¹⁷¹ 'Verax', *New Age*, 2.5.1901; Carlisle, A. J., *Commonwealth*, July, 1901; anon., *Daily News*, 26.8.1901. Typically the reviewers criticised Hobson's attack on Professor Alfred Marshall and other representatives of neo-classical political economics. See, for example, Chapman, S. J., A review of *The Social Problem: Life and Work* by J. A. Hobson, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. XIII, no. 1 (October, 1902), pp. 112-114.

¹⁷² Freeden, 'Hobson, John Atkinson (1858-1940)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. See also Hobson, John A., Review of *An Introduction to Social Philosophy* by J. S. Mackenzie, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. II, no. 8 (April, 1892), pp. 388-391.

¹⁷³ Freeden, 'Hobson, John Atkinson (1858-1940)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National*

The War in South Africa: the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Speaker*

In 1899 L. T. Hobhouse, then a political leader-writer for the *Manchester Guardian*, persuaded its editor, C. P. Scott to send Hobson to South Africa to conduct a political inquiry even though his experience of day to day newspaper work was limited.¹⁷⁴ Under the editorship of Scott, the *Manchester Guardian* was one of the leading radical-liberal newspapers in Britain.¹⁷⁵ The newspaper's influence was exerted through its special correspondents, who were often envied by their colleagues, because they could be fairly certain to see their texts in print without distortion or manipulation by the editor.¹⁷⁶

The *Manchester Guardian* received Hobson's reports almost daily from Capetown, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Bloemfontein during the period August 11 to November 28, 1899.¹⁷⁷ *The War in South Africa*, published in 1900,¹⁷⁸ was based on these reports and a set of articles that were published in the *Speaker*, a weekly magazine, in late 1899 and early 1900. The picture of Hobson's South African experiences can be supplemented by Hobson's letters to Scott. *The War in South Africa* set out to argue that the war was being fought in the interests of international financiers and capitalists, most of whom were, as Hobson understood it, foreign Jews who had emigrated to South Africa from Eastern Europe and who also had a hold on the London press.

Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse (1864–1929), social philosopher and journalist, has been named as one of the key intellectual comrades-in-arms of Hobson. Undoubtedly, the two 'Hobs' shared many common convictions and hopes. At the time of the war Hobhouse was, together with Hobson, one of the most important opinion formers over the issue of the war in South Africa. Indeed, the closest connection between the two thinkers occurred in matters of practical politics as they shared a highly critical opinion of British politics in South Africa.¹⁷⁹ Writing of Hobhouse in the 1930s, Hobson considered his

Biography.

¹⁷⁴ Hobson, *Confessions*, pp. 60–61. According to the contract with the *Manchester Guardian* Hobson received £ 300 plus expenses. (Extract from letter to J. A. Hobson, 16 July, 1899, Correspondence 1899–1900, reel 6, 122/60, C. P. Scott Papers [hereafter cited as CPSP], John Rylands Library, Manchester University) Furthermore, Hobson agreed with Scott that he received an additional £ 100 'in order to cover certain lectures and literary engagements he must cancel and for "moral and intellectual" damages connected with the postponement of two books which are in the press and for which it is really important for me to secure an early publication'. (Hobson to Scott, 15 July, 1899, Elmstead, Limpsfield, Surrey, 122/59, CPSP) The books Hobson referred to were presumably *The Social Problem* and *The Economics of Distribution*.

¹⁷⁵ The circulation of the *Manchester Guardian* was 43,000 in the late nineteenth century. (Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 32)

¹⁷⁶ Scott, C. P., *The Making of the Manchester Guardian*, Frederick Muller, London 1946, pp. 146–147.

¹⁷⁷ The following ones to be analyzed belong to 24 of the more analytical ones that were published.

¹⁷⁸ Hobson, J. A., *The War in South Africa. Its Causes and Effects*, James Nisbet, London 1900.

¹⁷⁹ Freedon, Michael, 'Hobhouse, Leonard Trelawny (1864–1929)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33906, accessed 16 Oct 2007]

contributions to the *Manchester Guardian*, dealing with matters of foreign and colonial policy, to be amongst the most thought-provoking of their time.¹⁸⁰

The Gladstonian *Speaker* (formed in 1890) was at first a little too official for Hobson. It was only in 1899 when the editorship was taken over by J. L. Hammond, an Oxford graduate journalist and a leader writer on the *Leeds Mercury*, that Hobson found it agreeable. The *Speaker* took an active role in the pro-Boer campaign under the editorship of Hammond. The first issue (new series) of the magazine appeared in October 1899, and formed from its very beginning a fruitful ground for Hobson's anti-Imperialist and anti-war arguments. Some years later, in 1907, when the *Speaker's* editorship was taken over by H. W. Massingham, the title was changed to the *Nation*. The *Nation* lunch, which Massingham inaugurated, was in practice a seminar where the usual attendees, Hobson, Hammond, Hobhouse, Francis W. Hirst, C. F. G. Masterman, H. N. Brailsford, the Reverend W. D. Morrison and other less frequently attending intellectuals discussed the direction liberalism should follow after the Liberal victory of 1906. Hobson's book entitled *The Crisis of Liberalism* (1909) illustrates the concerns the Progressives felt about the Liberal government's social policy. It also shows how closely the arguments of the liberal intellectuals and those of the Liberal politicians in power for the first time coincided.¹⁸¹

A Periodical Campaign on the Issue of Imperialism

It was the South African War that worked as the paradigm for Hobson's thesis of Imperialism. After the journey Hobson analysed Imperialism in a vivid manner and contributed to a number of periodicals and newspapers on issues concerning the British South African policy in particular and Imperialism in general.

One of these journals was the *New Age*, a liberal weekly magazine, which practised a policy of Christian liberalism under the editorship of E. A. Fletcher. Towards the end of the century Fletcher was replaced by A. Compton-Rickett who in turn was shortly replaced by an anti-war man called Joseph Clayton. In 1899 the *New Age* was placed under the control of a Unitarian minister and secretary of the 1900 Stop the War Committee, the Reverend Harold Rylett.¹⁸² In order to discuss the relationship between liberalism and Imperialism Hobson

Freeden says that Hobson and Hobhouse both had a curious compound of holism and empiricism in their methods of investigating social phenomena. Scientific organicism also was in both cases a hallmark of their new liberal thinking brilliantly expressed in *The Social Problem* and Hobhouse's most valued work *Liberalism* (1911). (*op. cit.*)

¹⁸⁰ Hobson, J. A., *L. T. Hobhouse: His Life and Work*, Routledge/Thoemmes, London 1993 (1931), pp. 39-40.

¹⁸¹ Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp. 107-118; Hobson, J. A., *The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy*, P. S. King, London 1909.

¹⁸² Lee, Alan J., 'The Radical Press'. In *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914. Some aspects of British Radicalism*, J. A. Morris (ed.), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Boston 1974, pp. 54-55.

had contributed in early 1899 a series of articles to the *New Age* entitled 'Liberalism or Imperialism'. These articles offer a more comprehensive view of Hobson's position between liberalism and Imperialism than any other of his writings. They reflect the mood and the mind of those Progressives and Radicals who were disappointed with the Liberal Party's imperial politics.

The purpose of the *New Age* was to support the idea of 'the new age of reason'. At the beginning of the twentieth century liberal sentiments and ideas as well as democratic institutions seemed utterly incapable of saving the people from economic, political and moral exploitation by politicians, capitalists and financiers. The choice to make was between an external quantitative or an internal qualitative life, between Imperialism, capitalism and bureaucracy or socialism, the social ideal of the liberally minded advocates of social reform.¹⁸³

The advantage of contributing to the *New Age* rather than other available publications at the time was that Hobson was apparently quite free to express his thoughts without fear of distortion by the editorship. In addition, after the floundering of the *Progressive Review*, the *New Age*, which had already offered working premises to the *Progressive Review*, must have felt like a natural channel through which Hobson could publish his views.

His second attempt to define Imperialism was in *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901) which was largely based on a number of articles he wrote for the *Ethical World* and the *New Age* in late 1899, 1900 and early 1901.¹⁸⁴ In *The Psychology of Jingoism* Hobson set out to study crowd psychology. His work gained additional depth from his having studied the work of the French social psychologist, Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931). Even though he built on Le Bon's *The Crowd: a study of the popular mind* (English ed. 1896), Hobson's analysis of Jingoism is considered to be one of the earliest studies of mass (social) psychology.¹⁸⁵ The work was reviewed in the *Speaker* as a sociological study that explained 'the assemblage of Jingoism.'¹⁸⁶ The liberal morning paper *Daily News* believed that the study explained the formation of 'the sham philosophy of imperialism.'¹⁸⁷ However, a liberal-unionist paper, the *Belfast News-Letter*, simply regarded the study as pro-Boer.¹⁸⁸

Hobson saw Jingoism as a state of mind into which society degenerates rather than evolves.¹⁸⁹ Since 'Jingo-ridden people' did not have the ability to make considered judgements, hypocrisy could only exist amongst the educated

¹⁸³ Hobson, J. A., 'Ideals of the Twentieth Century', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 327 (January 3, 1901), pp. 9–10.

¹⁸⁴ Hobson, J. A., *The Psychology of Jingoism*, Grant Richards, London 1901.

¹⁸⁵ Rich, Paul B., *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990 (1986), p. 220, note 30.

¹⁸⁶ *Speaker*, 29.6.1901.

¹⁸⁷ *Daily News*, 12.4.1901.

¹⁸⁸ *Belfast News Letter*, 30.5.1901.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 236–238. The term 'Jingo' had actually originated in an anti-Russian context in a British music hall song at the time of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878). 'We don't want to fight; but by jingo if we do/ We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too/ The Russians shall not have Constantinople'. (Bealey, Frank, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, Blackwell, Malden 1999, 'Jingoism').

upper classes, the 'illiberals' who were supporting the war. As Hobson found to his disappointment his "'Liberal" friends [were] terribly anxious to avoid discussion of the "causes" [of the war].'¹⁹⁰

In the field of economics Hobson called for 'honest finance,' a financial system based on a humane colonial policy and a free social life rather than on Imperialism.¹⁹¹ In Hobson's analysis reform and Imperialism were opposite entities. Imperialism made the work of reform impossible and increased repressive elements in politics. An emphasis on home market consumption and progressive taxation was a significant part of Hobson's social reform policy. Such an emphasis was most clearly expressed in *Imperialism: A Study*.¹⁹²

The book is divided into two sections dealing respectively with the economics and the politics of Imperialism. The first part of the book, 'The Economics of Imperialism' evolved from a set of articles that was published in the *Speaker* in October-December 1901 and an article named 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism' in the *Contemporary Review* of August 1902. What Hobson meant by the economic tap-root of Imperialism is, in short, that the economic basis of Imperialism lies in capitalism. The surplus capital accumulated in a few hands seeks investment in uncivilised or insecure countries such as South Africa. The surplus capital, Hobson further argued, calls upon the state to protect its investments, though these investments are made by private investors. Imperialism will, thus, always continue as long as this surplus capital goes on accumulating in the hands of the few, the investing and speculative classes, who employ the resources of the state to protect their investments. The remedy suggested for overproduction is that markets should be found at home by means of such social reform as will enable the poorer classes to absorb the surplus wealth. By this means new consumers could be found, and thus the difficulty caused by the restricted purchasing power of industrial workers could be overcome.

The latter part of *Imperialism: A Study*, in a chapter of forty pages, deals with the use of the biological concept of the survival of the fittest to support imperial expansion. This chapter was previously published under the title 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism' in the *Political Science Quarterly* of September 1902. In dealing with the biological notion of the survival of the fittest Hobson analysed two recent books, Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1894) and Carl Pearson's *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (1900). The argument in chapter IV, 'Imperialism and the Lower Races', which was published with the same title in the *British Friend*, a liberal-minded Quaker magazine, in March-June 1902, claims in effect that, while Imperialism damages and causes deterioration in the conquering nation, it is even more disastrous for the 'lower races' brought under imperialist rule. In this chapter Hobson showed his disbelief in the arguments for political expansion used by those who were

¹⁹⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'The Soul of Illiberalism', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 354 (July 11, 1901), p. 440.

¹⁹¹ Hobson, J. A., 'Honest Finance', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 375 (December 5, 1901), pp. 776-777.

¹⁹² Hobson, J. A., *Imperialism: A Study*, James Nisbet, London 1902.

interested in missions and philanthropy. However, he also admitted that the native races could not just be left alone, though he insists upon the necessity of certain safeguards to avoid their exploitation for mercenary purposes. Hobson's intention in publishing these articles can in fact be considered an attempt to advocate a civilising policy for colonial administration.¹⁹³

As Hobson made clear in the preface 'the study is distinctively one of social pathology addressed to the intelligence of the minority who are content neither to float along the tide of political opportunism nor to submit to the shove of some blind "destiny" but who desire to understand political forces in order that they may direct them.'¹⁹⁴ In a letter to his Liberal friend, Gilbert Murray, who had read most of the proof-sheets of the study, Hobson explained that his purpose was not so much to convince his enemies but to strengthen the arm of his Liberal friends, who were at the time struggling with their anti-war policy. Hobson suspected that even if he had supported his thesis with detailed statistics 'in no case would it carry much weight with "convinced" imperialists'. He further suspected that it was doubtful whether any book exercised much real influence in politics. Such a worrying statement underlines Hobson's growing despair when he witnessed his Liberal friends' growing willingness to follow the path of Imperialism.¹⁹⁵

In a number of reviews, Hobson's methods of analysing Imperialism were declared unsound.¹⁹⁶ In the *Spectator* the reviewer stated that the study was full of 'the tangled mass of error and angry invective.'¹⁹⁷ Even John McKillop's review in *Fabian News* was distinctly negative. Like Fabians in general, McKillop considered capitalism the real problem, not Imperialism.¹⁹⁸ Only small radical-liberal journals and papers such as the *New Age* welcomed the study without reservation.¹⁹⁹ The reviewers agreed, however, that Hobson had based his arguments on a substantial amount of data, and the study was more valued in this respect than for example Godwin Smith's *Commonwealth or Empire* (1902). The *New York Times* declared that 'Hobson's previous work as an economist has prepared him for the scientific side of the task, while his experience as a lecturer and contributor to the magazines has given him the necessary skill in popular presentation.'²⁰⁰

In November 1902 Hobson set out on a six months lecture tour in the United States during which he strengthened friendships with a number of Americans of radical views.²⁰¹ In November, 1902 *Harper's Weekly* published an

¹⁹³ Cf. 'V', Review of *Imperialism: A Study* by J. A. Hobson, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 11, no. 2 (March, 1903), pp. 311-314.

¹⁹⁴ Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp. v-vi.

¹⁹⁵ Hobson to Murray, August 7, 1902, Limpsfield, Surrey, Letters to Murray 8, Gilbert Murray Papers (hereafter cited as GMP), Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

¹⁹⁶ See, for example, *Times* (5.12.1902); *Daily Chronicle* (1.11.1902).

¹⁹⁷ Special Literary Supplement to the *Spectator*, January 31, 1903, pp. 153-154.

¹⁹⁸ *Fabian News*, vol. XIII, no. 2 (February, 1903), pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁹ Anon., 'The Anatomy of Imperialism', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 420 (October 16, 1902), pp. 664-665.

²⁰⁰ *New York Times*, November 15, 1902.

²⁰¹ Hobson enjoyed H. D. Lloyd's hospitality during his trip. Hobson to Lloyd, May 9, 1902; 23 June, 1902, Elmstead, Limpsfield, Surrey, Correspondence, General, Reel 13,

introductory article on Hobson and his work. Hobson was greeted (quoting the *Fortnightly Review*) as ‘the most subtle, clear-sighted, and penetrating living economists’ of his time.²⁰² Interestingly, at a time when Hobson’s economic views were vigorously rejected by the academic elite in Britain, both of the leading American social and economic theorists of the time, Richard Ely and Henry Demarest Lloyd, gave their support to them.²⁰³ Generally speaking Hobson’s study seemed to be more valued in the United States than in Britain.²⁰⁴

Through this study Hobson introduced a critical, historically based explanation of imperial expansion, which differentiated between colonialism and Imperialism. This historically based explanation of Imperialism and the inspiration it provided for future Liberal and Socialist critics of empire can be considered the two great achievements of Hobson’s study.

P70-2722, HDLP. Lloyd died only a few months after they met in September, 1903. See Hobson’s regrets to Lloyd’s wife, Jessie Bross Lloyd, March 25, 1904, Elmstead, Limpsfield, Surrey, Correspondence, General, Reel 13, P70-2722, HDLP.

²⁰² *Harper’s Weekly*, vol. XLVI, no. 2395 (November 15, 1902), p. 1725. Hobson was defined as ‘tall, spare, and of delicate health, one of those ardent spirits enthusiastic for work even beyond his strength, as if the sword were wearing out the scabbard’ (*op. cit.*). He sported a moustache but was otherwise closely shaven. See cover picture.

²⁰³ Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p. 48.

²⁰⁴ On Hobson’s influence in the United States refer to Schneider, *J. A. Hobson*, pp. 129–130. There has been speculation about whether Hobson’s analysis of Imperialism was influenced by Thorstein Veblen’s seminal *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Hobson strongly approved Veblen’s diatribes against the luxury and waste of the upper classes. The two radicals had presumably met for the first time during Hobson’s lecture trip to America in autumn 1902 and early 1903 (see, for, example Hobson, J. A., ‘The Theory of the Leisured Class’, a lecture delivered before the South Place Ethical Society, 21. and 28.6.1903, SPESP) but there is no written evidence on this until 1906 when Hobson wrote a series of articles for the newly-founded liberal daily, *Tribune*. Some of these contributions were published in the second, revised edition of *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (1906). Hobson’s subsequent work *Veblen* (1936) shows that the two radicals had common ground in many respects. See Hobson, J. A., *Veblen*, Augustus M. Kelley, New York 1963 (1936); Veblen, Thorstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class. An Economic Study of Institutions*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1899.

3 HISTORY: LIBERALISM AND IMPERIALISM

3.1 Early Liberty Discourses and the Colonies

The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science defines 'liberalism' as a family of concepts. It stresses that there never has been *a* liberalism but many liberalisms. Thus, in order to understand the term, it is better to approach liberalism from the angle of social and intellectual history rather than that of philosophy.²⁰⁵

The term 'liberal' was first coined in the early nineteenth century Spain,²⁰⁶ though diverse and even contradictory connotations of liberty had already existed in political theory for centuries. In the 1640s England, the King and the Parliamentarians fought a series of battles over military and political hegemony but also over political vocabulary. In this battle, the classical form of liberty was defined as being free to act at one's own will. This understanding was further defined by Thomas Hobbes in *De Cive* (1642) and *Leviathan* (1651), in which his view of state sovereignty reached its mature form. According to Hobbes's definition civil liberty was the degree of freedom of will which was left outside the domain of the law.²⁰⁷

Supporters of the English republic, in their turn, supported a parallel, neo-Roman theory of civil liberty, which was put forward by James Harrington in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656). The focus of neo-Roman civil rights was not so much on individual rights as on the liberty of the Commonwealth, the whole body of the people. These liberties were undermined if they were threatened by force by another state. This argument clearly arises from the Declaration of American Independence. Being colonised and thus enslaved by the English, the

²⁰⁵ Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, pp. 191-192.

²⁰⁶ Leonhard, Jörn, 'From European Liberalism to the Languages of Liberalisms: the Semantics of *Liberalism* in European Comparison', *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History*, vol. 8 (2004), SoPhi, University of Jyväskylä 2004, pp. 20-26.

²⁰⁷ Skinner, Quentin, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 4-7; Skinner, Quentin, 'Democratisation and Political Rhetoric'. A lecture delivered in the Department of History, University of Jyväskylä, 28 May, 2004.

thirteen North American colonies considered their liberties to be threatened.²⁰⁸ In the nineteenth century the neo-Roman theory of liberty was advanced in vain and was finally declared dead by Henry Sidgwick in his *Elements of Politics* (1897).²⁰⁹ The classical form of liberty prevailed and formed the basis of the understanding of liberties in England.

These definitions of liberty were limited to concern with European peoples only. It has been maintained by Parekh Bhikhu that in this regard liberalism resembled, in its form, a secularised Christianity. The founding fathers of liberalism, such as for example John Locke, reproduced many of the attitudes towards and beliefs of colonialism concerning non-European peoples, such as the view that mankind constituted a unity and that a single vision of life was valid for all, while rejecting much of Christian theology. Since reason was considered to be the essence of the life of man, one had a duty to exploit the earth's resources to the full, to be energetic and industrious and to lead a purposeful life. Since the Indian way of life, for example, did not satisfy these criteria, Europeans had a duty to interfere with their way of life, to take over the land and to exploit it to the full. Colonisation was further justified for the reason that Indians needed to be civilised. This philosophical defence of colonialism ruled out the moral claims to equality on the grounds that Indians as a body had no political claims to inviolability.²¹⁰

While an economic interpretation of the American Revolution has been maintained by several researchers such as A. M. Schlesinger and Louis M. Hacker, it has been stressed by I. R. Christie that at the heart of the Anglo-American dispute lay a controversy about the nature of imperial authority. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the potential for conflict between the North American colonies and Britain was masked by the British government's lack of interest in the political and constitutional structure of the colonies. Under the mercantilist system, the colonies were relatively prosperous, and Britain saw no need to interfere in their internal structure. However, the prolonged struggle with the French, which culminated in the Seven Years War (especially called, North America, the French and Indian War, 1756-1763), had highlighted the weakness of metropolitan authority over the colonies. This removal of the French threat also made the colonists less dependent on Britain's protection. After the war, metropolitan economic regulations defined more clearly the political relationship between the colonies and Britain. This development turned the crisis of authority into a revolt and the revolt into a revolution.²¹¹

After losing the 13 American colonies, Britain reoriented the mercantilist system towards its Empire in Asia, which stretched by this time from the Indian

²⁰⁸ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, pp. 15-16, 23-24, 49-50.

²⁰⁹ Sidgwick, Henry, *The Elements of Politics*, Macmillan, London and New York 1891, p. v. See also Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, pp. 98-99.

²¹⁰ Bhikhu, Parekh, 'The West and Its Others'. In *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*, Keith Ansell-Pearson & al. (eds.), Lawrence & Wishart, London 1997, pp. 180-186.

²¹¹ Christie, I. R., *Crisis of Empire: Great Britain and the American Colonies, 1754-1783*, Edward Arnold, London 1966, pp. 108-114.

subcontinent to the eastern shores of Australia. Under the rule of the East India Company, the expansionist dynamic came from India with only a little encouragement from the British government. The critics of the mercantilist system now asked whether the lessons of North America were similarly valid in the Asian Empire and what the purpose was of possessing colonies in general. These considerations were first put forward by Adam Smith, who argued that the possession of colonies was unprofitable and unbusinesslike. The national economic advantages could be obtained by colonial trade which did not require the actual possession of colonies. In fact, the whole origin of the history of a critical attitude to empire lay in this liberal criticism of the mercantile system. Thus, while a philosophical defence of colonialism was firmly established by some Liberals such as John Locke, yet another, more critical approach evolved from an economic perspective which was proposed by another set of Liberals. By the mid-nineteenth century, the critics of colonialism were only a minority faction among Liberals but they managed to lay the foundations for late nineteenth century liberal anti-Imperialism.²¹²

3.2 Critical Attitudes to Colonialism: Richard Cobden

The eminence of Richard Cobden (1804–1865) among Liberals was first established by John Morley's biography *The Life of Richard Cobden* (1881) and the activities and publications of the Cobden Club which were part of the late nineteenth century attempt to return the Liberal Party to the principles of free trade and anti-Imperialism.²¹³ In 1918 these principles were restated by Hobson in his *Richard Cobden: the International Man*, which was designed to rescue the memory of Cobden.²¹⁴ The very essence of Cobden's liberalism was formulated by Hobson as follows:

'Protective tariffs and other trade impediments were condemned, not merely or mainly because they made food dear and otherwise impaired the production of national wealth, but because they interfered with the free and friendly intercourse of different nations, bred hostility of interests, stimulated hostile preparations, and swallowed up those energies and resources of each nation that were needed for the cultivation of the arts of peaceful progress.'²¹⁵

For Hobson Cobden's intellectual contribution to radical-liberal political thought lies in his internationalism.²¹⁶ In fact, Cobden's European diaries confirm that it was internationalism rather than Anglo-centric radicalism that was the predominant idea so far as he was concerned. Until his mind was

²¹² Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 5–9, 16.

²¹³ Hamer, D. A., *John Morley: Liberal Intellectual on Politics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968, pp. 121–122, 141–142, 309–310.

²¹⁴ Hobson, J. A., *Richard Cobden: The International Man*, T. Fisher Unwin, London 1918, p. 11.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

changed by Mediterranean and European tours in the late 1830s and 1840s, Cobden's view of Continental politics was similar to that of the British Liberals, who felt that the Napoleonic wars had left Continental Europe in an unstable political condition and in a state of economic and social decay. It was further felt that Britain's destiny lay with the rising commercial power of North America. However, examples of social equality and of the political economy at work observed during his European tour took Cobden's mind in a more positive direction. He even saw Russia as a progressive society. In the late 1840s and the 1850s Cobden's vision of rational social and economic progress both in Britain and on the Continent was increasingly supported by Radicals and Liberals, and in the late 1850s the Liberal Party returned to a policy of retrenchment in defence spending.²¹⁷

Cobden's liberalism was based on two interlocking sets of concepts, one of economic growth and prosperity and the other of non-intervention and civil society.²¹⁸ These two aspects of Cobden's liberalism can be found in his early writings *England, Ireland, and America* (1835) and *Russia* (1836). Cobden's critical attitude to colonialism was based on an economic argument: 'Three hundred millions of permanent debt have been accumulated—millions of direct taxation are annually levied—restrictions and prohibitions are imposed upon our trade in all quarters of the world, for the acquisition or maintenance of colonial possessions; and all for what? That we may repeat the fatal Spanish proverb—"The sun never sets on the King of England's dominions"''.²¹⁹ Cobden saw no reason to sacrifice Britain's trade with the United States in favour of 'a few small islands', as he saw the West Indies, especially when this sacrifice was not based on any economic rationality whatsoever but on national ambitions. Economic prosperity was to be sought from the United States, whose relative importance as a rising economic and political power compared with the West Indies and the 'petty States' in Europe was stressed in *England, Ireland, and America*.²²⁰

In his pamphlet *Russia* Cobden was arguing against writers and speakers who supported Britain's intervention in the affairs of Russia and Turkey, as Cobden believed, on the false pretence that Britain's commerce, colonies and national existence required her to do so. The Turks, 'a race of Tartars of Asia' as Cobden saw them, were described, in terms of economics and culture, as a backward people. In the same line of 'fierce tribes' with 'the rude habits of savages' belonged the peoples of the Caucasus against whom the Russians were compelled to guard their Southern borders. Things were quite the opposite in the case of the Turks and, if the Russians were to seize Constantinople they would be doing as great a favour for civilisation and humanity as they had done by their conquests in the Gulf of Finland. However, as this prospect did

²¹⁷ Taylor, Miles, 'Introduction'. In Cobden, Richard, *The European Diaries of Richard Cobden, 1846–1849*, Miles Taylor (ed.), Scolar Press, Aldershot 1994, pp. 1–4, 30–31.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 28–29, 32.

²¹⁹ Cobden, *England, Ireland, and America*. In Cobden, Richard, *The Political Writings*, vol. I, reprinted from 1903 ed. Kraus Reprint, London 1969 (1867), p. 21.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23, 76.

not satisfy the trade interests of Britain, she blocked Russia from the markets and concentrated on a colonial trade that was not based on economic rationality or the principles of free trade.²²¹

Paradoxically, the British people accused the Russians of being an aggrandising people: 'If during the last century Russia has plundered Sweden, Poland, Turkey, and Persia [...] Great Britain has, in the same period, robbed – no, that would be an unpolite phrase – “*has enlarged the bounds of his Majesty's dominions*” at the expense of France, Holland, and Spain'. They had not even questioned their own expansion based on unsound morality: '[...] but surely we, who are staggering under the embarrassing weight of our colonies, with one foot upon the rock of Gibraltar and the other at the Cape of Good Hope – with Canada, Australia, and the Peninsula of India, forming, Cerberus-like, the heads of our monstrous empire – [...] surely *we* are not exactly the nation to preach homilies to other people [...]'. England had simultaneously acted aggressively against other powers and seized upon colonies while accusing the Russians of conquering Ukraine, Finland and the Crimea. These accusations were carried out even though Russia was surrounded by 'barbarous nations' one of which (*i.e.* Turkey) had institutions that were by their nature warlike and aggressive.²²²

According to Cobden's argument Russia was morally justified in having subjugated 'less civilised states'. Russia had rooted out the 'predatory habits' of the 'barbarous and indolent' inhabitants of its Southern borders and kept Swedish laws and the peasantry's privileges alive in Finland by incorporating it into Russia. Annexation of Turkey by Russia would have been a morally righteous and humane act that would have led to a civilising intercourse with commercial nations. Otherwise 'these worse than savages' would have spread war, destruction and pestilence amongst the European states.²²³ In Cobden's argument, civilised states had a right to intervene in the name of commerce. Eventually, the civilising intercourse between the commercial nations would spread to the 'less civilised' regions.

In spite of the fact that Cobden advocated the idea that civilised states had a right to intervene in the name of commerce, in the mid-Victorian context Cobden can be termed anti-Imperialist. At the time the term 'Imperialism' referred to the despotic forms of government to be found, for example, in India. In his pamphlet *How Wars Are Got up in India* (1853) Cobden did indeed condemn the East India Company's acquisitions of territory as 'crimes, deeds of violence and injustice and unproductive'.²²⁴

In its social outlook Cobden's critical attitudes to colonialism in India resembled late-Victorian social Imperialism. Colonies were valued in so far as they were national assets but not culturally. The early nineteenth century discussion of colonialism concentrated on questions of the nature and the power of rule: were the economic advantages most effectively gained by means

²²¹ Cobden, *Russia*. In *The Political Writings*, vol. I., pp. 127–134, 137, 141–142, 149–150.

²²² *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 156–157, 159.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 160–161, 164, 208.

²²⁴ Cobden, *How Wars Are Got up in India*. In *The Political Writings*, vol. II, pp. 455–458.

of colonial rule, and if this was the case, what were the costs of such rule? What Cobden argued was that the advantages gained by possessing colonies were in fact far more modest than was commonly assumed and that colonial trade had numerous negative effects on other sources of national income such as peaceful and harmonious trading interaction between Britain and the United States on the one hand and between Britain and Continental Europe on the other. Thus, Cobden's anti-Imperialism was largely concentrated on the question of the balance between maximising national benefits and minimising the social costs to society.

3.3 Philosophical Defence of Colonialism: John Stuart Mill

It has been maintained by Peter Mandler that the major British intellectual contributions to mid-Victorian thought were less concerned with race and nationality than with the universalistic science of political economy. The impact of the year 1848 confirmed a British sense that it was the path of multi-national empire rather than nationalism that advanced civilisations should follow. As the British Empire was a multi-national and racial whole, it was believed that it was the responsibility of the English to maintain their institutional hold on 'uncivilised' peoples. However, thinking about the English as a nation threatened the justification of the domestic class distinctions which were, in spite of the democratic elements in English liberalism, strongly supported by the majority of the English political and intellectual elite. The emphasis on national and racial qualities remained relatively random during the mid-Victorian era and was displaced by that glorification of the English institutions that were believed to be sources of liberty and prosperity.²²⁵

The fact that J. S. Mill was more concerned with good government in India than strengthening patriotic loyalties towards the Empire made his liberalism less appealing to the masses than that of Liberal Imperialists. Furthermore, Mill's liberalism revolved around the abstraction 'liberty' that underlined its unsuitability as a national ethic compared with patriotic demonstrations. Consequently, Mill's influence on British colonial thinking was more indirect than direct.²²⁶

Mill considered the political economy of Adam Smith obsolete and imperfect for the needs of the mid-nineteenth century because it did not intertwine sufficiently with other branches of social philosophy and because its relation to the mid-Victorian social ideas remained unresolved. However Mill saw, as did Smith, that the wealth existing in the community was the measure of social progress. A community that still lived in a state of nature and its

²²⁵ Mandler, Peter, "'Race" and "nation" in mid-Victorian thought'. In *History, Religion, and Culture: British intellectual history 1750-1950*, pp. 225, 230, 232-236.

²²⁶ Stapleton, 'Political thought and national identity, 1850-1950'. In *History, Religion, and Culture*, pp. 249-251.

wealth 'consists of skins they wear; a few ornaments; some rude utensils' was by definition 'savage'. The land was its sole source of subsistence and had a marketable value only if required by somebody else. The first great advance away from the state of nature was the growing of surplus food beyond the essential needs of consumption. This progress led to the growth of the population, which in its turn left labour free to engage in other departments of industry. However, distribution of wealth remained uneven in the colonial mid-nineteenth century.²²⁷

Mill's hopes and fears were similar to those of other mid-Victorian English Liberals. On the one hand he was puzzled by democratisation of the British institutions and on the other the imperial role of these institutions.²²⁸ In his essay *On Liberty* (1859) Mill noted the problematic relationship between liberty and forced civilisation and expressed his avowed belief in progress by enlightenment.²²⁹

Mill believed that within the boundaries of the British Empire existed communities which in respect of culture and development were not fit for more than a limited freedom. These communities were capable of developing into a higher state by 'a concourse of influences, among the principal of which is the government to which they are subject'. Such progress in civilisation was, however, unattainable until a people in a state of nature had learnt to obey. Therefore, it was the despotic form of government, which derived its power from foreign arms that was best suited to 'uncivilised races'. The objective of such despotism was to teach the arts of self-government by guidance while being cautious enough not to convert the subjugated peoples into slaves. Mill stressed that the possessor of force should only use that force as a last measure.²³⁰

It has remained arguable to what extent Mill referred to his experience in India House and to what extent he discussed social progress in general. By his sociological perspective on colonies Mill stressed the evolutionary aspect of social progress and regarded the colonisation of 'uncivilised peoples' as natural. In his concern with the capabilities of the masses Mill remained quite pessimistic and suggested that in those societies where differences of race or peculiarities of circumstance had caused uneven social progress, institutions should be ruled by the dominant class. In a country made up of different nationalities, the united public opinion, necessary for the working of representative government, was regarded by Mill as an impossibility. Therefore, the admixture of nationalities was a benefit to the human race especially in such countries as India where the more advanced smaller nationality was able to overcome the less developed greater nationality. If,

²²⁷ Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, People's ed., Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, London 1866 (1848), pp. v-vi, 6-8, 12-13.

²²⁸ Mandler, "'Race" and "nation" in mid-Victorian thought'. In *History, Religion, and Culture*, p. 235.

²²⁹ Mill, John Stuart, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, reprinted from 1910 ed., J. M. Dent & Sons, London 1962 (1910), pp. 148-149.

²³⁰ Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, pp. 178-179, 197-200.

however, separation of nationalities should exist, those who were separated may become members of a federation, having more sympathies in common, if not also a greater community of interest.²³¹

The question of colonial responsible government first became acute in Canada where, after the Seven Years War, Britain was left with the task of governing territory whose population felt no loyalty towards her. In an attempt to resolve the problems of Canada, on the brink of rebellion in 1837, the Whig-liberal Lord Durham, then British ambassador in St. Petersburg, was dispatched to British North America as governor-in-chief and high commissioner. Durham, who found from Canada 'a struggle, not of principles, but of races', recommended in his *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (1839) the principle of representation of the 'English race' [the English-speaking people] to overcome the problems of Canada.²³² That form of responsible government was introduced to the Australian colonies and New Zealand in 1856, the Cape Colony in 1872, and again to the Canadian Confederation in 1867, Australia in 1901 and South Africa in 1909.

Mill agreed with many Liberals of the time that federations prevented wars and provided protection against aggression by powerful states. Furthermore, it was felt that Canada would uphold British interests in North America by becoming a counterweight to the United States. A somewhat similar perspective on federations was shared by the Whig-Liberal Charles W. Dilke (1843–1911), who recorded his travels in English-speaking countries in 1866 and 1867 in a travel book entitled *Greater Britain* (1868). Dilke approved of federal government in the United States but resented slavery and the oligarchic manners of the South. He also supported democratic federal institutions in the colonies with white settlements, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.²³³ Confederation based upon imperial interests was, thus, for Dilke a matter of simplicity. In a federation, improvement of government would naturally follow, and above all, 'confederation would lend to every colonist the dignity derived from citizenship of a great country'.²³⁴ For Dilke 'Greater Britain' thus represented a confederation of independent Anglo-Saxon countries, England, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and a future model for a 'virtual confederation of the English race'.²³⁵

Both Mill and Dilke agreed that the British possessions in America and Australia (Mill even included South Africa in this category) were mature enough for representative government but that India was at a great distance from such a state. Furthermore, both of them were obviously in favour of free trade and the policy of colonial self-government and, as they pointed out, also in favour of a confederation of independent Anglo-Saxon countries. As Mill stated: 'England is sufficient for her own protection without the colonies; and

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 225, 361, 364, 366.

²³² *Lord Durham's Report*, G. M. Graig (ed.), the Carleton Library No. 1, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto 1963 [1839], pp. 47–51 *et passim*.

²³³ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, pp. 24–26, 206–208, 247–248, 298, 319–321, 327–328.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–55, 393–396, 398–399.

would be in a much stronger, as well as a more dignified position, if separated from them, than when reduced to being a single member of an American, African, and Australian confederation [...] England derives little advantage, except in prestige, from her dependencies; and the little she does derive is quite outweighed by the expense they cost her [...].²³⁶

Due to the one-sided nature of the relationship it was felt that those colonies already ripe for representative government and, in the future, also for full independence, should separate. Such models of mid-Victorian liberal thinking on colonies as those of Mill and Dilke, anticipated the Commonwealth ideas of the early twentieth century rather than reflecting the Imperialist ideas of the late nineteenth century with which they are more familiarly associated. What is common to these two models of thinking is that both envisage a confederation of the Anglo-Saxon race based on language, religion and culture, on mutual affection for each other and inevitably on similar if not quite identical political institutions rather than on the military and governmental presence of the English.²³⁷ However, Liberals such as Mill and Dilke endorsed the counter-arguments of mid-Victorian critics, such as Cobden, and even separatist writers, such as Godwin Smith.²³⁸

The difference between the colonial thinking of Mill and Dilke when contrasted with that of Cobden was that they believed that the time was not yet ripe for a free trading empire but one that needed to be based on authority and the domination of the Anglo-Saxon race for just as long as it took to modernise them. Dilke and Mill believed that the colonies contributed to Britain's interests in terms of trade and emigration and therefore endorsed colonial relations. Cobden was more cautious in his hopes and beliefs but believed that civilised nations should rule the less developed at least as far as trade was concerned. Interestingly, from the point of view of their concepts, all three Liberals were obvious anti-Imperialists in their criticism of despotic forms of government and even expansion but Mill and Dilke can equally obviously be labelled mid-Victorian Imperialists in terms of their attitudes to the British dependencies and the subject peoples.²³⁹ David Nicholls has named this sort of Imperialism 'an imperialism of race and civilisation' that differs from Imperialism as it is conventionally understood as 'a stage in capitalist political economy or as a form of territorial aggrandisement'.²⁴⁰ However, an Imperialism of race and civilisation was typical, it will be shown, even of late nineteenth century Liberal anti-Imperialists, such as James Bryce and even Hobson, who continued to resent expansion to the tropics. As the British Empire expanded in the late nineteenth century, questions of capital and expansion became more dominant

²³⁶ Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, pp. 378–379.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 380–381.

²³⁸ Nicholls, David, *The Lost Prime Minister: a life of Sir Charles Dilke*, The Hambledon Press, London 1995, pp. 24–25.

²³⁹ E.g. Mandler, "'Race" and "nation" in mid-Victorian thought'. In *History, Religion, and Culture*, p. 232.

²⁴⁰ Nicholls, *The Lost Prime Minister: a life of Sir Charles Dilke*, pp. 26–27.

factors in defining Imperialism whereas mere emphasis on race and civilisation did not any longer sufficiently explain attitudes taken to Imperialism.

3.4 The Liberal Party and Imperialism

It has been maintained by Eugenio F. Biagini that Gladstonian Liberal politics (c. 1860–1885), founded on the social and economic thought of political economists such as Richard Cobden and J. S. Mill, formed, together with a Reformed religious culture, an ideological cohesion which can be termed ‘liberalism’. What Biagini suggests is that in order to understand the nature of late nineteenth century liberal politics, the focus should be on the social and economic thought of the political economists of the time rather than on the history of the Liberal Party.²⁴¹ Biagini’s view on liberalism differs from some of the suggestions of earlier writers, such as D. A. Hamer, who has argued that in the late nineteenth century there was no such thing as ‘liberalism’ but that liberal politics were created by some of the leaders who managed periodically to raise some single issue or cause around which the diverse elements in liberal politics could be induced to rally. It was only when Imperialism offered a systematic and comprehensive concept that a unified party arose and it guided the conduct of Liberals in many hitherto uncoordinated areas of policy, not least a social policy different from that of Socialists.²⁴² However, taking Imperialism as a systematic concept that could provide the foundation for a programme of social reform did not suit all the Liberals. Many influential intellectuals such as John Morley opposed Imperialism on the grounds that it would increase national expenditure and consequently lead to increasing attacks on property. Quite contrary to the Liberal Imperialists’ assertions, Morley wanted a complete separation between Imperialism and social reform.²⁴³

It is difficult to ascertain where and when the Liberal party’s sympathy for the Empire first emerged. It has been suggested in numerous studies that in this respect responses to William Gladstone’s support for Irish Home Rule and the Egyptian problems seemed to have been the main sources. The public outcry caused by the death of General Gordon in 1884 deepened the lines of division between the Gladstonian Liberal Party (Gladstone was Prime Minister from 1868 to 1874, and again from 1880 to 1885) and the new Liberal Unionist coalition led by Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903. The Liberal Unionists held that economic prosperity, social reform and Imperialism were interdependent. They further believed that social reform and an active Imperialist policy could be pursued simultaneously. Despite these claims, the Liberal Unionists’ theory of Imperialism remained ill-defined. In many cases

²⁴¹ Biagini, Eugenio F., *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone 1860–1880*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, p. 4.

²⁴² Hamer, D. A., *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery. A Study in Leadership and Policy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1972, pp. xi, 42, 236, 263, 265.

²⁴³ Hamer, *John Morley*, pp. 311, 313–315.

they simply supported Conservative perceptions of the Empire but otherwise concentrated on domestic issues. In many cases they accepted this idea 'in a fit of absence of mind' without the intellectual capability to explain their cause.²⁴⁴ In fact, this type of view emphasises that Chamberlainites and Liberal Imperialists, another liberal fragment headed by Lord Rosebery, who was Prime Minister between 1894 and 1895, existed only in the field of party politics. Outside that, it consisted merely of airy nothingness. To John Morley, for example, liberal Imperialism was a mere catchword or a party impulse which was manifested only on political platforms.²⁴⁵

It has been said by G. R. Searle that the Liberal Party was a party of ideas and ideals with a programme of 'peace, retrenchment and reform' that was ill-suited to an 'Age of Imperialism'. Nevertheless, many of its major achievements took place in the late-Victorian and Edwardian years. In the years before 1885 the Radicals formed a minority group within the 'Whig-Liberal' alliance and were divided into two main groups. The 'Entrepreneurial Radicals' consisted of Capitalists in the big manufacturing cities and looked to Cobden for inspiration. 'Philosophic Radicals' drew their inspiration from the writings of the Utilitarians, especially from J. S. Mill. The latter group came from the London-oriented professional middle-class although its social background tended to get more blurred in the course of the nineteenth century. A third group of Radicals, named the 'Plebeian Radicals', formed yet another fragment within the Liberal Party. They consisted of independent craftsmen, tradesmen and small employers who were inspired by the republican ideas of Thomas Paine, Cromwell, Mazzini, Garibaldi and Lincoln.²⁴⁶ Disagreements over party objectives, especially concerning foreign politics, Irish Home Rule and later the South African War, caused divisions, and consequently, in the general elections of 1886, 1895 and 1900 Liberals were defeated by Conservatives and their Liberal Unionist allies.

Only moderate changes had occurred in the arguments of the Liberal critics of the Empire by the mid 1890s. The economic arguments based on the doctrine of free trade and philosophical reservations made in the name of democracy remained in essence similar to those expressed by Cobden and Mill. Only after the Jameson Raid of 1895 and allegations concerning Chamberlain's involvement in it, did the intellectual reservations become more profound. The sheer quantity of political writings based on the post-Gladstonian liberal critique of the Empire also increased significantly. This new critical orientation is strikingly illustrated by *Liberalism and the Empire* (1900), a collection of essays written by Francis W. Hirst, Gilbert Murray and J. L. Hammond, all of whom belonged to the younger generation of liberal intellectuals. The post-

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Bentley, Michael, *The Climax of Liberal Politics. British Liberalism in Theory and Practice, 1868-1918*, Edward Arnold, London 1987, pp. 88-90.

²⁴⁵ Morley, John, 'Liberal Principles and Imperialism'. A Speech by the Right Hon John Morley, M.P., Oxford, June 9, 1900, National Reform Union Pamphlets, Manchester 1900, pp. 4-5.

²⁴⁶ Searle, G. R., *The Liberal Party. Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929*, 2nd ed., Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York 2001, pp. 3, 6-7, 11, 14-15, 17, 19.

Gladstonian liberal critique of the Empire did not condemn it as such but the despotic methods used to rule it, the ignorance of social reform its predominance produced and the grave risks and dangers of war it brought upon Britain. Their assertion differed from that of the Little-Englanders in that they did not seek peace with the Boers at any price but tried to promote the idea of a self-governing South Africa. They also continued to cherish memories of how liberal principles and liberal ideas had raised Canada, Australia and New Zealand from the status of colonies to self-governing commonwealths.²⁴⁷

The issue of Home Rule proved the major obstacle for Liberal social reformers. Differences amongst the Liberals over foreign and imperial policy inhibited the Party from developing a domestic programme that would have placed social reform at the top of the Liberals' agenda. The Liberal Imperialists did make some efforts to develop social politics in the interests of 'National Efficiency' but these efforts proved to be in vain. But by 1903, after the South African War had ended, party unity had been restored and the Liberals were able to unite in defence of free trade which, however, once again left a social programme off the agenda.²⁴⁸ A secular intelligentsia was needed to work out a considered rationale for social reform.

This task was undertaken by those liberal groupings that came to be known as the 'New Liberals'. At first their views were circulated especially through a variety of small-circulation periodicals as well as newspapers. This method resembled that of the Entrepreneurial Radicals, who used provincial newspapers, such as the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Manchester Guardian*, as a means of mobilising opinion. But in the general election of 1906 several of these liberal-minded Cambridge and Oxford graduates, who took an interest in studying the problems of social deprivation, particularly in the East End of London, men who could speak with authority about urban problems, began to enter Parliament. In the Liberal landslide victory of 1906 ten out of twenty-five members of the Rainbow Circle were elected. The concern of the New Liberals was to define the concept of 'liberty' in more sophisticated ways and to be more social minded in their outlook. This was done in terms of economics by escaping orthodox economic theories and using the notion of 'social value' as an aid in introducing a set of newer economic theories, such as a theory of underconsumption that argued in favour of effective demand and budget policy as an instrument of social policy. These emphasis tended to make new liberalism collectivist in its outlook and even in its welfare initiatives but did not bring the New Liberals into closer relationship with the Labour Party since their lack of belief in class politics and the sectional interests, which were represented by trade unions.²⁴⁹

The three questions regarding new liberalism that have raised most interest among scholars can be listed as follows.²⁵⁰ First, how successfully did

²⁴⁷ 'Preface'. In *Liberalism and the Empire. Three Essays by Francis W. Hirst, Gilbert Murray and J. L. Hammond*, R. Brimley Johnson, London 1900, pp. v, xii, xv.

²⁴⁸ Searle, *The Liberal Party*, pp. 48-49, 53.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, 54, 57-59.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

new liberalism harmonise the older philosophical traditions with the new social needs and how coherent and persuasive an ideology was the new liberalism in fact? Second, did New Liberals make an impression on the Liberal politicians, who held power at central and local levels, or was creating the new liberalism a mere hobby of the liberal intelligentsia? Finally, was their concept of social reform acceptable to working men and women or was it just seen as paternalistic and patronising?²⁵¹

3.5 New Liberalism and Imperialism

The terms used in today's political philosophical discourse mean things to us that they did not mean to our predecessors in the nineteenth century. This is a particularly valid remark in relation to the term 'new liberalism'.²⁵² The epithet 'new' refers to the transformation of the ideology of liberalism from the mid-century philosophical radicalism to that of the liberal radicalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (c. 1893–1905).²⁵³ As the term 'liberalism' is fought over by libertarians and conservatives, and has been repeatedly condemned by communitarians, the ideology of the new liberalism or 'welfare liberalism' as Michael Freeden names it,²⁵⁴ has been analysed as an example of an ideology in which individual rights and devotion to the common good need not to be ineluctably opposed values.²⁵⁵

The New Liberals were a definite group of like-minded (middle-class) individuals who moved in similar circles and were nourished by common ideas. The press was their chief instrument of power as well as the Rainbow Circle, the Ethical societies and small groups on the periphery of the Liberal Party, such as the Political Economy Circle of the National Liberal Club which concentrated their attention on acute problems of the day such as poverty, unemployment, the 'condition of the people' and on other issues relevant to

²⁵¹ Peter Clarke has shown that in Lancashire new liberals managed successfully to combine liberalism and socialism into a coherent progressive ideology that had much to offer the working class. (Clarke, P. F., *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, London 1971) It is not, however, clear that the success of new liberals in Lancashire can be generalised to the rest of the country. Michael Freeden has pointed out that new liberalism's historical influence cannot be calculated merely in terms of electoral and party support but sees it essentially as a broad ideological and cultural phenomenon. (Freeden, Michael, 'The new liberalism and its aftermath'. In *Victorian liberalism: political thought and practice*, Richard Bellamy (ed.), Routledge, London 1990, pp. 175–176)

²⁵² Simonhy, Avital & Weinstein, D., 'Introduction: The new liberalism and liberal-communitarian debate'. In *The New Liberalism: Reconciling Liberty and Community*, Avital Simonhy & David Weinstein (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 3.

²⁵³ Freeden, *New Liberalism*, pp. 3–4, 6; Saastamoinen, Kari, *Eurooppalainen liberalism: Etiikka, talous, politiikka*, Atena Kustannus, Jyväskylä 1998, p. 161.

²⁵⁴ Freeden, 'J. A. Hobson and Welfare Liberalism', pp. 441–442.

²⁵⁵ Simonhy & Weinstein, 'Introduction: The new liberalism and liberal-communitarian debate'. In *The New Liberalism*, p. 5.

'the social problem'. To solve this problem, the New Liberals felt that a unified social science, which Hobson termed 'sociology', was needed for the rational control of man's environment. This new social science evolved from their lack of belief in the deductive nature of science and a conviction that only by an inductive sense of science could the false over-specialist type of science be overcome. They rejected atomistic individualism and concentrated on the social system as a whole. Thus, just as classical liberalism was in line with the Benthamite concept of 'utility', the New Liberals with their awareness of the 'social' developed utilitarianism to the point that the concept was reformulated in the phrase 'social utility'. These orientations led the New Liberals into the study of contemporary human life in British society as well as the British Empire. The social science of the New Liberals had common ground with British idealism and with positivism in respect of its evolutionary and developmental outlook. As with positivism, it rejected a value-free approach to the study of man and put ethics on a scientific basis. The objective of the New Liberals was the radical social reform of British society²⁵⁶ and even, as will be shown, the relationship with the colonies. This was done by overcoming the nineteenth century liberal hostility to the state.

British idealism has been considered one of the elements of the late nineteenth century progressive movement in ideology, philosophy, economics, science and politics. Freedden holds that idealism provided the emotional atmosphere in which to study social problems but little intellectual justification for the actual work of social reform.²⁵⁷ David Boucher and Andrew Vincent have pointed out, however, that British idealism is also worth considering in its own right and that it did in fact engage in a constructive dialogue with the other radical ideologies of the period. One of the most striking elements in British idealism is its contribution to the practical life. Idealists showed the unity of theory and practice and the relevance of philosophy to social problems. In their social outlook Idealists varied from utilitarianist individualism to organic collectivism, and as with the New Liberals they tended to regard society as a social organism. Boucher and Vincent have also maintained that unlike the New Liberals, Idealists did not believe that individuals owed the state blind obedience but that the state was a moral absolute only if it promoted the common good.²⁵⁸ It seems that Boucher and Vincent have exaggerated the New Liberals' views on the extent to which the individual should show obedience to the state. Individual freedom of choice or even the right to revolt was never questioned by New Liberals such as Hobson. Their ultimate belief in freedom and individuality is exactly the very element in new liberalism that makes it a liberal ideology and separates it from the socialist and conservative ideologies of the time.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ I am indebted to Michael Freedden for these formulations. (Freedden, *New Liberalism*, pp. 3-4, 6, 8-10, 13-14)

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.

²⁵⁸ Boucher, David & Vincent, Andrew, *British Idealism and Political Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2000, pp. 1, 3, 10-12.

²⁵⁹ This point is further discussed in the concluding chapter.

However, in many respects the New Liberals shared the same political ideals as the Idealists. Both believed that liberalism had a duty to raise all members of society to a civilised condition of life. The strongest disagreement concerned the desirable level of state intervention. As with the New Liberals, Idealists held that true individuality was only possible when expressed through the state and that there was no absolute opposition between the individual and the state. In fact, British Idealism offered a much needed social cohesiveness between individual and collective responsibility at a time when active social citizenship became an important theme in politics and welfare theory.²⁶⁰

The Rainbow Circle and Imperialism

The monthly Rainbow Circle meetings aimed to provide 'a rational and comprehensive view of political and social progress, leading up to a consistent body of political and economic doctrine which could be ultimately formulated in a programme for action' in social reform work.²⁶¹ The discussions and debates were arranged in sessions whose themes lucidly illustrate the evolving orientations of the Circle.²⁶²

In its first session 'The Old Manchesterism and The New Radicalism' (November 1894–June 1895) the Circle rejected the previous radical emphasis on individualism and oriented itself towards ethical collectivism in order to define the relationship between the state and the individual in a fuller way.²⁶³ The Circle esteemed a progressive policy in social matters more highly than previously in liberal tradition.²⁶⁴ First, it was agreed that the perception of the individual as independent of society was false. Second, following Hobson's suggestion, it was decided that their economics should be developed in conjunction with the ideas of Ruskin. 'Economics of the quantitative kind must be supplemented by economics of the qualitative kind.'²⁶⁵ Finally, the discussions of the first session could be summarised as saying that formal political democracy was not sufficient by itself to secure good government but that a solution for the problems of the production of wealth was needed.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ Boucher & Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory*, pp. 12–13, 21–22.

²⁶¹ Freedon, 'Introduction'. In *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924*, p. 1.

²⁶² Of these meetings and debates the Circle kept minute books of which four (from 1894 to 1924) have survived to the present day. The Rainbow Circle minutes and papers are kept at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London. There is an edited version of the minutes available (*Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924*, Michael Freedon [ed.], Camden Fourth Series, vol. 38, Offices of the Royal Historical Society, London 1989). I am quoting here from the original Rainbow Circle minute book if not stated otherwise.

²⁶³ Minute 1, 7 November, 1894, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁶⁴ Haldane, R. B., 'The New Liberalism', *Progressive Review*, vol. I, no. 2 (November, 1896), p. 139.

²⁶⁵ Minute 2, 5 December, 1894, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁶⁶ Minute 8, Summary of the discussions of the first session, 19 June, 1895, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP. Cf. Minute 3, 9 January, 1895, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

In the following four sessions the Circle concentrated on defining their social and economic theory. It was felt that the socialist bodies had no complete or self-sufficient theory of government, and this left the task to the New Liberals.²⁶⁷ The new liberal social theory was based on the idea of evolution but its view was not biological, because biology was believed to have no role to play in the development of social forces.²⁶⁸ Despite these commonly shared orientations unanimous conclusions were usually not achieved due to the ideologically heterogeneous backgrounds of the members.²⁶⁹

The ideological foundations of the Circle are perhaps most clearly exemplified in the two sessions concentrating on political thinkers.²⁷⁰ In conjunction with the philosophy of history of Vico, there was wide speculation over whether British society had already reached its human or democratic stage after which point the nation should either decay or to be conquered and return to the stage of religion and barbarity.²⁷¹

Hobbes was regarded as a father of modern democracy though not of liberalism. His view of society was considered too mechanical and consequently it lacked an organic outlook.²⁷² Rousseau had realised that natural rights needed to be complemented by the ethical idea of all men's duties to each other. In Rousseau it was important to realise that morality is not given but obtained by struggle. Many of the New Liberals shared his view of the immorality of extremes of wealth and poverty. Rousseau was even credited with discerning the germ of the idea that society is an organism.²⁷³ Of contemporary British thinkers, J. S. Mill seemed to contribute most to the Circle's theory of government whereas Herbert Spencer's atomic individualism was considered as a harmful political principle.²⁷⁴ Although Bentham was respected for his willingness to reform society and for his teaching abilities, his anti-Imperialism and his support for free trade, it was felt that he had not got to the bottom of the moral problems.²⁷⁵

German Idealism and Marxism appealed to the Circle members only to a limited degree. Hegel had shown that liberty is not to be obtained apart from the state, but only through the state. However, in terms of practical politics he was considered merely as one of the Prussian Junkers. Marxism was considered to be as much a matter of temperament as of theory. Marx himself had unduly simplified the nature of surplus value by making it emerge exclusively from labour power instead of the joint action of all the factors in production.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁷ Minute 10, 6 November, 1895, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁶⁸ Minute 9, 2 October, 1895, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁶⁹ See, for example, discussion followed Hobson's paper on individual and state property. Minute 16, 6 May, 1896, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁷⁰ Sessions seven (November 1900–June 1901) and eight (October 1901–June 1902), Coll Misc 545/1-2, RCP.

²⁷¹ Minute 64, October 2, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁷² Minute 60, March 6, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁷³ Minute 61, March 21, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁷⁴ Minute 71, May 14 1902; minute 72, June 4, 1902, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁷⁵ Minute 62, May 1, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁷⁶ Minute 70, April 9, 1902, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

The heated disagreements concerning the question of British Imperialism originated in 1896. The minutes of the Circle reveal how the anti-Imperialism of Hobson and Clarke, who shared the editorship of the *Progressive Review*, led to distrust and lack of support from the other members of the Circle. They also reveal how the diverse political and ideological aspirations of the members shaped their views on Imperialism. The two big issues of the day were whether the British Empire was rightly or wrongly won and whether it was a profitable or unprofitable possession. Imperialists, who included William Pember Reeves (1857–1932) and Herbert Samuel (1870–1963), formed the majority in the Circle until the end of the South African War.²⁷⁷ The dissenting views were represented by Hobson and Clarke who found themselves in opposition. As Clarke explained his and Hobson's position:

‘The real crux of politics is not going to be Socialism & anti-Socialism, but Jingoism and anti-Jingoism. It is well for the directors to know that Hobson & I take strong views on this, & that we are dead against Jingoism in every form (in the form of a huge navy & of an aggressive policy), & that we should make the P.R. anti-Jingo. [...]’²⁷⁸

William Clarke (1852–1901), a Cambridge graduate, free thinker and writer, can be regarded as one of the most influential mentors of Hobson. Clarke's early death in Mostar, Herzegovina in 1901 while travelling in the country together with his friends, Herbert Burrows, the Reverend A. L. Lilley and Hobson, was a severe blow for the latter. In an obituary on Clarke, published in the *New Age* under the pseudonym ‘Nemo’ (presumably Hobson), his political thinking was described as ‘Radical Quakerism’. Clarke derived his inspiration from the writings of Mazzini, Henry George and Whitman and though he became a Fabian member yet he never really felt comfortable in the Society. In particular his emphasis on democracy, Christianity and anti-Imperialism severed him from the main stream of Fabian socialism. Clarke's revolutionary thoughts made the leading British journals and papers of little use to him thus transferring his focus to the radical papers. Of these the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Progressive Review*, the *Spectator*, *Reynolds's Newspaper* and the *New Age* were the papers which Clarke contributed most. The *New Age* in particular under the editorship of E. A. Fletcher, the former editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, proved significant for Clarke's career as a free thinker and radical.²⁷⁹ Herbert Burrows, who together with Hobson edited his collection of writings published in 1908, mentioned in a biographical sketch that Clarke was known for his opposition to militarism and that he blamed the Jews for the war in South Africa.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ See, for example, Reeves, W. P., ‘The Nation's Duties to the Empire’. In *Good Citizenship. A Book of Twenty-three Essays by Various Authors on Social, Personal, and Economic Problems and Obligations*, J. E. Hand (ed.), George Allen, London 1899, pp. 259–277. ‘He must be a strange kind of Anglo-Saxon who does not believe that it will be better for humanity in general, and our own race in particular, that the Empire should hold together, and be a united force in days to come for peace and social progress.’ (*op. cit.*, pp. 266–267)

²⁷⁸ Clarke to Macdonald, n. d. but 1896. Quoted in Porter, *Critics of Empire*, p. 165.

²⁷⁹ Nemo, ‘William Clarke’, *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 346 (May 16, 1901), pp. 313–314.

²⁸⁰ Ironically, Clarke was buried between a soldier and a Jew. (Burrows, Herbert,

John Mackinnon Robertson (1856–1933), the social and economic theorist and Liberal MP under the Liberal Government of 1906, was along with Clarke and Hobson one of the few members who held clearly negative views about Imperialism. He was an author and politician whose contribution to the evolution of British radical thinking was significant but is less known compared with that of many other social reformers of the day. Robertson started his journalist career as editor of Charles Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* but when it floundered in 1893 he founded the *Free Review*, which he edited until 1895. During the 1890s Robertson became increasingly involved with ethical and radical causes in London and mingled with many of those progressive groupings who were defining progressive secular politics.²⁸¹

Hobson's first personal contact with Robertson was at a Liberal soirée, presumably at the Political Economy Circle of the National Liberal Club, where he gave an address on the subject of over-saving in the early 1890s. At the time Hobson was not aware that the argument of *The Physiology of Industry* had in large part been anticipated by an essay of Robertson's which was subsequently published with the title *The Fallacy of Saving* (1892). In his book Robertson showed considerable acceptance to Hobson's and Mummery's line of argument even if they differed in the method of approach; Hobson's and Mummery's was 'empirical' while his was 'logical'. However, Robertson went further in his argument when he maintained that 'it is not quantity but *kind* of consumption, the setting up a continuous demand which shall withdraw labour from the fatally easy fruitions of the mechanical manufacture of common necessities, that will prevent chronic depression of trade'. Anticipating Hobson's arguments Robertson continued that 'such ever-rising standard of demand, it is obvious, is impossible without such a restraint of the rate of increase of population as shall give scope for the play of the higher and subtler needs

'Biographical Sketch; His later years'. In Clarke, William, *A Collection of His Writings*, Herbert Burrows & John A. Hobson [eds.], Swan Sonnenschein, London 1908, p. xxiv) Herbert Burrows was a civil servant, an official in the Inland Revenue Department, until he retired in 1907. He was born in a Suffolk village in the 1840s and became a non-collegiate student in Cambridge but did not take a degree. In 1877 Burrows went to London where he joined radical and ethical clubs, including the South Place Ethical Society, and, under the influence of Annie Besant, turned to Theosophy. According to Hobson, Burrows was 'a committed Socialist'. (Bevir, Mark, 'Burrows, Herbert (1845–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, October, 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39607>, accessed 15 Oct 2007])

²⁸¹ Michael Freeden says in a biographical sketch that Robertson was one of those self-taught men in late-Victorian British politics whose wit and energy mattered more than academic honours. (Freeden, Michael, 'Robertson, John Mackinnon (1856–1933)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35783>, accessed 16 Oct 2007]; Herrick, Jim, 'John Mackinnon Robertson (1856–1933): A Biographical Introduction'. In *J.M. Robertson (1856–1933). Liberal, Rationalist, & Scholar*, G. A. Wells (ed.), Pemberton, London 1987, pp. 11–30. For a detailed discussion of Robertson's life-work see Tame, Chris R., 'J. M. Robertson: The Critical Liberal'. In *op. cit.*, pp. 93–122.

without fatal encroachment on the part of the simpler and lower.'²⁸² The merit of Robertson's argument lay in the fact that it carried economics into sociology.

In the 1890s, when Hobson lived in London, the two saw a great deal of one another outside and inside the arena of public controversy usually spending their time discussing economic topics.²⁸³ However, the two Radical thinkers had probably most common in their attitudes to Imperialism. In Robertson's *Patriotism and Empire*, which was published in October, 1899, Imperialism was associated with patriotism, which had conventionally been defined as love of country, but stood now for 'love of more country'. As Hobson did, Robertson distinguished between 'true' or 'sane' Imperialism on the one hand, which meant ruling colonies for their own good, and 'false' or 'bad' Imperialism which meant expansionism. Empire was one thing and Imperialism another since the latter stood for an ideal, which did not merely accept empire and made the best of it, but held that the pursuit of empire might be a scientifically advisable course. There was also a conspiratorial aspect in Robertson's theory. He saw that the only interests that really furthered expansion in South Africa were those of the speculative capitalist class.²⁸⁴

Robertson's own experience of Imperialism was in South Africa where he was on a commission from the *Morning Leader* to report on the workings of martial law in the summer and autumn of 1900. His letters, written for the newspaper in Cape Colony and Natal, were published under the pseudonym 'Scrutator' and subsequently were published in a book entitled *Wrecking the Empire* (1901).²⁸⁵ His reports on the looting and burning Boer farms and the killing of captives were attacked by the London press as 'absolutely untrue', 'reckless accusations', 'perverse imputations' or 'slander' and the writer himself was accused of 'moral treason' and the betrayal of his country.²⁸⁶

The ideal state for anti-Imperialists like Hobson, Clarke and Robertson was, in accordance with the ideas of Aristotle, a small state, not 'an amorphous mass like London,' still less an empire.²⁸⁷ According to St. Augustine, empire was a trust and duty delegated by God, not a natural right.²⁸⁸ Dante's aim in the three books of *De Monarchia* was a permanent moral and political unity. However, in Dante's words, empire must rely on a moral basis as well as on

²⁸² Robertson, John M., *The Fallacy of Saving. A Study in Economics*, Swan Sonnenschein, London 1892, pp. 113-114. Robertson's italics. See also Kadish, Alon, 'The Non-Canonical Context of *The Physiology of Industry*'. In J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years, pp. 70-72. In his article Kadish shows that the theories of underconsumption and overproduction were widely discussed in late nineteenth century Britain. (*loc. cit.*)

²⁸³ Hobson, John A., 'Appreciations'. In Robertson, J. M., *A History of Freethought. Ancient and Modern to the Period of the French Revolution*, vol. I, Watts & Co., London 1936, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

²⁸⁴ Robertson, John M., *Patriotism and Empire*, 2nd ed., Grant Richards, London 1900 (1899), pp. 138, 143-145, 187. Robertson's italics.

²⁸⁵ Gilmour, P. J., 'John Mackinnon Robertson (1856-1933)'. In Robertson, *A History of Freethought*, p. ix.

²⁸⁶ Robertson, J. M., *Wrecking the Empire*, Grant Richards, London 1901, pp. vii, xix.

²⁸⁷ Minute 55, November 7, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁸⁸ Minute 56, December 5, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

force.²⁸⁹ It was Machiavelli, who ultimately had severed the link between politics and ethics.²⁹⁰

Clarke held that the Roman Empire was a type of Imperial state whose policy showed the incompatibility of Imperialism and democracy. 'An empire won & held by the sword & composed of different races must deteriorate social morality in the imperial people.' Thus, the most serious argument against Imperialism was that it sapped the moral freedom which was necessary to sanction political freedom. Those in favour of imperial expansion pointed out, however, that it was quite possible for the British to govern themselves according to one set of political principles and other races according to another.²⁹¹

The majority of the Circle members felt that the spirit of the times was such that Britain should own as much of the earth's surface as possible, and that it was the duty of the British to see that what they had colonised was well governed.²⁹² Despite this orientation, further acquisitions, especially in the tropics, were resented. It was held by the critics that the establishment of law and order was not sufficient justification for Imperialism but that the Imperial Government must also show that it was capable of making progress possible.²⁹³

However, there was a consensus amongst most of the members that between Britain and its colonies there was 'a bond of moral responsibility - a kind of imperial strength which no other empire had enjoyed'. Furthermore, it was believed that compared to previous commercial and military enterprises, the British Empire had 'a racial nation-producing quality'.²⁹⁴

In relation to progressivism, a policy of rational patriotism was considered the best.²⁹⁵ Some of the members even proposed a form of 'Progressive Imperialism' to link the Empire and social reform.²⁹⁶ Those who held Imperialist opinions were condemned by Hobson and Clarke, because of the impossibility of fitting a democratic system and social reform into a programme of Imperialism and expansion. In Hobson's words:

'The present temper & ideals of the country made reform in democratic machinery impossible & blocked the way of social reform; they tended to concentrate autocratic power in the hands of the few completely removed from democratic control, but as completely under the thumb of certain pernicious social influences. The yielding of certain progressives to imperialism is one of the worst features of present day politics. The public morality is being degraded by crooked appeals to false ideals of right & wrong; & an unscientific & harmful political method of judging every expansive step on "its own merits" is being upheld. So long as the present spirit lasts there can be no robust progressive party.'²⁹⁷

²⁸⁹ Minute 58, January 2, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁹⁰ Minute 59, February 6, 1901, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

²⁹¹ Minute 48, November 1, 1899, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁹² Minute 39, November 17, 1898; Minute 52, April 11, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1.

²⁹³ Minute 53, May 2, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁹⁴ Minute 47, October 4, 1899, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁹⁵ Minute 45, May 3, 1899, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁹⁶ Minute 50, January 17, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

²⁹⁷ Minute 46, June 7, 1899, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

Hobson's thesis of Imperialism is one of social pathology.²⁹⁸ In the field of politics Hobson's purpose was to outline a possible programme for a Progressive Party. His progressive policy can be divided under three interlocking headings: constitutional reform, social reform, and the reform of colonial policy. Failure to take account of the importance of the third group, made the work for democracy and social reform futile. The policy of expansion of the Empire checked constitutional progress as it corrupted the political nature of the existing forms of popular government by substituting the will of the people for the will of a small bureaucracy. Since every important reform attacked vested interests which were to get some direct advantage out of expansion, Imperialism formed the eternal enemy of this progressive policy.²⁹⁹

Hobson claimed that one of the fundamental mistakes which the Englishman made was to believe that law and order upheld by coercion meant civilisation, and that his 'constitutional lack of sympathy blinds him to the great evils wrought by his benevolent intentions'. As Hobson suggested:

'The dangers of Imperialism to the Imperialist state are many. Revolt, envy, stagnation at home are the most important. Regarding the plea of inevitability [*sic*], a vicious policy & motive must of course lead to a vicious end, & in this respect we should be very careful how we offer unconditional protection to missionaries & traders abroad, & how far we should permit international politics to be guided by international financiers.'³⁰⁰

After the South African War, the atmosphere of the Circle became more open to accepting anti-Imperialism. India and South Africa were both regarded as examples of badly governed countries.³⁰¹ Hobson saw only two ways of keeping South Africa in the Empire. One was 'to grant complete autonomy & to allow the financial ring & the Boers to keep the black majority in practical slavery, & deprived of justice & equality before the law'. The other was 'to keep [a] large army in South Africa to support [the] rule of the monopolist ring against Boers, blacks, & considerable section of the British settlers'. After the war South Africa's situation had only worsened, because 'a little ring of capitalists, chiefly Jews and British aristocrats', who controlled the chief industry and wealth of the country, were freed from all real restraint and fear of competition.³⁰² It was even suggested that, because it was doubtful if the British really were benefiting 'the tropical races' whom they governed, the nature of political authority should be re-considered altogether.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp. v-vi.

²⁹⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'A Progressive Policy', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 246 (June 15, 1899), pp. 329-330.

³⁰⁰ Minute 54, May 30, 1900, Coll Misc 545/1, RCP.

³⁰¹ Minute 82, October 14, 1903, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

³⁰² Minute 83, November 11, 1903, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

³⁰³ Minute 88, April 13, 1904, Coll Misc 545/2, RCP.

The Ethical Societies and Imperialism

The outbreak of the South African War in 1899 brought the British into conflict with another Christian nation for the first time since the Crimean War. It also brought many prominent New Liberals into contact with both the Secular Movement and the Protestant Nonconformity that formed the two major propounders of ethical-Christian criticism of the war as well as broader liberal critiques of both the Empire and the Imperial state. As the newspapers and periodicals of the late-Victorian era were moulding as well as conveying the opinions of the readers, it was a logical outcome that they also raised questions about how far the civil rights and moral codes of British society should also be applied to the colonial peoples of the Empire and to the war in South Africa itself.³⁰⁴

The New Liberals, who had rebelled over the war, consisted of men who were primarily interested in perfecting the machinery of democracy, for the attainment of social progress upon lines essentially harmonious with the Labour Movement. Both bodies recognised aggressive Imperialism as 'the deadly enemy of all social reforms. Together with Hobson,³⁰⁵ some of the Socialist leaders such as John C. Kenworthy, a representative of the Christian Socialist Society,³⁰⁶ and ethicists such as Stanton Coit³⁰⁷ made similar proposals for co-operation but nothing came of all this activity.

The Ethical Societies' understanding of ethics was not ineluctably anti-war by nature. In the *Reformer* (1897-1904), a monthly journal edited by Hypatia Bradlaugh-Bonner, an ethical-Christian criticism of colonialism was outlined which suggested that Christianity or civilising humanitarianism were not the actual reasons for Britain's colonising efforts and that these were really pursued for politico-economic gains. Christianity had influenced Britain's colonial policy only rhetorically while in reality many atrocious punitive wars against the natives had been waged in the colonies. In fact, the missionary activities in New Zealand had caused dishonesty among the Maoris, who were once described by J. A. Froude in his *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* (1886) as 'brave, honourable and chivalrous' but had adopted Christian doctrines only in so far as they seemed good to them and had fallen back on 'hybrid worship'. In theory, it was claimed that the clash between higher cultures and lower was a stimulus for the former and a prerequisite for the development of the latter. But in reality, while the civilisation and colonisation of regions were a triumph for Christianity, the decline in population and the spread of social and physical diseases produced devastating results among the newly Christianised

³⁰⁴ Nash, David, 'Taming the God of Battles. Secular and Moral Critiques of the South African War'. In Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh & Mary-Lynn Suttie (eds.), *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, Ohio University Press, Athens 2002, pp. 266-268.

³⁰⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'A New Party. Suggested Political Alliance.', *Echo*, 15.10.1901, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Kenworthy, John C., 'A New Party. A Moral Dynamic.', *Echo*, 19.10.1901, p. 2.

³⁰⁷ See above pp. 45-46.

peoples.³⁰⁸ Despite this criticism, the supremacy of Britain as a colonising and exploiting power was by no means at stake.

In the *Ethical World* the problem of the Empire was regarded as a problem of ethics in as far as 'Imperialism is the embodiment of the claim of a nation to a right to spread moral government throughout the world.' However, as a political method Imperialism's legitimacy was to be tested in terms of self-government, which was considered essential to progress.³⁰⁹ National idealism formed the core of ethical patriotism at the time of the South African War. It was felt that an absence of patriotism meant death to democracy and the triumph of autocracy and military despotism. In this respect the *Ethical World* was wholly pro-British. Ethicists protested against the Conservative Government in power and condemned the South African War.³¹⁰ This they did for the sake of the British Empire.

In the matters of Empire the basic *Ethical World* demand was for 'democratisation' and this required: 1) No new acquisition of territory. 2) Conservation of existing native organisations. 3) Prohibition of forced labour. 4) Abolition of the Chartered Companies. 5) Establishment of free, self-governing native populations when possible. 6) Resistance to the militaristic tendencies of Imperialism.³¹¹

The *Ethical World's* ethnological concerns, which sprang from its ethicism, clashed with Bernstein's internationalism and D. G. Ritchie's idealism both of which broadly and emotionally approved of Imperialism.³¹² Bernstein insisted that internationalism and Imperialism were not inevitably opposite values. He saw that international feeling was only possible to accomplish between races which had already achieved a certain level of civilisation. The colonial system was needed to form contacts with the 'less civilised races'.³¹³ Bernstein's insistence upon 'Progressive Imperialism'³¹⁴ was rejected by the more fiercely minded Socialists, G. H. Perris and J. Ramsay MacDonald who considered Bernstein's Imperialism just another form of political opportunism like Liberal Imperialism.³¹⁵ MacDonald and Perris found 'that Imperialism is simply the largest outreaching of that despotic and capitalist spirit which is the Eternal enemy of Socialism or Democracy'. However, they had 'no wish to give the

³⁰⁸ Gilmour, J. P., 'British Christianity and Colonisation', *Reformer*, vol. I, no. 9 (November 15, 1897), pp. 253-256; *Ibid.*, vol. I, no. 10 (December 15, 1897), pp. 289-290. See also Froude, James Anthony, *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies*, Longmans, London 1894 (1886), pp. 233ff.

³⁰⁹ MacDonald, J. R., 'Ethics and Empire', *Ethics*, vol. IV, no. 51 (December 21, 1901), p. 638.

³¹⁰ Coit, Stanton, 'For Love of England', *Democracy*, vol. IV, no. 2 (January 12, 1901), pp. 18-19.

³¹¹ Cf. Mckillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, pp. 156-162.

³¹² Mckillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, pp. 156-162.

³¹³ Bernstein, Edward, 'Imperialism a Legacy. A Rejoinder', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 21 (May 26, 1900), pp. 325-326.

³¹⁴ Bernstein, Edward, 'Democracy and Imperialism', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 19 (May 12, 1900), pp. 292-293.

³¹⁵ Perris, G. H., 'Imperialism - and the Alternative', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 20 (May 19, 1900), p. 309; Macdonald, J. R., Comment on Bernstein's article 'Imperialism and Democracy', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 20 (May 19, 1900), p. 319.

Imperialist dog any worse name than that which he [Bernstein] has given himself.'³¹⁶ With their emotional reaction critically minded Radicals had become 'Jingoes of anti-Jingoes'.³¹⁷

3.6 Liberalism or Imperialism?

According to Hobson's analysis party politics formed a direct threat to democracy. This was because the party machine discouraged people from thinking or feeling for themselves. Politicians were not chosen by the free voice of the people, but were imposed upon them by the 'bosses', the speculative class of financiers. The party organisation was, however, needed because it enabled 'good men' to hamper the conspiracy of 'bad men'.³¹⁸

In his critique of the Liberal Party's imperial policy Hobson leaned on John Morley's authority. Hobson considered the liberal imperial politics as hypocritical. A large section of the Liberal Party rejected the policy of further territorial expansion *per se*. However, despite these benevolent liberal beliefs and intentions, the examples of Egypt and the Sudan contradicted these. The anti-imperial policy of Morley embodied 'a general repudiation of all further increase of British territory, whether under the title of empire, colony, suzerainty, sphere of influence, or lease, on the broad grounds that all such further increase endangers and enfeebles the political, economic, and moral character of Great Britain, and disables her from doing her best work in the world'. The expansion in different parts of Africa and Asia were evidences of 'a root fallacy which interprets British greatness and British progress in quantitative terms of territory and population'. In the context of the so-called 'Khaki' elections in October 1900 Hobson feared that Liberals were in danger of falling into the latest of 'Rhodesian traps'.³¹⁹

'If these Liberal members and candidates give way, they simply sell their principles and the future of their party to Satan for the chance of a few years of weak and miserable political existence, earning the contempt and disgust of their more earnest and far-sighted followers.'³²⁰

At the close of the war Hobson became increasingly pessimistic about the future of the Liberal Party when he found that his previous guides, Morley and Bryce among others, were supporting the incorporation of the Boers into the Empire.

³¹⁶ Macdonald, J. R., 'Imperialism' (to the Editors of the *Ethical World*); Perris, G. H., 'Imperialism' (to the Editors of the *Ethical World*), *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 22 (June 2, 1900), p. 350. Quotations taken from Perris's reply.

³¹⁷ Bernstein, 'Imperialism a Legacy. A Rejoinder', p. 326.

³¹⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'The Machine in the Politics', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 2 (January 13, 1900), p. 24.

³¹⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Issue of Expansion', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 227 (February 2, 1899), pp. 25-26.

³²⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'The Politician and His Soul', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 24 (June 16, 1900), p. 371.

To him, this was an act of treason, not only against the Liberal Party but against liberal principles.³²¹

For the Liberals commitment to the South African War was first of all a moral question and could be explained in terms of philanthropy. Hobson believed that philanthropy was only an excuse that made a policy of expansion possible in South Africa.³²² However, the Liberals' moral dilemma, with which they entered the late 1890s, could be explained in terms of politics. The Liberals were 'moral anarchists' who changed their point of view whenever it suited them best. 'What he [a Liberal politician] says to himself is this: "Well, this is a bad business; but if we get through it, we might as well make something out of it; the people must have something to show for the blood and money they have spent; and, if we try to baulk them of the spoils, they will turn on us and rend us."' ³²³

Hobson feared that if the Liberals were going to sell their souls for seats it would have been the end of the Liberal Party.³²⁴ In 'Liberalism or Imperialism?', a series of articles published in the *New Age* in 1899, Hobson set out to test the assertion that Imperialism was consistent with the liberal principles; popular government, peace, retrenchment, and reform. At the turn of the century, only one seventh of the population of the British Empire enjoyed local self-government. Furthermore, the ongoing Imperial expansion in Africa and Asia was confined to territories upon whose population British had no intention of conferring self-government. Imperialism, thus, far from promoting or securing popular government, denied it alike in theory and in practice.³²⁵

The colonial reality was to be seen for example in India where popular government tended to degenerate into oligarchy: '[...] we find in India a tyrannical oligarchy of soldiers and officials actively engaged in stifling the very breath of liberty by gagging the press and repressing the rights of public meeting, while the tender plants of local self-government, which more genial minds had planted in the past, are being starved or uprooted by a sterner official *régime*.' These same 'reactionary vices of illiberalism' were to found in the Crown Colonies as was proved by Mary Kingsley's travel descriptions from West Africa. It seemed that Colonial Secretary Chamberlain, the stoutest advocate of Liberal imperial policy, was now intending to take power from the colonial governments and to concentrate it in Downing Street.³²⁶

Self-governing principles were swiftly changed into a more autocratic style. 'Britons, when the social support of equality, furnished by ordinary civic life, is removed, degenerate rapidly into autocrats of a pronounced type; the

³²¹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Last Chance for a Liberal Party', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 380 (January 9, 1902), p. 24.

³²² Hobson, J. A., 'The White Man's Burden', *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 7 (February 18, 1899), p. 104.

³²³ Hobson, J. A., 'Liberal Apostates', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 15 (April 14, 1900), p. 225.

³²⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'The Politician and His Soul', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 24 (June 16, 1900), p. 371.

³²⁵ J. A. H., 'Liberalism or Imperialism? I. - Popular Government', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 231 (March 2, 1899), pp. 84-85.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

position of supremacy in which they are often placed, while young men, as army officers, magistrates, or industrial managers, ripens all those vices of savagery which are latent in every civilised man.' Hobson feared that hordes of retired colonial officials and officers and speculators would rush to enter Parliament and make a reform morality impossible. After a period of colonial or imperial service, the Anglo-Indian official or the African millionaire brought back to Britain the habits of life and the character and interests he has acquired abroad. This return of the 'Nabob' (*i.e.* a capitalist, who had made his fortune in the Orient) might well prove to be the 'veritable nemesis of empire.' In Parliament they constitute a permanent barrier to social reforms. Hence, Imperialism was the enemy of popular government because it meant autocratic centralised government.³²⁷

In Britain itself, the size and complexity of the British Empire had visibly and rapidly broken the spirit of democracy in the British constitution. Hobson argued that the burden of Empire disturbed the centre of gravity in a state. When the public energies were absorbed in the 'rapacious arts of territorial expansion', home and local government affairs were reduced to insignificance compared with colonial affairs. High politics demanded 'swift, secret, treacherous, high-handed methods', which belonged rather to a close official oligarchy, not to a democracy. Thus, the maxim 'Live openly!' was patently impossible for Imperialism. Hobson's argument ran that an oligarchy of statesmen and officials was influenced by a series of social, political, professional, and financial forces, which organised interests at home and abroad brought to bear upon them. In Egypt, in South Africa, in China, and elsewhere, financiers and trading adventures sought to use the purse and the arm of the Government in order to secure for themselves opportunities for profitable speculation. Paradoxically, it seemed that the "man on the spot", the official, the soldier, the frontier trader, or the missionary was the determinant factor in public policy. This created the utmost dangers for British democracy.³²⁸

As Cobden believed, the first aim of liberalism was to uphold peace in Europe and in the world. The most serviceable means of promoting peace was the economic bond among nations. Militarism was an alien way of securing peace and commerce for liberalism. Yet the Liberals of the late 1890s were endorsing militarism partly from a lack of clear ideas of Cobdenism and partly from the pressure of 'certain strong interests' seeking an immediate private gain at the expense of the public. Hobson especially suspected that the Open Door policy of the late 1890s was leading Liberals into becoming supporters of militarism. Armaments were used to force doors open as well as to prevent other nations from closing them.³²⁹

It was wiser, under these circumstances, to raise the effective demand of the home market rather than to uphold risky colonial trade.

³²⁷ J. A. H., 'Liberalism or Imperialism? II. - Popular Government (contd.)', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 232 (March 9, 1899), p. 100.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'Liberalism or Imperialism? Peace.', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 233 (March 16, 1899), p. 116.

'A Policy of domestic progress which raises the economic standard of life for the working classes, increasing the effective demand they exercise for the conveniences and comforts of life, will furnish far better and more reliable markets than can be won by tricking savage chieftains into commercial treaties which they do not understand, or forcibly annexing new islands in order to push cheap cotton cloth, rum, guns, and Bibles on naked islanders.'³³⁰

The willingness to abandon the principle of Retrenchment and to increase armaments signified the illiberal tendency of the time. With a close investigation of the statistics showing the expenditure on armaments, Hobson concluded that the expense of armaments was regularly and consistently growing.³³¹ However, the final cause of antagonism between Imperialism and liberalism proved to be the policy of reform. 'The satisfaction of coarse animal sensationalism and rapacious instincts, not merely diverts the mind of masses, but worse still, it saps and corrupts the primal elements of pity and fairness, which are the sources of reform energy.'³³² The choice between social reforms and imperial expansion formed the most perplexing problem British liberalism had yet seen.

3.7 Collectivism in British Politics

Whether a set of ideas are to be characterised as 'liberal' or 'socialist' is always a matter of definition when it comes to late nineteenth and the early twentieth century collectivism in Britain.³³³ If left in their unreconstructed form, these concepts can be rather misleading guides to British intellectual life at the turn of the century. In fact, as Stefan Collini has stressed, far too often preoccupations with current controversies have been allowed to affect judgements about the past. Thus when it comes to the principles of individualism and collectivism it is essential to recapture what contemporaries thought that they were discussing.³³⁴

The first in Britain to accept the organic concept of society was the early Christian Socialist Movement which derived its philosophy from Coleridge, Carlyle, the French Communists and the revelations of Chartism. Furthermore, the anti-Corn-Law agitation of Cobden has been mentioned in relation to collectivism because agitation for free trade paved the way for other demands for freedom in industry. Even J. S. Mill contributed to collectivism as he

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³³¹ Hobson, J. A., 'Liberalism or Imperialism? Retrenchment.', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 234 (March 23, 1899), p. 139.

³³² Hobson, J. A., 'Liberalism or Imperialism? Reform.', *New Age*, vol. IX, no. 235 (March 30, 1899), p. 148.

³³³ In the late nineteenth century Britain the term 'collectivism' referred to measures passed by both Liberal and Conservative governments which provided benefits on the working class population. In the early twentieth century it began to be employed in describing types of public enterprise in such utilities such as water and gas. (See Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, p. 70)

³³⁴ Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 1-4, 8, 14.

developed the doctrine of utilitarianism and modified the earlier political economy to make it more 'social' in its outlook. However, the economics and sociology of John Ruskin were the chief defences of progressive social movements in the late nineteenth century Britain. Ruskin's ideas of wealth and consumption were applied to the economics and politics of some of the Socialists as well as those of the Idealists. Like Hobson they contributed to the transition from quantitative to qualitative consumption. While the critics of collectivism, such as for example Bernard Bosanquet and the economist W. H. Mallock, put some serious arguments against collectivist devices, the overall outlook of late nineteenth century British social philosophy remained strongly collectivist.³³⁵

In turning to consider the contemporary understanding of collectivism, it is apparent that it cannot be disentangled from socialism. Up to the 1880s the comparative absence of socialism from British politics is striking. However, in the early 1880s the situation quickly altered, and numerous, often pejorative definitions of socialism quickly made their appearance in British political thought. Collini has categorised these meanings as implying:

- 1) A radically different conception of society.
- 2) The ideal of the cooperative society.
- 3) Class warfare and proletarian revolution.
- 4) The nationalisation of the means of production.
- 5) The redistribution of wealth.³³⁶

Moreover, socialism varied in 'moral', 'economic' and 'progressive radical' responses. The Progressive Radicals shared the general inspiration of socialism but rejected its methods for solving economic problems. It considered socialism a development of liberalism under new conditions. Thus the term 'radicalism' referred no longer to 'peace, retrenchment and reform' but to a policy of social reform which was to a greater or lesser extent collectivist.³³⁷

In the early 1880s three new groups calling themselves socialists emerged in British politics. These groups were the Marxist oriented Social Democratic Federation (SDF), founded by Henry Mayers Hyndman in 1881, the Labour Emancipation League, a fragment of the SDF which regrouped as a socialist propaganda organisation under the leadership of William Morris in 1884, and the Fabian Society, a discussion group of middle-class intellectuals founded in 1884. The Fabians, notably Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Bernard Shaw and Graham Wallas, were the ones, who of all the Socialists of the time most contributed to the systematic research of social problems.³³⁸

³³⁵ Zuebelin, Charles, 'A Sketch of Socialistic Thought in England', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. II, no. 5 (March, 1897), pp. 644-645, 647, 650, 652-653, 656-658, 660-661.

³³⁶ Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 32-35.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 38, 42.

³³⁸ Morton, A. L. & Tate, George, *The British Labour Movement 1770-1920. A History*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1979 (1956), pp. 163-173.

Despite the revival of socialist ideas and the growing political awareness of the working class, culminating in the new Trade Unionism and the wave of strikes and demonstrations in the London Docks in 1889 and 1890, the socialist movement remained relatively weak and this led to its further fragmentation in the early 1890s. Independent labour organisations had already been established in a number of places including London and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was finally formed in 1893 under the tutelage of Keir Hardie. The ILP leaders also founded some of the earliest independent labour newspapers, such as Robert Blatchford's *Clarion*, Hardie's *Labour Leader* and the *I.L.P. News*. However, when the upsurge of the socialist organisations of the 1880s and early 1890s began to flounder, liberal reformism reasserted itself once again.³³⁹

The founding in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), a mixture of SDF, ILP and Fabian leaders, reflected both the heterogeneity of British socialism and its attachment to liberalism. Its first secretary, J. Ramsay MacDonald was the prototype of a new kind of Labour politician, who had connections with both liberal and socialist organisations and whose ideology was a mixture of liberalism and socialism. As with most of the Socialist leaders, he rejected the theory of class struggle while using biological analogies to analyse society as an organism similar to the human body.³⁴⁰ Following the setting up of the 1906 government, the LRC was renamed the Labour Party.

3.8 Socialism and Imperialism

The heterogeneity of intellectual backgrounds of the people who were attracted by the British socialist and labour movements led to serious ideological disagreements within the socialist bodies. Among the most debated issues was the South African War which compelled Socialists, so far almost exclusively concerned with the achievement of social reform, to express their attitudes to the issue of Imperialism.

In *Fabianism and the Empire*, a manifesto of the Fabian Society published in 1900, a majority of the Fabian members, under the leadership of G. B. Shaw, expressed their support for two separate British imperial policies. One policy was designed to strengthen the democratic elements in the white governing colonies and the other, bureaucratic policy was designed for the rest of the British dependencies and colonies. In relation to the question of the South Africa, the Fabians proposed the internationalisation of the Rand mines by the British Empire until the Federation of the World became an accomplished fact.³⁴¹ In the context of the war, opinions tended to get polarised and this led the anti-Imperialists to claim that the Fabians had gone Jingo. As a result, the

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 185–204.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 213–217.

³⁴¹ *Fabianism and the Empire. A Manifesto by the Fabian Society*, Bernard Shaw (ed.), Grant Richards, London 1900, pp. 16, 23–24.

Fabian Society experienced a similar intellectual crisis to that experienced by other progressive groups. The members most critical of the Fabian manifesto resigned, and the Society had difficulty in defining an independent imperial policy without being dragged on to either side of the quarrel.³⁴²

Many of the Radicals considered the manifesto a symptom of a Fabian willingness to ride with the tide of patriotic fervour. Having seen the windows of the opponents of the war broken by Jingoist crowds, the Fabians used the cloak of their intellectual methods to avoid its political standing being damaged by a suspicion of 'Pro-Boerism'. Collectivism and Imperialism did not fit intellectually together but were considered mutually exclusive. The great flaw of Fabian Imperialism was that it did not have its own economics of Imperialism outside that of capitalism. As 'Imperialism did not spring from the people' but was 'blown into them by the financial bellow-wielders of the platform and press,' the Fabian Imperialism was 'composed of airy nothingness'.³⁴³

The war caused a significant re-alignment of friendships and hostilities among the British Socialists. Sydney Olivier (1859–1943), who was first Colonial Secretary (1900–1904) and then Governor of Jamaica (1907–1913), for example, shared with Hobson a Gladstonian moralising approach to foreign policy. Philosophically, they were both humanistic-rationalists following in the tradition of J. S. Mill. Being also a member of the Rainbow Circle, Olivier was influenced by Hobson's views on colonial politics. Interestingly, Olivier's views, not published until the 1920s and the 1930s, on the role of the League of Nations, Imperialism and its incompatibility with democracy, and on free trade, the transition from colonialism to Imperialism, the roles of the chartered companies, the part played in the shaping of British colonial policy by financial interests in London and Jingoism – views based upon experience and arrived at empirically – all reflected his intellectual debt to Hobson.³⁴⁴ Interlocking relationships such as this wove close-knit personal contacts but could also break up the cohesion of progressive societies.

With the exception of Olivier and Henry Hyndman, the leader of London's largest socialist body, the Social Democratic Federation, only few of the leading Socialists could speak with authority about imperial matters. Although many of the British Socialists opposed the war, their ranks were not united. Robert Blatchford, the editor of the *Clarion*, for instance, supported the war and the Government then in power.³⁴⁵ When critical views were expressed, Hobson was their common source of inspiration. In the SDF organ, *Justice*, a weekly paper founded in 1884, Hobson's criticism of Imperialism was found acceptable at least in two regards. First, it was maintained that the South

³⁴² Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 111–112; Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp. 71–72.

³⁴³ Muggeridge, H. T., 'The Fabians and Imperialism', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 41 (October 13, 1900), pp. 648–649.

³⁴⁴ Lee, Francis, *Fabianism and Colonialism. The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier*, Defiant Books, London 1988, pp. 170–172, 174–175, 193, note 13.

³⁴⁵ Pelling, Henry, *The Origins of the Labour Party 1880–1900*, Macmillan, London 1954, pp. 199–200; Tsuzuki, Chushichi, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, Henry Pelling (ed.), Oxford University Press, London 1961, pp. 125–130.

African War was a cosmopolitan war, carried on in the interests of 'a cosmopolitan gang of financiers, mainly controlled by Jews.'³⁴⁶ Second, it was believed that the South African War was nothing more than the latest stage of capitalist competition for markets.³⁴⁷ The most obvious problem in the Socialists' anti-Imperialism was, however, that it reflected not socialism but liberal radicalism. This led to an attempt to develop their own imperial policy, sometimes termed as 'Progressive Imperialism'.

The ILP branches and members held a variety of views on the meaning and tendency of Imperialism. For most of them Imperialism was defined as a form of colonial policy. The ILP welcomed colonies as equals in democratic government and opposed the Imperialist idea that one country can impose law and order upon another. Imperialism was regarded as ineffective and destructive of the bonds of the relationship between Britain and the white governing colonies. It was believed that no nation can play the part of the despot abroad and the democrat at home. In its economics, the ILP expressed purely Hobsonian ideas. It attacked the 'pseudo-social reform' that the Imperialists tried to promote and maintained, in agreement with Hobson, that the increase of effective demand on the home market would eventually lead to the end of Imperialism.³⁴⁸

The highly critical stand that some of the ILP members took against British South African policy at the time of the war is revealed by the ILP pamphlets and newspapers.³⁴⁹ However, some of the members formed a more positive view of Imperialism which can be termed a form of "progressive Imperialism". This orientation is illustrated by a pamphlet *The Case for Progressive Imperialism* (1902) written by J. Ernest Jones, a Fabian and an ILP member, who dedicated his pamphlet to 'the illustrious Fabian trio - Hubert Bland, G. Bernard Shaw, and Sidney Webb - in deep and profound respect and admiration of their intellectual greatness'. To Jones's mind *Fabianism and the Empire* had shown 'independent and courageous thought and unswerving loyalty to the sacred cause and eternal and beautiful truths and principles of Socialism'. It seemed that during the South African War almost all Socialists had forgotten their principles and unwittingly advocated 'the impossible, individualistic principles' of Herbert Spencer and John Morley.³⁵⁰

Progressive Imperialists denounced 'the Trading and Jingo Imperialism' of the Liberal and the Conservative parties as well as 'Little Englandism', 'Pro-Boerism', 'Manchesterism', 'Gladstonianism' and 'Campbell-Bannermanism'. They also criticised individualistic views and methods in relation to Imperialism. For the Radicals of the mid-nineteenth century the world was visualized as having different aims and the abstract right to pursue those ends.

³⁴⁶ *Justice*, vol. XVIII, no. 842 (March 3, 1900), p. 1.

³⁴⁷ *Justice*, vol. XVII, no. 870 (September 15, 1900), p. 4.

³⁴⁸ Anon., *Imperialism. Its Meaning and Its Tendency*, City Branch Pamphlets, no. 3, City Branch, the Independent Labour Party, London 1900, pp. 4-6, 9-10, 12-13.

³⁴⁹ E.g. Anon., *War! Killed, Wounded, Missing, Spread the Light* No. 1, *Labour Leader*, 1900; Anon., *The War! What Are We at War About?*, *Spread the Light* No. 2, *Labour Leader*, 1900.

³⁵⁰ Jones, J. Ernest, *The Case for Progressive Imperialism*, 2nd ed., November 1902, p. 2.

An atomic conception of society was transferred from the state to the British Empire as a whole and thus this lay at the root of the feeling of nineteenth century radicalism, liberalism and Gladstonianism with regard to foreign and colonial policy. The central idea of the "old" liberalism, hostile to the development of the state, was naturally unsympathetic to the organisation of the Empire overseas.³⁵¹

Progressive Imperialism meant the adoption of a constructive policy which tried to achieve a socialist world-state with one language and brotherhood. Any claim of separate nationality and national independence, whether made by the Boers or the Irish, was only individualism under another garb. However, there was no clear perception of what Progressive Imperialists like Jones meant by 'Little Englandism', 'Pro-Boerism' or 'Machesterism'. Their policy was more destructive than constructive, and this led to political confusion. It seems that in Jones's mind a Little-Englander was necessarily a person above all of hysterical emotionalism, extravagant sentimentalism and false humanitarianism. The triumph of pro-Boerism would have been the end of the British 'civilising' Empire.³⁵²

Progressive Imperialists felt no loyalty towards capitalism or capitalist Imperialism but tried to construct their own progressive form of Imperialism. In the evolution of human society socialism evolved out of capitalism. Similarly, in the evolution of foreign policy progressive Imperialism was now evolving out of capitalist Imperialism. A progressive world politics meant the enlightened management and control of 'British freedom and civilisation on backward races'. Despite the drawbacks of each of them, 'trading', 'bastard' and 'Jingo' Imperialism were all considered far superior to Little-Englandism. Besides the war in South Africa, the issue of Irish Home Rule was considered another symptom of this Little-Englandism. 'In that stage of evolution where democracy does not make for freedom and material and industrial progress, we are better without it.'³⁵³

Progressive Imperialists denounced nationality, nationalism, national languages, the claim of national independence, national freedom, national patriotism, national and racial sentiment, national non-intervention or any insular treatment of world questions as individualistic and impermissible. The annexing of weak nations such as the Boer states by the British Empire was considered inevitable, righteous and absolutely necessary, seeing that nationalism in any shape or form was individualistic and dangerous to the principle of internationalism. The aim of Progressive Imperialists was to form an Imperialist Socialist Party. In course of time England would have been able to send socialist missionaries to the British colonies and dependencies and ultimately to the whole world.³⁵⁴

Seeing that Imperialism was a much more important subject than 'insular British Socialism', Jones urged working men to consider the subject of

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 9-10.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 7-9.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 24.

Imperialism more actively. World politics and problems of poverty and unemployment were seen to be in practice inseparable from each other. In social politics the Progressive Imperialists concerned themselves with the physique and the moral condition of the people. It was calculated that as a result of unsatisfactory housing England was losing 100, 000 people every year, a number that made the South African War insignificant compared with this "war". 'Boys at the critical time of their lives when leaving school do not know what to do with themselves in their spare time, and they form bad habits –, drinking, smoking, gambling, and attending exciting professional sports.' To be compulsorily made to drill, shoot, and go through gymnastic exercises and healthy sports provided the means for breeding an imperial race. However, Jones saw, as Hobson did, that only the best, not the worst were the ones who were worth working and fighting for.³⁵⁵

3.9 Christian Socialism and Imperialism

The Christian socialist revival of the 1880s and the 1890s derived part of its inspiration from the earlier Christian Socialist Movement within the Church of England and part of the general socialist and reform revival of the period.³⁵⁶ Christian socialism faced the dilemma of the alienation of the masses from organised religion. To many people religious commitment was increasingly seen as a matter of personal choice but to many others it was embodied in certain public movements, such as the advancing of democracy, social reform, and expansion of the Empire or the assertion of some sort of group identity. Organised religious bodies continued to play a major role in public life, particularly in the sphere of education, but the religious activity of working-class people declined in terms of formal churchgoing activities. However, it would be misleading to assert that working class people were particularly non-religious. On the contrary, working class religiosity re-oriented itself to many worldly, informal bodies.³⁵⁷

Outside Christian Socialist organisations the Labour Church Movement of the late 1890s and the early 1900s attracted people with heterogeneous religious identities. For example Paul Campbell, the editor of the *Christian Socialist* and the founder of the London branch of the movement, was an Anglican. Some of the secularist leaders with mixed religious backgrounds, such as Keir Hardie and Hypatia Bradlaugh-Bonner, also appeared before the Labour Churches. The regular services of the Labour Churches seemed more like political meetings than religious occasions. They included the singing of 'hymns', socialist songs

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 11, 19.

³⁵⁶ Jones, Peter d'A, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914. Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1968, pp. 4-5, 73-74, 79-82.

³⁵⁷ Harris, Jose, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, Penguin Books, London 1994 (1993), pp. 151-152, 160-163.

by socialist leaders such as Edward Carpenter and William Morris, along with short prayers and addresses. The typical topics of these addresses were the ideas of modern economists, typically Ruskin. The main centralising force within the nondoctrinal faith of the movement was the *Labour Prophet* (1892–1898), a monthly magazine edited by the founder of the movement, John Trevor, whose secular motto ‘Let Labour be the basis of civil society’ was taken from Mazzini.³⁵⁸ The ethical basis of the Labour Movement was also based on the Mazzinian dictum that ‘every social question is ultimately a religious question’ which stressed essentially the social, practical and humanitarian aspects of religion.³⁵⁹

In matters of theory the Christian socialist organisations’ outlook remained quite modest. Among their ranks, however, certain individuals did make significant contributions to the history of the British Labour Movement. The extent of the contribution of Christian socialism is difficult to assess for certain because the Radicals lacked a distinct intellectual identity. Were they Socialists because of their faith? Or were they merely Socialists who happened to go to chapel on Sundays? These questions are of most concern when assessing the contribution of Nonconformist Radicals. Christian Socialists operated through secular socialist organisations, most notably the ILP and the Fabian Society, but had problems in agreeing with Fabian policy over the South African War and looked on Fabian collectivism with suspicion. However, the Fabian idea that socialism was merely a continuing transformation of Victorian liberal-radicalism suited well most of the Christian Socialists. Outside the realm of social theory, the Christian Socialists did make considerable contributions to the growth of the socialist and labour movements by breaking down prejudices against the whole idea of socialism. Christian socialist organisations also shared the common weakness of other socialist organisations, their middle-classness.³⁶⁰

One of the most notable outlets for people who substituted ethical socialism for the Church of England’s orthodox Christian doctrine was the Christian Social Union (CSU), which of the all Christian socialist organisations was the most liberal in its outlook with its welfare-state ideas. Under the influence of Henry Scott Holland (1847–1918), the chairman of its executive, its London branch was said to be the most radical. However, compared with the other Christian socialist organisations the CSU was rather more moderate than radical. In justifying the positive welfare state it followed T. H. Green’s arguments. Like the other vehicles of radicalism, the CSU was also organised to study and publicise social and economic problems. The monthly publication *Commonwealth* provided the main means for its individual members and like-

³⁵⁸ Bevir, Mark, ‘Labour Churches and Ethical Socialism’, *History Today*, vol. 47, no. 4 (April, 1997), pp. 50–55. The *Labour Prophet* continued as a quarterly magazine named the *Labour Church Record* until 1902 (*loc. cit.*).

³⁵⁹ Wilson, J. M., *The Ethical Basis of the Labour Movement*, Labour Church and Independent Labour Party, The Temperance Hall, Bolton, December 16, 1894, pp. 4, 8.

³⁶⁰ Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, pp. 6, 8, 390, 392, 449–450, 455, 457.

minded Radicals such as Hobson to present practical suggestions for social reform.³⁶¹

In the matter of Imperialism the CSU and especially Scott Holland remained highly critical of British imperial politics in South Africa and elsewhere. Commenting on England's presence in the Sudan Scott Holland stated that '[England] is not [in the Sudan] as Europe's Delegate [...] She is not there under the moral responsibility of answering to Europe for what she practically achieves. She is there, in her own name, and by right to conquest.'³⁶² Certainly, Hobson's economic theories and his moral tone in condemning Imperialism seemed highly appealing to the CSU. In its anti-Imperialism it remained ideologically more cohesive than other socialist groupings, such as the Fabians or the ILP. However, there were some Christian socialist organisations, for example the Church Socialist League, which represented more sacramental forms of socialism and was not as unreservedly suspicious of Imperialism as Scott Holland.³⁶³

Nonconformist Christian socialism is more elusive to define. Nonconformist social doctrine remained formless and vague and its adherents anti-theological in their outlook. One of the first Nonconformist socialist organisations was the Christian Socialist Society, which was founded in London in 1886. Peter d'A Jones has described its thinking as 'Christian theism', which is illustrated by the work of the Reverend J. C. Kenworthy, who worked as a pastor at the Croydon Brotherhood Church founded in June 1894. Kenworthy worked actively on experiments in communitarian social reform and mixed with other reformers of the day, including Clarke, Burrows and Hobson. After the floundering of the Christian Socialist Society in 1892, its successor, the Christian Socialist League (1894-1898) continued to express moral criticism of Imperialism. Its leader, John Clifford in particular showed moral fortitude remaining steadfast in his criticism throughout the South African War.³⁶⁴

The direct successor of the Christian Socialist League, the Christian Social Brotherhood (CSB, 1898-1903) tried to bring the teaching of Christ to bear directly on social problems and to achieve this end it adopted the epithet 'social' rather than 'socialist'.³⁶⁵ In *Brotherhood*, edited by J. Bruce Wallace, society was viewed as an organism, and this sense of collective selfhood was regarded as the means of achieving bonds of genuine social brotherhood.³⁶⁶ Militarism and individualism were opposite entities to the peace and co-

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 164, 169, 180-181, 432, 438. The London branch had ca. 1,000 members in 1895. (*op. cit.*, p. 164). In conjunction with the teachings of John Ruskin the CSU regarded charity as the major vehicle for bringing about social reform. Scott Holland, Henry, A review of *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* by J. A. Hobson, *Commonwealth*, vol. IV, no. 2 (February, 1899), pp. 52-54. Hobson was a frequent contributor to the *Commonwealth* as well as a lecturer at the CSU.

³⁶² H.S.H., 'England and the Soudan', *Commonwealth*, vol. IV, no. 2 (February, 1899), p. 54.

³⁶³ Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, pp. 199-200, 202, 205, 438, 439-440.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 306-307, 314-316, 343-345.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 330, 347.

³⁶⁶ Gillard, Robert S., 'Imperialism and Repentance', *Brotherhood*, vol. 9, no. 1 (May, 1901), pp. 4-6.

operation, which the CSB tried to promote.³⁶⁷ The CSB held that the South African War produced mental aberration, moral decadence, material privation and, most strikingly, the postponement of domestic reforms.³⁶⁸

The Swedenborgian New Church Socialist Society was founded in 1895 and had its own journal, *Uses*, founded in 1896, but it disappeared owing to insufficient support in 1901.³⁶⁹ Following the demise of *Uses* some of its literary content was transferred to *Brotherhood* whose aims and views on militarism and Imperialism were essentially similar.³⁷⁰ As with other Christian socialist journals, such as the *Church Socialist*, *Brotherhood*, the *Christian Socialist* and the *Church Reformer*, *Uses* was deeply anti-Imperialist and blamed Capitalists, Imperialists and the Jewish financiers for producing the South African War. What is notable about Swedenborgian anti-Imperialism, however, compared with that of other Christian socialist organs is that they advocated the use of civil disobedience to support their hostile attitude to the war.³⁷¹

Considering its size, the Methodist Church produced only a small share of Christian socialist propaganda. From its ranks, however, rose some of the leading anti-war agitators, such as the Reverend Samuel E. Keeble (1853–1946), the founder of the pacifist and socialist *Methodist Weekly*.³⁷²

The Socialist Quaker Society, founded In 1898, also concentrated on Imperialism, the big moral issue of the time. However, its influence remained limited due its poor relations with official Quaker bodies and journals. The situation improved a little after 1901 when the liberal-minded Edward Grubb became editor of its journal, the *British Friend*.³⁷³ Under Grubb's editorship it formed an important channel for Radicals' anti-militaristic and anti-imperialistic views. In 1902 Hobson wrote a set of articles to the *British Friend* entitled 'Imperialism and the Lower Races' trying to promote a type of imperial politics which can be seen as an early sketch of the Mandate idea.

³⁶⁷ *Brotherhood*, vol. 9, no. 1 (May, 1901), p. 1.

³⁶⁸ Anon., Review of *Patriotism and Ethics* by John George Godard, *Brotherhood*, vol. 9, no. 4 (August, 1901), p. 60.

³⁶⁹ Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, p. 355. A Swedenborgian Church was formed in 1787 and named after the Swedish scientist, philosopher and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). The circulation of *Uses* never exceeded 1,000 and its impact outside Swedenborgian circles remained quite limited. (*op. cit.*, pp. 353–355, 366)

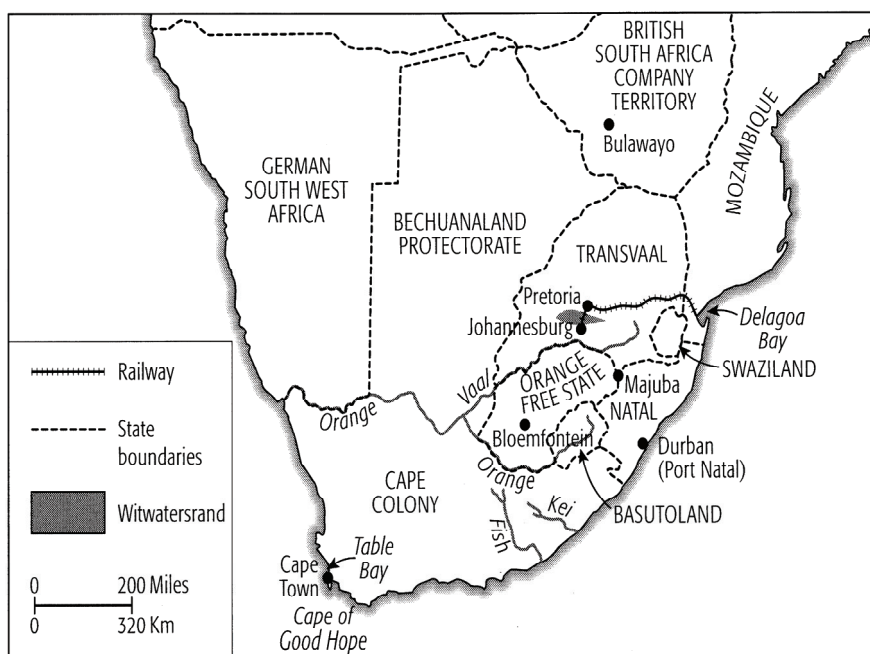
³⁷⁰ Anon., 'Magazine "Uses"', *Brotherhood*, vol. 9, no. 1 (May, 1901), p. 7.

³⁷¹ Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, p. 362.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 403, 410. The *Methodist Weekly* was founded in November, 1900 when the South African War no longer dominated the pages of radical papers and journals.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 367, 377.

4 PARADIGM: THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR



MAP 1 Southern Africa on the eve of the South African War³⁷⁴

In 2002 several compilations were published to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the South African War of 1899–1902. The intention of the authors of these studies was to go beyond standard conceptualisations of the war by placing it in a wider context of globalisation – an orientation which is illustrated for example by the compilation entitled *Writing a Wider War*. They felt that previous conceptualisations did not sufficiently take account of new research perspectives on, for example, race, gender and identity. In addition, the name

³⁷⁴ The map is taken from Smith, Simon C., *British Imperialism, 1750–1970*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 87.

'the South African War' rather than 'the Boer War' or 'the Anglo-Boer War' was considered more fitting to reflect the complex nature of the conflict.³⁷⁵

Hobson also placed the war in the wider context of capitalism and Imperialism. He claimed that the South African War was brought about through the influence of the gold-mining magnates of the Rand in their search for increased profits. Hobson's view on the causes of the war was a basis for the first theoretical analysis of the role of capitalists in Imperialism. Being a matter of real significance for the Empire as well as for South Africa, the war offered Hobson an opportunity to study the origins, participants and consequences of Imperialism.³⁷⁶ The most striking feature of the previous studies commenting on Hobson's perceptions of the war is that his assertions have been almost solely analysed as if they were just polemic allegations without any link to his wider social, economic and political thought. Consequently, Hobson's analysis has been criticised by his contemporaries as well as subsequent researchers for not presenting sufficient evidence.³⁷⁷ The focus has been on the question of how convincing Hobson's line of argument was. Less has been said about what sort of theory his theory of Imperialism in fact was and how this theory was related to the South African War in particular.

4.1 The Jameson Raid and Its Aftermath

Wrong! Is it wrong? Well, may be:
But I'm going, boys, all the same.
Do they think me a Burgher's baby,
To be scared by a scolding name?
They may argue, and prate, and order;
Go, tell them to save their breath:
Then, over the Transvaal border,
And gallop for life or death!

³⁷⁵ For terminological discussion see Omissi, David & Thompson, Andrew, 'Preface'. In *The Impact of the South African War*, David Omissi & Andrew S. Thompson (eds.), Palgrave, Basingstoke 2002, p. viii; Lowry, Donal, 'Introduction: not just a "teatime war"'. In *The South African War reappraised*, Donal Lowry (ed.), *Studies in Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York 2000, p. 4. For new research orientations see Omissi & Thompson, 'Introduction: Investigating the Impact of the War'. In *The Impact of the South African War*, pp. 2-3; Mackenzie, John M., 'General Editor's Introduction'. In *The South African War Reappraised*, pp. vii-viii; Cuthbertson, Greg, Grundlingh, Albert & Suttie, Mary-Lynn, 'Introduction'. In *Writing a Wider War*, p. ix.

³⁷⁶ David Long has argued that Hobson's theory generated his trip to South Africa and not the other way around. (Long, David, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 88) Long bases his argument on Hobson's *Contemporary Review* article 'Free Trade and Foreign Policy' (1898) where China, not South Africa works as a paradigm of his theory. However, this view does not pay any attention to Hobson's pre-1899 views on South Africa.

³⁷⁷ See, for example, Jeeves, Alan, 'Hobson's *The War in South Africa*: A Reassessment'. In *Writing a Wider War*, pp. 238-239, 243-244; Smith, Ian R., 'Capitalism and the War'. In *Impact of the South African War*, pp. 57-63.

Let lawyers and statesmen addle
 Their pates over points of law:
 If sound be our sword, and saddle,
 And gun-gear, who cares one straw?
 When men of our own blood pray us
 To ride to their kinsfolk's aid,
 Not heaven itself shall stay us
 From rescue they call a raid.³⁷⁸

In January 1896 Alfred Austin, the newly appointed poet laureate, wrote a tribute to Dr Leander Starr Jameson (1853–1917), medical doctor, a close friend and admirer of Cecil Rhodes, explorer, soldier, administrator, and the filibuster leader of a column of irregular mounted infantry who tried to invade the Transvaal in December 1895. The Raid on the Transvaal Republic, a raid later named after Jameson, proved the beginning of a series of events that eventually flared up into the war in South Africa.

In the 1880s South Africa was still considered a peripheral country while the old imperial cornerstones, India and even Canada, gained most of the attention of the reading public. In 1889 Hobson, then the London correspondent of the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, had already realised South Africa's importance for the future of the Empire and was urging the British public to pay attention to the quickly altering situation in the country.³⁷⁹ In fact diamond findings in the country west of Bloemfontein (later known as the Kimberley diamond fields) had already altered South Africa's significance drastically. In the 1870s these Kimberley diamond fields had already been transformed from being simply an area of small claims into an area run by joint stock companies. In 1871, ignoring the rival claims of the region's indigenous Tswana people and the Boer Republics, the British Government declared the diamond fields a British crown colony, Griqualand West, which was eventually incorporated into Cape Colony in 1880. The annexation of Griqualand West opened a new aggressive phase of imperial expansion in South Africa. Tens of thousands of whites and blacks rushed to the area where the diamond city Kimberley was born in 1872. In the struggle for holdings that followed, a few young immigrants from Europe managed to overcome their competitors. The most successful of them all proved to be Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902), who had arrived in Natal in 1869 in an attempt to stave off pulmonary tuberculosis in a country known as having a cure-all climate for pulmonary complaints.³⁸⁰

The final contest for control of the diamond fields and the final monopolizing of the diamond mines was between the De Beers mine, which was controlled by Rhodes and Charles Dunell Rudd (1844–1916), Rhodes's

³⁷⁸ Austin, Alfred, 'Jameson's Ride', *Times*, 11 January, 1896, p. 9.

³⁷⁹ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 28.6.1889.

³⁸⁰ Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, revised ed., Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1995, pp. 115–117. More recently, it has been suggested that Rhodes's weak lungs were not the actual reason for his dispatch to South Africa which was caused rather by his father's view that his son was not fit for routine life in England. (Marks, Shula & Trapido, Stanley, 'Rhodes, Cecil John (1853–1902)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35731>, accessed 24 Oct 2007])

friend and business partner, and the Barnato Diamond Mining Company (Barnato DMC), controlled by the two Barnato brothers, Harry and Barney Barnato. In the process Rhodes got financial backing from Rothschilds of London and with their support he persuaded Barnato DMC to cooperate with him. In 1888 was born De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. which became one of the largest British companies of the time.³⁸¹

By the late 1880s Rhodes's vision was already oriented towards the north, the highlands of central South Africa. Between 1889 and 1895 Rhodes managed to annex all the remaining independent African polities south of the Limpopo River. These new annexations were subjugated to the rule of the British South Africa Company (BSAC). This company, a mixture of somewhat dubious economic and political enterprises, got a royal charter to extend British administrative control over the ill-defined interior of South Africa in 1889. For the British government the BSAC and the white settlers offered a way of making its claims over the country effective at minimum cost. To Rhodes, the managing director of the BSAC, and the shareholders of the BSAC the royal charter offered an opportunity to be the first to reach the yet almost unexploited mineral wealth of the country.³⁸²

In 1888 Leander Jameson, then practising medicine at Kimberley, was persuaded by Rhodes to undertake a mission to hold Lobengula Khumalo, King of the Matebele nation, to the bond, which he had made with Charles Rudd, to mine gold in Mashonaland.³⁸³ It was not unusual for medical practitioners to leave their profession for more lucrative or adventurous occupations. Furthermore, Rhodes is said to have been eager to employ doctors in administrative posts. Jameson, who was apparently something of a restless soul, fell under the spell of Rhodes's vision for a great English-speaking dominion amid the highlands of Central Africa. As a consequence, Lobengula was defeated and, at the same location where his former capital stood, the city of Bulawayo was born in 1893.³⁸⁴ The whole, Matabeleland and Mashonaland, was renamed Rhodesia in 1895 in honour of Rhodes. By that time it was, however, already evident that mines in the newly occupied territories of

³⁸¹ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, pp. 116–117; Newbury, Colin, 'Barnato, Barnett Isaacs (1852–1897)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1464>, accessed 26 Oct 2007]; Stearn, Roger T., 'Rudd, Charles Dunell (1844–1916)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65577>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

³⁸² For further detail see, for example, Robinson, Ronald & Gallagher, John, *Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of imperialism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1981 (1961), ch. VII.

³⁸³ The Rudd concession in October 1888 granted to Rhodes and Rudd all the minerals in Lobengula's kingdom. Lobengula agreed to this hoping to strengthen his kingdom against Shona-speaking peoples in the east and the Boers in the south. Phimister, Ian, 'Lobengula Khumalo (c.1835–1893/4?)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/52662>, accessed 29 Oct 2007]

³⁸⁴ Shee, J. Charles, 'Rhodes and the Doctors', parts I–III, the *Central African Journal of Medicine*, vol. 9, nos. 4–6 (April–June, 1963), pp. 131, 185–186, 225, 228. Cf. Lowry, Donal, 'Jameson, Sir Leander Starr, baronet (1853–1917)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34155>, accessed 29 Oct 2007]

Rhodesia were not rich enough to compete with the gold mines of the Witwatersrand in the Transvaal (the South African Republic).

The South Africa of the late nineteenth century consisted of British colonies and protectorates in an uneasy alliance with the two Boer states, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and Portuguese East Africa. In the war of 1881 (in Boer eyes the War of Independence) the Transvaal had defeated British troops at the battle of Majuba Hill. At the London Convention which followed, the President of the Republic, Paul Kruger, won a series of diplomatic victories over the British. Despite these victories, the Transvaal was surrounded by expanding British territory in the course of the 1880s. This diminished the authority of Kruger, whose presidency was already undermined by corruption charges. The dispute that was to alter the President's situation altogether was over the political rights of the *uitlander* (outlanders), immigrants of mostly British origin.³⁸⁵ For Rhodes this dispute offered an opportunity to undermine the Boer political power in South Africa. Furthermore, it seemed to serve his purpose to secure a British dominated white South Africa. From late 1894 onwards Rhodes began actively to seek an opportunity to stir up an *uitlander* rebellion on the Witwatersrand aimed at overthrowing Kruger's government. Following these developments, in December 1895, a column of irregular mounted infantry led by Jameson launched a raid into the Transvaal hoping it would serve as a starting point for an *uitlander* uprising.³⁸⁶

Without support and any true knowledge of the situation in the country, the poorly informed Jameson forces were soon forced to surrender by the Boer forces. The miserable Jameson Raid was to have far reaching effects on Anglo-Boer relations. First, it once again united the people behind Kruger and his government. The second great effect of the Raid was that the Orange Free State, the sister republic of the Transvaal that had gained its full independence in 1854, determined to enter into a closer union with the Transvaal. A military pact between the two Republics was concluded in 1897. Lastly, the moral support expressed by Kaiser Wilhelm II led Boers to believe that in future Germany would back their cause. As a consequence, the Republics began to arm themselves with the latest magazine rifles and artillery helped by the railway connection via Portuguese territory to the Indian Ocean coast completed in 1895. By the outbreak of the war in 1899, the Boer Republics were real military powers in South Africa.³⁸⁷

Before the Jameson Raid, Hobson, like many other Radicals, had shown only sporadic interest in the affairs of South Africa. However, he was not entirely unaffected by imperial matters. Until the early 1890s his views on them reflected the Liberal Unionist outlook of the *Derbyshire Advertiser*. He supported union with Ireland and the maintenance of a large navy, expressed approval of

³⁸⁵ *Uitlanders* constituted a majority of the white population in the major cities of the Transvaal, Pretoria and Johannesburg, whose population in the late 1890s was estimated at 100,000.

³⁸⁶ See, for example, Lockhardt, J. G. & Woodhouse, C. M., *Rhodes*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1963, pp. 296-297.

³⁸⁷ Pakenham, Thomas, *The Boer War*, Abacus reprinted ed., 1998 (1979), pp. 39-42.

the Imperial Federation Movement and flirted with the idea of an imperial customs union (*Imperial Zollrovin*).³⁸⁸ Hobson conditionally approved the development of trade in China³⁸⁹ but he believed that in East Africa Britain was dragged into imperial ventures which were profitable only for the missionaries and the ivory traders. Yet the moral and rational objections Hobson raised resembled his future critique of Imperialism.³⁹⁰ Outrages were caused by the ivory trade, H. M. Stanley's alleged involvement in it and suspicions that some members of the Church Missionary Society owned East Africa Company stocks.³⁹¹

However, by 1896 Hobson's wavering between the 'old liberalism' and the 'new radicalism' was over. What ultimately severed him from the British imperial mission was the Jameson Raid. Hobson was one of the journalists who paid close attention to the trial of Jameson at the Old Bailey in 1896.³⁹² Although Rhodes was not formally charged over the Raid, his reputation was smeared by this episode and his identification with an increasingly jingoistic pro-war faction in South Africa as well as in Britain. The Raid altered Hobson's attitude to Rhodes and his fellow capitalists drastically. Despite the fact that the Raid was judged lawless and morally wrong, Jameson was welcomed as a hero of the Empire by the public. 'The crowd of well-dressed rowdies in the Court rose and cheered these heroes to the echo, polluting the sober atmosphere of justice with their ignorant and lawless Jingoism.'³⁹³ The public sympathy expressed by the British public for Jameson, Rhodes and other South African capitalists was what Hobson abhorred most. 'I cannot understand the sympathy which people over here profess to feel for the conduct of a set of speculators and business "bosses" who, because they are compelled to disgorge in taxes a certain proportion of the immense gains which had come to them, plotted the overthrow of the Government of the country [the Transvaal] which had allowed them to settle there.'³⁹⁴

Hobson's criticism of Rhodes and the company was shared by Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), a South African writer, who together with her husband S. C. Cronwright Schreiner wrote a series of essays and political tracts for British audiences in the 1890s attempting to shape British perceptions of South Africa and British-South African relations. *The Political Situation*, published in 1896, a political tract which analyses the criminal actions of the Chartered

³⁸⁸ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 27.1.1888; 29.3.1889; 6.4.1888; 10.4.1891.

³⁸⁹ E.g. *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 21.10.1887.

³⁹⁰ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 7.10.1892.

³⁹¹ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 14.11.1890; 1.7.1892; 30.9.1892.

³⁹² By agreement between the Transvaal and British governments, Jameson and five of his officers were handed over to the British authorities. Jameson was eventually sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for his part in the Raid but was soon released due to his poor health. He returned to South Africa as a celebrated hero of the Imperialists in 1899. (Lowry, Donal, 'Jameson, Sir Leander Starr, baronet (1853-1917)' In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34155>, accessed 5 Nov 2007])

³⁹³ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 28.2.1896.

³⁹⁴ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 2.5.1896. Cf. Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, p. 476.

Company and Rhodes, had a particular and abiding influence on Hobson's mind.³⁹⁵ After familiarising himself with Schreiner's work, Hobson, who had previously had quite moderate perceptions of the Empire, changed his whole tone and attitude, becoming extremely hostile towards the South African capitalists. To Hobson Rhodes was the 'arch-filibuster' and 'the Rand Lords' were 'a gang of unscrupulous financiers and grabbers of land' who practised 'stock-jobbing Imperialism.'³⁹⁶

The accusations which Hobson directed at the 'Randlords', a group of wealthy individuals controlling the gold mines on the Witwatersrand, became world famous after the publication of *The War in South Africa* in which he recycled religious, racial, and social prejudices displayed against Jews in the press, musicals, cartoons and other aspects of late-Victorian popular culture. The archetypal 'Randlord' was a greedy exploiter of working men with Semitic features who manipulated government to achieve his own economic ends.³⁹⁷ However, it would oversimplify Hobson's status as a critic of South African capitalists, if he were to be considered a mere recycler of the typical prejudices of the time. His analysis of the structure of South African finance, begun in the late 1890s but not concluded until 1905, proved much more complex.

The sudden and unexpected Ndebele and Shona uprisings in Southern Rhodesia in 1896 temporarily calmed down the attack on Rhodes.³⁹⁸ Rhodes's courage in entering negotiations with Ndebele 1897 is generally considered the finest moment of his career. It also restored some of his reputation.³⁹⁹ This did not, however, put an end to Hobson's or the Schreiners' criticism.

In 1897 Olive Schreiner published another book on South Africa entitled *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897), a moralising story of a young Englishman named Peter Halket, a trooper of the BSAC, who experiences a religious awakening while waging a war against the Matabele in 1896. Through a dream dialogue between Halket and a disguised Jesus, the novella charts Halket's gradual conversion from being a supporter of British Imperialist policies in South Africa into being a staunch critic of the BSAC.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 2.5; 22.5; 2.10.1896; Krebs, Paula M., 'Olive Schreiner's Radicalization of South Africa', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 427-428.

³⁹⁶ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 2.5; 22.5; 2.10.1896.

³⁹⁷ Fraser, Maryna, 'Randlords (act. 1880s-1914)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95075, accessed 5 Nov 2007]

³⁹⁸ For further details see Ranger, T. O., *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7. A Study in African Resistance*, Heinemann, London 1967.

³⁹⁹ Marks & Trapido, 'Rhodes, Cecil John (1853-1902)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn.

⁴⁰⁰ See [in Finnish] Schreiner, Olive, *Ratsumies Peter Halket Mashonamaasta*. Translated by Aino Malmberg, Otavan 50 pennin Kirjasto, Otava, Helsinki 1911. [first english ed. 1897: *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*] Cf. Avrech Berkman, Joyce, 'Schreiner, Olive Emilie Albertina (1855-1920)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35972, accessed 17 Oct 2007]

A similar moralising tone to that adopted by Schreiner can be found in Hobson's writings to the *Derbyshire Advertiser* commenting on the African rebellion in Mashonaland:

"It is grand fun potting niggers off and seeing them fall like ninepins." This is a sentence from an ingenious letter written to his friends at home by a young Englishman engaged in the conquest of Matabeleland [...] It is true that the Matabele, resenting theft of their cattle by the enterprising settlers whom Mr. Rhodes had planted out to "civilize" their country, vented their savage instincts by murdering their enemies. But they are savages. We are a Christian and civilized nation, and what is the reprisal we make? [...] And all this is "grand fun" for the young Englishman, who is probably not worse-hearted than the average of his species, but is simply corrupted by the terrible demoralisation of character, which comes from this method of "expanding" England.⁴⁰¹

Hobson shared British perceptions of the Matabele as fierce and warlike savages but he also pointed out how immoral actions such as these had corrupted the British character in South Africa.

In the following years Hobson consulted and mingled with the Schreiners on several occasions. They shared many aspects of rationalism and had similar opinions about the future development of South Africa. In 1898 the Schreiners spent some time in England 'to tell the truth about the war' only to discover that their analysis received only a limited amount of sympathy among the British public. One of the few exceptions was at a meeting with Hobson, who proved highly receptive to the idea that the forces behind Jameson needed to be exposed.⁴⁰² In 1899 he interviewed Olive Schreiner for the *Manchester Guardian* trying to explain the feelings of the Boers in Cape Colony but also the line Schreiner followed in her accusations. The Boers had loved the Colony as a part of the British Empire but the present British imperial policy meant losing that Empire's hold on their hearts. The person solely responsible for the troubles was Rhodes along with his fellow 'Rhodesites' who tried to control not only the mines but the land.⁴⁰³

Olive Schreiner gave a face to the sympathy for the Boers then existing throughout Europe and the United States. In France and Germany the South African War and the widespread pro-Boerism offered an opportunity to express anti-British and anti-Imperialist feelings but also to stress the defects of British colonial policy compared with that of the French and the Germans.⁴⁰⁴ Many voluntary groups, fighting in the Boer ranks, including American, Russian, German, French and Scandinavian volunteers expressed the whole pro-Boer atmosphere in practical terms. In a post-apartheid world it is sometimes difficult to remember how persistent a phenomenon pro-Boerism in fact was.

⁴⁰¹ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 19.6.1896.

⁴⁰² First, Ruth & Scott, Ann, *Olive Schreiner*, André Deutsch, London 1980, p. 231. It was Hobson who arranged Cronwright Schreiner's lecture tour. One of his first speaking engagements was at South Place. (MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies*, p. 60)

⁴⁰³ *Manchester Guardian*, 15.11.1899, 'An Interview with Olive Schreiner'.

⁴⁰⁴ Kaarsholm, Preben, 'Pro-Boers.' In *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. I: *History and Politics*, Samuel, Raphael (ed.), Routledge, London 1989, pp. 110-121.

Up to the 1960s Boers were still being seen as a progressive rather than a pariah people in many parts of the world.⁴⁰⁵

4.2 The Drama Opens

By 1899 the age of adventurism in South Africa was over. But before the launch of the following era of settler domination yet another war was to be waged between the Boers and the British over political and economic power in South Africa. The negotiations for a settlement carried out earlier that year proved to be in vain. By September an armed conflict between Boers and the Empire seemed inevitable. Finally, after weeks of hesitation, the Boers issued an ultimatum on 9 October. Three days later the Boer columns moved into Natal, where the first battles took place.⁴⁰⁶

Before his trip to South Africa in the summer of 1899, Hobson corresponded with James Bryce, who had visited South Africa some four years earlier hoping to get background information about the country.⁴⁰⁷ Bryce's travel book *Impressions of South Africa* (1897) was widely discussed at the time and according to his biographer, H.A.L. Fisher, remained the best available source of information on South Africa well into the 1920s. In addition, as a fellow Liberal, Bryce proved somewhat sympathetic to Hobson's views on Imperialism.⁴⁰⁸ Bryce's determination to travel to South Africa arose from the Liberal defeat in the general election of 1895. Furthermore, after the Jameson Raid and Jameson trial, the public interest in South African affairs was at its height thus creating a demand for such a book.⁴⁰⁹ Hobson's ambitions were similar to those of Bryce. He went to South Africa determined to explore the country's political situation for himself as well as for his fellow Liberals.

As a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, Hobson's purpose was to clarify the nature of the Anglo-Boer dispute for the British readership. Hobson was more sympathetic to the Boer's cause than most of the English newspaper correspondents on the spot during the war. In addition, his reports were quite authoritative because he was fairly free to express his thoughts and views without fearing distortion by the editor. In many cases Hobson found his colleagues' testimonies either insufficient or wrong. Allegations of a press

⁴⁰⁵ Lowry, Donal, "'The World's no Bigger than a Kraal': the South African War and International Opinion in the First Age of 'Globalization'." In *The Impact of the South African War*, pp. 271–284.

⁴⁰⁶ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 102–103, 107.

⁴⁰⁷ Hobson to Scott, R. M. S. "Carisbrook Castle", no date but 1899, Correspondence 1899–1900, 122/68, C. P. Scott Papers (hereafter cited as CPSP), John Rylands Library, Manchester University.

⁴⁰⁸ See, for example, Crook, W. M., 'Real Liberalism in Foreign and Colonial Policy', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 360 (August 22, 1901), pp. 536–537; Bryce, James, Reply to W. M. Crook's Real Liberalism in Foreign and Colonial Policy article, *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 361 (August 29, 1901), p. 545. See also Bryce, James, *Impressions of South Africa*, 3rd revised ed., Macmillan, London 1900 (1897).

⁴⁰⁹ Fisher, H. A. L., *James Bryce*, vol. I., Macmillan, London 1927, pp. 304–305.

conspiracy and press manufactured war form a significant part of Hobson's analysis. They also provide insights into the way he criticised the formation of the 'Yellow Press' that thrived on wars and sensations. From early on in his trip, Hobson got an impression that the Anglo-Boer dispute was changing into a 'war of races' – a development which he believed to benefit Rhodes and his fellow capitalists most. He believed that the nature of capitalism was understood by the Boers but the English people were blinded by the conspiracy of the capitalist owned press. '[The Boers] have a good working comprehension of the ways of Mr. Rhodes and the ways in which capitalism is handling British Imperialism, though they see the history not in its abstract "isms" but in hard, concrete deeds and persons.' While in South Africa, Hobson was determined to unmask what he considered the 'most unscrupulous machinations known to modern history'.⁴¹⁰

The Boers reserved their animosity for the Imperial Government which was personified in Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary (1895–1903), and his tool, Sir Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner (1897–1905). Rhodes, 'the ancient [Boer] enemy', was manipulating Chamberlain to provide his political backing.⁴¹¹ The *Manchester Guardian's* objectives were similar to those of Hobson as it tried to introduce a more sympathetic view on the Boers – to argue that their sins were not as heinous as they had been represented by the London press.

The Cast

The Boer Leaders

During his trip to South Africa Hobson visited Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. He met High Commissioner Sir Alfred Milner, the British negotiator, interviewed the Boer Presidents, Paul Kruger and Marthinus Steyn, and dined with Rhodes on the eve of the war. The leading actors of this drama were Kruger and Milner and Chamberlain. Boer and British leaders were manipulated by a definite group of Jewish financiers, the 'Randlords' who directed not only economics but politics in South Africa. The natives were mere puppets in this play.

Paul Kruger (Stephanus Johannes Paulus Krüger, 1825–1904), the President of the Transvaal Republic, was the son of a *trekboer* (i.e. a Boer living a frontier life) whose ancestors had emigrated to the country from Germany. To the *trekboers* the Calvinism they believed in and practised was considered a shield against the threat of rebarbarisation latent in frontier life. In its uncompromising adherence to biblical precepts it provided moral strengthening against danger and temptation. Most *trekboers* hunted for food, hides, or to eliminate predators. Their life was full of hazards, and survival was

⁴¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 21.10.1899, 'War of Races'.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

the objective.⁴¹² Kruger's education, like that of most *trekboers*, was confined to the Old Testament and the rifle, the use of which he mastered far better than diplomacy. In his youth, Kruger made good use of his shooting skills against human enemies as well as wild animals.⁴¹³ Kruger's personality aroused mixed feelings among those who met him. Some saw him as the personification of the Boer peasant, whose 'boorish' appearance aroused both fear and loathing. They stressed his unsophisticated manners and biblical appearance, with his ideas giving a slight suggestion of 'flat-earthism'. Other people, on the other hand, have stressed his frankness and righteousness in the eyes of his people but also his stubbornness and, if needed, harshness when the Boer cause was being defended.⁴¹⁴

To the British Kruger and the culture he represented remained as strange, loathsome or even disturbing as the London press eagerly represented it. His diplomatic opponents also settled on this press-manufactured caricature which made the negotiations for settlement difficult. Chamberlain understood Kruger as little as Kruger understood Chamberlain. For Boers Chamberlain was the 'Pushful Joe' of the cartoonists, whose only concern was to see that the British Empire expanded. To the British Kruger was 'Oom Paul', an old bigot who put his trust in nothing and nobody but God and his Mauser rifle. One of the tragedies of this war was that during the negotiating of a settlement Chamberlain and Kruger never met face to face.⁴¹⁵ Both leading actors in this play were caricatures manufactured by the press.

Hobson's interview with Kruger, published in the *Manchester Guardian* a week before the hostilities broke out, set out to correct this caricature manufactured by the press. In spite of the fact that Hobson had some problems in grasping the personality of the aged President and his 'growling out disconnected sentences between the spits', he believed in Kruger's honesty even though regarded him as a 'fanatic' and a 'narrow-minded bigot'. What was crucial was that his interview with Kruger made it clear that the Boer conception of politics differed significantly from that of the British:

[...] fighting has played so essential a part in the making of the nation that it seems to him [Kruger] that such personal service is the only basis of burgher rights. Animated by such feelings one can understand how he regards the agitation of the speculators and the counterjumpers of the Rand, who look on the burghership not as linking them with the destinies of a country for which they are prepared at twelve hours' notice to mount their horse and fight till death, but rather as a means of

⁴¹² Davenport, T. R. H., 'Kruger, Stephanus Johannes Paulus (1825-1904)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41290>, accessed 6 Nov 2007]. The life and hazards of *trekboers* were presented for the reading public in a rather pictorial way. See Drayson, Alfred Wilks, *Among the Zulus. Adventures of Hans Sterk, the South African hunter and pioneer*, 1868. [Finnish ed. Born, Adolf, *Hannu Väkevä. Metsästyseikkailuja Buurien ja Zulukafferien maassa*, Otava, Helsinki 1925]

⁴¹³ Such tales flourish in his *Memoirs*. See [in Finnish] Krüger, Paul, *Presidentti Paul Krügerin elämämuistelmät. Hänen oman kertomuksensa mukaan*, H. C. Bredell & Piet Grobler (writers), Irene Mendelin (translator), WSOY, Helsinki 1902.

⁴¹⁴ Davenport, 'Kruger, Stephanus Johannes Paulus (1825-1904)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn.

⁴¹⁵ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 38-39, 102.

helping them to develop the industrial resources of the country and to make a pile.⁴¹⁶

The true nature of the conflict rested in the clash between the modern capitalist civilisation of the British colonies, represented by Rhodes and the 'Randlords', and the old seventeenth century burgher civilisation of the Boers, represented by Kruger.⁴¹⁷

While in South Africa, Hobson spent some time in Johannesburg inquiring into the alleged oppression of British subjects by the Boer Government. The *uitlander* franchise question had already originated in the early 1890s but beneath it lay the Rand capitalists' discomfort over the government's mining policy which was believed to weaken mining-houses. After the Jameson Raid, the hostility between *uitlanders* and the Boer authorities intensified, and allegations of police misbehaviour against *uitlanders* were frequent. Hobson, however, found in Johannesburg 'a curiously marked self-restraint' on the part of the Boers⁴¹⁸ and the militarism of the *uitlanders*, 'a motley crowd of speculative cosmopolitans'.⁴¹⁹ He did not condemn the British demands for reform but was convinced that the *uitlanders* were not the victims of oppression and terrorism as British newspapers had presented them. On the contrary, he found that compared to London, Manchester, Paris, Berlin, or Dublin, Johannesburg was 'a place where liberty prevailed'. Furthermore, he felt that this comparison was unfair bearing in mind the rapid growth of Johannesburg, a large cosmopolitan city peopled by some ten thousand white and a hundred thousand black miners at the time.⁴²⁰

In spite of his obvious Boer sympathies, Hobson also shared some of the typical prejudices concerning Boers manufactured by the press in Britain. One of the most striking examples was his somewhat prejudiced attitude to Willem Leyds (1859–1940), state secretary for the Transvaal, who was the main target of the so-called 'Hollander hate' felt against the educated Dutch in the Transvaal government. Leyds was also targeted by the London press due to his high role in Kruger's government.⁴²¹ Hobson too regarded Leyds as 'an imported Hollander', born in Java, in the Dutch East Indies and trained in an atmosphere hostile to British notions of liberty. Among the Transvaal Boers Hobson also found a fanatic religious spirit, 'an Old Testament Puritanic conviction that the Lord was fighting with them'. He also found Boers inadequately equipped with knowledge of culture and experience in politics.⁴²² The Boer was not, however, by nature a 'warlike animal' but fought only reluctantly. Despite this reluctance,

⁴¹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 3.10.1899, 'The Personality of President Kruger'.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Bryce, *Impressions of South Africa*, pp. 57, 380–381, 401, 403–404, 454–455.

⁴¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 2.10.1899, 'War Spirit in the Transvaal'.

⁴¹⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 6.10.1899, 'Crisis in South Africa'.

⁴²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 19.10.1899, 'Johannesburg before the War'; *Manchester Guardian*, 3.10.1899, 'The Personality of President Kruger'.

⁴²¹ van Niekerk, L. E., 'Leyds, Willem Johannes (1859–1940)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53749, accessed 7 Nov 2007]

⁴²² *Manchester Guardian*, 5.10.1899, 'Public Men and Public Life in the Transvaal'.

Hobson warned the British that the Boers were prepared to fight to the bitter end in defence of the independence of their country.⁴²³

In Cape Colony, the alliance and understanding between the English-speaking colonists and the Boers was dissolved by the Jameson Raid and Rhodes's involvement in it. Cape Boers' mistrust of the Imperial Government raised worries among the British that in the event of war the Cape Boers might not be loyal to the Empire. Hobson, however, remained sceptical in relation to this alleged 'Dutch conspiracy in Cape Colony' which was mostly based on accusations made by the British Jingoists and the 'Rhodesian press'. He did not find any evidence to support the idea the Boers were plotting to overthrow British power and to establish 'Dutch supremacy in South Africa'. Boers in Cape Colony were hated and distrusted simply because they were condemning the war policy of the Imperial Government. In the minds of the British people, however, these accusations were the chief justification for the armed coercion of the Republics.⁴²⁴

In his interview with Martinus Steyn, President of the Orange Free State, who was elected in 1896, Hobson tried to clarify the sister republic's uneasy political situation between the Transvaal and the Imperial Government. The dispute over the Transvaal *uitlanders'* political rights did not directly affect the political situation in the Orange Free State. It was felt by the people there, however, that the loss of the Transvaal's independence involved the loss of theirs as well. After a period of hesitation, Steyn made up his mind that the two Republics 'should stand or fall together'.⁴²⁵ To Hobson's mind, the Orange Free State Boers had a good conception how the British Government was "worked" by the capitalists and speculators of the Rand. To him, it was important to stress that the Boers rightly mistrusted 'these miserable hucksters, obsessed by insane British Jingoism, wish to see British troops at Bloemfontein'. However, against the English people, the British Empire, or even the British power in Africa Hobson found no 'strong or abiding hostility' in the Orange Free State.⁴²⁶

Based on this information gathered in South Africa, Hobson's estimate of the future development of South Africa was somewhat pessimistic. He believed that England would find 'an African Ireland' in South Africa which it was now trying to militarise and imperialise. Furthermore, Hobson believed that it was probable that conquest could not be confined to the Transvaal but consisted in securing 'equal rights for all white people south of the Zambesi'.⁴²⁷ This estimation was fulfilled a decade later, in 1909, when a national constitution embodying the principle of responsible government was granted to the Union of South Africa.

⁴²³ *Manchester Guardian*, 2.10.1899, 'War Spirit in the Transvaal'.

⁴²⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 3, 7, 8.11.1899, 'The Alleged Dutch Conspiracy, I-III'.

⁴²⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 25.9.1899, 'Interview with President Steyn'.

⁴²⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 18.10.1899, 'Crisis in South Africa'.

⁴²⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 6.10.1899, 'Crisis in South Africa'.

Milner

Sir Alfred Milner (1854–1925) was a product of Oxford who once was described by Dean Church as ‘the finest flower of human culture that the University of Oxford had produced in our time’. In imperial matters, Milner was a man of strong imperialistic proclivities, a strong advocate of the Empire who also absorbed some of the social Darwinist ideas of the time. Milner’s first imperial post was in Egypt where he served as director-general of accounts and as an acting financial adviser of the Government from 1889 to 1892. His views on the country and the Empire were made familiar to the British by his best-selling book *England in Egypt*, published in 1892.⁴²⁸

In 1897 he was appointed High Commissioner and Governor of Cape Colony. Hobson reserved his animosity to Milner in the context of the negotiations for a settlement in the summer of 1899 and of the war itself. His first comments concerning Milner’s appointment as High Commissioner and his work in Egypt, written as a correspondent for the *Derbyshire Advertiser* in 1896 and 1897, appeared to be somewhat positive.⁴²⁹ What at first appears to be a sudden change in opinion, is however more safely seen as something dependent on the context. South Africa served Hobson’s purpose in his analysis of the conspiratorial aspects of Imperialism. In this context Milner had a role to play as one of the main tools that capitalists used to accomplish their goals.

Hobson saw Milner in the light of the policy of federating the States of South Africa. The first attempt to secure a federation of South Africa took place in the 1870s when it was the object of Lord Carnarvon’s policy. J. A. Froude, who was sent to negotiate with the Boers on the spot, shared certain characteristics with Milner.⁴³⁰ They both were temperamental Imperialists of the sentimental academic school and believed that British rule was the greatest secular agency for good known to the world. This first attempt failed because of the Transvaal’s desire to remain independent and the resistance of the Ministry of the Cape Colony. In 1896 Chamberlain resumed, as a part of his high imperial mission, the policy of federation but faced the same two obstacles that had caused the failure of Lord Carnarvon. This time Milner was sent to judge matters on the spot. In Hobson’s analysis Milner’s experience fitted him in no degree for such a task. The intellectual atmosphere in which he had grown up had exercised a hardening influence on his humanity and morals. Being unable to throw off the habits of his official career he was incapable of sympathy for the rights and capabilities of the colonists.⁴³¹

Milner, partly from temperamental Jingoism, partly from a deficient power of judging character, allowed himself to become the instrument of the

⁴²⁸ Newbury, Colin, ‘Milner, Alfred, Viscount Milner (1854–1925)’. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35037, accessed 13 Nov 2007]

⁴²⁹ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 18.2.1897; 20.3.1896. See also Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, p. 66.

⁴³⁰ See Froude, James Anthony, *Two Lectures on South Africa*, delivered before the Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh, January 6 and 9, 1880, new ed., London 1900.

⁴³¹ Hobson, J. A., ‘The Proconsulate of Milner’, *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXVIII (October, 1900), pp. 540–545.

wreckers of the existing political order. The Boers saw Milner fall quickly under the control of politicians, financiers and journalists. Following his appointment in 1897, Milner informed himself of British views by talking with Rhodes and with mining-house representatives. He toured the Cape Colony and Rhodesia but not the Transvaal. In 1898 he started to press the British case, in the belief that the Boers would back down. According to various estimates, including Hobson's, Milner has been accused of bringing about the war.⁴³²

Hobson gravely suspected Milner's suitability for his task in South Africa. 'A flower of human culture, grown in scholastic soil, with a top-dressing of autocratic finance, is not easily acclimatised to the rough, free atmosphere of our self-governing colonies.' The supporter in an autocratic government, such as Egypt, was the worst man to handle the delicate relations of Boers and British in South Africa. 'His cold and arrogant demeanour, serviceable enough, perhaps, in an Egyptian satrap [governor], chilled and estranged the feelings of Dutch Afrikaners; his rigorous insistence upon the petty formalities which belonged to his exalted station was ill calculated to secure popularity and to heal the rupture between the two races which the Raid had emphasised.'⁴³³

Hobson considered the psychology of Milner one of the perplexing problems of the whole South African question. Imperialism as a temperamental proclivity was fed by his foreign [German] birth. To Milner the war was a purely political matter. Nonetheless, as Hobson suspected, Milner was well used by the capitalists. He failed to see 'the ways in which the clever financiers of the Rand played on his proclivities.' To him the origin of the war was political, as it was for Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary. He did not see or chose not to see how the hands of the capitalists were 'helping to pull the puppets on the stage of politics'.⁴³⁴ '[...] this brilliant but prejudiced official has been "used" by the clique of industrial politicians who are seeking to coin the blood of British soldiers into profits and power for themselves. [...] he had allowed himself to become the tool of a set of political and financial schemers whose names are notorious in South Africa'.⁴³⁵ Following the annexation of the Boer Republics on October 8 1900 Milner was appointed civil administrator of the Orange River and Transvaal colonies.⁴³⁶ He thus became the builder of the great imperial city of Africa, Johannesburg, which was to become 'Milner's Babylon'.⁴³⁷

Joseph Chamberlain, 'the faithful representative of Imperialism', under whose command (1895-1903) the matters of the Empire were lifted from the

⁴³² Pakenham termed the South African War 'Milner's war'. See Pakenham, *The Boer War*, part I.

⁴³³ Hobson, J. A., 'Sir Alfred Milner in South Africa', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 24 (March 17, 1900), p. 647.

⁴³⁴ J. A. H., 'The Psychology of Milner', *Speaker*, vol. IV, no. 101 (September 7, 1901), p. 635.

⁴³⁵ Hobson, 'Sir Alfred Milner in South Africa', p. 648.

⁴³⁶ Newbury, 'Milner, Alfred, Viscount Milner (1854-1925)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn.

⁴³⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'Milner's Babylon', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 384 (February 6, 1902), pp. 88-89.

periphery to the centre of British political life, was also seen by Hobson as an instrument of the generals of finance.⁴³⁸ Chamberlain's career as Colonial Secretary reached its height in 1900 when he led the Liberal Unionists to victory in the elections by assuring the British of the necessity of military victory in South Africa. In Hobson's analysis of the psychology of Jingoism, the 'Khaki elections' of 1900 made it clear that the apparent spontaneity of Imperialism was a mere illusion.

4.3 Argument: the Capitalist Conspiracy

'Everywhere do I perceive a certain conspiracy of rich men seeking their private advantage under the name and pretext of the Commonweal.' – Sir Thomas More⁴³⁹

Hobson's argumentative type of articles began to appear in the *Speaker* right after the outbreak of hostilities. His first article for the *Speaker*, 'Why Did the Boers Issue the Ultimatum?', signed while he was still in South Africa, clarified the nature of the Anglo-Boer dispute along the lines already presented in the *Manchester Guardian*. The Imperial Government, personified by Chamberlain, Milner and Rhodes and the South African Capitalists were the wrongdoers. The Boer ultimatum was a reaction to this imperial policy, the intent of which was to militarise and imperialise the Republics by using coercive methods.⁴⁴⁰

The *Speaker* articles further deepened Hobson's analysis of the nature of capitalism and Imperialism and formed the core of what is known as the 'capitalist conspiracy theory'. The main argument of this theory was that the financiers used their financial supremacy and the South African press as well as the London press rather than politics in legitimising British political power in South Africa.⁴⁴¹ Hobson saw the capitalists buying up the most important organs of the press in the Cape Colony for propaganda purposes and establishing new organs of revolutionary agitation in Johannesburg. In his analysis, the capitalist owned unscrupulous press poisoned public opinion throughout South Africa and drove the British Imperial policy towards a catastrophe.⁴⁴²

Hobson's views on the capitalist owned press echoed Ruskin's dislike of sensationalism and bad journalism. 'Everywhere the less reputable organs of the Press are rightly regarded as disturbers of the public peace, living upon

⁴³⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 2.10.1899, 'War Spirit in the Transvaal'.

⁴³⁹ Quoted in Hobson, J. A., 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', *Contemporary Review*, LXXVII (January, 1900), p. 17.

⁴⁴⁰ H. [published under 'H' but Hobson], 'Why Did the Boers Issue the Ultimatum?', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 7 (November 18, 1899), pp. 161-162; In 1902 these allegations were supplemented with a series of official documents extracted from the Parliamentary Blue Books. See Hobson, J. A., 'Who Began the War?', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 393 (April 10, 1902), pp. 232-233.

⁴⁴¹ Hobson, J. A., 'What Are We Fighting For? – II.', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 15 (January 13, 1900), p. 395.

⁴⁴² Hobson, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', pp. 11-12, 14.

strong sensations; unwilling, and often unable, to check the accuracy of the wild rumours which they promulgate. The “Yellow Press” is a danger in every “civilised” country to-day.’⁴⁴³

The weight of South African newspapers, the *Cape Argus*, the *Johannesburg Star*, the *Bulawayo Chronicle*, the *Rhodesian Herald*, the *African Review*, the *Cape Times*, the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* of Kimberley and the *Transvaal Leader*, among others, had been ‘thrown into the scale of a drastic Imperialist policy’.⁴⁴⁴ With modern means of communication, it was possible ‘to poison the conscience and intelligence of England’ and to ‘exploit the stupid Jingoism of the British public’ to an extent that was not seen before. According to Hobson’s estimate, at least three London daily newspapers, the *Times* among them, and several weekly papers were to some extent influenced by the capitalist press of South Africa. ‘The London “Liberal” paper [presumably the *Daily News*], whose perversion from the true path of Liberalism has inflicted the heaviest blow upon the cause of truth and honesty in England, was fully and constantly inspired by the editor of the *Cape Times*.’⁴⁴⁵ The method of the Jingo press was to manufacture “outrages” and to feed the slow-rising Jingoism of the English mind in whose credulity it trusted.⁴⁴⁶

Hobson’s claims were supported by Henry W. Massingham (1860–1924), the Radical editor of the *Daily Chronicle*,⁴⁴⁷ who resigned in November, 1899, over his unwillingness to support Milner’s South African policy. Writing of this incident to Hobson and Scott, Albert Cartwright, the editor of the *South African News*, described the feelings of the anti-war party in South Africa: ‘Good Heavens! What is coming over the nation? An incident such as that [sounds more] like Paris under the Dreyfus madness, than sober, feasible Krugland [...] let me say again how sure I feel that before many years have passed England will confess that you & those who think with you tried [to save] the Empire.’⁴⁴⁸

Hobson’s second exposure concerned the Jewish element in the financial and political life of Johannesburg, which was controlled by ‘a small group of international financiers, chiefly German in origin and Jewish in race’. These aforementioned financiers controlled the mines as well as the press of Johannesburg which was the chief agitator in the *uitlander* grievances. Besides the financial supremacy being in the hands of Jew-capitalists, Hobson found that the atmosphere in Johannesburg was wholly Jewish. ‘I thus discovered that not Hamburg, not Vienna, not Frankfort, but Johannesburg is the New

⁴⁴³ Hobson, J. A., ‘A Chartered Press’, *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 10 (December 9, 1899), p. 254.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ Hobson, J. A., ‘A Chartered Press. II’, *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 11 (December 16, 1899), pp. 280–281. Hobson presumably refers here to the *Daily News*, a prominent liberal newspaper which was harnessed in support of Jingoism (Cf. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, p. 114).

⁴⁴⁶ Hobson, J. A., ‘A Chartered Press. III’, *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 12 (December 23, 1899), pp. 310–311; Hobson, J. A., ‘A Chartered Press. IV’, *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 13 (December 30, 1899), pp. 337–338.

⁴⁴⁷ Massingham, H. W., ‘The History of a Crime’, *Morning Leader* (21.2.1900).

⁴⁴⁸ Albert Cartwright to J. A. Hobson, 26.12.1899, Cape Town, 122/154, CPSP; Albert Cartwright to C. P. Scott, January 9, 1900, Cape Town, 123/1, CPSP.

Jerusalem.⁴⁴⁹ The Jewish race had out-competed the slow-witted Briton in Johannesburg as it had done in the East End of London. They also had 'lowered the average character of the population'.⁴⁵⁰

Hobson termed the nature of the Jew-directed financial enterprise 'stock jobbing' or 'gambling'. Its nature also included controlling politics by bribery and other persuasive methods to supply cheap labour for the mines. The British troops were thus fighting to establish an international oligarchy, 'boss-rule' in South Africa.⁴⁵¹ At first the financiers acted as secret conspirators with those planning the war but after the outbreak of hostilities, when the time was right for them, they showed their true colours as Imperialists.⁴⁵² To Hobson's mind, the actual reason for waging the war was to secure for the mines a cheap supply of labour. For this reason, international capitalists were also expanders of the British Empire. At the same time, Hobson denied the possibility of other possible explanations for waging the war such as philanthropy.⁴⁵³

The Randlords

'Who are the South African financiers?' 'What is the nature of the power they wield?' In his answer, first started in September 1899 but not concluded until 1905, Hobson maintained that a class of adventurous explorers and concession mongers, "pure financiers", were essential.

'The bulk of the Uitlanders excepting the actual miners I believe to be Jews [...] German Jews who have been in England and figure as British subjects. Many of them are the veriest scum of Europe. The entire mining industry, with the partial exception of the Consolidated Gold Fields (Rhodes) is in their hands, the Dynamite Monopoly, the illicit Liquor Traffic are theirs, they and Rhodes own or control the press, manipulate the slave market, and run the chief commercial businesses both in Johannesburg and Pretoria. These men will rig the politics when they have the franchise. Many of them have taken English names and the extent of the Jew power is thus partially concealed.'⁴⁵⁴

Many of the most able and successful members of this class were, in Hobson's understanding, Jews, originally from the European continent, 'though assimilating with ease and fervour to the environment of British sentiment, which is helpful to their financial designs'. Rhodes, essentially a combination of adventurer and financier, was able to use his political genius to give a temporary cloak of political significance to adventures which were really

⁴⁴⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'II.-For Whom Are We Fighting?', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 8 (November 25, 1899), pp. 192-194.

⁴⁵⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'Before and After the Jameson Raid', In Ogden, H. J., *The War Against the Dutch Republics in South Africa. Its Origin, Progress, and Results*, the National Reform Union, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., London 1900, p. 16.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² Hobson, J. A., 'The Political Methods of the Outlanders', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 9 (December 2, 1899), p. 231.

⁴⁵³ Hobson, J. A., 'What Are We Fighting For? I.', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 14 (January 6, 1900), pp. 366-367.

⁴⁵⁴ Hobson to Scott, 2 September 1899. Quoted in Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 201-202.

operations of the stock market. Their penetration of the entire financial structure of South African business, mining, manufacture, commerce, transport, and banking, was 'the strongest consolidation of economic power ever wielded by a single group over a large profitable area of the globe'.⁴⁵⁵

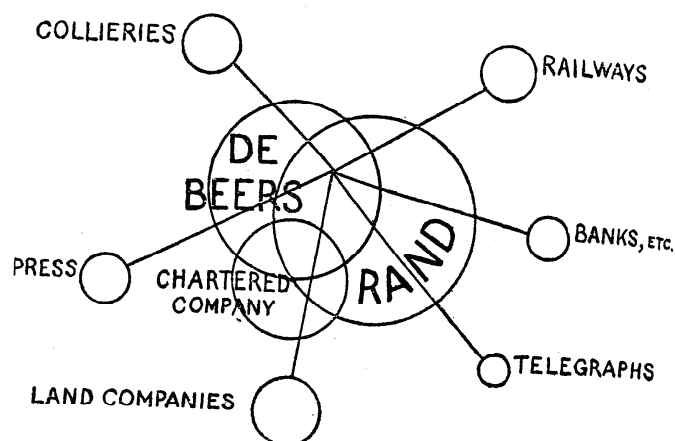


FIGURE 1 The structure of South African finance illustrated by Hobson in 1905 (*Speaker*, 29.4.1905, p. 118). The chart reveals that De Beers, the largest mining company of the Witwatersrand, controlled, together with the BSAC, press, land companies, telegraphs, banks, railways and coal mines.

Hobson's first method, in analysing Imperialism, was to personify it. In his analysis Rhodes was a paragon of a capitalist, a 'sham-hero' of the Empire.⁴⁵⁶ Hobson's animosity to Rhodes was not so much based on his personal feelings as on the distrust he felt towards capitalists and the 'Randlords', the creatures of a set of almost fortuitous circumstances, with just enough grit and ability to utilise them.⁴⁵⁷ He and other discredited financiers and political 'swashbucklers' were to be blamed for the 'economic plunder' of South Africa. Rhodes was not a politician per se but used politics in order to accomplish his economic interests. 'Those who deny that finance runs politics in South Africa may be invited to consider how natural it appears to a statesman of Mr. Rhodes' calibre to use financial force to cancel the free choice of a self-governing colony.'⁴⁵⁸ The Rhodes type of capitalist was also the answer to the question: *Cui bono?* Who benefits? This was so because the capitalists stood to lose most if the status quo in South Africa were maintained.

The names of the chief directors of the leading gold and diamond companies proved the international character of the financial power in South

⁴⁵⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Structure of South African Finance', *Speaker*, vol. 12, no. 291 (April 29, 1905), pp. 117-118.

⁴⁵⁶ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 2.10.1896.

⁴⁵⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'The Responsibility of Mr. Rhodes', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 21 (May 26, 1900), pp. 323-324.

⁴⁵⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'Mr. Rhodes and the Future of South Africa', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 359 (August 15, 1901), p. 521.

Africa. Some of them were 'foreign' (non-British), mostly German Jews, who, in Hobson's analysis, used the British in order to accomplish their selfish financial ends. Profit making, investing and speculating were considered especially typical of the Jews.⁴⁵⁹

The ring of directorial control of the South African finance is illustrated by the following list of names: G. Albu, L. Albu, A. Beit, F. Eckstein, R. English, F. A. English, Sir G. Farrar, S. H. Farrar, H. Goldie, Lord Harris, J. J. Hamilton, L. S. Jameson, S. B. Joel, J. R. Maguire, C. Mever, Sir L. L. Michell, H. Mosenthal, S. Neumann, L. Phillips, L. Reyersbach, J. B. Robinson, C. Rube, C. D. Rudd, and J. C. Wernher. A smaller inner ring included Beit, Jameson, Maguire, Michell, Neumann, and Wernher.⁴⁶⁰

Of the Jewish capitalists Hobson mentioned, the most prominent included Lionel Phillips (1855–1936) and Barnett Isaacs (Barney) Barnato (1852–1897). They both were English Jews from the East End of London who settled in Kimberley in the early 1870s. In the early 1890s Phillips acquired substantial wealth and position in Johannesburg as technical adviser to H. Eckstein & Co before he was banished from the Transvaal in 1897 for his involvement in the conspiracy to overthrow the Boer government.⁴⁶¹ As for the franchise, Phillips 'cared a fig for it' but, finding that the Transvaal Government claimed a larger share of the mining wealth than he and other leading capitalists cared to give, they decided to utilise the reform movement and to finance it for a revolution.⁴⁶²

Barney Barnato managed to acquire by speculation a substantial share in several mining companies in Kimberley. In 1881 the mines were consolidated as the Barnato Diamond Mining Company (Barnato DMC) which in its turn was amalgamated with Rhodes's De Beers Company in 1888. Barney Barnato, who committed suicide in 1897, most fitted Hobson's definition of the Jewish capitalist in South Africa. He was above all known for the cheeky manner in which he fought and cheated his way to the top. He was admired, envied for his financial and manipulative skills and hated for his vanity in exhibiting his wealth.⁴⁶³ Barney Barnato's younger brother Joel (1865–1931) was a director of Barnato Brothers and De Beers Consolidated Mines from 1901 until his death.⁴⁶⁴

Rhodes and Charles Rudd along with Lewis Loyd Michell (1842–1928), who became chairman of De Beers Consolidated Mines and a director of the

⁴⁵⁹ Hobson, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', p. 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Hobson, 'The Structure of South African Finance', p. 117. This list illustrates the situation in 1905.

⁴⁶¹ Fraser, Maryna, 'Phillips, Sir Lionel, first baronet (1855–1936)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39343, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

⁴⁶² Hobson, 'Before and after the Jameson Raid'. In Ogden, *The War Against the Dutch Republics in South Africa*, p. 17.

⁴⁶³ Newbury, Colin, 'Barnato, Barnett Isaacs (1852–1897)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1464, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

⁴⁶⁴ Fraser, Maryna, 'Joel, Solomon Barnato (1865–1931)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34195, accessed 19 Nov 2007]

British South Africa Company after Rhodes's death in 1902, were also English but not Jews. James Rochfort Maguire (1855–1925) was an Irishman, who had become Rhodes's close friend and companion during their Oxford years. Maguire accompanied Charles Rudd to obtain mineral rights from Lobengula and was also involved in planning the Jameson Raid. His main contribution to Rhodes's business and imperial plans was the development and supervision of the financial and transport system infrastructure of South Africa Company's rule in Southern Rhodesia.⁴⁶⁵

Among the other capitalists of English-origin, Joseph Robinson (1840–1929) was the son of English settlers who had arrived in Cape Colony in the 1820s. Robinson was one of the rare capitalists who was on good terms with the Boer government and even supported the pro-Boer fraction of the British Liberal Party in the election of 1900.⁴⁶⁶ George Herbert Farrar (1859–1915), for his part, was a leading member of the *uitlander* party in the Transvaal. He was sentenced to four months imprisonment for his involvement in the Raid.⁴⁶⁷

Alfred Beit (1853–1906) and Julius Wernher (1850–1912) were German Protestants,⁴⁶⁸ who became associated in the diamond business at Kimberley through Jules Porgès, a prominent diamond merchant in Paris and London. When Porgès retired in 1889 the firm was reconstituted as the Wernher & Beit Co. of London. The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand brought the firm into gold-mining and eventually led to contact with Rhodes's De Beers Consolidated Mines. In 1898 Wernher was appointed a life governor of the company. Of the two, Beit in particular acquired much of Rhodes' imperial vision. He was planning the coup in the Transvaal with Rhodes and succeeded to some of Rhodes' positions after the latter's death in 1902.⁴⁶⁹

Of the other German-born capitalists in South Africa, Hermann Ludwig Eckstein (1847–1893) with two Jews, Sigismund Neumann (1857–1916) and Maximilian Michaelis (1860–1932), formed the 'German Messrs'. Together with Rhodes's group of capitalists they were the most powerful group of men in Kimberley.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁵ Newbury, Colin 'Maguire, James Rochfort (1855–1925)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct. 2006. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34832>, accessed 19 Nov 2007].

⁴⁶⁶ Cregier, D. M., 'Robinson, Sir Joseph Benjamin, first baronet (1840–1929)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35798>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

⁴⁶⁷ Pinfold, John, 'Farrar, Sir George Herbert, baronet (1859–1915)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53224>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

⁴⁶⁸ Though Beit's family was descended from Portuguese Jews they were Lutheran by religion.

⁴⁶⁹ Boyd, C. W., 'Beit, Alfred (1853–1906)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30676>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]; Colvin, I. D., 'Wernher, Sir Julius Charles, first baronet (1850–1912)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36834>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

⁴⁷⁰ Fraser, Maryna, 'Randlords (*act.* 1880s–1914)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95075>, accessed 8 Nov 2007]

These men were not by choice politicians, still less were they British Imperialists. It was essential for the capitalists to shift the costly burden of political government to the body of the white inhabitants, while reserving for themselves the economic resources of the country for profitable exploitation, or for still more profitable speculation. In Hobson's evaluation, 'aversion from politics' was seen as an element in the capitalists' temperament. 'The aversion of the true "business man" from politics is almost universal; where the political barriers, tariffs or restrictive legislation block the path of profit-making, or where State aid is needed to push business of secure profitable jobs, he generally prefers to exert influence by the gentle art of bribery, rather than himself entering the political arena.' The career of Rhodes was most instructive on this matter. By skilfully manipulating imperial power he succeeded in using the money and the arms of Britain for the protection and furtherance of his business projects. 'Does any single soul really believe that Messrs. Beit, Eckstein, Rouliot, Neumann, and the rest are Imperialists, or have any other aim than that of using the Imperial power to help them in their gold mining business?' These considerations made it evident that a small group of financial capitalists had large and clear advantages to gain by upsetting the Government of the Transvaal.⁴⁷¹ 'But at the end Messrs. Wernher, Beit, Eckstein, Albu, and the men upon the spot will be found in possession of the country, and John Bull, as usual, in possession of the bill of the costs.'⁴⁷²

This hypothesis of capitalist aggression also explained the political and military preparations for the invasion of the Transvaal as a distinctly defensive policy. It stressed that the race, character and conduct of *uitlanders* were utterly repellent to the Boer nature and traditions. The prominence of self-seeking motives and the energy of financial capitalists were the main guiding forces in this and in other cases of aggressive Imperialism. Other social and humane motives, the desire to promote the causes of civilisation and Christianity, to improve the economic and spiritual condition of 'lower races', to crush slavery and to bring all parts of the world into closer material and moral union, were not such powerful and directing forces as were the organised influences of these professional and commercial classes. The most potent of all these influences was the financier. The power of this financier class, exerted directly upon politicians or indirectly through the press upon public opinion, was in Hobson's analysis 'the most serious problem in public life to-day'. This nucleus of economic force in Imperialism gathered around it certain other allied economic interests. These included iron and shipbuilding trades as well as the aristocracy and the professional classes seeking honourable and profitable employments for their sons. Their most profitable ally, however, was Jingoism, the lust for racial dominance, 'that false or inverted patriotism' which, measured in a mercantilist manner, was seeking the glory of its country by another's shame.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Hobson, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', pp. 5-7, 9-10.

⁴⁷² Hobson, 'The Last Chance for a Liberal Party', p. 25.

⁴⁷³ Hobson, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', pp. 15-16.

4.4 Reception

Hobson's analysis of the causes of the war provoked immediate publicity in Britain. For the Radicals he was a celebrated hero whose homecoming was honoured by a 'Welcome Home' dinner at the National Liberal Club in December 1899.⁴⁷⁴ Many intellectuals as, for example, James Bryce, Herbert Spencer, the Positivist Frederick Harrison, and the emigrant Anarchist Peter Kropotkin (Pjotr Krapotkin) were impressed by his analysis.⁴⁷⁵

The criticism came from the British public in general and from the London press in particular. At the beginning of the war the London press was predominantly dominated by the Conservatives. In 1899 there were only three liberal morning papers, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily News* and the *Morning Leader*. Hobson had at first the sympathy of the Liberal Unionist *Daily Chronicle*, which was edited until 1895 by E. A. Fletcher before moving to the *New Age*, but Hobson broke with the opinions of the *Chronicle* in November, 1899 when H. W. Massingham, its liberal-minded editor, was replaced by W. J. Fisher following his unwillingness to support the South African War. Some of the liberal sympathies were then transferred to the *Morning Leader*, which took the main responsibility for holding the radical line in social and foreign policy in London. Among the other liberal morning papers the *Daily News* had already turned its back on him when it became a supporter of the imperial cause in 1896. The situation improved only in 1901/2 when the *Daily News* became the exponent of a new liberalism under the editorship of A. G. Gardiner. T. P. O'Connor's evening paper, the *Daily Mail* (founded 1896) as well as the *Star* (founded 1888), were both deplored by Hobson as representatives of the 'new journalism'.⁴⁷⁶ Among the Labour newspapers Hobson was greeted by Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*, Michael Davitt's new paper *Labour World* and Robert Blatchword's weekly *Clarion* in spite of its contrary editorial line.⁴⁷⁷

The picture of the radical press in the provinces was brighter compared with the situation in London. There were, for example, the radical *Newcastle Daily Leader* and *Liverpool Mercury* though the most important radical provincial paper was undoubtedly C. P. Scott's *Manchester Guardian* which was the

⁴⁷⁴ The menu of the 'Welcome Home' dinner held at the National Liberal Club, London, December 13, 1899. The dinner was chaired by Sir Robert Reid and David Lloyd George, the future Prime Minister, while its 'stewards' included Graham Wallas, W. Clarke, J. L. Hammond, R. Stapley, W. M. Crook, and George H. Perris. ('Welcome Home', December 13, 1899, DHN 22, JAHP)

⁴⁷⁵ F. Harrison to J. A. Hobson, 6.3.1900, DHN 22, JAHP; Peter Kropotkin to J. A. Hobson, no date, c. 1900, DHN 22, JAHP; Bryce, James, 'Mr. Hobson's Book on the War', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 13 (March 31, 1900), p. 193; Harrison, Frederick, A review of *The War in South Africa* by J. A. Hobson, *Positivist Review* (April, 1900), pp. 69-73; Spencer, Herbert, 'Mr. Hobson's Book and the Coming Settlement I.', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 10 (March 10, 1900), p. 145.

⁴⁷⁶ Lee, *A Study of the Social and Economic Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 49-52, 70; Lee, 'The Radical Press'. In *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914*, pp. 47-49.

⁴⁷⁷ The *Clarion* even published Hobson's article in which he criticised the proposed scheme of federation. (Hobson, J. A., 'The Settlement in South Africa', *Clarion*, no. 434 (March 31, 1900), pp. 97-98.

staunchest supporter of radicalism outside London. However, the regional liberal newspapers did not have effective channels to reach the masses in London. The National Liberal Club, for example, received two copies of each major provincial paper.⁴⁷⁸ This left the radical-liberal periodicals almost alone to defend the Radicals' cause in London. When their mere circulation numbers are considered it appears that the radical-liberal periodicals were simply too limited in resources to match the supporters of the war. However, even if constrained by commercial forces and, in many cases, were dependent on the generosity of a few rich men, the 'Free Press' could still triumph over the 'Official Press', because it was read carefully and because it reached small, highly specific, audiences through which ideas were spread.⁴⁷⁹

In the end it was the two radical weeklies, the *New Age* and the *Speaker* that shared most common ground with Hobson. With the help of these two papers, Hobson continued to carry out his 'frontal attack' on Imperialism while most of the Liberals confined themselves to more moderate ways of expressing their views.⁴⁸⁰ The conspiracy theory was not even accepted in its entirety by the readership of the *Speaker*. A reader named A. J. Hailey, for example, suspected that Hobson had overestimated the power of a group of financiers, who in Hobson's analysis seemed to possess almost superhuman powers. In his reply, Hobson agreed that there were other co-operating forces had to taken into account such as 'the lust of race dominance of industrial exploiters and desires of Jingo Imperialism of Great Britain' but that he wanted to stress the powers of financiers because of their overwhelming importance.⁴⁸¹

C. Boyd, another reader of the *Speaker*, objected to Hobson's views in their entirety and considered them politically biased against *uitlander* opinion and Milner whom Hobson had accused of being Machiavellian.⁴⁸² In his answer to Boyd's accusations, Hobson re-asserted his view that while in South Africa Hobson had witnessed a 'vile conspiracy of stockjobbing politicians, with Sir Alfred Milner for their active tool [...]'. Milner had no personal knowledge of the Transvaal: he had never set foot in that country but had trusted in his search for knowledge to 'the carefully greased path prepared by Messrs. Rhodes, Eckstein and Co. for English visitors'.⁴⁸³

William Hosken, a representative of *uitlander* opinion, saw that the Boer Government was characterised by corruption, maladministration and oppression of British subjects as of the natives in the Transvaal. This oppression

⁴⁷⁸ Koss, Stephen, *The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Anti-war Movement*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1973, pp. xxix-xxxii; Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 44.

⁴⁷⁹ Lee, 'The Radical Press', pp. 58-59.

⁴⁸⁰ Brailsford, H. N., 'The Life Work of J. A. Hobson' In *L. T. Hobhouse Memorial Trust Lectures*, no. 17, delivered on 15 May 1947 at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Oxford University Press, London 1948, p. 21.

⁴⁸¹ Hailey, A. J., 'Mr. Hobson and the Causes of the War', *Speaker*, vol. I., no. 23 (March 10, 1900), pp. 620-621; Hobson, J. A., To the Editors of the *Speaker*, *ibid.*, p. 621.

⁴⁸² Boyd, C., To the Editors of the *Speaker*, *Speaker*, vol. II, no. 27 (April 7, 1900), pp. 14-15.

⁴⁸³ Hobson, John A., 'Sir Alfred Milner'. To the Editors of the *Speaker*, *Speaker*, vol. II, no. 28 (April 14, 1900), p. 41.

had justified the attempted coup in the Transvaal five years earlier and the annexation of the Boer Republics in 1900.⁴⁸⁴ Hobson found several flaws which, he felt, impaired the value of Hosken's statement. The most serious one was that he did not make clear his connections with the Rand capitalists and their advocates, especially the *Transvaal Leader*. It was seen in his 'reckless falsification of the proved facts in which the Johannesburg mineowners and their advocates indulge'. Hobson also re-asserted that in comparison with many European Governments, the Transvaal's political atmosphere before the war was relatively free. Besides, the oppression of the natives was in its rudest form taking place in the mines owned by the foreign capitalists.⁴⁸⁵ In his answer Hosken systematically denied having anything to do with the mining capitalists. He was chairman of the syndicate which owned and ran the *Transvaal Leader* but this did not make him an advocate for the mine-owners.⁴⁸⁶

Hobson's methods of presenting the alleged capitalist conspiracy caused strong resentment among the Cape colonists. F. Edmund Garrett, the editor of the *Cape Times*, claimed that Hobson's attack on Milner was largely based on statements which he had no means whatsoever of verifying. Indeed, Hobson's own vocabulary should have been a subject of inquiry so grossly extravagant it was.⁴⁸⁷ In his reply Hobson pointed out that after the annexation of the Boer Republics, *uitlanders* with connections to the mining capitalists were actually appointed to many important posts in the colonial governments and this seemed to support his capitalist conspiracy theory. The capitalists turned out to be Imperialists after all.⁴⁸⁸ Hobson found it impossible from England to verify the truth of his statements but pointed out that, as the editor of the *Cape Times* owned by Dr Rutherford Harris, the mining capitalist and a Tory candidate in the Parliamentary election of 1900, Garrett should have known better than to slander pro-Boers by accusing them of being one-sided in their views.⁴⁸⁹

Hobson's knowledge of British diplomacy in South Africa was, however, somewhat limited. Furthermore, before the publication of *The War in South Africa* in 1900, Hobson was still best known on both continents for his books on the evolution of capitalism and Ruskin. Subsequently, his questionable authority as a commentator on diplomacy was one of the main issues to which attention was paid by the reviews of the study.⁴⁹⁰

The War in South Africa was generally considered to be pro-Boer and anti-British in its arguments. The *Athenaeum*, the *Baptist Times and Freeman*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Western Morning News*, among others,

⁴⁸⁴ Hosken, William, 'Ten Years in Johannesburg', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXVII (April, 1900), pp. 472-479.

⁴⁸⁵ Hobson, John A., 'The Testimony from Johannesburg. I.-A Reply to Mr. Hosken', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXVII (May, 1900), pp. 656-659, 661.

⁴⁸⁶ Hosken, Wm., 'II.-A Rejoinder', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXVII (May, 1900), pp. 662-663, 667.

⁴⁸⁷ Garrett, F. Edmund, 'A Pro-Boer Authority', *Times* (October 30, 1900), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁸ Hobson, J. A., To the Editor of the *Times*, *Times* (November 2, 1900), p. 10.

⁴⁸⁹ Hobson, J. A., To the Editor of the *Times*, *Times* (November 13, 1900), p. 8; Shee, 'Rhodes and the Doctors (6) Frederick Rutherford Harris', pp. 434-438.

⁴⁹⁰ E. g. *Liverpool Mercury*, 29.3.1900; *Editor's Table*, March, 1900.

considered Hobson's arguments strongly biased against the British.⁴⁹¹ In the *Scotsman* the book was characterised as 'a singularly wrong-headed, one-sided, perverse, and prejudiced attempt to vindicate the action of the Boers and to convict the British of being guilty [...] of the present war in South Africa'.⁴⁹² Even the *Manchester Guardian* had to apologise for his strong and abiding views on what he believed was the press manufactured war.⁴⁹³ Only some radical and socialist papers and journals, Hardie's *Labour Leader*, Hyndman's *Justice* and the *New Age* being the most influential of them, found Hobson's arguments persuasive and accepted them without reservation.⁴⁹⁴

Even though some of the reviews appreciated that Hobson's arguments were balanced, well-constructed and even logical,⁴⁹⁵ it appears that his intentions remained unclear to most readers.⁴⁹⁶ Some regarded his book as a defence of the Boer,⁴⁹⁷ for some it was an attack on the Briton.⁴⁹⁸ The most wholeheartedly positive reception came from foreign, especially American newspapers. The *New York Times*, for instance, found the book 'the most exhaustive and authoritative' work on the subject of the war yet seen. The author was regarded as a careful and discriminating historian whose utter frankness was seen from his observant and balanced style.⁴⁹⁹ Positive statements as this should be seen in the context of the pro-Boer atmosphere then existing in the United States and Continental Europe.

In Britain, however, the pejorative connotations of being called pro-Boer undermined Hobson's intentions severely.⁵⁰⁰ In the heat of the war, any criticism was easily taken as pro-Boer or anti-British statement. However, James Bryce, for example, was seen as an opponent of the war whose views were by no means pro-Boer let alone anti-British.⁵⁰¹

The South African War and the Jingoism which accompanied it presented the British Peace Movement with its greatest challenge since the Crimean War. The Movement consisted of a heterogeneous group of pacifists, anti-Imperialists, welfare theorists, progressives and internationalists and it was organised into committees which were more or less supporters of a conciliation policy.⁵⁰² The various peace associations and anti-war committees had

⁴⁹¹ *Athenaeum*, vol. I. (1900), p. 273; *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 16.3.1900.; *Leeds Mercury*, 7.3.1900; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2.2.1900; *Western Morning News*, 2.3.1900.

⁴⁹² *Scotsman*, 1.2.1900.

⁴⁹³ *Manchester Guardian*, 29.10.1900, reviews of books of S/A war.

⁴⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 3.3.1900; Colebrook, Frank, 'Hobson's "The War in South Africa" (1900)', *Justice*, vol. XVII, no. 845 (March 24, 1900), p. 3; 'Socius', *New Age*, 1.3.1900.

⁴⁹⁵ E.g. *Echo*, 21.2.1900; 'The South African Problem', *Westminster Gazette*, 21.3.1900.

⁴⁹⁶ E.g. *South Wales Daily News*, 22.2.1900.

⁴⁹⁷ 'A Pro-Boer View of the African Question', *Sydney Telegraph* (21.4.1900).

⁴⁹⁸ E.g. *Daily News*, 23.2.1900.

⁴⁹⁹ Anon., 'The Politics of the African War', *New York Times*, March 17, 1900.

⁵⁰⁰ This was noted by 'R.B.S.' in the *Clarion* (17.3.1900).

⁵⁰¹ Fisher, *James Bryce*, pp. 311, 313.

⁵⁰² Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, pp. xiv-xxvi. The South Africa Conciliation Committee (SACC) supported the publication of *The War in South Africa* and published Hobson's pamphlet 'How the Press Worked before the War' (SACC, no. 14, 1900). See Dogson, W., 'Mr. Hobson's Book', *Morning Leader* (10.4.1900); Hobson, *The War in South Africa*, pp. 189-240.

insufficient prestige and too few resources but they played a significant part in the pro-Boer campaign. However, the anti-war committees were not simply pacifists but also in some cases argued that the Boer people had an age-old right to defend themselves against an aggressive, expansive and illiberal empire.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, not all anti-war agitators were simply anti-capitalist or anti-Rhodes activists, some propagated a non-Rhodes and non-capitalist policy which was supposed to secure South Africa's future as a self-governing colony of the British Empire.⁵⁰⁴

The Transvaal Independence Association was formed following the establishment of the independence of the Transvaal in 1881. Its direct successor was the Transvaal Committee which consisted of a heterogeneous group of anti-war agitators of whom Hobson was one and employed moral and constitutional arguments. The Treasurer of the Transvaal Committee, Dr G. B. Clark, among others, opposed the demand that the Republics should be changed into Colonies. He explained the nature of the conflict in South Africa in terms of a struggle between white races. As the British already had Ireland on their flank, it was not advisable to form 'another Ireland 7, 000 miles away'. The British experiences in Ireland and the Russian experiences in Poland had showed that a federation of self-governing communities based on free consent was the only possible policy for holding a Commonwealth together easily and for providing effective government.⁵⁰⁵

Most of the anti-war committees supported the liberty, retrenchment and reform policies which had been at the very core of liberalism in the age of Gladstone.⁵⁰⁶ In February 1900 Hobson, with a group of likeminded Liberals, founded the League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism (which was previously known as the Gladstone League against Aggressive Imperialism). Its purpose was to combat the growth of Imperialism and militarism, to respect, strengthen and extend the right to colonial self-government, to demand retrenchment as a prelude to social progress and political reform and to co-operate with other peace committees.⁵⁰⁷ While Hobson's point was similar to that of the anti-war agitators, there were also significant differences. This Gladstonian position fostered a more interventionist position than the Cobdenite non-interventionism with which Hobson has usually been associated.

⁵⁰³ Laity, Paul, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 155–156; Laity, Paul, 'The British Peace Movement and the War'. In David Omissi & Andrew S. Thompson (eds.), *The Impact of the South African War*, Palgrave, Basingstoke 2002, pp. 152–154.

⁵⁰⁴ Albert Cartwright to Scott, January 9, 1900, Cape Town, 123/1, CPSP.

⁵⁰⁵ Clark, G. B., *Our Boer Policy. An Historical Sketch*, The Transvaal Committee, St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster 1900, pp. 3–4.

⁵⁰⁶ Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914*, pp. 11, 154.

⁵⁰⁷ The League of Liberals Against Aggression and Militarism, 21.2.1900, Correspondence 1899–1900, 122/153, CPSP.

Judenhetze

Not only was Hobson accused of being pro-Boer, he was also widely accused of a hatred of Jews (*Judenhetze*). His virulent views on the Jewish element in South Africa seemed to upset many and proved to be the major obstacle to accepting his arguments. The *Spectator* found it unbelievable and upsetting that an English radical was allied with French reactionaries (*réactionnaires*).⁵⁰⁸ In the *Outlook* Hobson's anti-Imperialism, anti-capitalism and anti-Judaism were seen as symptoms of an illogical separation policy.⁵⁰⁹ The *Investor's Review* felt that it was unfair to accuse the 'Semitic races' of bringing about the war.⁵¹⁰ For the *Jewish World* Hobson's 'absurd' arguments were to be regarded just as babble.⁵¹¹ In a colourful article in the *Liverpool Courier* Hobson was called 'a socialist soldier firing his Vickers-Maxim at a pack of Jewish capitalists.'⁵¹² However, most of the reviews from national and provincial journals and newspapers saw the matter as irrelevant and did not mention the issue at all. In fact, only a few reviews expressed reservations and radical papers especially, the *Echo*, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Review of Reviews*, the *New Age*, and the *Positivist Review*, as well as the socialist *Clarion* and the *Labour Leader*, found Hobson's arguments persuasive.⁵¹³

The critics of Hobson pointed out that investment was not something related to one's race but to one's moral behaviour.⁵¹⁴ Lewis H. Berens, a reader of the *New Age* and a member of the National Liberal Club, for example, accused Hobson of increasing national and racial animosities by using loose and misleading phraseology such as 'Jew-gamblers' thus linking investing and Jews together.⁵¹⁵ Edward B. Rose defended Hobson's integrity as a recorder of the events in South Africa. To Rose it was clear that that there were financial gamblers in South Africa and that most of them, almost without exception, were Jews. Even Rhodes, the 'arch-nobbler', worked in association with the Rothschilds of London. These men were the sole responsible individuals for the South African imbroglio. The financial character of the Jewish element in South Africa was proved by the fact that the Stock Exchange was closed on the Day of Atonement.⁵¹⁶ Berens' critique, however, was not aimed at Hobson's integrity but at his insinuation of the predominance of the Jewish element in South

⁵⁰⁸ *Spectator*, 17.3.1900.

⁵⁰⁹ *Outlook*, 3.3.1900.

⁵¹⁰ *Investor's Review*, 24.3.1900.

⁵¹¹ *Jewish World*, 5.5.1900.

⁵¹² *Liverpool Courier*, 1.6.1900, leader.

⁵¹³ *Echo*, 21 and 22.2.1900; *Birmingham Post*, 26.2.1900; *Daily Chronicle*, 21.2.1900.; *Review of Reviews*, March, 1900; 'R.B.S.', *Clarion*, 17.3.1900; *Labour Leader*, 3.3.1900.

⁵¹⁴ Berens, Lewis H., 'Mr. J. A. Hobson's Phraseology', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 376 (December 12, 1901), pp. 798-799; Berens, Lewis H., 'Mr. J. A. Hobson's Phraseology', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 379 (January 2, 1902), p. 14.

⁵¹⁵ Berens, Lewis H., 'Mr. J. A. Hobson's Phraseology', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 376 (December 12, 1901), pp. 798-799.

⁵¹⁶ Rose, Edward B., 'Mr. J. A. Hobson's Phraseology', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 378 (December 26, 1901), p. 831.

African finance.⁵¹⁷ The critics also approved of Hobson's assertion that investing was being transformed into anti-social gambling in South Africa but that the men responsible were to be accused because of their capacity as gamblers, not as Jews.⁵¹⁸

Hobson, however, was convinced that 'the religious and racial bond of the Hebrews worked powerfully in business and politics.'⁵¹⁹ He did not change his point of view even at the close of the war but was even more fiercely arguing that 'Jew-gamblers' were not people who would be of benefit to the British Empire and with whom the British should negotiate the political future of South Africa.⁵²⁰ 'The financiers who used Milner, Chamberlain, and Rosebery to bring about this war are a little group of those Hebrews who, controlling to an extent the world most inadequately realises, the big bourse operations of London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, have organised an almost complete monopoly of the gold and diamond industries in South Africa, and have developed to a fine art of gambling in connection with them.' Hobson asserted that the methods employed, could not be rightly comprehended, unless the race-basis of this financial business was taken as a fact. Hobson was keen to point out that his analysis was not based in any way on hatred of Jews and that it did not have any connection with the violent *Judenhetze* supported by some ignorant and brutal people. For him it was an historical fact that banking, and in particular international exchange, was largely a creation of Jews. To question how far this dominance of Jews over finance was based on 'race-wit', and how far on custom and connection, was not for Hobson to answer.⁵²¹

Even though Hobson did not want to generalise too much from the lessons of South Africa and admitted that the financiers working for war formed only a minority among Jews, he considered profit making, investing and speculating especially typical of the Jews. It should be pointed out, however, that this analysis of the Jew's superior capacity as a profit maker was not something Hobson solely linked with the South African situation.⁵²²

In 1881, when the Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, the East End of London, a traditional immigrant reservoir, became once more the reception centre for the many Jewish immigrants who were fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire. In the 1880s the immigration question had become a part of the wider 'condition of England' problem then facing British society. It is against this background that Hobson's economic stereotype of the Jewish immigrant,

⁵¹⁷ Berens, Lewis H., 'Mr. J. A. Hobson's Phraseology', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 379 (January 2, 1902), p. 14.

⁵¹⁸ Ryan, Frederick, 'Jews and Gambling', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 379 (January 2, 1902), p. 14.

⁵¹⁹ Hobson, John A., Reply on Mr. Hobson's Phraseology articles, *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 384 (February 6, 1902), p. 94.

⁵²⁰ Contrary to the position taken, for instance, by Allett I am thus arguing that Hobson's notions of the financial supremacy of Jews were more meaningful than just fleeting remarks. Cf. Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 132-133.

⁵²¹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Last Chance for a Liberal Party', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 380 (January 9, 1902), pp. 24-25.

⁵²² Thus it has been argued, for example, Hannah Arendt. See *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, André Deutsch, London 1986, p. 135, note 34.

constructed between 1888 and 1891, becomes relevant.⁵²³ As early as 1891 he had pointed out that the problem of poverty did not really affect Jews in the same way as the rest of the East London poor. The Jews possessed a capacity to act like the ideal economic man, the fittest person to survive economic competition. To Hobson it seemed that the Jews of East London were free of all social morality; they would work for anything and under any conditions thus lowering the standard of the community where they had settled.⁵²⁴ In fact, Hobson's early London letters to the *Derbyshire Advertiser* reveal that his animosity to financiers can be traced back as far as 1888.

Hobson treated poor and rich Jews separately. While poor Jewish immigrants were eventually of little concern to Hobson, it was those wealthy members of the Jewish society, who were involved in controlling finance, that puzzled him most. The financial business of the world and the London press were noteworthy examples of aspects of life that were more and more falling under the control of Jews.⁵²⁵ The South Africa of 1899 just proved his conclusions right and worked as a paradigm of his analysis.

These two aspects of Hobson's analysis have been typically labelled 'anti-Semitic'.⁵²⁶ In both cases, the economic factors are dominant. In the case of the poor East European refugees who fled to England in great numbers in the 1880s, the national characteristics of the Jews were blamed for the plight in which they found themselves. They fed the sweated labour clothing industry in the East End of London and the consequent problems were caused by their concentration in a small area. The other aspect was his association of Jews with 'finance' and his distrust of the financier which he shared with many other Radicals of the time.⁵²⁷

In many cases Hobson's assertions certainly caused a lot of anger and hurt feelings among Anglo-Jewry. In some cases this even led to resignations from the ethical societies.⁵²⁸ However, it seems that the majority of the Radicals shared Hobson's view of the Jews in South Africa as usurers, speculators and gamblers. To the advocates of the Empire, these assertions were easily turned

⁵²³ Holmes, Colin, 'J. A. Hobson and the Jews'. In *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society*, Colin Holmes (ed.), George Allen & Unwin, London 1978, pp. 126-130.

⁵²⁴ Hobson, *Problems of Poverty*, pp. 58-62, 78-79, 98, 125-26, 134-137.

⁵²⁵ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 17.7.1891; 21.10.1892. See also Holmes, 'J. A. Hobson and the Jews'. In *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society*, pp. 135-136. Cf. Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, p. 109.

⁵²⁶ See, for example, Lindeman, Alberts, *Esau's Tears. Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, pp. 362-364. The nature and extent of Hobson's prejudices against Jews has aroused several scholarly interesting debates over the years. It is clear that Hobson was stereotyping Jews. However, it must be emphasised that Hobson's prejudices were not biological in origin but cultural in kind. It is true that Hobson was intrigued by Galton, Pearson, Kidd and others who tended to try to biologize the concept of 'race' but his own position was somewhat more ambivalent than theirs. Allett, John, 'New Liberalism, Old Prejudices: J. A. Hobson and the "Jewish Question"', *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 49 (1987), pp. 99-114. Cf. ch. 5.3 Eugenics and the Empire.

⁵²⁷ These included, among others, William Clarke. See Burrows, Herbert, 'Biographical Sketch; His later years' In Clarke, *A Collection of His Writings*, p. xxiv.

⁵²⁸ N. N., 'Ethics and Anti-Semitism', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 12 (March 24, 1900), p. 191.

into claims that the Jews did not express the same patriotism for the Empire as the rest of the British.⁵²⁹ Even Anglo-Jewry realised the similarities between the two analyses and was therefore keen to express its loyalty to the British Empire at the time of the war.⁵³⁰

4.5 Estimations and Outcomes

Following his return to England in late 1899 Hobson found, to his disappointment, that books written on the origins of the South African war were still considered more authoritative than the views he expressed in the pages of the radical press. 'An example came before me a short time ago in a visit to Oxford, where I found a number of "dons" discussing the origin of the South African War by collating passages in the book of Mr. Fitzpatrick and comparing them with the text of various blue-books [...]'.⁵³¹

The book which Hobson mentioned, *The Transvaal from Within*, published in 1899 by J. P. Fitzpatrick, Secretary of the Johannesburg Reform Committee, supplied a need which was widely felt in England in the late 1890s: a clear statement of the case for the *uitlanders* and a full account of the Raid from their perspective. In the *Times* it was stated that 'few readers will lay down the volume without feeling that they know more than they have ever known before of the real issues on trial in South Africa.'⁵³² The *Standard* considered that as the Secretary of the Johannesburg Reform Committee, Fitzpatrick was particularly well qualified to describe the inner workings of the South African Republic. The *Daily Mail*, among many other papers, saw that the book offered a careful telling of facts. According to the *Daily News* Fitzpatrick showed how 'galling the conditions were to free-born Britons' in the Transvaal.⁵³³

In relation to other contemporary views of the South African situation, Hobson remained quite critical. He stated, for example, that A. H. Keane's *The Boer States* (1900) ended 'in a glorification of the imperialism of Mr. Rhodes and vilification of the Transvaal government such as would even gratify the jaded appetite of readers of the *Daily Mail*'. In particular Keane's analysis of the events leading to the Jameson Raid was repudiated by Hobson. 'Most Jingo Imperialists either feel or feign some condemnation for this dastardly episode. Not so Mr. Keane.'⁵³⁴ The *Life and Times of Sir J. C. Molteno* (1900) by P. A.

⁵²⁹ E.g. Raphael, Maurice, 'The Rand Financers', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 13 (March 31, 1900), pp. 206–207.

⁵³⁰ Mendelson, Richard, 'The Jewish War. Anglo-Jewry and the South African War'. In *Writing a Wider War*, pp. 247–249.

⁵³¹ Hobson, 'The Tyranny of Books', p. 34.

⁵³² *Times* (October 6, 1899), p. 10.

⁵³³ For more on press opinions see Fitzpatrick, J. P., *The Transvaal from Within. A Private Record on Public Affairs*, William Heinemann, London 1899. Something of this want is demonstrated by this request to readers from the Gosvenor Gallery Library 'In consequence of the exceptional demand for this Work, it is respectfully requested that all copies may be RETURNED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE'. (*op. cit.*)

⁵³⁴ J. A. H., Review of *The Boer States* by A. H. Keane, *Speaker*, vol. II, no. 28 (April 14,

Molteno was however regarded as a fair account of the diplomatic history of South Africa.⁵³⁵ *The New South Africa* (1901) by W. Bleloch was even recommended as 'the best-informed and ablest volume dealing with the Transvaal which has yet appeared' although the author held that the war was undertaken for the safety of the Empire. Like Hobson, Bleloch hoped that the fervour of brief Imperialist passion would have soon subsided and the abiding sentiments of colonialism would have re-asserted themselves.⁵³⁶ Josephine E. Butler's *The South African Native* was 'designed to support the false suggestion' that some consideration for the natives was the actual motive, and is a justification for the war in South Africa.' The Boer domination of the native tribes was painted very black. 'Passages, now familiar, from Livingstone, Moffat, Mackenzie, and the other great "historical" missionaries are once more put in evidence [...].' Moreover, 'a similar tale of injustice and cruelty can be told of British colonists and frontier settlers in Australia, New Zealand, and everywhere where they have been brought into contact with lower races'. As Hobson pointed out, '[...] there can be little question that the record of the Dutch in South Africa has been as bad as that of any other while race set in the midst of militant tribes or savages.'⁵³⁷ Only a few of the sources Hobson consulted were actually used to support his views. The evidence given by Sir William Marriott in his *The War and Its Cost* was used to back Hobson's argument that the war was undertaken by the Imperial Government in order to secure mines for the capitalists.⁵³⁸

In relation to the economic future of South Africa, Hobson remained more pessimistic than most of his contemporary collaborators such as, for example, James Bryce. In his estimate, the Rand mines would be extinct in less than sixty years (*i.e.* by 1960). He also seriously doubted the possibilities for immigrants of British origin to inhabit the country. Based on his estimates of the capabilities of the Jews of German and Polish origin in Johannesburg, Hobson predicted that the trading future of the Rand belonged to them.⁵³⁹ The future of British immigrants in South Africa remained at best unpromising. '[...] there is reason to doubt whether the British race is destined to retain any long or vigorous hold upon this corner of the earth.'⁵⁴⁰

Furthermore, he gravely doubted whether the working of gold mines in the newly gained British South Africa Company territory of Southern Rhodesia could be profitable. The development of the mines was contingent upon a large supply of cheap, submissive unskilled native labour which was the true reason

1900), pp. 50-51.

⁵³⁵ J. A. H., 'A Prime Minister of the Cape'. Review of the *Life and Times of Sir J. C. Molteno* by P. A. Molteno, *Speaker*, vol. II, no. 34 (May 26, 1900), pp. 226-227.

⁵³⁶ J. A. H., Review of *The New South Africa* by W. Bleloch, *Speaker*, vol. IV, no. 95 (July 27, 1901), pp. 472-473.

⁵³⁷ J. A. H., 'The South African Native'. Review of *Native Races and the War* by Josephine E. Butler, *Speaker*, vol. II, no. 47 (August 25, 1900), pp. 575-576.

⁵³⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'A Sort of a Loyalist', *Speaker*, vol. 6, no. 131 (April 5, 1902), pp. 10-11.

⁵³⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'How Long Will the Rand Last?', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 16 (January 20, 1900), pp. 421-423.

⁵⁴⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'Has England A Real Hold of South Africa?', *Speaker*, vol. I, no. 20 (February 17, 1900), pp. 529-530.

for the forcing the natives to work and not, as it was sometimes argued, lifting their race on to a higher plane.⁵⁴¹ In future, the absence of an adequate supply of labour could effectively hinder the profitability of the mines.

In his estimates of the cost of the war, Hobson reminded his readers that the Imperialist too was a taxpayer, who eventually would have to face the bill. 'It looks as if the British taxpayer were destined soon to realise in a most intelligible way the "burden of empire" in South Africa.'⁵⁴² 'If accepted that this was not a mineowning but an Imperialist war, fought not for goldfields but for the protection and prestige of the British Empire, there was no reason for exacting from the mineowners the "considerable contribution"; the British taxpayer ought to pay the entire bill.' Hobson suspected that the Rand capitalists were prepared to use 'dishonest trickery' by which income and profits were concealed in order to evade taxation.⁵⁴³

D. G. Ritchie's Philosophical Argument in Justification of the War

In 1900 Hobson and one of the leading British Idealist thinkers, David G. Ritchie (1853–1903), Professor of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics at St Andrews, entered into a bitter controversy about justification of the South African War. Tensions caused by the war also translated idealist theory into practical policies. This controversy reveals some of the ethical and political arguments used for and against the war. It also reveals something of the way the war affected British intellectuals. Idealism and Imperialism did not fit together intellectually but were considered mutually exclusive. Despite this ideological unease, the issue of the war divided British Idealist thinkers into supporters and critics. The war provides an illustration of the implications of an idealist treatment of society and the state by nationalists and Imperialists. Did their insistence upon the social organism lead inevitably into a defence of Empire as the ultimate community?⁵⁴⁴

British idealism was a deeply responsive philosophy in dealing with many of the concerns of Victorian and Edwardian Britain.⁵⁴⁵ In doing so, it tended to look to the Greek philosophical legacy to expose the flaws of modern British society and to prescribe what that society ought to become. Idealists had to fight many battles over the prejudices against German philosophy in Britain. Idealism was typically regarded as incoherent and absurd or even dangerous as it was associated with continental upheavals and crises. These prejudices concerning idealism reached their climax in 1914 when the British idealists had

⁵⁴¹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Land of "Limitless Possibilities"', *Speaker*, vol. 8, no. 200 (August 1, 1903), pp. 409–410.

⁵⁴² Hobson, J. A., 'Facing the Bill', *Speaker*, vol. III, , no. 61 (December 1, 1900), pp. 223–224.

⁵⁴³ Hobson, J. A., 'Cooking the Uncaught Hare', *Speaker*, vol. III, no. 64 (December 22, 1900), pp. 319–320.

⁵⁴⁴ Den Otter, Sandra, *British Idealism and Social Explanation. A Study in Late Victorian Thought*, Clarendon Press, London 1996, pp. 173–175.

⁵⁴⁵ Boucher & Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory*, p. 3.

to defend their position against accusations of harbouring blind state obedience or even a Prussian type of militarism in their thought.⁵⁴⁶ Idealists did not offer any single response to the South African crisis nor did they agree on whether the British Empire possessed any rights that could have justified the war. Ritchie, among some other Idealist thinkers, most notably R. B. Haldane, Henry Jones and J. S. Mackenzie, endorsed the war on the grounds that the Boer Republics were morally corrupt.⁵⁴⁷

The Boer Republics based their claim to national self-determination on a natural rights theory which had already been challenged by Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham and Karl Marx. Ritchie's challenge however was practical rather than theoretical.⁵⁴⁸ Ritchie, like many contemporary British idealist thinkers, oriented his philosophical idealism towards contemporary social issues. In doing so he gained a reputation for progressive political sympathies and joined many of radical societies of the time. However, Ritchie did not have any one socialist programme but was interested in developing a political and social philosophy from idealist foundations. His uniqueness in idealist thinking rises from his analysis of the application of evolutionary theories to social thought.⁵⁴⁹

In *Darwinism and Politics* (1889), *Principles of State Interference* (1891) and in *Darwin and Hegel* (1893) Ritchie argued against the individualist dogma of *laissez-faire* expressed by Herbert Spencer and J. S. Mill. Like the Socialists and the New Liberals, he challenged the antithesis between the individual and the state and pointed out the need for increased state intervention.⁵⁵⁰ Furthermore, he described the state and, indeed, the Empire as moral entities. As the state had its end in realising the best life for the individual the Empire, in accordance with the previous statement, had its end in realising the best life for the colonies.

In Ritchie's evolutionary ethics rights, such as the right to self-determination, were not natural but derived from social utility and varied according to evolutionary standards. His evolutionary ethics justified a wide range of social institutions. Slavery, for example, would have been a perfectly justified social institution if only it had served a social purpose.⁵⁵¹ Ritchie's rights theory concerned itself with human capacities in a global context. Therefore, the races of mankind did not possess any natural rights but rights

⁵⁴⁶ Den Otter, Sandra, *British Idealism and Social Explanation*, pp. 13–14, 31–32, 47, 175.

⁵⁴⁷ Boucher & Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory*, p. 168.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 135, 138, 140, 144, 150, 152–153.

⁵⁴⁹ Den Otter, S. M., 'Ritchie, David George (1853–1903)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35763>, accessed 24 Oct 2007]

⁵⁵⁰ Ritchie, David G., *The Principles of State Interference. Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, J. S. Mill, and T. H. Green*, Swan Sonnenschein, London 1891, pp. v, 64, 169; Ritchie, David, G., *Darwin and Hegel. With other Philosophical Studies*, Swan Sonnenschein, London 1893, p. vii; Ritchie, David, G., *Darwinism and Politics. With Two Additional Essays on Human Evolution*, Swan Sonnenschein, London 1895, *passim*.

⁵⁵¹ Ritchie, David G., *Natural Rights. A Criticism of Some Political and Ethical Conceptions*, 5th impr., George Allen & Unwin, London 1952 (1894), pp. ix, 101–104; Ritchie, David G., *Studies in Political and Social Ethics*, Swan Sonnenschein, London 1902, p. iv.

that varied according to the civilised standards of the time.⁵⁵² Ritchie supported the war because he felt that the Boer Republics were corrupted by their morals. Without the British, the oligarchic Boer Republics would have exploited the natives endlessly. Ritchie asked, to support his theory, if Cromwell would have put the rights of the Anglo-Saxon race before the political freedom of mankind.⁵⁵³

An idea of mature nations assisting younger nations to reach full citizenship was appealing for Ritchie who defended Milner's South African war policy on the principle that the war was like a classical struggle for 'true constitutional democracy'. The cause of the British Empire seemed to him as just and the South African War as inevitable as had been the struggle between the North and the South in America. In Ritchie's mind, the war was fought for democracy, civilization and progress.⁵⁵⁴

For Ritchie capitalism did not properly explain the causes of the war. He also disagreed with Hobson about the meaning of natural rights.⁵⁵⁵ Hobson, like many other liberals such as L. T. Hobhouse, expressed concern that without some natural rights, such as the right to personal property, individuals would be deprived of all the rights essential for social citizenship.⁵⁵⁶ Ritchie pointed out that self-determination based on the natural rights theory was meaningless if society itself was not capable of self-determination. This argument justified the actions taken by the Jameson Raid which Ritchie compared to the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.⁵⁵⁷

The vastly expanded *uitlander* population in Johannesburg had placed the concept of political rights at the heart of the Anglo-Boer conflict in the early 1890s. Ritchie felt that Hobson had been 'dialectically dishonest' attacking Chamberlain and Milner for defending British rights but at the same time approving the Boer concept of political rights without any reservation.⁵⁵⁸ Certainly, Hobson showed an understanding of the Boer concept of political rights.

'These people believe in their cause with an intensity of passion which we cannot understand. But though we may not understand it, we shall have to reckon with it. It now seems to us, in our imperial pride, a small thing to take away the freedom of two little States, and we have even acquired a clumsy skill in half-persuading ourselves that we are making and not killing freedom. But we shall find to our

⁵⁵² Ritchie, *Natural Rights*, pp. 232–235, 247, 258–262, 279; Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference*, p. 94, note 1.

⁵⁵³ Ritchie, D. G., 'Another View of the South African War', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 2 (January 13, 1900), pp. 19–20.

⁵⁵⁴ Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation*, p. 50. Ritchie and Milner were acquainted with each other from their Balliol College undergraduate days when both had belonged to a discussion group gathered around Arnold Toynbee to study politics. (*op. cit.*)

⁵⁵⁵ This point is further discussed in the concluding chapter.

⁵⁵⁶ J.A.H., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life - XIII', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 25 (June 18, 1898), p. 388.

⁵⁵⁷ Ritchie, D. G., 'To the Editors of the *Ethical World*', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 7 (February 17, 1900), p. 110.

⁵⁵⁸ Ritchie, D. G., 'Mr. Hobson's Book and the Coming Settlement - II', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 10 (March 10, 1900), pp. 145–146.

sorrow, if we force this form of settlement [a federation], that this fond and foolish passion of independence will not disappear, that it will abide always, fermenting in the body politic, waiting for the ripe time to reappear in a dangerous rebellion.⁵⁵⁹

It was seen that there was a very close analogy between the circumstances of the Transvaal and those of the Canada 140 years ago. For the French Canadians too were 'a high spirited and valorous people, a people to whom freedom was a passion, a religion, a people who cherished the independence of their country'. Yet, it took nearly 100 years after the annexation of Canada to England, that the full rights of self-government were conferred upon the French Canadians in 1867.⁵⁶⁰

Hobson felt that his ethics of empire were based on more solid arguments than those of Ritchie who had accepted Imperialism as his philosophy.⁵⁶¹ At the time of the war, what was meant by Imperialism was not yet clear. The alternative pejorative and positive connotations of Imperialism offered both sides a chance to win support. Both Ritchie and Hobson used Imperialism in its pejorative meaning and saw it as synonymous with despotism. However, at the time of the war, 'Imperialist' was also synonymous with the terms 'pro-British', 'anti-Boer' and even 'pro-Rhodes'. Therefore, when Hobson called Ritchie's philosophy Imperialism, that could have suggested either that Ritchie opposed the Boer concept of political rights or that he supported Rhodes and capitalism in general. Ritchie's critique of Hobson concerned more his views over capitalism than Imperialism.⁵⁶² Antonyms such as anti-British, pro-Boer, anti-capitalist and anti-Rhodes were equally useful in this battle over political vocabulary. Indeed, Hobson's work can be appreciated not only for redefining political concepts but also for their innovative use in political discourse.⁵⁶³ This point can be further discussed by looking how the term 'Imperialism' was defined in the liberal political discourse regarding the Grand Duchy of Finland.

The Boer States and the Grand Duchy of Finland: a Historical Comparison

'Over forty years ago, at the brink of the twentieth century, two small nations were unjustifiably attacked by their much bigger and powerful neighbours. The one was of our own people [the Finns], whose national privileges were compromised by the so called Manifesto of February 15th, and the other was the Boer people who lived at the far side of the world.'⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁹ Hobson, 'The Settlement in South Africa', p. 97.

⁵⁶⁰ Bland, Hubert, 'The Settlement in South Africa. A Reply to J. A. Hobson', *Clarion*, no. 435 (April 7, 1900), p. 105.

⁵⁶¹ J.A.H., 'A Reply to Professor Ritchie', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 12 (March 24, 1900), p. 179.

⁵⁶² Ritchie, D. G., 'The Transvaal War' (To the Editors of the *Ethical World*), *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 7 (February 17, 1900), p. 110.

⁵⁶³ Cf. Freedon, 'J.A. Hobson as a Political Theorist'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, p. 31.

⁵⁶⁴ Manninen, Antero, 'Suomalaiselle lukijalle'. In *Wet, Christiaan de, Buurien ja englantilaisten sota*, translated by Vihtori Peltonen, WSOY, Porvoo 1942, p. 5, author's translation.

In June 1902 the desperate Boer guerrilla war was over and this paved the way for the Boer political campaign. One of the best-sellers during the Boer national campaign was the war memoirs of the Boer General Christiaan de Wet (1854–1922) *De strijd tusschen Boer en Brit* (1902), which was immediately translated from the Dutch original into English (with the title *Three Years War*) and Finnish. In Finland de Wet's war memoirs were for long regarded as a handbook suited to the Finnish national struggle with the Russian Empire (or later with the Soviet Union). In 1942, at the beginning of the Continuation War, Finland's political similarities to those of the Boer Republics were recalled in the manner quoted above.

In 1899 the Grand Duchy of Finland had entered a period of political conflict with the Russian Empire. In Finland as well as in Britain, some of the Liberals recognised the similarity between the political situation of the Grand Duchy and that of the Boer Republics' so far as questions of national self-determination and an imperial thread were concerned. This is clearly to be seen in *Finland* (1899–1900), a British liberal journal devoted to the cause of the Finnish people.⁵⁶⁵ Finland was seen as an example of a nation that had cultivated its inner national interests instead of setting out to colonise: '[...] it is the small states alone who, unable to attempt to compete in the race for territorial aggrandizement, are enabled to develop their own countries unburdened by the crushing expense of an army out of proportion to their resources'.⁵⁶⁶

D. G. Ritchie, one of the British signatories of the international petition to the Tsar,⁵⁶⁷ feared that by showing the British Empire in a poor light, Hobson had furthered already widespread Anglophobic attitudes in Russia and weakened Finland's chances of seeking political support from Britain.⁵⁶⁸ The attempted Russification of Finland offered the British liberal intellectuals an opportunity, not only to express their sympathy for the Finns, but also to point out the liberal principles' inconsistency with Imperialism. The political rights and privileges in the 'Constitution of Finland', granted to the Finns by Tsar Alexander I and reconfirmed by Tsar Alexander II were seen as an example of a proper handling of imperial minorities.⁵⁶⁹ Within the British Empire similar minority questions were acute in Ireland, Canada (with the French Canadians) and South Africa. It should be stressed, however, that even British Liberals did not wish any other political solution to the South African situation than one that accorded with imperial interests. An anti-war policy did not inevitably imply pro-Boer activity let alone anti-British feelings. *Finland* and its liberal supporters were clearly anti-Imperialists by definition but not pro-Boer. Therefore,

⁵⁶⁵ In June 1900 the paper's title was changed to the *Finland Bulletin*.

⁵⁶⁶ *Finland*, no. 7 (January, 1900).

⁵⁶⁷ *Finland*, no. 3 (September, 1899).

⁵⁶⁸ Ritchie, 'Mr. Hobson's Book and the Coming Settlement - II', p. 146.

⁵⁶⁹ For further details see, for example, Polvinen, Tuomo, *Imperial Borderland. Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904*, Translated from the Finnish by Steven Huxley, Hurst, London 1995.

Finland's pro-Boer movement was a very complicated issue for the British supporters of Finland's national interests.

The Finnish pro-Boer activists considered the South African War a British attempt to steal Boer land and as a payback from the First Boer War in 1881. The Boer Republics were believed to be in no way guilty for the outbreak of the war. The blame was placed on the 'foreign gold seekers and criminals' who swarmed to Johannesburg. The war was also analysed in the wider context of British Imperialism; the independent Boer states were in the way of the Chartered Company and Rhodes. After the Jameson Raid had failed, the British Government started to support Imperialists in order to steal the Boer land and gold. Unlike the British, the Boers were believed to be a peace-loving people who were forced to defend their national sovereignty with arms.⁵⁷⁰

However, the pro-Boer attitudes were not shared by everybody in Finland. Free Church journalist Frederick Lönnbeck's (1854–1914) pamphlet *Pro Britannia* (in Swedish, 1900) was warmly welcomed by the journal *Finland* since it tried to convince Finns that the Boers were not to be idealised.⁵⁷¹ Lönnbeck argued that Boer social life was entirely based on slavery, a fact which consequently revealed the brutal and fanatic nature of the Boer people. Finns were not properly equipped to make valid judgements about the political situation in the Transvaal. According to Lönnbeck, 'Dutch race superiority in South Africa' did not serve 'the general interest of peace' and consequently did not legitimate the Boer national existence. The British Empire, however, had shown its civilising capacity and was therefore capable of furthering European culture and Christendom in South Africa. By expressing their pro-Boer attitudes, the Finnish people showed a lack of respect for the British civilising mission – something incomprehensible to Lönnbeck. Finns, who had taken their side with the anti-British party, did not earn British devotion to the cause of the Finnish people.⁵⁷²

This British devotion to the cause of the Finnish people and the Finnish pro-Boer attitudes exemplify how problematic political and ideological categories such as 'Imperialist' or 'anti-Imperialist' can be. For the British liberals *Finland* offered a channel, not only for supporting Finnish national interests but also for criticising despotic forms of government in Russia and the British Empire. In terms of the traditional understanding of Imperialism, Liberals opposed British Imperialism since the concept's traditional pejorative connotations were closely connected to despotism. Yet, in its context *Finland* and its liberal supporters were neither pro-Boers nor anti-British. Finland's autonomous status was understood as a suitable example of the proper handling of imperial minorities; a question that was quickly becoming highly acute political question not only in South Africa but internationally.

⁵⁷⁰ Manninen, Antero, 'Suomalaiselle lukijalle'. In De Wet, *Buurien ja englantilaisten sota*, pp. 6–8.

⁵⁷¹ *Finland*, no. 10 (April, 1900).

⁵⁷² Lönnbeck, F. Wald., *Pro Britannia*, Ekenäs 1900, pp. 3–8, 11–15.

5 THEORY: THE SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION OF IMPERIALISM

In Hobson's analysis the problem of Imperialism was intimately linked with the factors of the industrial and moral growth of nations. He refused to treat either ethics, politics, and economics in isolation, and some of his most original contributions to the subject occurred in the border region where these studies, conventionally separated, intersect. Hobson liked to use, for instance, analogies from manufacturing and other businesses, where the size of capital and operations are conditions for success, in an investigation of expansion. While conditionally recognising here the general application of principles of national economy and ethics, in the following dealings we are especially concerned with their application to the Empire. Hobson's explanations of Imperialism were dependant on his method of investigating social phenomena and this is why it is discussed first.⁵⁷³

5.1 The Science of 'Sociology'

'Everywhere the pressure of special concrete interests, nowhere the conscious play of organized human intelligence!'⁵⁷⁴

'We are all Spencerians to-day.'⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ David Long has maintained that Hobson's critique of Imperialism was a political statement and not the statement of scientific theory (Long, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 72, 90). I am arguing here that Hobson developed various explanations of Imperialism based on scientific beliefs of the time. However, it should be noted at the outset that we are here only concerned with the question how Hobson defined and understood the epithet 'scientific'.

⁵⁷⁴ Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, p. 116. Originally published in the *Progressive Review* of 1896.

⁵⁷⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'Herbert Spencer', *South Place Magazine*, vol. IX, no. 4 (January, 1904), p. 49.

These statements made by Hobson have been used to illustrate the organic way of thinking he adopted at the turn of the century. It claimed to deal with the social question as an organic whole instead of mechanically breaking it down into parts.⁵⁷⁶ It also vindicated collectivist solutions to social problems. Hobson's organicism did not generate a single coherent political theory but these metaphors sprang from different sources of which biology was one while idealist philosophy formed another.⁵⁷⁷ However, he did not accept the full conclusions of either but, according to Michael Freeden, tried to find 'a balance between the exclusive concern of idealism with society as existing to realise an ethical order and the purely physical implications of organicism'. Hobson supplemented the idea of the life of the social organism with an idea of a common 'psychical life', character and purpose thus forming a new science of 'psycho-biology'.⁵⁷⁸

When discussing Hobson's analogies, taken from biological and medical findings, it should be noted that he was able to adapt evolution to his own ends by eschewing its form in the natural world and emphasising social evolution. For instance, the parasitism Hobson was discussing was mainly a sort of 'economic parasitism' by which he meant that the financiers used colonies in order to enrich themselves.⁵⁷⁹ His relation to philosophy and especially British idealism is more elusive than this. As seen from the dispute over the South African War Hobson can be regarded as one of the staunchest critics of idealism which he saw as one of the forms of conservatism.⁵⁸⁰

By conservatism Hobson meant a tactical defence of the existing order of things. John Allett has pointed out that when defined as a respect for tradition, a belief in hierarchy, order and authoritative leadership, a preference for entailed rights over declared rights and a commitment to the idea of community as a system of reciprocal obligations and paternalistic responsibilities, there seems to be significant conservative aspect in Hobson's own social thought; and, in particular, in his organicism. However, to take distinctly conservative hue there must be the recognition that society, like a living organism, is more than the sum of its parts. Hobson's comprehension of the organic structure of society was not constituted by the sum of individual utilities but organic or social utility needed to be deliberately pursued as an end in itself.⁵⁸¹ Thus organicism as a liberal argument was in favour of the need to secure individual well-being without which society as a whole could not flourish.

⁵⁷⁶ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. IX.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 21 (May 21, 1898), p. 324.

⁵⁷⁷ Jones, H. S., *Victorian Political Thought. British History in Perspective*, St. Martin's Press, New York 2000, ch. 3, especially pp. 74, 76-77, 93-94.

⁵⁷⁸ Freeden, Michael, 'Biological and Evolutionary Roots of the New Liberalism in England', *Political Theory*, vol. 4., no. 4 (November, 1976), p. 484.

⁵⁷⁹ See Peter Cain's discussion of parasitism in *Hobson and Imperialism*, ch. 5.

⁵⁸⁰ Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 184-185, 187, 272.

⁵⁸¹ Allett, John, 'The conservative aspect of Hobson's new liberalism'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson. Humanism and Welfare*, Michael Freeden (ed.), Unwin Hyman, London, pp. 74-75ff.

For the most part the British Idealists too were social reformers who responded to the crucial concerns of late-Victorian Britain and who opposed excessive individualism. While they did that, they were accused of subordinating the individual to the state, and of propagating a moral absolutism, the implications of which in international relations was Imperialism. Idealists tended to defend themselves by asserting that the state for them was only a moral absolute for promoting and sustaining the common good.⁵⁸² Hobson also tended to hold that the state had an absolute moral claim on the individual only to the extent that it sustained the common good. They also believed, in their different degrees, that there was the possibility of a general will developing out of the already existing attempts at international co-operation, such as the Empire. Hobson shared many of the aims of liberal-minded Idealists. Their common view of the role of liberalism was that its purpose was to raise all members of society to a civilised condition, entailing positive state intervention, even if they disagreed about the desirable level of that intervention.⁵⁸³

In analysing the views of Idealists on international relations, David Boucher maintains that it is crucial to bear in mind what they conceived philosophy to be. According to his words 'the role of philosophy is to make intelligible what is here and now in terms of its rational development.' At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries both Imperialism and the South African war were facts of life that had to be explained. It was quite common among the late nineteenth century theorists influenced by the theory of evolution to extend the struggle for existence beyond individual competition to nations. For many of the Idealist philosophers, including R. B. (Lord) Haldane, D. G. Ritchie and Henry Jones, the idea of group selection led to a justification of Imperialism. Yet many of the Idealists too condemned Rhodes's methods in South Africa. As already seen from the previous chapter, it was possible to deplore the methods of ruling but at the same time support the imperial principle at stake. As will be seen a right kind of Imperialism entailed a responsible and sustained effort to prepare the 'lower races' for self-government. As Boucher has said 'the only justification for Imperialism, if indeed it could be justified at all, was this fundamental principle that the socially most efficient people elevated the lower [groups] to [their] own level'. Ritchie, however, expressed a harsher view that many of the 'lower races' may never be fit to govern themselves, and for their own sakes they should be ruled in a despotic manner.⁵⁸⁴

The first traces of Hobson's increasing interest in the organic view of society can be found in a book review of *An Introduction to Social Philosophy* (1890) by J. S. Mackenzie (1860-1935), an Idealist philosopher, who traced the

⁵⁸² See Bosanquet, Bernard, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Macmillan, London and New York 1899.

⁵⁸³ Boucher, David, 'Introduction'. In *The British Idealists, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, pp. x, xiii-xiv, xii-xxiii, xxxiii.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xxviii-xxxii.

bearings of social philosophy to the related subjects of ethics, politics, and economics. There existed no exact boundary-lines between these subjects but social philosophy necessitated an ideal of social unity.⁵⁸⁵ He found further support from the American economist Simon N. Patten's book entitled *The Theory of Dynamic Economics* (1892), which seemed to convince Hobson that the quantitative study of wealth should be supplemented with a qualitative assessment of life.⁵⁸⁶

Whereas Hobson's presentation of the social question was distinctively economic, he did not believe that social problems were soluble by political economy. 'A science which still takes money as its standard of value, and regards man as a means of making money, is, in the nature of the case, incapable of facing the deep and complex human problems which compose the Social Question.' In his dealings with that question, the previous estimates of wealth were put aside and expressed in terms of waste.⁵⁸⁷ Hobson's aim was to discover the best means of minimising social waste, or, conversely, of maximising social satisfaction.⁵⁸⁸ To achieve this he transformed political economy into a Science of Human Wealth and substituted social utility as a standard of wealth instead of money.⁵⁸⁹

Hobson's qualitative notion of wealth was soon bolstered by an empirical analysis on Spencerian lines. Hobson appreciated Herbert Spencer as the first English thinker who clearly applied the organic conception of growth to the structure of society.⁵⁹⁰ He showed Hobson how scientific methods can be applied to the study of social life.⁵⁹¹ However, Spencer regarded society as a low grade organism. Thus, the perfection of the organic nature of society in industry or politics was to him an impossibility. Spencer did not learn, as did J. S. Mill, that economic inequality impaired 'selection', the instrument of progress in social evolution. Similarly, he did not notice the disappearance of individual liberty and free competition over large areas of industrial society.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁵ Mackenzie, John S., *An Introduction to Social Philosophy*, 2nd ed., James Maclehose, Glasgow 1895 (1890), pp. 1-3, 7-10; Hobson, John A., Review of *An Introduction to Social Philosophy* by J. S. Mackenzie, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. II, no. 8 (April, 1892), pp. 389-390. See also Freeden, Michael, 'Hobson's evolving conceptions of human nature'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 56-59.

⁵⁸⁶ Hobson, John A., Review of *The Theory of Dynamic Economics* by Simon N. Patten, *Economic Journal*, vol. II (December, 1892), pp. 689-690. For more on Patten's influence on Hobson see Freeden, 'Introduction'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁸⁷ J. A. H., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. I.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 13 (March 26, 1898), pp. 194-195; Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. I.', *Ethical World*, vol. IV, no. 16 (April 16, 1898), p. 243. Quotation in J. A. H., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. V.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 17 (April 23, 1898), p. 259.

⁵⁸⁸ J. A. H., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. III.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 15 (April 9, 1898), p. 226.

⁵⁸⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. VI.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 18 (April 30, 1898), p. 275.

⁵⁹⁰ On Spencer's conception of society refer to Spencer, Herbert, *First Principles*, Williams & Norgate, London 1908 (1860), pp. 7 *et passim*. Refer also to Freeden, 'Hobson's evolving conceptions of human nature'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁹¹ Brailsford, 'The Life-work of J. A. Hobson', p. 5.

⁵⁹² Hobson, 'Herbert Spencer', p. 52.

The late nineteenth century Liberal theorists constantly alluded to Mill as a yardstick by which to measure their own attainments and Hobson was not an exception.⁵⁹³ Even if Hobson criticised Mill's negative conception of freedom he appreciated him more than perhaps any other British thinker of his time.

Mill, who started 'as a rigid theoretic individualist, with a conception of the State as narrow as that of Spencer, [...] came [...] to so passionate a realisation of the need of social reconstruction as to accept and apply to himself the name Socialist'.⁵⁹⁴ Ultimately, however, it was Giuseppe Mazzini who gave Hobson the idea of the necessity of thoroughgoing industrial reform as a condition of a sound social life. The lesson of the French Revolution had taught that the remedy for social problems did not lie with political reforms but with equality of opportunity in the attainment of life and property.⁵⁹⁵

John Ruskin, the study of whom helped Hobson to develop his methodology, had approached society from an economic perspective. Ruskin's intention was to define the concept of 'wealth' in a fuller way than the previous writers of classical political economy had done. The famous dictum of Ruskin 'there is no wealth but life' illustrates this effort. He also wished to reorganise political economy for the purposes of social reform work.⁵⁹⁶ In Ruskin's political economy, any amount of objective wealth could yield very varying levels of subjective satisfaction depending upon how it was produced and consumed. Wealth was not essentially the same thing as welfare. Bad forms of machine production brought high costs in terms of ill-health and other evils. Since conventional economics only concerned itself with objective wealth, it should have been subjectivised. Such economics, when brought into a right relation with ethics and politics, could become an effective part of 'Sociology'.⁵⁹⁷

'Sociology' defined by Hobson dealt with human life and consequently human values and therefore it was not value-free.

⁵⁹³ Freedon, Michael, *Ideologies and Political Theory. A Conceptual Approach*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996, p. 178. Freedon clearly demonstrates this in his dealing with New Liberal thinkers (*op. cit.*, 194-210).

⁵⁹⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'John Stuart Mill', *Speaker*, vol. XIV, ns., no. 347 (May 26, 1906), pp. 177-178. For a more detailed discussion see Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 180-189.

⁵⁹⁵ Hobson, J. A., Mazzini. I.' (a lecture delivered at Essex Hall, the London Ethical Society, 17.3.1895), *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 30 (July 29, 1899), p. 468; Hobson, J. A., 'Mazzini. II.' (*ibid.*), *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 31 (August 5, 1899), pp. 484-485.

⁵⁹⁶ Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 79-83, the quotation is taken from Ruskin, John, *Unto This Last*, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London 1994 (1862), p. 156. Principles of Ruskin's Political Economy were already published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860. These articles titled 'The Roots of Honour', 'The Veins of Wealth', 'Qui Judicatis Terram', and 'Ad Valorem' were reprinted in his *Unto This Last* in 1862. See Cain, Peter, 'Introduction. In Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, pp. v-xii. Hobson appreciated Ruskin's Political Economy particularly for its 'honesty' in dealing with seen facts. They were dealt with without making them subservient to the conveniences of some class or party cause. (J. A. H., 'Ruskin's Equipment for Political Economy', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 9 [February 26, 1898], p. 131)

⁵⁹⁷ Hobson, John A., *Subjective and Objective View of Distribution*, The American Academy of Political and Social Science, no. 105, The American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia 1894, pp. 378-403; Here my debt is to P. J. Cain. Refer to Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, 35.

[...] if we are to take a scientific view of human efforts and satisfactions, such as shall furnish a basis of social reform, we must have a social ideal constructed to accord with human facts and human possibilities [...] The "ought" is not something separable and distinct from the "is"; on the contrary, an "ought" is everywhere the highest aspect or relation of an "is". If a fact has a moral import (as, in strictness, every fact of human significance must have, though, for convenience, we may often ignore it), that moral import is part of the nature of the fact, and the fact cannot be fully known as fact without taking it into consideration [...] You cannot exclude the discovery of moral truths from inquiries into facts.⁵⁹⁸

The difference between Hobson and Ruskin arises from the fact that while for Ruskin society was essentially an economic concept, Hobson supplemented this idea with a concept of society as a political structure. Hobson saw society as a highly-evolved rational organism with a common psychic life, character and purpose.⁵⁹⁹ The conception of society as an organism had practical importance for his considerations of democracy. In Hobson's analysis democracy represents a self-chosen benevolent oligarchy of able men.⁶⁰⁰ He suspected that the general will was susceptible to immense pressure which necessitated firm leadership. Thus the individualistic doctrine of equality of franchise 'One man one vote' was transformed into a formula 'from each according to his powers'; the idea of political rights varying according to people's 'ability' to perform their public duty.⁶⁰¹

Ruskin had insisted that the organic unity of man as a conscious, rational being, with a capacity for regarding his life as a whole, imposed a corresponding unity upon the science which was to treat of human conduct.⁶⁰² This view encouraged Hobson to develop a holistic approach in the understanding of human life.⁶⁰³ The science of 'Sociology' indicated the insufficiency of the biological study of the individual. It suggested that on the physical or psychological side the social organism of family, tribe, race cannot be regarded as mere aggregates of units. On the psychical side, the study of 'folk-psychology' was aimed at disclosing the phenomenon of the mass-life in a "crowd", of the more consciously ordered organisms of a city or a state, or even of the organisms of international and human relations.⁶⁰⁴

In Hobson's approach, history, the knowledge of the past, was no longer a sufficient guide for the social reformer.⁶⁰⁵ Such a change in method was a

⁵⁹⁸ Hobson, 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. X.', pp. 339-340.

⁵⁹⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Re-Statement of Democracy', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXXI (January, 1902), pp. 262-263, 265.

⁶⁰⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'Ruskin and Democracy' (a lecture delivered before the South Place Ethical Society, 15.9.1901; the Streatham/Brixton Ethical Institute, 17.11.1901), *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXXI (January, 1902), pp. 105-106, 110-112.

⁶⁰¹ Hobson, 'The Re-Statement of Democracy', pp. 267-268. 'Upon this ground [ability], and upon this ground alone, the logic of the demand for Woman's Suffrage is unimpugnable' (Hobson, *Crisis of Liberalism*, p. 84).

⁶⁰² Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 75, 87-89.

⁶⁰³ Townshend, J. A. *Hobson*, pp. 27-30.

⁶⁰⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. The Need of a Sociology', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 45 (November 5, 1898), pp. 708-709.

⁶⁰⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. The Range and Area of "Social Utility."', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 48 (November 26, 1898), p. 757.

drastic one since the Victorian liking for the use of analogies can be traced back to the classical method of understanding by comparison.⁶⁰⁶

The two approaches of social science were the empiricist one which entailed one study per problem and the dialectical one in which the parts were subordinate to the whole. The aim of the Sociological Society of London, which was founded in 1904, was to bring together those distinct strands of social theory and practice which claimed the title 'sociology'. In doing so it took an interest in the practical and concrete social issues of the day.⁶⁰⁷ For its progress, sociology required the instrument of a stable and fitting terminology. However, for the time being, its advocates were virtually obliged to borrow tools from physics, biology, and psychology while admitting that they did not really suit the work of social reform to which they were being applied. In the papers read before the Society by, for example, Bernard Bosanquet (on behalf of Professor Emile Durkheim), it was claimed that the political, economic, and ethical social sciences could cover the whole work of sociology. Hobson, who served first on the Council and the Editorial Committee before becoming Chairman in 1913 and then Vice-President in 1922, was uneasy with this idea. To him it seemed to leave little, if any, space for the recognition of the substance of 'the unified science of sociology' which he tried to advocate.⁶⁰⁸ This movement towards investigation of social systems rather than their evolutionary order represented the collapse of the comparative method which for many of the Victorian and Edwardian social theorists still meant that history, biology, anthropology, ethics, psychology, and sociology could share a language and methodology.⁶⁰⁹

5.2 Problems of Poverty

In the late nineteenth century it was natural to begin the discussion of social progress with the industrial problems that were then so devastating. One of the earliest studies in political economics which concentrated on the problems of poverty was the American, Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) which was widely read and discussed on both continents.⁶¹⁰ George was struck by an observation, made in New York in the 1860s, that modern progressive societies were capable of producing at one and the same time a huge amount of wealth

⁶⁰⁶ Hobson's lack of interest in history was shared by many of the new liberal thinkers of his era. Matthew, H. C. G., 'Hobson, Ruskin and Cobden'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁰⁷ Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation*, pp. 133-137.

⁶⁰⁸ *Sociological Papers*, vol. I (1904), pp. 212-215; See also *South Place Magazine*, vol. IX, no. 6 (March, 1904), p. 94.

⁶⁰⁹ Jones, Greta, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, Harvester Press, Brighton 1980, pp. 175-176, 181; Matthew, H. C. G., 'Hobson, Ruskin and Cobden'. In *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 12.

⁶¹⁰ Newton, Bernard, 'The Impact of Henry George on British Economists, I. The First Phrase of Response, 1879-82; Leslie, Wicksteed and Hobson', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 30, issue 2 (April, 1971), pp. 179-180.

as well as excessive poverty. George's solution for the uneven distribution of wealth was efficient land taxation.⁶¹¹

In modern industrial societies such as the Britain of the 1890s, capital accumulation was more rapid among the capitalist classes than among the old landed aristocracy. For this obvious reason, Hobson did not see a solution for the modern poverty question in land taxation. Besides, the rapidly advancing forces of internationalism made all attempts to solve social problems in national isolation futile.⁶¹² Nevertheless, Hobson believed that the decay of English agriculture was the root cause of the problem of poverty since it had increased the general flow of population to the towns. Comparing the Census of 1851 with that of 1891 Hobson estimated that while the population of Britain had increased by nearly one-half, agricultural labour had diminished by more than one-third.⁶¹³

At the time it was still commonly believed that destitution was a sign of personal failings and character defects. However, in 1890, at the start of the long depression, Hobson, basing himself on Charles Booth's and his own social investigations in the East End of London,⁶¹⁴ came to reverse this belief and conceptualised poverty as a 'social question', a collective problem for society. Although it was difficult to ascertain to what extent personal defects were actually responsible for poverty in individual cases, Hobson tended to see the problem of poverty and its symptoms as direct results of the economy of machine production.⁶¹⁵

Booth's and Hobson's own measurements suggested that approximately one-third of the London population was 'poor', and these he further divided into four classes. In the bottom stratum were 'city savages' who constituted 1.25 % of poor. These were the bullies or beggars whom Hobson found hanging around street corners and the doors of public-houses. They rendered no useful service to society and created no wealth but rather destroyed it. The next class consisted of the large mass of destitute people who were often left without the protection of their families which were normally considered the underline basis of Victorian social life. 11.5 % of the socially wrecked people of London were assigned in this stratum. The third (8 %) and fourth classes (14.5 %) consisted of low skilled labourers or people who suffered from irregularity of employment such as dock-workers.⁶¹⁶

Hobson's definition of 'poverty' was somewhat broader than Booth's classification suggested. 'Under this term I include not merely that meagre quantity of food shelter and clothing [...] but all the requisites of a full

⁶¹¹ George, Henry, *Progress and Poverty*, Hogarth, London 1953 (1879).

⁶¹² Hobson, J. A., 'The Influence of Henry George in England. I.', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. LXII, no. CCCLXXII, (December 1, 1897), pp. 840-841.

⁶¹³ Hobson, J. A., 'The Decay of English Agriculture', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 3 (March, 1896), pp. 85-88.

⁶¹⁴ On Booth's investigations refer to *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. I: East London, Charles Booth (ed.), 2nd ed., Williams & Norgate, London 1889.

⁶¹⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Measure of Poverty', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 1 (January, 1896), pp. 6-9.

⁶¹⁶ Hobson, *Problems of Poverty*, pp. 6-8.

wholesome physical life, all the education and equipment of the intellectual life, access to all forms of spiritual and aesthetic enjoyment, which the most favoured amongst us deem requisite to "a life worth living".⁶¹⁷

He stressed that the problem of poverty were essentially social in origin and therefore insoluble with individualistic methods.

'The Modern industrial forces drive the poor into congested masses in large centres of population, where the physical and social conditions of malady not merely render self-help impossible by sapping the sources of healthy vitality, but make less effectual all efforts of private benevolence. [...] the problem confronts us is a "Social" one, and can only be solved by the organic action of society itself.'⁶¹⁸

Hobson believed that indiscriminate charity sapped the morale of the poor, weakened his incentive to work and did harm to family life.⁶¹⁹ In his critique of charity Hobson assaulted the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and the advocates of its method of investigating social phenomena, Bernard and Helen Bosanquet. In its social philosophy the COS had applied T. H. Green's rationale of private property to various private schemes for assisting the poor. Green and the Bosanquets argued that an individual required private property in order to realise his full potential.⁶²⁰ They associated the existence of poverty with the personal defects of the poor and especially with the vice of drink.⁶²¹

Similarly, the temperance solution, which was widely advocated by the Liberals in the 1890s, was criticised by Hobson because he regarded temperance as an ineffective and potentially harmful method of dealing with the social problem. The calculations of Booth revealed that in Whitechapel, one of the poorest districts of East End, drink was accountable only for the poverty of 4 %. Furthermore, the large Jewish population of the district was entirely unaffected by it. By isolating and exaggerating the drink factor the temperance reformers offered but one individualist solution to the social problem.⁶²² Drunkenness was however an important determinant in dealing with the question of unemployment since it was seen as one of the major reasons for 'unfitness' for continuous labour.⁶²³

In the light of these calculations Hobson believed that 'a growing number of workers were unable to secure constant employment, and their physique and industrial character deteriorate under the ineffectual struggle for a decent maintenance'.⁶²⁴ Such a 'waste of human life' was to be seen on the streets of the

⁶¹⁷ Hobson, 'The Measure of Poverty', p. 8-9.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶¹⁹ Hobson, John A., 'The Social Philosophy of Charity Organisation.', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXX (November, 1896), pp. 710-727.

⁶²⁰ Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 190, 198.

⁶²¹ Bosanquet, Helen & Bosanquet, Bernard, 'Charity Organisation. A Reply.', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXI (January, 1897), pp. 112-116.

⁶²² Hobson, J. A., 'The Economics of the Temperance Movement', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 6 (June, 1896), pp. 209-211; Hobson, J. A., 'The Economics of Temperance', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 9 (September, 1896), p. 318.

⁶²³ Whyte, James, 'The Economics of the Temperance Movement', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 8 (August, 1896), pp. 283-284.

⁶²⁴ Hobson, John A., 'Preface'. In *Co-operative Labour upon the Land (And Other Papers)*. The Report of a Conference upon 'Land, Co-operation and the Unemployed', held at

East End of London. 'Some miserable group of half-starved, animal-faced children, playing in a city slum; a row of stolid-featured labourers, sitting on the wall outside the public-house on Sunday waiting for the opening hour; the garish vulgarity of a crowded music-hall; the dull, joyless, and unsuccessful "home" of an "unskilled" labourer's wife - such glimpses force us to feel how little the mass of the people appear to get out of life.'⁶²⁵

The economic dilemma over poverty was not without its political and social implications. Poverty itself was a subjective condition and depended on a growing social awareness of the lower classes.⁶²⁶ In this respect compulsory education, cheap newspapers, libraries, museums and other sources of information were dangerous vehicles of knowledge.⁶²⁷ It was feared that the poor might try to overturn a society based on capitalist wealth.

5.3 Eugenics and the Empire

By the end of the nineteenth century there was widespread anxiety in Britain that changes within modern society were reversing the progress of evolution and leading to the degeneration of the people. Intemperance, lack of thrift, idleness, and inefficiency were seen as symptoms of this corruption of body and mind.⁶²⁸ One of the most important issues in stimulating eugenic debate was concern about the falling birth-rate among the middle-classes compared to the high rates among the poorest and least responsible sectors of society. This fear of a degeneration of the physical, mental and moral fitness of the race demanded that the wasteful methods of natural selection must be replaced by methods of rational selection. This implied finding the means of enforcing laws that would prevent the propagation of the 'unfit'. In the era in which the social question was rising to the forefront of the political agenda, mental deficiency provided a biological explanation for social failure.⁶²⁹

Holborn Town Hall in October, 1894, J. A. Hobson (ed.), Sonnenschein, London 1895, pp. vii, ix.

⁶²⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. The Need of a Sociology', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 45 (November 5, 1898), p. 708.

⁶²⁶ See Hobson, John A., 'Is Poverty Diminishing?' (a lecture delivered at Essex Hall, the London Ethical Society, November 17, 1895), *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXIX (April, 1896), pp. 498-499.

⁶²⁷ Hobson, *Problems of Poverty*, pp. 27-29.

⁶²⁸ British eugenics is only discussed here to the extent it explains Hobson's attitudes towards it. For a fuller discussion consult Freedman, Michael, *Liberal Languages. Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford 2005, ch. 7; Pick, Daniel, *Faces of Degeneration: a European disorder, c. 1848-c. 1918*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, pp. 200-202, 219-220 *et passim*.

⁶²⁹ Hobson, 'The Social Question. The Problem of Population.', pp. 612-613; Thomson, Mathew, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency. Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain c. 1870-1959*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998, pp. 19, 22; Jones, *Social Darwinism in English Thought*, p. 102.

Writing on the midst of the Industrial Revolution, Thomas Malthus believed that human beings tend to increase at a quicker rate than their food supply. His fear was reflected by the Malthusian League (founded in 1877), which was the first organization in England that was dedicated to advocating the practice of birth control as the way of solving the problem of poverty. Contrary to the position taken by Malthus or his neo-Malthusian followers, who regarded over-population as the main cause of poverty,⁶³⁰ Hobson, together with his intellectual comrades, maintained that the poor distribution of wealth and England's bad social system were the actual causes of poverty. In a discussion chaired by Hobson held at the South Place Institution on 14 November, 1900 a group of three Progressives, Hobson, Burrows and Robertson, demanded that the theory of Malthus must be given up; the law of diminishing returns in agriculture had never been proved.⁶³¹ To C. V. Drysdale, a representative of the Malthusian League, it was painful to find that men who were supposed to be leaders of progress showed such 'puerile ignorance' of 'the law of population', the first principle of 'true economic science'. In attacking Burrows, Drysdale held that 'there is not a single one of Mr. Burrow's contentions which is worthy of anyone who has studied social science. It is evident either that he is totally ignorant of true economics, or that he wishes to push the population question aside to make room for his *false* Socialism.'⁶³² The error of socialism was seen in that it ascribed the ills of society to human institutions instead of to nature. The two sides found it impossible to agree about the functions of the state in relation to the population question.⁶³³

By the late nineteenth century, improved modes of production, transport and communication had enabled large areas in America, India, Africa, and Australia to provide food and raw materials for manufacture. For this reason, Hobson believed, the dangers of over-population, from the standpoint of the food supply, had become irrelevant.⁶³⁴ The population question of the late nineteenth century was no longer concerned with the quantity of human beings but the quality of human character. The problem of 'mis-population' was now regarded as more serious than the problem of over-population. Improved sanitary regulations, free medical assistance and especially private and public charity hindered the 'weeding out' of the physically, morally or intellectually 'unfit' by natural means and allowed the 'socially undesirable' to survive and propagate their stock.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁰ Drysdale, C. R., 'The New Ethical Movement in London. Its Relation to Neo-Malthusian Ethics', *Malthusian*, vol. XXII, no. 11 (November, 1898), pp. 81-82.

⁶³¹ Anon., 'Discussion on the Population Question', *Malthusian*, vol. XXIV, no. 12 (December, 1900), pp. 89-90.

⁶³² Drysdale, C. V., 'Mr. Herbert Burrows on the Population Question', *Malthusian*, vol. XXV, no. 2 (February, 1901), pp. 10-11.

⁶³³ Ledbetter, Rosanna, *A History of The Malthusian League 1877-1927*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus 1976, pp. 14-15.

⁶³⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. The Problem of Population.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 39 (September 24, 1898), pp. 611-612.

⁶³⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Population Question. I.', *Commonwealth*, vol. II, no. 4 (April, 1897), pp. 105-106; Hobson, J. A., 'The Population Question. Part II.', *Commonwealth*, vol. II, no. 6 (June, 1897), pp. 170-171.

Like many of the representatives of the eugenics movement, Hobson was caught between affirming the need for the control of racial inheritance and increasing concern about the illiberal implications of such control.⁶³⁶ In many cases he was inclined to believe that acquired characteristics were inherited. Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics, divided eugenics into negative eugenics (*i.e.* the prevention of racial deterioration) and positive eugenics (*i.e.* the active encouragement of racial improvement). Both aspects required however a degree of administration and control.⁶³⁷ Hobson's insistence upon eugenics was that of the negative type. Ultimately, eugenics or 'racial sociology' as it was sometimes termed formed an important theme in Hobson's social reform thinking. He put the question of social reform and theories of inheritance firmly together.

In his dealings with the subject of eugenics, Hobson rested on the studies made by Carl Pearson [Karl] (1857–1936) who devoted his life work to the development of the branch of mathematical statistics known as correlation theory and the establishing of the modern discipline of biometry, the application of mathematical methods to the biological sciences. Pearson applied his statistical innovations to the study of heredity and eugenics in an attempt to demonstrate that heredity was more important in determining the quality of human life. His conclusion was that environmental reforms could only have a very limited effect on individual human beings.⁶³⁸ In the context of the social reform thinking of the turn of the century, his main concern was that social reform work offered powerless remedies for racial degeneration: if health and ability were inborn traits, then only programmes for selective breeding could improve the biological fitness of the human population. Ultimately, however, many of the proposals of negative and positive eugenics were based more on the social and racial prejudices felt towards the poorer classes and 'lower races' than on sound scientific deductions.⁶³⁹

Like Pearson, Hobson wished to minimise the struggle for existence between individuals through social welfare legislation and eugenics. Unlike Pearson, however, he did not encourage military and commercial competition between nations. What Hobson liked to ask was why Pearson's insistence upon the social organism led to a defence of the nation as the ultimate community? Why did he not apply these rational selective tools to the imperial context?⁶⁴⁰

Hobson's view of the world's races was analogous to the previous observations he made in the East End of London. Quite the opposite to those of the Imperialists who trusted in the forces of natural selection, Hobson argued for rational selection in an imperial context. 'To the race as to the individual there is the great choice of life, quantity or quality, to have or to be, greatness

⁶³⁶ This anxiety Hobson shared for example with D. G. Ritchie. See Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation*, pp. 139–141.

⁶³⁷ Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, p. 115.

⁶³⁸ Searle, G. R., *Eugenics and Politics in Britain 1900–1914*, *Science in History* 3, Noordhoff, Leyden 1976, p. 6.

⁶³⁹ Woiaak, Joanne, 'Pearson, Karl (1857–1936)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35442>, accessed 9 Nov 2007]

⁶⁴⁰ Hobson, 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', pp. 467–471.

which consists in the magnitude of numbers and material possession, or in the character and intrinsic worthiness of life.'⁶⁴¹

For Hobson the idea of the rational selection of races in an imperial context was appealing. 'If the ordinary processes of physical degeneracy within the nation do not suffice for the elimination of bad stock, but must be supplemented by some direct prohibition of bad parentage, taking the wider scale of operations it might be necessary in the interest of mankind that similar measures should be enforced by the mandates of organized humanity.'⁶⁴² How then could this rational selection of the world's races have been accomplished? In his answer Hobson suggested that the forces of internationalism were to play a main role in this process.

5.4 The Principles of Social Ethics

The Ethics of Industrialism

In spite of all the misery and degradation which had accompanied industrialism, it had also increased opportunities for the attainment of a good human life. However, regarded from the moral point of view the structure of the modern industrial system was definitely maladjusted. Hobson saw the industrial world as a vast mutual benefit society where each individual worker was dependent on the well-being and efficiency of workers in other trades and in other lands.⁶⁴³ This new liberal vision of a free trade society regarded the ideals of mass-production as threatening because they were identified as part of a broader trend away from individual freedom and social solidarity toward moral degeneration and social collapse.⁶⁴⁴ 'But does anyone seriously believe that the culmination of machine-economy in Lancashire will ever give this crowded, busy tract of land a place in the world's history comparable with that of Athens or of Mediæval Florence?', Hobson asked. However, mechanical inventions also had positive effects on social life. 'Society gains, if a smaller proportion of its working energy is devoted to lower kinds of mechanical work, and a larger proportion is utilised upon higher kinds of work [...].'⁶⁴⁵ Free Trade was a favourable principle for a society because it kept the quality of consumption high and encouraged a civic outlook in which citizens acquired an interest in their neighbours thus creating 'citizen-consumers'. In such an

⁶⁴¹ Hobson, 'The Population Question. Part II.', p. 170.

⁶⁴² Hobson, 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', p. 485.

⁶⁴³ Hobson, J. A., 'The Ethics of Industrialism. A Diagnosis', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 214 (November 3, 1898), p. 468.

⁶⁴⁴ Trentmann, 'Civil Society, Commerce, and the "Citizen-Consumer"'. Popular Meanings of Free Trade in Modern Britain', In *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History*, Frank Trentmann (ed.), Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford 2000, pp. 313-314.

⁶⁴⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Revolt against Machinery', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 7 (July, 1897), pp. 246-247.

atmosphere the 'spirit of machinery' would give way to individual thought, feeling and effort.⁶⁴⁶

From the moral point of view industrialism did not differ essentially from militarism.⁶⁴⁷ A defensive or aggressive policy, the same sense of conflict that was historically associated with the growth of Trade Unionism, was present in dealings with capital. Industrial progress and evolving industrial fitness were believed to require the military qualities of fighting. The feeling that militarism requires autocracy, had spread from politics to industry. In the era of 'industrial feudalism' a group of great captains of industry acted as autocratic rulers.⁶⁴⁸

Hobson saw that the defects of the industrial system were caused by the principle of natural selection which still dominated the science of orthodox economics.⁶⁴⁹ Its culminating defect was irrationality.

'When a man gets wealth by some lucky turn of the wheel of fortune, or by some sudden coup, some brave display of advertisement, or even by gift or inheritance, our reason is not satisfied, we are affected by a sense of insufficient causation. Similarly, when a hard-working man is unable to earn enough to keep his family in decency, to provide against old age or other contingencies, we feel that the economic system is out of joint [and] operates irrationally.'⁶⁵⁰

In industrial reform work Christian Socialists and Positivists pin their faith to self-help, philanthropy and charity. The exceptional abilities of the great captains of industry were seen as paramount in fighting an industrial battle for the Commonwealth. This exceptional ability of the industrial leaders was the quality on which the economist W. H. Mallock (1849-1923) based his "the great-man theory".⁶⁵¹ Hobson found the appeal to individual goodwill in respect of economics an ineffective and in respects of psychology a harmful method.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁶ Trentmann, Frank, *Free Trade Nation. Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, pp. 77-79.

⁶⁴⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'The Ethics of Industrialism. III.-The Demands of Justice.', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 216 (November 17, 1898), p. 503.

⁶⁴⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'War or Peace in Industry?', *Reformer*, vol. I, no. 12 (February 15, 1898), pp. 335-337. Hobson mentioned, among others, Krupp and Siemens in Germany and John D. Rockefeller and John Pierpont Morgan in America.

⁶⁴⁹ See Hobson, J. A., 'Gentlemen-democrats', *Reformer*, vol. II, no. 14 (April 15, 1898), pp. 44-48.

⁶⁵⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'The Ethics of Industrialism. IV.-Unreason in the Business World', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 217 (November 24, 1898), p. 519.

⁶⁵¹ By 'greatness' Mallock means that somebody is particularly efficient in producing some result. Mallock, W. H., *Aristocracy & Evolution. A Study of the Rights, the Origin, and the Social Functions of the Wealthier Classes*, Adam and Charles Black, London 1898, pp. 47-50, 77, 128. Hobson rejected Mallock's theory because it ignored the organic character of production. Hobson, John A., 'Mr. Mallock as Political Economist', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXIII (April, 1898), pp. 528-539. On Hobson's criticism of Ruskin's plea that the captains of industry should become more chivalrous in their relations with the workers see Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 197-198.

⁶⁵² Hobson, J. A., 'The Ethics of Industrialism. II.-The Appeal to Individual Goodwill.', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 215 (November 10, 1898), p. 487. Cf. Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Problem. Individualist Solutions of Social Problems.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 30 (July 23, 1898), pp. 467-468. Hobson admitted that working class movements, trade unions, co-operatives, friendly societies, and the various religious and political organisations had an educative value but they were not the solution in the task of achieving industrial reform. See Hobson, J. A., To the Editor of the *New Age*, *New*

Economic power given through 'unearned incomes', a power to live parasitically, was as injurious to society as it was to the parasites themselves who tended to degenerate morally and physically.⁶⁵³ 'The excessive power of enjoyment which passes by economic force into the control of certain members of the community, and which we have seen to be in large measure wasted, necessitates a corresponding lack of enjoyment in others; while the direct and indirect results of abuses of this power are manifested in converting the enjoyment of wealth into the 'misenjoyment' of "illth".⁶⁵⁴ Bad social administration enabled certain classes to take and enjoy the social property which was actually made by the community, and should have therefore been enjoyed by the whole society.⁶⁵⁵

In the large, highly organised industries of the late nineteenth century, coal-mining, shipping, railways and metal and textile manufactures, it had become more and more difficult to locate satisfactorily the different kinds and degrees of moral responsibility. The directors were appointed by and derived their power from the shareholders and 'had no right to indulge their private philanthropic predilections' at the expense of the owners.⁶⁵⁶ A joint-stock company was primarily motivated by the desire to make profit and only secondarily by a desire to confer benefit on workers.

Hobson also demanded a minimum wage which was a part of his wider project of moral reform. 'A living wage' would nurture the life and health of the family and that sense of security which was essential to sound character. Yet Hobson's purpose was not only to guarantee fair wages but to reduce the possibility of industrial conflict that lurked behind the rise of Trade Unionism and other forms of anti-social struggles for the survival of the fittest. A living wage was determined by needs and differed in different classes of workers and in different stages of development.⁶⁵⁷ From the social standpoint, the ordering of industry upon a basis of Trade Unionism was subject to criticism. Hobson rejected egalitarian proposals that all individuals should have equal incomes: Equal distribution of income would be inefficient in terms of the maximising of individual satisfaction and the minimising of social waste. People had different abilities and their needs varied accordingly. Social utility demanded that a 'high-grade' worker had to have a higher rate of pay than a 'low-grade' worker since his needs were greater.⁶⁵⁸

Age, vol. VIII, no. 217 (November 24, 1898), p. 531.

⁶⁵³ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. "Unemployment" and Misemployment', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 44 (October 29, 1898), p. 692. Cf. Hobson, J. A. 'The Ethics of Industrialism. Outlines of a Constructive Policy.', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 219 (December 8, 1898), pp. 554-555.

⁶⁵⁴ Hobson, 'The Social Question. The Need of a Sociology.', p. 708.

⁶⁵⁵ Hobson, John A., 'Rights of Property' (a lecture delivered at Essex Hall, the London Ethical Society, 14.3.1893), *Free Review*, vol. I (November, 1893), p. 144.

⁶⁵⁶ Hobson, J. A., 'On Capital'. In *Good Citizenship*, pp. 78-81.

⁶⁵⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'A Living Wage', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 4 (April, 1896), pp. 128-129; Hobson, J. A., 'A Living Wage. Part II.', *Commonwealth*, vol. I, no. 5 (May, 1896), pp. 165-167.

⁶⁵⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'Of Labour'. In *Good Citizenship*, pp. 98-104. See also Townshend, J.A. *Hobson*, pp. 79ff.

In Hobson's analysis 'needs' assigned the distribution of property but also 'material production, a set of rules by which social behaviour was controlled, a system of education by which these rules might be instilled in the individual and political authority which co-ordinated social life'. A rational system based upon needs would have replaced the anarchic struggle of disordered competition and guaranteed the survival of society.⁶⁵⁹ To avoid social waste individual abilities were to be taken into account as well. 'Why should a dull, unprogressive, uneducable man have the same opportunities of education or of social influence furnished [for] him as an able, progressive man?', Hobson asked.⁶⁶⁰

What then were the chief lines of economic change required to bring about a readjustment between modern methods of machine production and social welfare? In his answer Hobson mentioned two conditions: first, an adequate social control of machine-production; second, an education in the arts of consumption. For the state, growing industrial life was a necessary condition of its moral health. Just as it was essential for the progress of the moral life of the individual to have some property to use in the realisation of rational ends, so the moral life of the state required both public property and industry for self-realisation.⁶⁶¹

Such demands for the increased predominance of the state – in both an imperial and a domestic sense – raised concerns among the Social Darwinists. One of the most prominent examples of this heavy sense of English decline is offered by Charles Henry Pearson (1830–1894), a prominent Australian politician in the state of Victoria, in his *National Life and Character* (1893). Pearson felt that if individual competition was sacrificed in the course of developing social welfare it would do harm to the vigour of the English nation and race.⁶⁶² In his book Pearson reflected those fears which were felt towards encroachment of the 'half-civilised' or 'savage peoples' of the world over the Aryans. The Chinese in particular were regarded as 'a versatile race'.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. Efforts, Productivity, or Needs?', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 33 (August 13, 1898), p. 516. Cf. Hobson, 'Gentlemen-democrats'; Hobson, J. A., 'The Rich Man's Trilemma' (A Lecture delivered before the West London Ethical Society, January 9th, 1898), *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 3 (Jan. 15, 1898), p. 36; Hobson, J. A., 'The Rich Man's Trilemma – II' (*ibid.*), *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 4 (Jan. 22, 1898), p. 52; Hobson, J. A. 'The Rich Man's Trilemma – conclusion' (*ibid.*), *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 5 (Jan. 29, 1898), pp. 70–71. Cf. these organic needs of society to those of the anthropologist Malinowski's in Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, p. 160.

⁶⁶⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. Distribution according to Needs.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 34 (August 20, 1898), p. 531.

⁶⁶¹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Ethics of Industrialism. Outlines of Constructive Policy. Part II.', *New Age*, vol. VIII, no. 221 (December 22, 1898), p. 586.

⁶⁶² Stapleton, Julia, 'Political thought and national identity, 1850–1950'. In *History, Religion and Culture*, pp. 254–255.

⁶⁶³ Pearson, Charles, H., *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, Macmillan, London and New York 1893, pp. 43ff, 66–67, 112, 122–133. This vocabulary of 'advanced' and 'backward' races or nations was typically used by the Victorians (E.g. Bryce, James, *The Relations of the Advanced and the Backward Races of Mankind*, the Romanes lecture 1902, delivered in the Sheldonian theatre, Oxford, June 7, 1902). It extended the discourse of British class politics and the debate over family into the realm of interstate relations. As Paul B. Rich has pointed out, the Liberals needed a new

Hobson's answer to these fears was that industrial competition was sacrificed in order that a larger proportion of individual activity might be engaged in the exercise of higher functions, the practice of competition upon higher planes, and the education of higher forms of fitness.

Hobson did not deny the value of the lessons of Darwinism when applied to society but he thought that it was often misinterpreted in a way that was used to support might over right and conflict instead of cooperation. Turning the consumer from a passive object into an active citizen, educating a 'citizen-consumer', would strengthen organic human relations over militaristic and material ones. The arts of consumption and production would be reunited and the 'spirit of machinery' replaced with 'individual thought, feeling, [and] effort.' The resulting increasing regard for quality of life would, Hobson felt, make it possible to 'escape from the moral maladies arising from competition'. The ethics of industrialism would be thus transformed into 'generous rivalry in co-operation'.⁶⁶⁴

The Ethics of Imperialism

For Hobson expansion was first of all an ethical question since politics and economics both belonged to the sphere of ethics. As he stated in the *South Place Magazine* in 1902: '[...] an Ethics distinct in its subject matter from Politics and Economics becomes nothing but a set of moral platitudes supported on phrases [;] the moment you begin to materialise the phrases you are driven perforce into the struggles of political and economic principles, interests and parties'.⁶⁶⁵ The criticism of the ethical justification for Imperialism formed one part of Hobson's analysis while definition of the sound ethical principles of the Empire formed another.

The first aim of all ethical inquiry, whether taking place in the sphere of economics or of politics, was to provide a more definite interpretation of the term 'Social Utility'.⁶⁶⁶ The ethics of the British Empire were therefore best understood by answering the following questions: 'In what way can England best utilize for the welfare of the world her national energy? Will she do best to confine herself to the "intensive" and "qualitative" cultivation of her present territorial resources, or shall she spread her growing population and her

vocabulary with which to discuss race in terms of modern biology so that they could be freed from the older Victorian hierarchical concept of race differences. In spite of this effort Hobson too had difficulty in moving out of the Victorian paradigm of 'higher' and 'lower races'. See Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, pp. 19-22, 43; Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, pp. 158-159.

⁶⁶⁴ Hobson, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, ch. XIV, pp. 352, 355, 364, 368ff, 377; Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 104-105. Cf. Trentmann, 'Civil Society, Commerce, and the "Citizen-Consumer"'. In *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, p. 313.

⁶⁶⁵ J. A. H., 'Propagandism in the Pulpit' (a lecture delivered before the South Place Ethical Society, 18.5.1902), *South Place Magazine*, vol. VII, no. 12 (September, 1902), p. 179; Cf. Robertson, J. M., *Essays in Ethics*, Bonner, London 1903, p. 110.

⁶⁶⁶ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. A Study of Work and Life. X.', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 22 (May 28, 1898), p. 340.

political and commercial energy over other portions of the globe, and, if so, over what portions?' Hobson tried to explain the elements of Imperialism that were meaningful, as he believed, for the solution of the social question in Britain. 'How to employ that energy over an area which is neither too small nor too large, so as to yield the largest and most satisfactory result in work and life, is an aspect of the Social Question which it is the business of every society to put and to answer as best it can.'⁶⁶⁷ Imperialism raised therefore the question of the balance between national maximum and social minimum.

What was then the area over which the various forms of a nation's energy might be most profitably expanded? In his answer Hobson assumed that there must be at any given time for a given nation a truly economic area of empire. The Greek idea of a city-state was based upon a clear recognition of limits to the number of citizens. London, a huge metropolis with some six million inhabitants at the turn of the century, was seen as a palpable violation of this principle of civic economy. When applied to the Empire, this principle proved the risks of expansion when size was the chief determinant of Imperial economy. However, the difficulties the British Empire faced in South Africa and elsewhere seemed to arise chiefly, not from its size or number inhabitants, but from its quality.⁶⁶⁸

At the turn of the century it was commonly believed that raising the standard of life among the lower masses of the people was done at the expense in some degree of those above them. The task of the Liberal Party was to secure the social emancipation of the lower masses in an orderly manner and prepare the masses to come into rivalry of life on conditions of equality of opportunity.⁶⁶⁹ Hobson did not believe in this liberal demand but maintained that equality of economic opportunity could not be mechanically applied. Similarly, he asserted that equal political rights did not make everybody fit to govern, because people had varying abilities.

Benjamin Kidd (1858–1916) was to become an overnight celebrity and social prophet when his *Social Evolution* was published in 1894. Kidd's treatise on social evolution was full of semi-mystical and non-testable doctrines but in spite of these flaws it managed to attract an immense number of supporters. Kidd's analysis was based upon the German naturalist August Weismann's 'germ plasm' theory (that is to argue that a hereditary material passed from generation to generation, largely unaffected by the environment) which he applied to his social theory and human behaviour. In his analysis, Kidd attacked both Individualists such as Spencer who had condemned external applications of Social Darwinism as well as Socialists who were supporting artificial aid for the poorer classes at the expense of competition.⁶⁷⁰ The study

⁶⁶⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'Expansion in the Light of Sociology', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 47 (November 19, 1898), pp. 741–742. See also 'Nemo', *Ethics of Empire*, *Progressive Review*, vol. II, no. XI (August, 1897), pp. 448–453.

⁶⁶⁸ J. A. H., 'Issues of Empire. IV. Expansion.', *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 29 (July 22, 1899), pp. 450–451.

⁶⁶⁹ Kidd was interviewed for the first number of the *New Age* by 'Percival'. See 'A Talk with Mr. Benjamin Kidd', *New Age*, vol. I, no. 1 (October 4, 1894), pp. 8–9.

⁶⁷⁰ Semmel, Bernard, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-*

itself focused upon race survival. At a time of challenge for the established churches, Kidd justified religion as a countervailing force against the destructive rationalism then popular but also feared. Kidd also touched upon widespread fears that socialistic elimination of competition would result in the degeneration of the human species.⁶⁷¹

Hobson came into contact with Kidd in Liberal political circles in London into which they both were drawn by a mutual acquaintance, William Clarke. There was much in Hobson's thought that reflected the ideas of Kidd on the unsuitability of tropical societies for white settlement.⁶⁷² Furthermore, influenced by their mutual acquaintance, H. D. Lloyd, they both had attacked global trusts and big business.⁶⁷³ In spite of this similarity in their intellectual backgrounds Hobson was one of the staunchest critics of Kidd's social evolution theory. For Hobson the imperial application of social evolution theory meant mainly quantitative progress, which he condemned: 'Quantitative progress says; "Breed freely, so that those below the physical average may be killed off and the stronger may multiply, and bursting the too narrow limits of their original home may swarm and encroach upon the lands of feebler folk, ruthlessly extirpating these natives when the latter stands in the way of their ascendancy, or else compelling them to toil and to give up the profits of their labour to the owners of Maxim guns and superior machinery."' If expressed in qualitative terms, progress should have consisted of limiting quantity so that the quality of human character might be raised. 'The way for a society to become socially efficient is to economize all force spent upon rivalry of physical life, so as to divert it into maintenance of higher and more profitable forms of rivalry.'⁶⁷⁴

For Kidd and his Social Imperialist supporters, Milner and Chamberlain, a bio-political defence of the Empire was linked with a programme of social reform in Britain. Tropical resources were to be brought in to use by the world in accordance with the idea of 'social efficiency'. Imperialists used social efficiency as their chief moral support for Imperialism. In this conviction, it was believed that human progress required the maintenance of the physical, industrial and political struggle. In the context of the 1890s, the British

1914, *Studies in Society* no. 5, George Allen & Unwin, London 1960, pp. 28-35; Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, pp. 84-85; See also Ritchie, *Darwinism and Politics*, *passim*.

⁶⁷¹ See [in Swedish] Kidd, Benjamin, *Den sociala utvecklingen*, Hugo Gebers Förlag, Stockholm 1895, pp. 13, 17; Hobson, John A., 'Mr. Kidd's "Social Evolution."' (a lecture delivered at Essex Hall, the London Ethical Society, 4.11.1894), *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. I, no. 3 (November 1895), pp. 311-312; Crook, D. P., 'Kidd, Benjamin (1858-1916)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34312>, accessed 9 Nov 2007]

⁶⁷² Hobson, J. A., 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. XVII, no. 3 (September, 1902), pp. 461-462; Hobson, J. A., A review of *Principles of Western Civilisation* by Benjamin Kidd, *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 388 (March 6, 1902), pp. 152-153.

⁶⁷³ Crook, D. P., 'Kidd, Benjamin (1858-1916)'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn.

⁶⁷⁴ Hobson, 'Mr. Kidd's "Social Evolution."' , pp. 309-310.

Imperialists believed that the Teutonic races, and in particular its Anglo-Saxon branches, represented the highest social efficiency.⁶⁷⁵

Hobson wished to give a sounder definition of expansion than that suggested by such loosely scientific, poetic phrases [or 'masked words' as John Ruskin would have said] as 'manifest destiny', 'punitive expedition', 'sphere of influence', 'paramount power', or 'high suzerainty', used by diplomatists and politicians.⁶⁷⁶ He believed that doctrines such as that of 'manifest destiny' were based on false or 'unscientific' sociological pretensions. Books such as *The Expansion of England* (1883) by Sir John Seeley held a view of history composed of great tidal movements of economic or racial forces making for a partition of the world.⁶⁷⁷ This pseudo-scientific view of history was used in politics to explain also the annexation of the Boer Republics.⁶⁷⁸ However, what was seen as inevitable when applied to the South African War, was really explicable in terms of human motives.⁶⁷⁹

Efficiency and fitness, on which the ethical justification of Imperialism rested, were in terms of sociology relative concepts. A nation was not absolutely more fit or efficient because it was stronger in war. Such fitness did not automatically test a nation's ability to civilise 'lower races'. Furthermore, one type of civilisation was not necessarily suitable for all people. The world consisted of diverse civilisations which differed from each other in different times and places. To argue that one type of civilisation, no matter how progressive, was suitable for all was based, to Hobson's mind, on utterly false scientific claims. Besides, it might have been a more economically sound principle to confine the energy of the British nation to the British Isles.⁶⁸⁰

Was then imperial expansion a natural necessity? According to various estimations at the time, for example, that given by the American Professor Edward Van Dyke Robinson in the *Political Science Quarterly* of 1900 the answer must be positive. To Van Dyke Robinson imperial expansion was based on the law of decreasing returns. As the population on a limited area of land grows faster than the food supply that is available, it creates a natural pressure for access to new land. The argument runs that this same pressure is produced by the need for territorial expansion.⁶⁸¹ Critics like Hobson, Clarke and Robinson

⁶⁷⁵ Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, pp. 34–35 *et passim*.

⁶⁷⁶ J. A. H., "'Masked Words'", *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 10 (March 5, 1898), p. 147.

⁶⁷⁷ Seeley, J. R., *The Expansion of England. Two Courses of Lectures*, Macmillan, London 1883, lecture VII *et passim*.

⁶⁷⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'The Inevitable in Politics. I.' (a lecture delivered before the West London Ethical Society, 17.6.1900), *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 36 (September 8, 1900), p. 563.

⁶⁷⁹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Inevitable in Politics. II.' (*ibid.*), *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 37 (September 15, 1900), pp. 579–580.

⁶⁸⁰ Hobson, 'Expansion in the Light of Sociology', pp. 741–742. Ethical subjectivism like this upon which his cultural relativism also rests has been associated with the philosophy of David Hume. See Allett, John, 'The Moral Philosophy of J.A. Hobson'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, p. 9. This notion seems to contradict the position held by David Long in his *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, p. 27.

⁶⁸¹ Hobson, John A., 'Is Imperial Expansion a Natural Necessity?', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 403 (June 19, 1902), p. 392; Robinson, Edward Van Dyke, 'War and Economics in History and Theory', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. XV, no. 4 (December, 1900), pp. 581–622.

felt that the supporters of social evolution theory, who endorsed expansion on the grounds of that law of diminishing returns, had reduced science to nonsense.⁶⁸²

In Hobson's analysis, the true laws of inevitability were to be seen in the long rhythms and compensations of reason and justice.⁶⁸³ The sociology of expansion could thus be formulated in the following questions: 'Is there any natural law which imposes upon nations a necessary decay, and associates this decay with territorial or other expansion of empire? If there is such a natural law, can its operation be counteracted or postponed by a more rational economy of national energy in conformity with modern conditions of environment?' In the light of history, the lesson that territorial aggrandisement in empire is a road to ruin seemed to hold some truth.⁶⁸⁴ The question remained whether the extension of the British Empire was conducted under such material and moral conditions as enabled it to escape the dangers into which many historical empires had fallen.⁶⁸⁵

As Hobson's analysis from South Africa already indicated, this natural necessity was not the case as far as British Imperialism was concerned. Imperialism was not necessary in order to obtain an increased food supply, nor was it engaged in finding land for surplus population. Imperialism and the forces behind it could be resolved into human motives. Even though Hobson admitted that in principle the natural need for expansion held a germ of truth, he believed that it was possible to avoid it in two ways: first, by a progressive mitigation of the law of diminishing returns in agriculture and trade. Hobson asserted that a similar progress that revolutionised the manufacturing and transport industries in the nineteenth century was likely to modernise agriculture in the future; second, by limiting the rate of growth of population. This meant reform in customs relating to marriage and the maintenance of children which Hobson termed the rational control of the quantity and quality of population. Both these aspects of reform work represented for Hobson a battle against the play of the irrational forces of nature.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² Robertson, John M., 'Population and Land Hunger', *Malthusian*, vol. XXVI, no. 8 (August, 1902), p. 61.

⁶⁸³ Hobson, J. A., 'The Inevitable in Politics. III' (*ibid.*), *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 38 (September 22, 1900), p. 594.

⁶⁸⁴ J. A. H., 'Issues of Empire. Destiny or Mission?-(continued).', *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 27 (July 8, 1899), p. 420.

⁶⁸⁵ J. A. H., 'Issues of Empire. III. The Vitality of a Nation.', *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 28 (July 15, 1899), p. 437.

⁶⁸⁶ Hobson, John A., 'Is Imperial Expansion a Natural Necessity?', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 403 (June 19, 1902), p. 393.

5.5 The Ethical Defence of the Empire

There were different and overlapping modes of internationalism in Hobson's work. By 1902 the economic internationalism of the Cobdenite perspective was supplemented with discussions of more involved forms of international cooperation which David Long has termed 'constructive internationalism'. In the context of the late nineteenth century the multinational and multiracial British Empire, when rightly ruled, seemed the only appropriate mean of achieving true internationalism.⁶⁸⁷

In the late nineteenth century there were several indicators which pointed in the direction of growing internationalism: the rapidly developing means of intercommunication of goods, information and persons. Blending of races by intermarriage was believed to improve 'racial efficiency' and ultimately to raise 'the character and intensity of the competition' and enhance 'the pace of human progress'. While internationalism promoted free intercourse between nations, Imperialism was a restrictive and exclusive force. It kept down the competition of nationalities and races to a low level of military and commercial strife and it checked the struggle of the 'higher arts of life' such as moral, intellectual and aesthetic ideas and institutions.⁶⁸⁸

Internationalism saw all attempts to solve the different aspects of the social problem in national isolation as futile. Cobden had understood this as he advocated the principle of free trade. By binding different parts of the world together with material business interests, war between nations would become impossible. What Cobden failed to take into account, however, was that there were certain powerful classes of interests within the nation which overruled the national interests conceived as a whole.⁶⁸⁹

Imperialists of the turn of century were trying to achieve this same equilibrium by dividing the earth between a few gigantic empires. Ritchie believed that there was only one possible way by which war between nations could be prevented; that is if the nations ceased to be independent. In Hobson's analysis, a nation did not lose its nationality by entering into organic relations with other nations but they existed in an organic relationship with each other thus forming a 'Society of Nations'.⁶⁹⁰

While Hobson admitted that the ethics of nations were at a feebler level than the ethics of individuals, a national morality too implied obligations. These were formulated as follows:⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁷ Long, David, 'Three Modes of Internationalism in the Work of J.A. Hobson'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, pp. 177 *et passim*.

⁶⁸⁸ Hobson, 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', pp. 473-474, 482, 485.

⁶⁸⁹ Hobson, John A., 'The Ethics of Internationalism' (An address before the Society for Ethical Culture of Philadelphia), *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. XVII, no. 1 (October, 1906), pp. 19-20, 22-23, 27.

⁶⁹⁰ Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 248, 250.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

- 1) It belongs to the common good of nations to leave each nation's liberty to govern itself in all matters where such liberty does not directly and clearly contravene the common good.
- 2) A repudiation of the practices of parasitic Imperialism, or forcible interference in the life of another nation so as to secure a gain in excess of the net services rendered.
- 3) The positive practice of mutual aid between nations upon equal terms, extending to the conduct of nations the sound organic principle of moral conduct "from each according to its powers, to each according to its needs".

Writing to his intellectual comrade-in-arms, Gilbert Murray, Hobson asserted that there cannot be any absolute law of inviolability of nations. He explained the principle of ethical subjectivism behind his thought that 'I agree in "theory" it is not necessary to show a separate gain to the "lower" races taken under the "trust" of the civilised world. It is the same question as that of individual rights; there are no natural inherent rights of individual or nation: the good of "the whole" must of course be the standard'. Hobson's cultural relativism rested in this ethical subjectivism. 'But as in the politics of a State it is an important maxim of practical government that the individual shall be regarded as a valuable end in himself, so with the nationality.'⁶⁹²

However, control of the tropical countries on the grounds of material necessity was liable to moral abuse. Was it then, and under what circumstances, justifiable for Western nations to use compulsory government for the control and education of the 'lower races' in the arts of industrial and political civilization? The real issue concerned motives and methods. 'What are the conditions under which a nation may help to develop the resources of another, and even apply some element of compulsion in doing so?'⁶⁹³ In his answer Hobson asserted that an act of Imperialism was only justifiable if it contributed to the civilization of the world and, in particular, the good of the 'lower races'. This condition was deduced directly from the principle of social utility. If it was to be admitted, it followed that 'civilised governments *may* undertake the political and economic control of lower races, in a word that the characteristic form of modern imperialism is not under all conditions illegitimate'⁶⁹⁴

Ritchie also saw the conquest and annexation of the Boer Republics as justified on the ground of social utility. If a nation refuses to utilise fully its resources or permit others to do so then coercion imposed on behalf of the general good of nations was justified. For Hobson the problem with this argument, even if he admitted it in principle, was that at the time there existed no organised or recognised mode of expression of the general will of nations. It

⁶⁹² J. A. Hobson to Gilbert Murray, 17, August 1902, Elmstead, Limpsfield, Surrey, MS8, GMP.

⁶⁹³ Hobson, John A., 'Imperialism and the Lower Races', *British Friend*, new series, vol. XI, no. 3 (March, 1902), p. 55; Cf. Hobson, *Imperialism*, 3rd ed., pp. 225-229.

⁶⁹⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'Imperialism and the Lower Races. II', *British Friend*, ns., vol. XI, no. 4 (April, 1902), pp. 81-82. His italics.

seemed to him that the transfer of power in South Africa served only British imperial interests and not the interests of the world at large.⁶⁹⁵

If organised governments of civilised powers refused the task of Imperialism, Hobson feared that

‘it would let loose a horde of private adventurers, slavers, piratical traders, treasurehunters, concession mongers, who, animated by mere greed of gold or power, would set about the work of exploitation under no public control and with no regard to the future; playing havoc with the political, economic and moral institutions of the peoples, instilling civilised vices and diseases, importing spirits and firearms as trade of readiest acceptance, fostering internecine strife for their own political and industrial purposes, and even setting up private despotisms sustained by organised armed forces.’⁶⁹⁶

The tale of horrors in the Congo Free State proved that Hobson was not exaggerating. The handing over of large regions in Africa to the virtually unchecked government of Chartered Companies, had exposed the dangers of a contact based on private commercialism. First, it did not serve the principle of social utility because there did not exist any international organ to determine what was the true capacity of the Anglo-Saxon race to contribute to the welfare of the world by a policy of expansion. ‘We claim to replace a lower by a higher civilisation: who is to determine whether the slow-going civilisation of the Transvaal Boer is really lower or less profitable for the world in the long run than a more rapid development of the country for mining speculation by Englishmen and German Jews?’⁶⁹⁷ Hobson felt that the moral defects of Imperialism were due to the lack of any sanction from a ‘Society of Nations’.⁶⁹⁸

Second, it did not serve the good of the ‘lower races’ as they were compelled to labour in mines. In the late nineteenth century trading companies such as BSAC were developing into a system for the control and development of agricultural and mining resources by native labour under white management. In the countries where mines required a larger supply of labour than could be obtained from the native population by ordinary economic means, direct taxes were levied on the ‘subject races’ aimed at compelling them to work. Imperialism thus rested upon and existed for the sake of ‘forced labour’.⁶⁹⁹

Lastly, it did not serve the interests of the ‘Anglo-Saxon race’ either. The condition of the white rulers of the ‘lower races’ was essentially parasitic. Where a large supply of natives could be made to work for them, the white rulers tended to become lazy and “unprogressive”.⁷⁰⁰ For example, testimonies from India, written by Rudyard Kipling, demonstrated the defects of the English society in India. The climate of India prevented the British settlers from

⁶⁹⁵ Hobson, John A., ‘Socialistic Imperialism’, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. XII, no. 1 (October, 1901), pp. 44–45, 48.

⁶⁹⁶ Hobson, ‘Imperialism and the Lower Races. II’, p. 80.

⁶⁹⁷ ‘Nemo’, ‘Ethics of Empire’, p. 454.

⁶⁹⁸ Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 248–251, 257–260.

⁶⁹⁹ Hobson, John A., ‘Imperialism and the Lower Races. III’, *British Friend*, ns., vol. XI, no. 6 (June, 1902), pp. 129–132.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

becoming more than 'a garrison with a camp-following of traders and manufacturers'. English family life, the germ of wider social institutions seemed impossible. India was in Hobson's analysis not an organic part of the Empire but a foreign body, upon which the British formed a parasitic growth. The veritable nemesis of Imperialism was that colonial officials, accustomed and trained in autocratic manners in India, brought these vices back to England and caused 'incalculable harm' to the attempts at social reform.⁷⁰¹

Despite the obvious drawbacks to British rule in India, Hobson admitted that there were certain achievements as well:

'We have established a wider and more permanent internal peace than India had ever known from the days of Alexander the Great. We have raised the standard of justice by fair and equal administration of laws; we have regulated and probably reduced the burden of taxation, checking the corruption and tyranny of native princes and their publicans. For the instruction of the people we have introduced a public system of schools and colleges, as well as a great quasipublic missionary establishment, teaching not only Christian religion but many industrial arts. Roads, railways and network of canals have facilitated communication and transport, and an extensive system of scientific irrigation has improved the productiveness of the soil; the mining of coal, gold and other minerals has been greatly developed; in Bombay and elsewhere cotton mills with modern machinery have been set up, and the organization of other machine industries is helping to find employment for the population of large cities. Tea, coffee, indigo, jute, tobacco and other important crops have been introduced into Indian agriculture. We are gradually breaking down many of the religious and social superstitions which sin against humanity and retard progress, and even the deeply rooted caste system is modified wherever British influence is felt. There can be no question that much of this work of England in India is well done.'⁷⁰²

It was 'anthropological colonialism,' a colonial government founded on consent rather than force, which Hobson was calling for.⁷⁰³

'By studying the religions, political and other social institutions and habits of the people, and by endeavouring to penetrate into their present mind and capacities of adaptation, by learning their language and their history, we should seek to place them in the natural history of man; by similar close attention to the country in which they live, and not to its agricultural and mining resources alone, we should get a real grip upon their environment. Then, carefully approaching them so as to gain what confidence we could for friendly motives, and openly discouraging any premature private attempts of exploiting companies to work mines, or secure concessions, or otherwise to impair our disinterested conduct, we should endeavour to assume the position of advisers. Even if it were necessary to enforce some degree of authority, we should keep such force in the background as a last resort, and make it our first aim to understand and to promote the healthy free operations of all internal forces for progress which we might discover.'⁷⁰⁴

Thus when Imperialism sought to justify itself as the 'sane civilization of lower races', 'it will endeavour to raise their industrial and moral status on their own lands, preserving as far as possible the continuity of the old tribal life and

⁷⁰¹ 'Nemo', 'Ethics of Empire', pp. 457-460.

⁷⁰² Hobson, *Imperialism*, 3rd ed., p. 287.

⁷⁰³ Thomas, Nicholas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁰⁴ Hobson, 'Imperialism and the Lower Races. III', p. 131.

institutions, protecting them against force and deceit of prospectors, labour touts, and other persons who seek to take their land and entice away their labour.' However, as long as private business interests prevailed and the lands of the 'lower races' were invaded in search of land or labour, this law of sane Imperialism was violated.⁷⁰⁵ Hobson therefore ended with a position that was not truly anti-Imperialist but rather one advocating minimal Empire, under international control.⁷⁰⁶

5.6 The Psychology of Jingoism

In the late nineteenth century politics developed in ways unacceptable to liberal intellectuals. As Greta Jones has pointed out 'the integration of the working class into a moral consensus and liberal political tradition had not been achieved to the extent that many liberal intellectuals had hoped'. Such developments increased the need to explain the working class behaviour in terms of irrationality.⁷⁰⁷ As seen, Hobson by and large believed that reason guides the passions and not vice versa,⁷⁰⁸ in the context of the South African War he put forward an explanation for the Jingoism of the masses in terms of irrational behaviour.

Hobson used instinct in describing social behaviour. When the instinctual drives eradicated rational behaviour the result was a lapse into a 'primitive' or 'savage' mentality.⁷⁰⁹ This became, for the first time, intelligible to Hobson when he arrived in South Africa. In Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Bloemfontein he found the lust of race dominance in its 'naked ugliness'. 'I thus clearly discovered that neither franchise, nor taxation, nor suzerainty had any real significance, but that a collective lust for the assertion of British dominance, excited, fed, and definitely engineered by self-seeking financial politicians for definite political or economic purposes, was the actually operative force.'⁷¹⁰

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain there were very few proponents of 'centralisation' as an administrative principle. In education, under the Education Acts of 1870 and 1902, the management of schools remained firmly in local hands. Yet together with mass-circulation newspapers, schools were producing unified attitudes and indeed cultural unification.⁷¹¹ To the Individualists such as Herbert Spencer, this process represented the eclipse of domestic liberties. He saw the cheap press and state education as responsible for the growth of Imperialism. Hobson believed that the rationality of the

⁷⁰⁵ Hobson, 'Imperialism and the Lower Races. III', pp. 129-132; Cf. Hobson, *Imperialism*, 3rd ed., pp. 279-280.

⁷⁰⁶ Brailsford, 'The Life-work of J. A. Hobson', p. 25.

⁷⁰⁷ Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, pp. 122-123.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. Long, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁰⁹ Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, pp. 128, 138.

⁷¹⁰ J. A. H., 'The Psychology of the War Spirit', *Ethical World*, vol. II, no. 49 (December 9, 1899), pp. 769-770.

⁷¹¹ Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, p. 21.

individual was limited. 'The forces which direct and control opinions and judgements, are chiefly what we called "temperamental". Only to a very slight extent is a man a reasoning animal and woman to an even less extent.' Improvement in education could not entirely eradicate this temperamental element. The two opponents of the war, Spencer and Hobson, did not regard education as a panacea. The defects of the social system in which the education process was conducted made this impossible.⁷¹²

At the time of the war the British nation became a great crowd which exposed its crowd-mind to the suggestions of the press. In Hobson's analysis, the psychological root-cause of this mental collapse of the nation was the eclipse of sympathetic imagination.⁷¹³ The growth and operations of a mob in the streets of London exhibited a character and a behaviour which was uniform.

'Look at the effect of an orator upon a crowd, the power of a sudden panic, the contagion of some quick impulse to action; it is quite evident that the barriers which commonly encase the individual mind have given way, that private judgement inhibited, and that for a time a mob-mind has been set up in its stead, with feelings and conduct imposed upon the units, a common mind and will in which the reasoning faculties are almost suspended and in which the passions of animal ferocity, generosity, credulity, self-sacrifice, malignity and courage express themselves unrestrained.'⁷¹⁴

Hobson drew attention to four characteristics of the crowd-mind which he found among the Jingoists. Credulity, a willingness to believe that something is true upon insufficient evidence, was displayed by the reception of Hobson's allegation of a press manufactured war. The allegation that the press of South Africa, which furnished information to the London press, was owned and controlled by a body of mining capitalists, received little if any sympathy and understanding while testimonies given by Sir Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner who had never set foot in the Transvaal, Mr. Fitzpatrick, the author of *The Transvaal from Within* and a member of the Eckstein firm, Mr. Lionel Phillips, a partner in the same firm and a frequent contributor to the *Times*, Mr. Hosken, a director of the *Transvaal Leader*, and Messrs. Rudd, Hayes, Hammond, Farrar, and other directors of the Rand mines, were accepted as the truth.⁷¹⁵

Brutality, the mentality of the 'Yahoo' or 'savage passion', characterised the immoral and cruel behaviour of the Jingoists. At the time of the war, the previous nobility of the British nature, expressed in the admiration shown of weaker enemies for their stubborn resistance,⁷¹⁶ was replaced by the admiration

⁷¹² Herbert Spencer to J. A. Hobson, March 29, 1901, Brighton, DHN 23, JAHP; Hobson, J. A., 'Latest Words of Herbert Spencer', *New Age*, vol. XIV, no. 398 (May 15, 1902), p. 313.

⁷¹³ Hobson, John A., 'The Eclipse of Humour', *Democracy*, vol. IV, no. 3 (January 19, 1901), pp. 33-34.

⁷¹⁴ Hobson, 'The Re-Statement of Democracy', p. 264.

⁷¹⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'The Psychology of the War Spirit. Credulity.', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 28 (July 14, 1900), pp. 435-436.

⁷¹⁶ For instance, the Maoris were described by J. A. Froude in his *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* (1886) as 'brave, honourable and chivalrous' (*op. cit.*, pp. 233ff)

of ferocious actions. 'Watch the features, listen to the voice of your Jingo friend when he rolls over his tongue some tasty morsel of his favourite war correspondent, or retails the latest sensation of the cablegram. Sex, age, nurture, education, refined surroundings, are of little avail to resist, or even modify, the pulsation of the primitive lust.' The acceptance of phrases such as 'exterminate the vermin' expressed the savage passion of the mob-mind in Britain.⁷¹⁷

Vainglory, expressed in boastful claims or invented threats, illustrated the irrationality of the Jingo. It was characterised by loss of perspective, inability to test evidence and reversal of normal standards of value. Closely linked with vainglory was shortsightedness, and an inability to make proper judgements about the future. 'A Jingo-ridden people looks neither before or after, but lives in and for the present alone like other brutes.'⁷¹⁸

The type of Jingoism of the masses, concretised in phrases such as "Avenge Majuba" or "Save the British Empire" was based on 'childish patriotism'. The Jingoism of the educated classes was more serious in type as it was based on intellectual dishonesty, an unwillingness to accept the evidence. 'In some cases the revelation has been peculiarly painful, because it has raised suspicions as to the intellectual honesty of men and women whom we have respected in the past, and to whom we have been attached by many bonds of fellowship.'⁷¹⁹ Following his return from South Africa Hobson found, to his disappointment, 'these "Liberal" friends terribly anxious to avoid discussion of the "causes" [of the war]'. The nominal adherents of the Liberal Party, the 'illiberals', as Hobson termed the Liberal Imperialists, seemed to have lost their liberal soul.⁷²⁰

5.7 The Economics of Imperialism

The central focus of Hobson's critique of classical political economy was 'the individualist notion of production'. Hobson saw production as an intrinsically social activity which created a surplus product in excess of the aggregate of individual contributions.⁷²¹ John Allett, among other scholars, has maintained The bridge between Hobson's political and economic thought lay in this notion of 'the organic surplus'. In an unreformed industrial system much of this surplus, generated by industrial machine production, was 'unproductive'. Similarly, Hobson considered income acquired through land ownership as

⁷¹⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'The Psychology of the War Spirit. Brutality', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 29 (July 21, 1900), pp. 451-452.

⁷¹⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'The Psychology of the War Spirit. Vainglory and Shortsight.', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 46 (November 17, 1900), p. 723.

⁷¹⁹ Hobson, John A., 'Are Educated Jingoists Honest?', *Ethical World*, vol. III, no. 40 (October 6, 1900), p. 628.

⁷²⁰ Hobson, J. A., 'The Soul of Illiberalism', *New Age*, vol. XIII, no. 354 (July 11, 1901), pp. 440-441.

⁷²¹ Hobson, J. A., 'The Social Question. Society as a Maker of Values', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 31 (July 30, 1898), pp. 483-485.

'unearned'. This unproductive surplus was responsible for all capitalism's defects. Reinvestment in home markets created products in excess of market demand thus causing the state of underconsumption while investment in foreign markets led to Imperialism. The key function of the state should be then the transformation of the surplus so that it becomes productive rather than unproductive.⁷²²

The Principle of Free Trade

During the nineteenth century the external trade policy of the British Empire relied on the principle of free trade. However, towards the close of the century Britain faced increasingly foreign competition in her traditional markets. As a result, the cry for the abandonment of free trade increased. To some, protectionism was part of a more general design to create an Empire, which would be firmly united by bonds of interest as well as of sentiment. Increased interest in protectionism reached its height in 1903 when Joseph Chamberlain launched his imperial preference programme. It suggested that Britain should follow Germany and create its own customs union (*Imperial Zollverein*).⁷²³

It has been said that free trade theory represented for Hobson something of an ideal or a 'fetish'.⁷²⁴ However, by the 1890s its workability was already severely undermined by a state of underconsumption. In his early analysis of the workability of the theory, Hobson was not always convinced of the merits of free trade and saw protection in this respect as comprehensible.⁷²⁵

While not protectionist at heart, in 1891 Hobson did not necessarily see free trade as a guarantee of the socially efficient distribution of resources and efforts. He feared that attempts to raise the living standards of the English poor might be threatened by overseas industrial competition and the result would be a flight of capital.⁷²⁶ Hobson further maintained that free trade increased total national wealth, but that this benefit could be out weighted by the harm done to the most vulnerable part of the working class.⁷²⁷ Immigration of cheap and

⁷²² Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 255–256; Jules Townshend has criticised Allett's view. See Townshend, *J. A. Hobson*, pp. 62–67.

⁷²³ However, the battle between Free Traders and the supporters of Tariff Reform lasted well into the 1930s. See Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*; Cunningham Wood, John, 'J. A. Hobson and British Imperialism', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 42, issue 4 (October, 1983), pp. 493–494; For more detailed discussion see, for example, Searle, G. R., *A New England? Peace and War 1886–1918*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004, pp. 334–341.

⁷²⁴ Lee, *A Study of the Economic and Social Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 455–459.

⁷²⁵ Hobson, John A., 'Can England Keep Her Trade?', *National Review*, vol. XVII, no. 97 (March, 1891), p. 3. Schneider has repudiated this view and argues that Hobson was steadfast in his belief in free trade. Schneider, *J. A. Hobson*, p. 90. Yet as Schneider admits, in his early writings Hobson was keen to open up new markets, for example in China. (*Derbyshire Advertiser*, 21.10.1887)

⁷²⁶ Cain, 'J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898–1914', p. 568.

⁷²⁷ Cain, 'International trade and economic development in the work of J. A. Hobson before 1914', p. 408.

more competitive labour to Britain and to the East End of London in particular threatened to deprive the English poor even further.⁷²⁸

Besides, Hobson feared that in the near future, Britain might have become as uncompetitive as protectionists had argued. 'Race, language, inherited prejudices, ignorance, timidity, inadequate communication, have furnished a formidable barrier to the free operation of commercial competition outside the limit of the nation which is being but gradually broken down.' Hobson estimated that England might even lose her economic advantage in the rising markets of India and China. 'Is it so grossly improbable that India might become the Lancashire of the British Empire, or even perhaps with China become the workshop of the world?' By looking at British foreign trade in the light of history, he was forced to conclude that 'Capital always tends to attach itself to the cheapest labour to be found within its field of investment'.⁷²⁹

Until the late nineteenth century this field of investment was confined to England. However, the gradual breaking down of international barriers to trade, and the rapid facilitation of means of communication had caused 'a constant expansion of the field of investment, both for capital and labour'. Hobson wholeheartedly admitted that 'the Englishman, both in physical strength [and] acquired skill, intelligence, and *morale*, is superior to the Hindoo'. Nevertheless, this being so, 'all hers efforts to civilize India, to teach her the arts of industry, to develop her factory system by the application of English capital and enterprise, to economize the industrial forces of the country by improved communications, and lastly to open up the vast hidden supplies of coal and iron she possesses, will end by making Indian labour much more effective than it has been in the past.'⁷³⁰

In the 1890s capital flows and subsequent economic movements were caused by improved ways of communication and travel. However, Hobson suspected that protective means to keep out foreign goods from the British market in fact encouraged the alienation of capital. To him capital seemed to be the perfect Imperialist: 'The greatest of modern explorers is capital; it passes into the remotest corners of the world, tapping the earth at every point for minerals, testing its fertility and varied capacities of growth, gauging the strength, skill, and adaptability of the inhabitants.' In his estimates of British capability to compete in the future with the rising Asiatic nations, China and India, Hobson remained somewhat pessimistic. 'Unless England possess special advantages of soil, climate, position, or race which enable her to play the same part in the free competition of the whole world as she has hitherto played in the restricted competition of a few advanced nationalities occupying the best bits of earth, she has nothing to hope for in the future of commerce.'⁷³¹

This 1891 estimation on capital flow from England to more profitable investments in India, China and in lands, which were undeveloped in their natural industrial resources, was based on underconsumption theory and laid

⁷²⁸ Hobson, *Problems of Poverty*, pp. 124-127.

⁷²⁹ Hobson, 'Can England Keep her Foreign Trade?', pp. 4-5.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 7.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

the basis for his future economic arguments concerning the task of demonstrating Imperialism to be a direct product of the capitalist system.⁷³²

At the close of the nineteenth century the free trade theory was still supported by the majority of the members of the Liberal Party. International trade was considered a method of international co-operation. Despite this support of the free trade principle, the assertion that Britain can only expand her foreign trade by extension of her Empire was customarily accepted among the Liberals.⁷³³

‘We must have new foreign markets; our industrial rivals close new markets which they get and hold them as “monopolies”; it is therefore necessary for us to acquire new colonies or “spheres of influence”, for not otherwise can we obtain markets for our expanding manufactures; large armaments are an essential for the pursuit of this trade policy, and the risks and expenses of such a policy must be met as best they can.’⁷³⁴

In order to investigate the validity of this assertion, Hobson set out to measure qualitatively whether an increase of the Empire was attended by a corresponding increase in imperial trade. Did trade then tend to follow the flag? Based on his measurements, Hobson concluded that the massive accessions of territory and population since 1884 had not been followed by any increase in colonial trade reckoned by money values and reckoned in goods.⁷³⁵

To Hobson the principle of free trade represented, in the spirit of Cobden, purely defensive policy with regard to the existing Empire and a total abstinence from the acquisition of new territory. His conviction arose from a philosophical view that the resources were needed for the improvement of the condition of the people in Britain. It did not demand the abolition of the Empire nor did it deny the necessity of protecting the existing Empire. It argued against the mercantilist belief that the spheres of influence in China or in Africa and monopolisation of trade by France, Germany, or Russia implied a corresponding loss of markets to Britain. The extension of trade was possible without extending the Empire. Britain should patiently wait for the growth of the commercial solidarity of interests which eventually would eradicate national antagonism.⁷³⁶

The principle of free trade was closely connected with Hobson’s thinking on social reform.

‘The issue, in a word, is between external expansion of markets and of territory on the one hand, and internal social and industrial reforms upon the other; between a militant imperialism animated by the lust for quantitative growth as a means by which the governing and possessing classes may retain their monopoly of political

⁷³² Cain, J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898–1914’, p. 568.

⁷³³ Hobson, J. A., ‘Free Trade and Foreign Policy.’, *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXIV (August, 1898), pp. 170–171.

⁷³⁴ Hobson, J. A., ‘Is England a Free Trade Country?’, *Reformer*, vol. II, no. 19 (September 15, 1898), p. 174.

⁷³⁵ Hobson, ‘Free Trade and Foreign Policy.’, pp. 172–174. These measurements are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁷³⁶ Hobson, ‘Is England a Free Trade Country?’, pp. 176–177.

power and industrial supremacy, and a peaceful democracy engaged upon the development of its national resources in order to secure for all its members the conditions of improved comfort, security, and leisure essential for a worthy national life.⁷³⁷

Imperialism, in its turn, rested on the basis of protectionism, which meant to strive to attach to the mother country the markets of new territorial acquisitions. While an advocate of free trade at heart, Hobson did not support the practice at all costs. England had done its share of the costly, laborious and dangerous work of opening up new countries to the general trade of Western industrial nations. Now it was the turn of the other active and ambitious industrial nations to do their share of the work of developing new countries.⁷³⁸

Hobson's theory of economic Imperialism, based on the principle of free trade, ran counter to the argument of Imperialists that new market areas were needed for growing manufacture, for surplus capital and for surplus population.⁷³⁹ In his analysis the economic factors were overwhelming compared with the other forces shaping Imperialism such as 'destiny' or 'mission'. However, there was a type of economic determinism in his analysis which proclaimed the 'necessity' or 'inevitability' of Imperialism. This argument held that a surplus of capital made expansion inevitable. The rapidity of industrial revolution in some European countries and the United States, the goods manufactured and capital accumulated, forcibly linked economics and politics. The lack of profitable investments in the home markets and the poor level of consumption ultimately led to 'over-production', caused by increased production and competition in industry, forcing the annexation of new markets. The adoption of imperialist methods not only in Britain but also, for example, in the United States was thus caused by economic factors.

'Thus we reach the conclusion that Imperialism is the endeavour of the great captains of industry to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth by seeking foreign markets and foreign investments to take off the goods and capital they cannot sell or use at home.'⁷⁴⁰

The outlook of the British manufacturing industries was very different from that of a German-type or American-type finance capitalism. Their interest was served both by free trade and foreign investment especially since the latter often led to an increase in demand for their goods abroad. However, something akin to monopoly capitalism existed in the South African mining industry, even if its structure was untypical of the structures found in Britain or in the rest of the Empire.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ Hobson, 'Free Trade and Foreign Policy.', p. 179.

⁷³⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'Imperialism based on Protection', *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 114 (December 7, 1901), pp. 275-276.

⁷³⁹ This argument was further developed in 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism'. Hobson, J. A., 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism', *Contemporary Review*, vol. LXXXII, (August, 1902), pp. 219-232.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷⁴¹ Some researchers, especially Norman Etherington, have asserted in relation to this point that the major influence on Hobson's idea of surplus capital might not have

The condition of over-production constituted what Hobson called 'the taproot of imperialism'.⁷⁴² While Imperialism was a direct outcome of what he saw as a false economy, social reform was the remedy as it increased home market consumption. 'The only safety of nations lies in removing the unearned increments of income from the possessing classes and adding them to the wage-income of the working classes or to the public income, in order that they may be spent in raising the standard of consumption.' Working class movements and state socialism formed thus 'the natural enemies of Imperialism'.⁷⁴³

Before the period of new Imperialism (c. 1870–1900), Britain held a virtual monopoly of the world's markets, which made Imperialism in the sense of the late nineteenth century unnecessary. However, the intensified rivalry with European competitors, particularly with Germany as well as with the United States at the end of the nineteenth century forced Britain to secure new markets. When such new markets were forcibly opened up, they were quickly protected with tariffs and bounties, thus linking Imperialism and protectionism.

By the beginning of the twentieth century a free trading British Empire was slowly disappearing. Hobson also seemed to have lost his faith in the workability of the free trade principle. He saw that in the Chinese markets the policy of free trade termed "Open Door" already seriously threatened British interests. In England its workability was undermined by the speculative classes and their selfish interests as the South African War painfully illustrated. Imperialism, driven by the pressure of machine production and surplus capital, was increasingly pursuing a policy of protection. The most obvious means of obtaining new incomes was to propose tariffs on imported goods.⁷⁴⁴ The idea of Imperial Federation, a self-sufficing Empire, became increasingly attractive to Hobson at the end of the South African War. Yet the propagation of the idea seemed to raise only scant interest among the Progressives.⁷⁴⁵

come from his South African experience but from H. Gaylord Wilshire, an American theorist of surplus capital, whose views about over-production and trusts Hobson recycled in a *Contemporary Review* article entitled 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism' (1902). See Etherington, Norman, *Theories of Imperialism: War, Conquest and Capital*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra 1984, pp. 40–43 and ch. 4. However, Peter Cain has criticised Etherington's argument and pointed out that the theory of underconsumption was a product of the 1890s and therefore Hobson's conclusions on surplus capital were made before the publication of Wilshire's views in *Wilshire's Magazine* (previously the *Challenge*) in 1900 and 1901. See Cain, Peter, 'J. A. Hobson, Financial Capitalism and Imperialism in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. XIII, no. 3 (May, 1985), pp. 5–6, 16.

⁷⁴² Hobson, 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism', pp. 225, 228.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁷⁴⁴ Hobson, J. A., 'The Approaching Abandonment of Free Trade', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. LXXI, no. CCCCXXIII (March 1, 1902), pp. 435–440, 442.

⁷⁴⁵ *South Place Magazine*, vol. IX, no. 2 (November, 1903), p. 28; *South Place Magazine*, vol. IX, no. 3 (December, 1903), p. 47.

The Measure of Imperialism

Even though Imperialism in a linguistic sense related to an empire's government, in the context of the 1890s it more and more often came to mean expansion or colonial trade. In his economic theory of Imperialism, Hobson intended to give definiteness to the term Imperialism by referring to concrete facts in the history of imperial expansion between 1870 and 1900. The following area and population measurements are taken from the official publications of the Colonial Office as corroborated or supplemented from the *Statesman's Yearbook*. With these measurements Hobson liked to introduce a new critical, historically based explanation of imperial expansion, which differentiated previous British colonial expansion from the new Imperialism of 1870–1900.

As in his own time, Hobson's measurements concerning the commercial value of Imperialism have been criticised by modern scholars.⁷⁴⁶ Interestingly, the content of this criticism has not altered significantly over the years. Considerations of the commercial value of Imperialism have remained imperative but emphasis has been more on the quantity of production rather than on the quality of the goods produced.

P. J. Cain has evaluated the usefulness of Hobson's estimations of the causes of British Imperialism as expressed in *Imperialism: A Study*. He finds Hobson's figures for British foreign investment roughly accurate and well-established. However, Hobson's own calculations of the costs and benefits of the British imperial project were relatively unsound. As will be shown, Hobson saw that the true beneficiaries were investors and financiers such as Eckstein and Beit, not those involved in trade. Most of Hobson's arguments about mining finance being a causal agent in bringing about the war have however been rejected by a succession of historians. Finance did not manipulate the patriotic forces that led to the war in the manner indicated by Hobson in *Imperialism: A Study*.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁶ Hobson himself admitted that his statistics had many flaws and might have been greatly strengthened by more revision. The reason Hobson hurried to send to press material he was not quite happy with was his approaching journey to America to where he travelled in November 1902. (J. A. Hobson to Gilbert Murray, August 7, 1902, Elmstead, Limpsfield, Surrey, MS 8, GMP) The statistics published in the *Speaker* articles were reproduced with minor changes in the first (1902) and second (1905) edition of *Imperialism: A Study*. Hobson brought his statistics up to date in the third revised edition of the study. See Hobson, *Imperialism*, 3rd ed., 1938, appendices.

⁷⁴⁷ Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, ch. 8.

TABLE 1 The Measure of Imperialism (*Speaker*, 26.10.1901, p. 94)

	Date of Acquisition	Area (sq. miles)	Population
EUROPE			
Cyprus	1878	3,584	227,900
AFRICA			
Zansibar and Pemba	1888		200,000
E. Africa Protectorate	1895	} 1,000,000 {	250,000
Uganda Protectorate	1894-96	140,000	3,800,000
Somali C. Protectorate	1884-5	68,000	?
Brit. Cent. Africa Pro.	1889	42,217	688,049
Lagos	to 1899	21,000	3,000,000
Gambia	to 1888	3,550	215,000
Ashantee	1896-1901	70,000	2,000,000
Niger Coast Protec.	1885-1898	400,000 to 500,000	25,000,000 to 40,000,000
Egypt	1882	400,000	9,734,405
Egyptian Soudan	1882	950,000	10,000,000
Griqualand West	1871-1880	15,197	83,373
Zululand	1879-1897	10,521	?
British Bechuanaland	1885	51,424	72,736
Bechuanaland Pro.	1891	213,000	200,000
Transkei	1879-1885	2,535	153,582
Tembuland	1885	4,155	180,130
Pondoland	1894	4,040	188,000
Griqualand East	1879-1885	7,511	152,609
Brit. S. Africa Charter	1889	750,000	321,000
Transvaal	1900	119,139	870,000
Orange River Colony	1900	48,826	207,503
ASIA			
Hong Kong (littoral)	1898	376	100,000
Wei-hai-wei		—	—
Socotra	1886	1,382	10,000
Upper Burma	1887	83,473	2,046,933
Baluchistan	1876-1889	130,000	500,000
Sikkim	1890	2,818	30,000
Rajputana (States)		128,022	12,186,352
Burma States	} since 1881 {	62,661	785,800
Jammu and Kashmir		80,000	2,543,952
Malay Prot'ted States	1883-1895	24,849	620,000
N. Borneo Company	1881	31,106	175,000
N. Borneo Protectorate	1888	—	—
Sarawak	1888	50,000	500,000
British New Guinea	1888	90,540	350,000
Fiji Islands	1874	7,740	122,676
Leeward Islands	1871	701	127,800
Winward Islands	1871	784	157,839

The table takes the year 1870 as indicative of the beginning of a conscious policy of Imperialism. However, as the measurements reveal, the vast increase in African land, may be dated from 1885. Hobson admitted that the list was by no means complete. It does not take account of several large regions which had passed under the control of the Indian Government as Native or Feudatory States. Despite these reservations, the list indicates that almost the whole of the expansion of Great Britain was conducted in tropical countries, nearly all of which were thickly peopled by natives. To conclude his findings, Hobson pointed out that the Imperial expansion of 1870-1900 stood entirely distinct from the earlier colonisation of sparsely-peopled land in temperate zones. The annexing of new territories involved the presence of a small minority of white men, officials, traders, and industrial organisers. They were exercising political and economic sway over native populations who were regarded as inferior and incapable of exercising any considerable rights of self-government, in politics or industry.⁷⁴⁸

Did trade then follow the flag? Based on measurements drawn from the aforementioned sources, Hobson argued that even if a considerable proportion of public interest, energy, and money were invested in seeking to secure colonial possessions and markets, not more than one-fortieth of British national income was derived from foreign and colonial trade. The Imperialist policy seemed to have no significant influence upon the volume and the value of external trade. In fact, before the period of pursuing a definite imperialist policy, Britain's external trade was advancing faster than her internal trade. Besides, the greatest advance in external trade was with other industrial nations, France, Germany, Russia and the United States. The colonial trade, Hobson concluded, formed the smallest, the most uncertain, and the least valuable part of the whole external trade. Moreover, the tropical export trade was not only moderate in quantity but also in quality. It consisted largely of the cheapest textile goods of Lancashire, the cheapest metal goods of Birmingham and Sheffield and of gunpowder, spirits and tobacco.⁷⁴⁹

Thomas Cairns, a reader of the *Speaker*, pointed out that Hobson failed to include in his measurements wages paid for labouring, rents, royalties, interest upon capital, and trading profits for the national income. As with that of most of the critics, Cairns' criticism was not without political allegations. He regretted 'the title and the tone of the article', which encouraged the idea that Britain should say 'Perish our foreign and colonial trade'. Cairns maintained that if the goods produced had not been sold abroad, none of them would have been produced at all.⁷⁵⁰ Hobson asserted, in relation to underconsumption

⁷⁴⁸ Hobson, J. A., "The Measure of Imperialism", *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 108 (October 26, 1901), pp. 94-95.

⁷⁴⁹ Hobson, J. A. "The Commercial value of Imperialism", *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 109 (November 2, 1901), pp. 124-126.

⁷⁵⁰ Cairns, Thomas, Comment on Hobson's 'Commercial Value of Imperialism' article, *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 111 (November 16, 1901), p. 186.

theory, that home market consumption is not a fixed amount but depends on consumers' purchasing power.⁷⁵¹

After the First World War, Hobson's estimates of the commercial value of Imperialism continued however to appeal especially to radical thinkers. Leonard Barnes (1895–1977), one of the most influential critics of the Empire in the 1930s, for instance, found Hobson's findings persuasive.⁷⁵² Frederick Lugard (1858–1945), a strong advocate of the colonial system, on the other hand, found colonial expansion even in Africa, not only morally just but also economically profitable.⁷⁵³ Modern economic historians have emphasized that in determining the commercial value of British Imperialism, estimates should include not only goods sold but also capital investments. In some markets, notably in India, the British export trade of the late nineteenth century was profitable whereas in Africa the undeveloped trade routes and poor infrastructure formed considerable hindrances to any satisfactory economic utilization of the markets.⁷⁵⁴

The Imperialists also argued for imperial expansion on the grounds of Britain's limited capacity to feed her growing population. This argument was closely linked to the economic motives for imperial expansion. In Hobson's analysis, the difficulties British settlers faced in their new home countries led easily to further annexations. When the British *witlanders* were not satisfied with foreign rule, they demanded the intervention of their home Government. The example of the Boer Republics was revealing.

[...] Wherever any considerable number of British subjects settles in savage or semi-civilised country they have a "right" to British protection, and since that protection can seldom be made effective without the exercise of direct British authority, the imperial aegis of Great Britain must be spread over all such areas, when a convenient occasion for such expansion presents itself.⁷⁵⁵

Despite this new annexation of territories, imperial expansion seemed not to provide any permanent solution for the problem of over-population. Countries acquired under the new Imperialism, attracted only a limited number of colonial officials, engineers, missionaries, prospectors and overseers of trading and industrial undertakings. The main bulk of British emigrants still settled in the United States.

'Do we find in Great Britain to-day any well-organised group of special commercial and social interests which stand to gain by aggressive Imperialism and the militarism it involves?' By posing this question Hobson liked to remind people of the parasitic aspects of Imperialism. Although, as revealed by the

⁷⁵¹ Hobson, J. A., A reply on Cairns' comment, *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 111 (November 16, 1901), pp. 186–187.

⁷⁵² Barnes, Leonard, *Empire or Democracy? A Study of the Colonial Question*, Victor Gollancz, London 1939, pp. 71–84.

⁷⁵³ See his *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1922) and also Margery Perham's introduction to the 5th edition (Frank Cass, London 1965), pp. xxix–xxx.

⁷⁵⁴ E.g. Cain, P. J. & Hopkins, A. G., *British imperialism: innovation and expansion, 1688–1914*, Longman, London, New York 1994 (1993), *passim*.

⁷⁵⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'Imperialism as an Outlet for Population', *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 110 (November 9, 1901), p. 154.

aforementioned measurements, the new Imperialism was not a profitable enterprise for Britain, it was good business for certain classes of individuals. 'The vast expenditure on armaments, the costly wars, the grave risks and embarrassments of foreign policy, the stoppage of political and social reforms within Great Britain, though fraught with great injury to the nation, have served well the present business interests of certain industries and professions.' Hobson found Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham 'full of firms which compete in pushing textiles and hardware, engines, tools, machinery, spirits, guns, upon new markets.' His careful analysis of the existing relations between business and politics revealed that the aggressive Imperialism he sought to understand, was the product of a combination of business and political interests. The business interest groups formed 'the nucleus of commercial Imperialism' and were supported by 'the part of the aristocracy and the wealthy classes, who seek in the services careers for their sons.' In the words of James Mill British colonies still formed 'a vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes'.⁷⁵⁶

The single most important economic factor in Imperialism was the influence of investors. Basing his argument on statistics gathered by Sir Robert Giffen (1837-1910), the statistician of the Department of Trade, and M. G. Mulhall, an economist for Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, Hobson maintained that Imperialism had coincided with a remarkable growth in the income derived from the external investments. Imperialism, which cost the British taxpayer so dear, was 'a source of great gains to the investor who cannot find at home the profitable use he seeks for his capital and insists that his Government shall help him to profitable and secure investments abroad.' *Cui bono? Who benefits?* Hobson's answer runs thus: the investor.⁷⁵⁷

However, a graver factor in the economics of Imperialism was still the special interest of the financier, the general dealer in investments. Banking, broking, bill discounting, loan floating, company promoting were controlled by a 'little group of financial kings'. 'Does anyone seriously suppose that a great war could be undertaken by any European State, or a great State loan subscribed, if the house of Rothschild and its connections set their face against it?' 'There was not a war, a revolution, an anarchist assassination, or any other public shock which was not gainful to these men; they are harpies who suck their gains from every new forced expenditure and every sudden disturbance of public credit.' The wars of the 1890s, the Philippine War, the Chino-Japanese War and the South African War, to take the most notorious examples, were sources of profit to the money-lenders and speculators.⁷⁵⁸

The wealth of the international financial houses, the scale of their operations and their cosmopolitan nature formed the prime determinants of

⁷⁵⁶ Hobson, J. A., 'Economic Parasites of Imperialism', *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 111 (November 16, 1901), pp. 179-181.

⁷⁵⁷ Hobson, J. A., 'Imperialism the Policy of Investors', *Speaker*, vol. V., no. 112 (November 23, 1901), pp. 210-211.

⁷⁵⁸ Hobson, J. A., 'The Financial Direction of Imperialism', *Speaker*, vol. V, no. 113 (November 30, 1901), pp. 245-246.

Imperial policy. They had the largest stake in the business of Imperialism and the amplest means of forcing their will upon the policy of nations. With this economic view of the history of Imperialism Hobson did not wish altogether to deny the importance that non-economic factors such as patriotism, the search for adventure, military enterprise, political ambition and philanthropy played in Imperial expansion.

'And it is true that the motor-power of Imperialism is not chiefly financial: finance is rather the governor of the imperial engine, directing the energy and determining its work; it does not constitute the fuel of the engine, nor does it directly generate the power. Finance manipulates the patriotic forces which politicians, soldiers, philanthropists, and traders generate; the enthusiasm for expansion which issues from these sources, though strong and genuine, is irregular and blind; the financial interest has those qualities of concentration and clear-sighted calculation which are needed to set Imperialism to work.'⁷⁵⁹

To exercise their control over the body of public opinion, financiers employed the press as their instrument. Not only in London but in Berlin, Vienna, and Paris many of the influential newspapers were under the control of the financial houses. These newspapers were used to put into the public mind beliefs and sentiments and to influence public policy and thus affect the money market. 'Add to this the natural sympathy with a sensational policy which a cheap Press always manifests, and it becomes evident the Press is strongly biased towards Imperialism, and lends itself with great facility to the suggestion of financial or political Imperialists who desire to work up patriotism for some new piece of expansion.' These financial forces were parasites upon patriotism which had adapted themselves to its protecting colours. In public, they desired to extend the area of civilisation, establish good government, promote Christianity, extirpate slavery and elevate 'the lower races'. In secrecy, they utilised these more unselfish forces in furthering their financial ends.⁷⁶⁰

In the *Edinburgh Review* Hobson's analysis was considered to provide a true diagnosis of the disease of Imperialism but it gave few grounds to hope that its considerations would have any effect in saving the world from the 'red ruin'. Furthermore, its palpable exaggeration concealed from readers the real importance of Hobson's arguments and subjected it to ridicule and contempt. To their mind it was preposterous to argue that British policy was dictated by 'self interested groups of financiers and millionaires'.⁷⁶¹ The fear was that Britain was about to witness a development which would end either in military and imperial consolidation on a gigantic scale, or in disruption without and socialism within.⁷⁶² However, it was generally accepted that the task of developing to the full the natural resources of the world must inevitably be one for the most vigorous races.

Again, however, it was found that 'with much of Mr. Hobson's indictment, scathing as it is, of the motives which unite various classes of

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ *Edinburgh Review*, no. 403 (January, 1903), pp. 267-269.

⁷⁶² *Edinburgh Review*, no. 404 (April, 1903), pp. 347, 354.

capitalists and the “parasites” upon imperialistic expenditure in a policy of foreign adventure it is difficult not to sympathise.’⁷⁶³ Hobson had forgotten the most essential part of Cobden’s teaching, the reliance on the free play of economic forces and discarded the solution of the social problem offered by a policy of free exchange in favour of the methods of socialism. His hostility to capital and his theories of taxation were the most obvious symptoms of this.⁷⁶⁴ Hobson’s remedy consisted of social reform which would deprive the possessing classes of their surplus and of that increase in public income which could be spent in raising the level of consumption. Taxation was employed for this purpose. He did not see, however, that by doing so he came into direct opposition to a free trade policy since protection and socialism were considered as forms of the same economic heresy.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

6 CONCLUSIONS: THE LIMITATIONS OF HOBSON'S LIBERAL THEORY OF IMPERIALISM

One of the purposes of this study was to offer a theoretical framework, based on historical evidence, for a discussion of the relationship between liberalism and Imperialism. When analysed in terms of "postcolonial theory" or purely in philosophical terms, Hobson's theory of Imperialism tends to lose its historical significance. Current admiration for Hobson's anti-Imperialism often tells us more about postcolonial theorists' attitudes than Hobson's actual intentions. When analysed in their original communicative context, Hobson's thesis of Imperialism, its concepts, meanings, intentions and challenges can only be properly interpreted in terms of the history of ideas.

When analysed as an ideology and not as a philosophical enterprise, liberalism is attached to some cultural and ideational, conscious and unconscious assumptions. Liberalism is an answer to some questions at a particular time and place. By studying these ideological traditions of liberalism, it is possible to answer the question: what is liberalism?⁷⁶⁶ It can make our current understanding of our values fuller or even totally challenge earlier assumptions. Liberalism should be analysed in its ideological context simply because philosophical liberalism bore only little relationship to the historical reality. From the viewpoint of the history of ideas there exist a number of liberalisms rather than simply one and these liberalisms have differed at different times as well as in their historical contexts.

If left in its unreconstructed form, a concept such as 'liberal' can be quite a misleading guide to British intellectual life at the turn of the twentieth century. Far too often preoccupations with current controversies have been allowed to affect judgements about their past. Thus when it comes to principles of liberalism it is essential to recapture what contemporaries thought they were discussing.⁷⁶⁷ This is to argue that as Hobson's reformulation moves liberalism

⁷⁶⁶ Freeden, *New Liberalism*, pp. 28, 48.

⁷⁶⁷ Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 1-4, 8, 14.

towards a socialist ideology, the reader will need to assess the legitimacy of the distinctions Hobson made between liberalism and socialism.⁷⁶⁸

Socialism in Liberalism

In the middle of the nineteenth century Cobden and Mill believed that the solidarity of human interests within each nation would be secured by the completion of popular self-government, while the growth of trade and other communications between nations would give to the sentiment of humanity a solid foundation of material co-operation. When analysing Cobden's and Mill's concerns at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hobson saw that the greatest obstacle to the growth of this world community was Imperialism which stimulated the race for armaments and led eventually to the First World War. This war was a palpable violation of the principles of Cobden and Mill. To the mind of Hobson it was also a lesson that the good of the whole world cannot be secured by each nation seeking its own separate gain.⁷⁶⁹ Looking back at the war-fervour of 1914 in the 1920s, the exploitation of the psychological conditions of herd (crowd) instinct and herd loyalty seemed as evident as in the late 1890s.⁷⁷⁰

In his economic interpretation of Imperialism Hobson continued to analyse capitalistic industries in terms of conspiracy against the Commonwealth. He saw that protectionism and Imperialism still dominated the field in world politics. The South African War was presented as an example of how justice, humanity, prestige, expansion, and political ambition all conspired to conceal the significance of the business motive. Trading and financial interests played upon political fears and desires in order to gain profit. While new areas of international disturbances were born, the basic structure of Hobson's analysis and his approach remained essentially the same.⁷⁷¹ As far as this element of conspiracy in the economic interpretation of Imperialism is concerned, Hobson's theory thus seems applicable to other events besides the South African War.

The relations between the economic and non-economic factors in social evolution also continued to appeal to Hobson after the First World War. Together with that of a group of progressive economists, Thorstein Veblen, Richard Ely and J. B. Clark, Hobson's approach to social-economic life was increasingly interpreted by the older school of economists as displaying a

⁷⁶⁸ Schultz, Harold J., 'Introduction'. In *English Liberalism and the State. Individualism or Collectivism?*, Harold J. Schultz (ed.), D. C. Heath, Lexington 1972, pp. xix-xx.

⁷⁶⁹ Hobson, John A., *Rationalism and Humanism*, Conway Memorial Lecture, Delivered at the Conway Hall October 18, 1933, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁷⁰ Hobson, J. A., *Problems of a New World*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1921, pp. 144-151.

⁷⁷¹ China being the most illustrative example of this. Hobson, J. A., *Democracy after the War*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1917, 78-101. On Hobson's later developments of his theories see, for example, Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism*, chs. 6 and 7.

'socialistic' tendency.⁷⁷² In particular, the increased role the state was to play in social affairs and in financial policy, pointed in the direction of state socialism. But how did Hobson himself see the place of socialism in his thought? Are there any examples of his liberalism that would exemplify liberalism's nature as an ideology? It has been noted by Jules Townshend that even if Hobson's core explanations and treatments of liberalism and socialism remained fairly constant over time, his own position seemed to be somewhat paradoxical.⁷⁷³

In classical liberalism it was asserted that the economic sphere within civil society could be left to itself. Although it is arguable to what extent the nineteenth-century state actually did withdraw from the economy, let alone civil society, classical liberalism became a dominant belief system in British society. However, by the time Hobson came to London in 1887, a varied protest, rationalistic, ethical, political, aesthetic, was being made against the sort of civilization that was emerging under free market competition and mechanized capitalism. Once Socialists had questioned the efficacy of the market as a deliverer of justice, wealth, peace and happiness, they had to redefine the value of liberty. The leading figures in British Socialism turned to the state to correct the failings they believed were inherent in the market economy. To them the state became a vehicle for promoting liberty.⁷⁷⁴

When New Liberals like Hobson reflected on these economic dilemmas, they often adopted ideas resembling those of the Socialists. Even though it is plain that Hobson's thought was related to socialism, his attitude to it was at best sympathetic. To him Socialists appeared 'either too inflammatory or too sentimental'. Writing of the 1890s he asserted in *Confessions* that 'the time for an effective general challenge of Capitalism was not yet ripe. Revelations of poverty, together with the extension of Trade Unionism to the unskilled workers (dramatized in the Dock Strike of 1889), were the direct stimuli of the "social reforms" of the nineties, and brought into being the Labour Party, which was soon to assume the name, if not the substance, of Socialism. But though my opinions and my feelings were beginning to move in the direction of Socialism, I was not a Socialist, Marxian, Fabian, or Christian.'⁷⁷⁵

His early views on socialism, as displayed in the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, were certainly not those of a convinced Socialist. In spite of the fact that there were some Marxist elements in Hobson's finding that the cause of over-saving lay in a maldistribution of wealth, in 1935 he claimed that at the time he was not aware of Marx's work.⁷⁷⁶ In a book review of Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867, vol. I, first English ed., 1886) Hobson found that the book was 'full of the most appalling "Germanity"' and did not recommend it to anyone 'unless they

⁷⁷² Hobson, *Veblen*, p. 15.

⁷⁷³ Townshend, J. A. *Hobson*, pp. 137-140. This view, however, does not take into account the fact that Hobson's books were essentially mere collections of his periodical writings and that therefore Hobson's position and views could vary even within one book.

⁷⁷⁴ See, for example, Bevir, Mark, 'Socialism, Civil Society and the State in Modern Britain'. In *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, pp. 336-344.

⁷⁷⁵ Hobson, *Confessions*, pp. 28-29. Cf. Brailsford, 'The Life-work of J. A. Hobson', p. 6.

⁷⁷⁶ Lee, *A Study of the Social and Economic Thought of J. A. Hobson*, p. 596.

should happen to be thrown on a desolate island with only that book'.⁷⁷⁷ He equally remained unimpressed by the Social Democratic Federation represented by W. H. Hyndman, the Socialist League represented by William Morris, and the Anarchists represented by Pjotr Kropotkin. He attacked virulently Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* claiming its texts to be 'promiscuous slaughter'. However, by 1890 Hobson seemed to adopt a more sympathetic view of the more moderate forms of socialism, especially Fabian socialism whose representatives, Sidney Webb, Bernard Shaw, Graham Wallas, and Sydney Olivier, he described as an 'interesting, intelligent, wide-awake set of people'. Alan Lee has seen this change in Hobson's opinions as a symptom of his breakaway from liberal mainstream to social radicalism.⁷⁷⁸ Indeed, in an *Ethical World* article of 1899 Hobson showed considerable sympathy towards socialistic principles. This sympathy was concretised in his liking for the key socialist slogan 'equality of opportunity' and in his internationalism.⁷⁷⁹ Hobson even saw Marx's contribution to the development of socialistic theory in a more positive light. Even if the metaphysical and economic basis of Marx's theory was groundless, its materialistic interpretation of history repellent and its conception of the social ideal too rigidly mechanical, its critical and emotional significance was unmistakable.⁷⁸⁰ In spite of this sympathy, it is important to notice that for Hobson Marxism continued to be a state of mind rather than a systematic theory.

The place of socialism in Hobson's thought brings us back to the central issue of liberalism, namely to the relation between the individual and society. If socialism was understood as a derivate from 'society', as Henry Sidgwick thought, then every effort was to be made to reduce class differences.⁷⁸¹ It would appear that Hobson too intended to resolve the antagonism between individualism and socialism. 'Considered as a philosophic term, Socialism is best taken to imply an organic view of social life, which accords to society a unity not constituted of the mere addition of its individual members, but contained in a common end and purpose, which determines and imposes the

⁷⁷⁷ *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 18.11.1887.

⁷⁷⁸ Lee, *A Study of the Social and Economic Thought of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 38–44. It should be stressed, however, that the texts were also written according to the political taste of the readers.

⁷⁷⁹ To appreciate the meaning attached to the slogan 'equality of opportunity' one must understand some nuances in the reformist tradition. Many Progressives with various ideological backgrounds promoted equality of opportunity as enabling true and efficient rivalry. This link between equality of opportunity and social efficiency was first forged by Benjamin Kidd in his *Social Evolution* from which it was later carried into socialist theory. (Freedon, *Liberal Languages*, p. 151.)

⁷⁸⁰ J. A. H., 'Is the Future with Socialism?', *EW*, vol. II, no. 11 (March 18, 1899), p. 168. It should be borne in mind that under the editorship of Stanton Coit the *Ethical World* was rather openly socialistic by its outlook and its content illustrates this orientation. At the time this article was published Hobson was a co-editor of the *Ethical World* but it is difficult to ascertain to what extent he was able to form his own opinions. Since a large number of the signed articles and anonymous notes on current affairs were written by Hobson it is probable that during their joint editorship the outlook of the paper was shared by both editors.

⁷⁸¹ Sidgwick, *The Elements of Politics*, pp. 153–154.

activities of these individual members.⁷⁸² On the one hand he was concerned about the welfare of society and on the other with the liberty of its members. 'Socialism, properly, that is liberally, interpreted, does not imply a mere regimentation of industry by the people for the people, but the growing self-realisation of the people's will in communities of such sorts and sizes as are found best suited to secure for all the best life they are capable of living [...]'.⁷⁸³

Hobson's early notions on the rights of property implied that he had already divorced himself from the liberal tradition of Mill by insisting that there was no absolute right to individual liberty.⁷⁸⁴ In an organic society rights were social and organic, not natural or original. Yet Hobson deprecated the abandonment of all individual rights. Unlike Ritchie, who considered rights socially conditioned and variable with different societies at different times, Hobson saw that in a rationally-ordered society 'rights' (the separate and ordered spheres of activity of its members) were, in principle, 'natural'. However, this discussion of rights Hobson supplemented with the discussion of 'duties'. He maintained that rights and duties were both social and, in principle, separable from each other.⁷⁸⁵

What is important to take into account in estimating the nature of Hobson's liberalism, even on those occasions when he seems to lose his faith in liberal principles, is that he was trying to reform liberalism from within.⁷⁸⁶ Organicism was the answer to the crisis of liberalism:

'The real crisis of Liberalism lies here [...] in the intellectual and moral ability to accept and execute a positive progressive policy which involves a new conception of the functions of the State [...] in the substitution of an organic for an opportunist policy [...] Liberalism is now formally committed to a task which certainly involves a new conception of the State in its relation to the individual life and to private enterprise. That conception is not Socialism [...] though implying a considerable amount of increased public ownership and control of industry. From the standpoint which best presents its continuity with earlier Liberalism, it appears as a fuller appreciation and realization of individual liberty contained in the provision of equal opportunities for self-development. But to this individual standpoint must be joined a just apprehension of the social, viz., the insistence that these claims or rights of self-development be adjusted to the sovereignty of social welfare.'⁷⁸⁷

This passage, taken from the preface of *Crisis of Liberalism* (1909), a compilation of essays published originally some years earlier in various periodicals, including the *Nation*, illustrates the use of arguments Hobson provided in

⁷⁸² Hobson, *John Ruskin*, p. 176.

⁷⁸³ Hobson, 'Ideals of the Twentieth Century', p. 10.

⁷⁸⁴ Freedon, 'J. A. Hobson and Welfare Liberalism', pp. 444-445.

⁷⁸⁵ Hobson, J. A., 'A Study of Work and Life. XIV', *Ethical World*, vol. I, no. 27 (June 25, 1898), pp. 403-405.

⁷⁸⁶ Freedon, Michael, 'J. A. Hobson as a New Liberal Theorist: Some Aspects of His Social Thought until 1914', *Journal of History of Ideas*, vol. XXXIV, no. 3 (1973), pp. 432-443. Here my approach differs from that of Jules Townshend who wishes to solve the question of how Hobson should be categorised as a political thinker at the theoretical level. However, I agree with him that it is difficult to reduce Hobson's thought to a single core. Cf. Townshend, Jules, 'Hobson and the Socialist Tradition'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, pp. 35-37ff.

⁷⁸⁷ Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. xi-xii.

justification of a more active welfare policy. Hobson refashioned liberalism to make it a philosophy capable of dealing with the social problems of industrial society, while trying to preserve the Liberal Party's traditional commitment to individual liberty. Quoting his Fabian friend, William Clarke, Hobson concluded that 'it is not in the absence of restraint but in the presence of opportunity that freedom really consists'. A society would flourish only if all its members were guaranteed the opportunity to thrive, in the form of both welfare and liberty.⁷⁸⁸

The goal which Hobson was seeking was neither individualism nor socialism but 'socialism in liberalism' which demanded thorough and impartial consideration to define 'the right limits of state and the municipal collectivism'.⁷⁸⁹ Indeed, it would be a mistake to oppose liberalism to social forms of government. What separates, say, classical liberalism from social democracy is not that one recognises that government must be anchored in society and the other does not, but rather their dissimilar conceptions of society and the implications that are derived from them.⁷⁹⁰ It should be borne in mind, however, that Hobson's examination of the social question, the health and living and urban conditions of the labouring classes, and the elimination of social, political and moral evils, was a response to particular problems posed for the late-Victorian and Edwardian liberal regime and must be understood in that context.

Liberty or Welfare?

European civil societies, when dealing with the questions raised by the modernity crisis (e.g. unemployment and poverty), put a strain on civil liberties rather than producing liberty as such. In fact, one of the most distinguishing paradoxes of modern civil society has arisen from the need to keep a balance between liberty and welfare when they wished impossibly to maximise both.⁷⁹¹

As it turned out, the Liberal's defence against socialism was social legislation. The clearest indicators of the altered relationship between the individual and the state were the new social programmes which the Liberals introduced between 1906 and 1914.⁷⁹² However, the Liberal Government of the

⁷⁸⁸ Hobson, 'Rights of Property', p. 133.

⁷⁸⁹ 'Socialism in Liberalism', *Nation*, October 12, 1907, pp. 37-38; Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 137-138. Refer also to Allett, *New Liberalism*, pp. 16, 22.

⁷⁹⁰ Dean, *Governmentality*, pp. 113, 128-129.

⁷⁹¹ Trentmann, Frank, 'Introduction: Paradoxes of Civil Society'. In *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, pp. 3-4, 38.

⁷⁹² These included old age pensions, national health insurance, unemployment insurance, free school meals for malnourished children, a school medical service, an infant welfare service, and national systems for the treatment of tuberculosis and venereal disease. See Eyler, John M., 'The Sick Poor and the State: Arthur Newsholme on Poverty, Disease and Responsibility'. In D. Porter & R. Porter (eds.), *Doctors, Politics and Society: Historical Essays*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 189, 195, 197-199; Trentmann, 'Introduction: Paradoxes of Civil Society'. In *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, p. 30; For a more detailed discussion see Emy, H. V., *Liberals, Radicals and*

time was not necessarily 'liberal' all the time and had some definite 'illiberal' characteristics.⁷⁹³ For instance, some of the consequences of a social policy based on eugenics could not be easily reformulated in liberal terms. Such liberalism always contains the possibility of non-liberal intervention in the lives of those who do not possess the qualities required to be full members of society. For Hobson the key point of this problem concerned the relation between the bottom class of the poor, semi-criminals and idlers, and those immediately above them, the casual labourers. The population was divided on the basis of those who availed themselves of the opportunity for improvement and those who did not. In the language of Hobson these domestic questions concerning the quality of the national population were linked to questions about its fitness in comparison with those of other national populations.⁷⁹⁴ When civil society is situated in the context of empire, a broader and more critical standpoint is necessary for analysing the interplay between imperial relations and the domestic dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

The outbreak of the South African War offered Hobson an opportunity to study the workings of the colonial system. Moreover, the war brought Imperialism and capitalism together at a theoretical level for the first time. This was quite a logical outcome since the vastly expanded South African mining industries were generally understood in terms of capitalism. By examining capitalism in the context of Imperialism, Hobson realised that expansion was an outcome of the capitalist market system. However, in contrast to Lenin, who laid the cornerstone of the theory of socialist revolution, Hobson believed that the capitalist market system could be reformed and made free from Imperialism by analysing its origin, meaning and consequences. At the turn of the twentieth century the South African mining industry, due to its modern outlook, was an example of capitalism in which the context of the problems of the modernity crisis were defined, discussed and answered.

Hobson's thesis of Imperialism is one of social pathology. According to him, British Liberals were used to making compromises with Imperialism. Liberal political theory bore little relationship to the colonial reality. For most of the British Liberals the acceptance of racial inequalities, based on the theory of evolution, provided an easier way of thinking to adopt than did the abstract liberal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. In their context, Hobson's definitions of Imperialism are to be read as a statement on social and political reform and as forming an attempt to evaluate political and economic questions by ethical standards – an attempt that can be respected as such.

Social Politics 1892–1914, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1973, chs. 5, 6 and 7.

⁷⁹³ Cf. Townshend, 'Hobson and the Socialist Tradition'. In *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, p. 36.

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. Mitchell Dean's dealings with the illiberal elements in liberal government. Dean, *Governmentality*, pp. 132–138.

YHTEENVETO (FINNISH SUMMARY)

J. A. Hobsonin imperialismi⁷⁹⁵

Analysoin tässä työssä aatehistoriallisesti englantilaisen talous- ja yhteiskunta-teoreetikon John Atkinson Hobsonin (1858–1940) poliittisen ajattelun sisältöä, sen käsitteiden merkitystä ja sanoman saamaa vastaanottoa 1800- ja 1900-lukujen vaihteessa.

Poliittisten aatteiden historian (*the history of ideas*) tutkimuksellinen painopiste on viime vuosikymmenien aikana siirtynyt tekstistä kontekstiin. Quentin Skinner määrittelee poliittisten aatteiden historian tehtäväksi aatteiden ideologisen kasvupohjan yksityiskohtaisen tarkastelun. Konteksti ymmärretään kehystarinaksi, joka ei tarjoa kausaalista selitystä aatteelle, vaan parhaillaan auttaa ymmärtämään poliittisen ajattelun nyansseja. Poliittisten aatteiden historiaa tulkitaan ideologioiden historiana. Yhteiskunnallisissa käännekohtissa aatteet sulautuvat ideologioiksi, ja poliittisen sanaston muodostuminen luo perustan moderneille käsityksille.

Kun imperialismia tarkastellaan ideologisena rakennelmana, sen katsotaan sitoutuvan aatteellisiin ja kulttuurisiin, tiedostettuihin ja tiedostamattomiin oletuksiin. Imperialismi vastaa yksilöiden ja yhteisöjen kysymyksiin tietyssä ajassa ja tilassa. Imperialismin tradition yksityiskohtaisella tarkastelulla voidaan lähtökohdat muotoilla uudelleen ja kysyä: mitä on imperialismi? Imperialismin analysointi ideologisessa kontekstissään on mielekästä sen vuoksi, että aatehistoriallisella tutkimuksella on mahdollista osoittaa imperialismien tradition monimuotoisuus, joka on huomioitu huonosti imperialismista käydyssä filosofisessa nykykeskustelussa. Imperialismeissa on eroavaisuuksia paitsi ajallista perspektiivistä tarkasteltuna niin myös ideologisessa kontekstissään.

Imperialismi ennen ja nyt

Politiikan tieteen sanakirjat eivät tunne monta käsitettä, jotka herättäisivät yhtäläillä tunteita kuin käsite 'imperialismi'. Irakin sota ja sen jälkimainingit, jotka keinuttivat niin transatlantisia suhteita kuin paljastivat jo täytetyiksi luultuja poliittisen asemasodan taisteluhautoja, tarjoaa hyvän esimerkin. Irakin sodan yhteydessä Suomenkin valtamedioiden sivuilla ja kanavilla esitetty lukuisia arvioita Yhdysvaltain imperialismista.

Poliittisille käsitteille on turha pyrkiä tekemään varauksia ja valtauksia vain johonkin poliittiseen aikaan, paikkaan tai tilanteeseen. Monet käsitteet, ku-

⁷⁹⁵ Katso lähemmin Särkkä, Timo, 'J. A. Hobsonin liberalismi ja imperialismi'. Teoksessa *Toivon Historia*, Kalevi Ahonen et. al. (toim.), Gummerus, Jyväskylä 2003, 145–157; Särkkä, Timo, 'Imperialismi. Hobsonin paradigma' Teoksessa *Vai pelkkää retoriikkaa? 9: Tutkimuksia poliittisesta ilmaisusta, tilasta ja toiseudesta*, Taru Haapala & Hanna-Mari Kivistö (toim.), Publications 79, Jyväskylän yliopistopaino, Jyväskylä 2007, 198–209.

ten 'demokratia', ovat kulkeneet alkuperäisistä merkityksistään pitkän matkan ilmaisemaan käsityksiämme joistakin toisista poliittisista tilanteista ja ilmiöistä. Länsimedioissa usein esitetty ihmettely vaikkapa siitä, mitä yhteistä Afrikan mantereeseen lukuisilla itseään demokraattisiksi kutsuvilla sissiarmeijoilla on demokratian kanssa, voidaan lopettaa alkuunsa kun hyväksytään ajatus, ettei poliittisille käsitteille ole syytä tai edes mahdollista tehdä vuosisataisia valtauksia. Demokratia merkitsee demokratiaa juuri niin kauan kuin joku sen jossakin demokratiaksi määrittelee. Käsittämistä tietysti auttaa, jos määrittely saa yleisesti hyväksytyt aseman.

Poliittiset käsitteet ovat entisaikojen linnojen, kaupunkien, valtakuntien ja imperiumien tapaan eräänlaisia jatkuvan mielenkiinnon kohteena olevia potentiaalisia valloituskohteita. Tulleessaan vallatuiksi – mikä on vääjäämätöntä – linnat, kaupungit, valtakunnat, imperiumit ja käsitteet saavat uudet herransa, uusia muotoja valloittajiltaan tai sitten ne vaipuvat unohduksiin hylättyinä ja loppuun kulutettuina. Toisaalta ne saattavat herätä uudelleen henkiin jossakin toisessa paikassa, ajassa ja tilanteessa.

Edellä kuvattu kehityskulku koskee myös käsitettä 'imperialismi', joka on saanut uudenlaisia positiivisia merkityksiä erityisesti Yhdysvaltain poliittisessa kulttuurissa 1990-luvulta lähtien. Imperialismi on yhdistetty valloitetujen maiden, kuten Afganistanin ja Irakin, hallintoihin, mikä on johdattanut myös imperialismiin kriitikot arvostelemaan yhdysvaltalaisen hallinnointia alusmais- saan ylimieliseksi, sokeaksi ja stereotyyppioihin nojaavaksi.

Yhdysvaltojen on sanottu toteuttavan eräänlaista maailmansivistystehtävää, jota uskalletaan kutsua imperialismiksi muidenkin kuin arvostelijoiden suulla. Laajimmillaan käsite viittaa myös Brittiläisessä imperiumissa vakiintuneeseen käsitykseen maailman kansojen sivistämisestä. 'Imperialismi' on käsitteenä rehabilitoitu ja vapautettu marxilaisista leimoista.

Yhdysvaltoja on myös varoitettu ja muistutettu imperiumeja jo vuositu- hansia koetelleesta *hybriksestä*, suuruudenhulluudesta, holtittomasta sotilaallisen, taloudellisen ja kulttuurisen vallan levittämisestä, johon myös Brittiläinen imperiumi huolimatta sen vankkumattoman ihailijan Rudyard Kiplingin varoituksesta lankesi.

Vaikka epäilijöitä riittää, on Yhdysvaltoja kehoitettu suorasanaisesti tarttumaan maailman sivistämisyyöhön jo Brittiläisen imperiumin sekä yhä Kansainvälisen valuuttarahaston ja Maailmanpankin suosimin keinoin – vapaakaup- palla, hyvällä budjettipolitiikalla, vakailla rahoitusoloilla, anglosaksisella oikeusjärjestelmällä, turmeltumattomalla hallinnolla ja kansainvälisesti lainoitetuilla yhteiskunnallisilla investoinneilla. Tässä yhteydessä yhdysvaltalaisia on myös arvosteltu siitä, ettei heistä ole ollut kunnan imperialisteiksi, maailman sivistys- työn suorittajiksi.

Imperialismin merkityssisältöjen määrittelyn kannalta keskustelun anti ei ole merkittävä. Voi kuitenkin olla, että kun Irakin sodan jälkimainingit laantu- vat, Yhdysvaltain imperialismi saa uusia merkityksiä siinä määrin, että vertaa- minen Brittiläisen imperiumin imperialismiin alkaa vaikuttaa yhtä naiivilta kuin Afrikan sissiarmeijoiden demokratiakäsitysten vertaaminen länsimaisiin. Kuitenkin niin kauan kun rakennusaineiden hakeminen Brittiläisen imperiumin

historiasta joko imperialismiin kritisoimiselle tai sen kannattamiselle koetaan mielekkääksi, on paikallaan pohtia imperialismiin genealogiaa hieman tarkemmin.

J. A. Hobson kirjoittajana

Englantilaisen talous- ja yhteiskuntateoreetikon J. A. Hobsonin (1858–1940) elämää ja ajattelua käsittelevä kirjallisuus alkaa usein lausahduksella ”hyvin tunnettu, mutta silti sivuutettu” (esim. *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, 1990; *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years*, 1994), mikä hyvin kuvastaa Hobsonia koskevan tieteellisen tutkimuksen sisältöä mutta myös monia hänen elämänsä ja ajatteluunsa sisältyviä ristiriitaisuuksia.

Ylemmän keskiluokkaan Derbyssä, Surreyssä vuonna 1858 syntynyt John Atkinson Hobson eli intellektuellissa mielessä poikkeuksellisen rikkaasta ja kirjallisesti tuotteliasta elämästä ja kuoli vuonna 1940 varsin arvostettuna yhteiskunnallisena keskustelijana ja vaikuttajana. Erityisesti ensimmäisen maailmansodan päättymisen jälkeisinä vuosina opillisen velkansa Hobsonin ajattelulle tunnustivat monet politiikan ja talouden merkkihenkilöt mukaan lukien V. I. Lenin ja J. M. Keynes. Tällaiset tunnustukset jäivät kuitenkin luonteeltaan yksityisiksi ja opillisiksi, ja virallinen, akateemisen maailman tai politiikan korkeimman johdon suulla lausuttu huomionosoitus ei Hobsonin kiistattomista tieteellisistä ja yhteiskunnallisista ansioista huolimatta koskaan toteutunut hänen elinaikanaan. Vasta 1980-luvulla virinnyt historiantutkimus on tuonut Hobsonin elämäntyölle sen ansaitsemaa huomiota. Erityistutkimuksia tai väitöskirjoja on kuitenkin tehty vasta muutamia, eikä saatavilla ole esimerkiksi kattavaa elämäkertaa.

Aikalaisille Hobsonin nimi ja hänen ajattelunsa olivat kuitenkin verrattain tuttuja, mistä osaltaan piti huolen hänen poikkeuksellisen laaja ja monipuolinen kirjallinen uransa. Julkaistuja teoksia on peräti 52. Erityisesti Etelä-Afrikassa käydyn buurisodan (1899–1902) kriittinen käsittely ensin *Manchester Guardianissa* (nyk. *Guardian*) ja myöhemmin lukuisissa muissa aikakauden keskeisissä brittiläisissä sanoma- ja aikakauslehdissä tekivät Hobsonista jo varhain tunnetun nimen paitsi Britanniassa mutta myös Yhdysvalloissa, minne hän teki lukuisia luento- ja esitelmämatkoja 1890- ja 1900-luvuilla. Aktiivinen sanoma- ja aikakauslehtikirjoittelu sekä luennointityö herättivät myös kirjakustantamojen kiinnostuksen, mikä johti kolmen imperialismia käsittelevän antologian syntymiseen, mistä tunnetuin ja kiistatta myös vaikutusvaltaisin on vuonna 1902 londonilaisen James Nisbetin kustantamon julkaisema *Imperialism: A Study*.

Imperialism: A Study -nimellä julkaistu imperialismiin taloutta ja politiikkaa käsittelevän antologian kirjoitukset julkaistiin alun perin neljässä eri aikakauslehdessä vuosina 1901 ja 1902. Näistä *Speaker* (vuodesta 1907 alkaen *Nation*) asettui lehden päätoimittajana toimineen J. L. Hammondin aikana vastustamaan jyrkästi Britannian sotapolitiikkaa Etelä-Afrikassa ja julkaisi vuodesta 1899 lähtien merkittävän osan Hobsonin imperialismia käsittelevistä kirjoituk-

sista, joista suuri osa päätyi myös *Imperialism: A Studyyn*. Vuonna 1866 perustettu *Contemporary Review* oli vuosisadanvaihteessa myös verrattain avoin foorumi kiistanalaistenkin kansainvälipoliittisten ongelmien käsittelylle. Mainittujen lisäksi antologiaan päätyneitä kirjoituksia julkaisivat *Political Science Quarterly* ja erityisesti kveekarien *British Friend*, jonka päätoimittaja Edward Grubb oli tunnettu liberaaleista näkemyksistään.

Teoksen imperialismiin taloutta käsittelevässä osuudessa Hobson osoitti ensimmäistä kertaa, että imperialismi perustui kapitalistisen markkinatalouden lakien huonoon toimivuuteen. 1800-luvun lopulla Britannian kansantalouden ylijäämä oli kertynyt melko harvojen varakkaiden yksityishenkilöiden käsiin, jotka kotimaisen kulutuskysynnän niukkuudesta johtuen sijoittivat varansa pörssiyhtiöihin. Nämä yhtiöt investoivat pääomat edelleen riskialttiisiin mutta usein tuottoisiin ulkomaisiin hankkeisiin, kuten Etelä-Afrikan kaivosteollisuuteen, ja olivat siis osaltaan edistämässä eurooppalaisten yritysten ja siirtomaavaltojen kilpailua markkinoista ja raaka-aineista, joka oli kiivaimmillaan juuri 1890-luvulla.

Hobsonin imperialismiin talousteorian innoitti useita sosialistisia aikalaisajattelijoita, mikä on usein johtanut väärintulkintoihin myös Hobsonin poliittisista päämääristä. Huomaamatta on jäänyt, ettei Hobson useimpien sosialististen ajattelijoiden pitänyt kapitalismin lainalaisuuksia vääjäämättöminä vaan keskittyi kansantalouden epätasaisen kasvuylijäämän aiheuttamien sosiaalisten ongelmien ratkaisemiseen, kapitalistisen yhteiskunnan ongelmien korjaamiseen, ei sen tuhoamiseen. Hobsonin ja hänen muutamien läheisempien työtovereidensa ansioksi onkin luettava vuonna 1906 liberaalihallituksen aloittamat sosiaalilainsäädännön uudistukset, jotka keskeisellä tavalla modernisoivat brittiläistä, sosiaaliselta ilmeeltään verrattain eriarvoista, yhteiskuntaa.

Teoksen toinen, imperialismiin politiikkaa käsittelevä osa on usein perusteetta sivuutettu imperialismiin talousteorian viedessä suurimman huomion. Osaltaan tähän lienee vaikuttanut myöhemmät pyrkimykset korostaa Hobson ajattelun vasemmistolaista suuntaa, mihin hänen poliittiset näkemyksensä siirtomaahallinnon järjestämisestä ja ylipäätään suhtautumisesta alkuperäiskansoihin kuitenkin huonosti sopivat. Hobson ei tuominnut brittiläistä siirtomaajärjestelmää sinänsä vaan hänen kritiikkinsä kohdistui ennemminkin hallitsemisen metodeihin, ja hän arvosteli paitsi taloudellisten toimijoiden, kuten kaupakomppanioiden toimintaa niin myös filantropian ja lähetystehtävän innoittamia pyrkimyksiä alkuperäiskansojen parissa tehtyyn sivistystyöhön. Teoksen jälkimmäisessä osuudessa korostuu erityisesti Hobsonin näkemysten eettinen ehdottomuus, hänen pyrkimyksensä arvioida taloudellisia ja poliittisia kysymyksiä eettisin kriteerein.

Lukuisten aikalaisarvioiden mukaan Hobson epäonnistui yrityksessään todistaa imperialismiin taloudellinen epäedullisuus Britannian kansantalouden kannalta. Aikalaisarvioita ja myöhempiä tieteellisiä arvioita Hobson teoksen johtopäätöksistä ja merkityksestä on kuitenkin vaivannut puutteellinen selvitys niistä taustoista ja foorumeista, joille Hobson antologiansa kirjoitukset oli alun perin suunnannut. Hobsonin yksityinen kirjeenvaihto paljastavat kirjoittajan tavoitteista ja päämääristä erityisesti sen, että brittiläisen imperialismiin kriitti-

sellä arvioinnilla Hobson tahtoi ennemmin vahvistaa oppositioon joutuneiden sodanvastustajien moraalialia kuin tuomita sotapolitiikan kannattajat. Myöhemmät tulkinnat Hobsonin imperialismin asteesta ja tasosta ovat pääsääntöisesti olleet tietämättömiä näistä Hobsonin teoksen poliittisista aikalaismerkityksistä, mikä on usein johtanut myös hänen ajattelunsa väärintulkintoihin. Hobsonin teoksen historiallista ja tieteellistä merkitystä ja arvoa arvioitaessa on kuitenkin huomioitava sen tarjoama inspiraatio ja innoitus muille imperialismin taloutta, politiikkaa ja ideologiaa ymmärtämään pyrkineille ajattelijoille ja tutkijoille.

Hobsonin näkemysten ja mielipiteiden ehdottomuus johti hänet usein törmäyskurssille akateemisten tieteenharjoittajien ja poliittisten päättäjien kanssa ja lopulta hänen asemansa marginalisoitumiseen. Oppituolien tai poliittisten virkojen sijasta Hobson teki elämäntyönsä vapaana kirjoittajana.

Euroopassa 1930-luvun lopulla kiristynyt poliittinen ilmapiiri teki Hobsonin teoksesta uudelleen ajankohtaisen, minkä johdosta George Allen & Unwin julkaisi teoksesta korjatun ja osin ajanmukaistetun laitoksen vuonna 1938. Tämän jälkeen Hobsonin teos unohtui lähes kahdeksi vuosikymmeneksi.

Hobsonin kuoleman jälkeen käynnistynyt kunnes Britannian siirtomaaimperiumin vähittäinen hajoaminen sekä Euroopan henkisen ilmapiirin vapautuminen nostivat Hobsonin ajattelun jälleen tieteellisen ja yhteiskunnallisen keskustelun kohteeksi. 1960-luvulla *Imperialism: A Study* käännettiin lukuisille eurooppalaisille sivistyskielille, ja teos kuului erityisesti 1960- ja 1970-luvuilla myös suomalaisten yliopisto-opiskelijoiden yleistietämykseen. Suomeksi Hobsonin edelleen ajankohtaista merkkiteosta eikä muitakaan hänen tutkimuksiaan ei ole kuitenkaan käännetty, ja useimmille Hobsonin nimi ja ajattelu lienevät tuttuja lähinnä toisten ajattelijoiden ja tutkijoiden välittäminä.

Uusi liberalismi

Epiteetillä 'uusi' (new) viitataan keskiviktoriaanisen filosofisen radikalismiin ja 1890-luvulla syntyneen liberalismien ideologisen katsontakannan välisiin aatteellisiin eroavaisuuksiin. Filosofisen radikalismien vapauskeskustelu kosketti yhtäältä aristokraattisia oikeuksia ja toisaalta kaupankäyntiä. Uuden liberalismien poliittista kieltä hallitsivat yhteiskunnallisista velvollisuuksista käyty keskustelu. Ajattelusuuntien näkemuserot heijastuivat erityisesti valtioroolia koskettaneisiin käsityksiin, jotka on Hobsonin kohdalla määritelty termillä 'hyvinvointi' (*welfare*).

Uuden liberalismien yhteiskunta-analyysi reagoi poliittisessa, filosofisessa, taloudellisessa ja uskonnollisessa merkityksessä yhteiskunnallisiin ongelmiin (esimerkiksi köyhyys ja työttömyys). Ajattelua hallitsi orgaaninen käsitys yhteiskunnasta sekä holistinen yhteiskuntatieteen (*science of society*) metodi, jonka avulla pyrittiin etsimään moraalisia totuuksia. Tieteenteorioissa uusi liberalismi kytkeytyi positivismiin, utilitarismiin, evoluutio-oppiin, eugeniikkaan ja alikulusteoriaan.

Poliittisessa mielessä uusi liberalismi identifioitui edistysajatteluun, jonka keskeinen forum oli vuonna 1894 perustettu keskusteluseura nimeltä Rainbow Circle. Keskusteluseuran jäsenistö koostui liberaaleista ja sosialisteista, jotka pyrkivät säännöllisillä tapaamisilla luomaan edistysideologiaa ja poliittista tilaa edistyspuolueelle. Jäsenistön toimittaman *Progressive Review'n* sivuilla esille tuodussa edistysideologiassa nostettiin yhteiskunnalliset kysymykset inhimillisen toiminnan kannalta ratkaisevaan asemaan. Yritys edistyspuolueen muodostamiseksi kariutui erimielisyyksiin, jotka koskivat brittiläisen imperialismiin sekä yhteiskunnallisten reformien välisen suhteen määrittelyä.

Toinen edistysajattelun merkittävä forum oli eettinen liike. Erityisesti vuonna 1793 nonkonformistien perustama, vuodesta 1897 lähtien nimellä South Place Ethical Society toiminut eettinen seura edusti poliittista radikalismia. Seura pyrki kasvattamaan kansalaisten sosiaalista luonnetta, mitä toteutettiin sunnuntaikeskusteluissa, jotka koottiin vuodesta 1895 lähtien ilmestyneen *South Place Magazine* sivuille.

Filosofisessa mielessä uusi liberalismi identifioitui yhtäältä hyötyfilosofiaan ja toisaalta idealistiseen moraalifilosofiaan, jonka opetus ja tutkimus saavuttivat vahvan aseman erityisesti Oxfordin yliopistossa 1800- ja 1900-lukujen vaihteessa. Idealismien moraalifilosofia oli luonteeltaan sosiaalista, tarjosi oikeutuksen muuttuneelle valtiokäsitykselle ja loi rakenneaineksia yhteiskunnalliselle sekä poliittiselle reformille. Brittiläisen idealismin lähtökohdat tarjosivat puitteita vuoropuheluun aikakauden radikaalien ideologioiden ja erityisesti uusien liberaalien kanssa.

Hobsonin uusi liberaali yhteiskunta-analyysi (-teoria) oli itsenäinen 1890-luvun aikaansaannos, minkä vuoksi klassikoille jäi analyysissä vain vähän tilaa. Aikalaisvertailukohtaa on haettava aikakauden muista edistysmielisistä filosofioista ja erityisesti David G. Ritchien (1853–1903) idealismista. Tämän päivän näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna kiinnostavimpia Hobsonin yhteiskunta-analyysin teemoja ovat hyvinvointikieli ja kansainvälisen politiikan alistaminen etiikalle.

Yhteiskuntakysymys

Hobsonin uusi liberaali yhteiskunta-analyysi pyrki hyödyttämään orgaanisesta näkökulmasta asetettua yhteiskuntakysymystä (*Social Question*). Negatiivisesti aseteltuna yhteiskuntakysymys esiintyi yhteiskuntaongelmana (*Social Problem*), jolla Hobson tarkoitti ponnistelussa (työ) ja nautinnossa (elämä) tapahtunutta tuhlausta. Hellittämätön köyhyysongelma oli osoitus modernin teollisen yhteiskunnan epäonnistumisesta ratkaista yhteiskuntakysymys.

Poliittisessa taloustieteessä hyötyä mitattiin varallisuuden määrällä, ja varallisuus (*wealth*) muodostui J. S. Millin määritelmän mukaan tavaroista, joilla oli vaihtoarvoa. Hobsonin näkemyksen mukaan poliittisen taloustieteen varallisuuden määritelmä ei huomionnut riittävästi moraalisia ja henkisiä arvoja, ja ihmiselämä määriteltiin liian kapea-alaisesti materiaalin keräämiseksi. Tämän johdosta Hobson ei pitänyt poliittista taloustiedettä soveliaana vastaamaan ky-

symykseen, kuinka yhteiskunnallinen hyöty voitiin maksimoida ja tuhlaus minimoida. Toisin kuin vallinneen todellisuuden määrää mitannut poliittinen taloustiede Hobsonin hyötyfilosofia pyrki mittaamaan tavoitellun hyödyn laatua ja ideaaleja.

Hobson otti käyttöönsä viktoriaanisen ajan keskeisimmän yhteiskuntakriittikon John Ruskinin määrittelemän termin 'illth', joka merkitsi varallisuuden vastakohtaa tai epävarallisuutta, kuten huonolaatuista kirjallisuutta. Toisin kuin Ruskin, Hobson oletti hyödyn määräytyvän sen mukaan, millainen oli hyödyistä nauttivien yksilöiden kehitystaso. Hobsonin hyötyfilosofia tukeutui kehitysoppiin, jolle yhteiskunnallinen tulkinta alistettiin. Yhteiskunta-analyysin biologisuus näkyi tyypillisesti orgaanisessa lähestymistavassa sekä yhteiskunnan esittämisessä metaforisesti elävänä organismina.

Orgaaninen näkökulma ei erotellut fyysisiä tarpeita ja henkisiä nautintoja toisistaan, vaan piti myös moraalista ja älyllistä elämää osana ihmisyyttä. Tarpeet ja nautinnot suhtautuivat toisiinsa kehitysopillisesti siten, että esimerkiksi ruoka oli edellytys korkeampi-arvoisten henkisten nautintojen saavuttamiseksi. Yksilöllisten oikeuksien arvo derivoitiin yhteiskunnallisesta hyödyistä, eikä Hobsonin orgaaninen yhteiskuntanäkemyks sen vuoksi kieltänyt luonnollisen omistusoikeuden olemassa oloa. Henkilökohtaisen ponnistelun tulos muodosti yksilön "luonnollisen" omaisuuden, ja varallisuus syntyi luonnollisen tarpeen ylittävistä osuudesta. Omistusoikeus oli keskeistä yksilöiden ponnistelujen intensiteetin kannalta.

Hobson tarkasteli yhteiskuntaa yhteistoiminnallisena yksikkönä. Omaisuuden vaihtoarvo syntyi markkinoilla, joiden kautta yksilöllisiä tarpeita ilmaistiin. Vaihtoarvon ja yksilöllisen työpanoksen synnyttämän käyttöarvon erotus muodosti yhteiskunnallisen arvon määrän. Koska yhteiskunta oli merkittävin arvon tuottaja, se saattoi perustellusti vaatia osuutta yhteisesti tuotetusta omaisuudesta. Hobsonin tulkinnan mukaan yhteiskunnallisen hyödyn määrittelemät fyysiset, henkiset ja moraaliset tarpeet olivat soveliaita tapa jakaa omaisuutta. Vaikka Hobson piti yhteiskunnallista varainsiirtoa (humanitaarinen sosialismi) eettisesti perusteltuna ja hyödyllisenä, hän ei kannattanut omaisuuden tasajakoa. Rationaalinen tarpeiden määrittely ja koulutuksellinen tasa-arvo olivat keinoja vähentää taloudellista eriarvoisuutta.

Hobson uskoi, että modernit erikoistuneet ja monotoniset työprosessit estivät työntekijöitä näkemästä hyötyään ja että teollinen yhteiskunta riisti kuluttajien vapaa-aikaa. Ylierikoistunut yhteiskunta kavensi yksilöllisyyttä, minkä vuoksi vaatteet lyhyemmästä työpäivästä olivat perusteltuja. Julkiset instituutiot olivat soveliaita tuottamaan rutiininomaisia palveluja, kuten museoita, kirjastoja ja konsertteja, mikä vapautti individualistisemmän työn, taiteen ja opetuksen yksilöille. Hobsonin uusi liberalismi irtautui hobbesilaisesta negatiivisesta vapauden käsitteestä ja lähestyi idealistien hegeliläistä vapauden määritelmää, jossa valtio yhteiskuntainstituution edustajana tuotti yksilöille positiivisia vapauksia.

Negatiivisesti määritelty yhteiskuntakysymys käsitteli määrällistä ja laadullista tuhlausta työssä ja elämässä. Ilman työntekoa perintönä, lahjoituksena sekä pääoman korko- ja vuokratuloina saatu "ansaitsematon" omaisuus vapa-

utti nauttijansa ponnistelusta ja johti henkiseen sekä fyysiseen rappeutumiseen. Näkemys johti Hobsonin kritisoimaan hyväntekeväisyyttä, yläluokan joutilasta elämää ja epävarallisuuden keräämistä. Useat yhteiskuntakysymyksen piirteistä olivat taloudellisia, eikä kristillissosialistien moraalinen tuomio taloudelliselle järjestykselle sen vuoksi riittänyt yhteiskuntaongelman ratkaisemiseksi. Myös eräiden konservatiivien, erityisesti W. H. Mallockin ja Bernard Bosanquet'n esittämä ajatus työläisten ja pääomaintressien harmonisoinnista luottamalla rikkaiden hyväntahtoisuuteen oli Hobsonin näkemyksen mukaan yhteiskunnallisesti turmiollista.

Määrällistä tuhlausta edusti työttömyys. Klassisessa taloustieteessä "economic man" muodosti tuotannon ja kulutuksen tasapainon markkinoilla, ja marginaalit työvoimassa tulkittiin talouden normaalin toiminnan takeeksi. Moderneissa teollisissa yhteiskunnissa tuotanto ja kulutus eivät olleet tasapainossa, koska yksityiset intressit ohjailivat taloutta yhteiskunnallisen hyödyn sijasta. Ansaitsematon pääoma ei epäluonnollisuutensa vuoksi voinut tuottaa markkinatasapainoa, vaan johti alikulutuksen ilmiöön, jonka keskeisiä tekijöitä työttömyys oli. Hobsonin progressiivinen talouspolitiikka pyrki kasvattamaan kulutusvoimaa palkka- ja työaikalainsäädännön keinoin sekä varaamalla valtiolle monopoli- ja verotusoikeuden.

Laadullista tuhlausta edusti moderneissa teollisissa yhteiskunnissa vallinnut "pakkosynnyttämisen" käytäntö. Vielä 1800-luvun alussa Thomas Malthus ja hänen myöhemmät uusmalthusilaisiksi nimetyt seurailijansa uskoivat, ettei ruokatuotanto pystynyt vastaamaan alati kasvavan väestön tarpeisiin, mikä rajoitti väestönkasvua "luonnollista" tietä. Hobson painotti, ettei ruokatuotannon riittämättömyys ollut enää ajankohtainen kysymys teknisesti kehittyneellä 1890-luvulla. Koska yhteiskunta vastasi kansalaistensa "laadusta", se ei voinut velvoittaa vanhempia vastaamaan "epäonnistumisistaan", vaan tarvitsi veto-oikeuden elämän tuottamiseen. Hobson piti luonnonvalintaa julmana ja ruokatuotannon riittävyuden vuoksi myös tehottomana ihmispopulaation laadun parantamiskeinona. Luonnonvalinnan tilalle tarvittiin "rationaalisia" syntyvyyden valintamekanismeja, jotka estivät "epäkelpojen" syntymisen. Käytännössä Hobson asettui kannattamaan lainsäädäntöä ja valistusta, jotka olisivat estäneet rikollisten ja sairaiden avioliitot. Eugeniikka palveli yhteiskuntakysymyksen tarpeita tarjoamalla biologisia selityksiä yhteiskunnallisille epäonnistumisille. Hobsonille eugeniikka merkitsi yksityisen elämän täydellistämisen hylkäämistä hyötyfilosofisena lähtökohtana ja valtuutusta yhteiskunnan määrittelemille elämäntarpeille.

Yhteiskuntakysymyksessä huomioitiin yhtäaikaisesti inhimillisen hyvinvoinnin kokonaisvaltaisuus, ja yhteiskuntareformit suuntautuivat työssä ja elämässä tapahtuneen määrällisen (*unemployment, misemployment*) sekä laadullisen tuhlauksen (*unenjoyment, misenjoyment*) poistamiseen. Parhaiten yhteiskuntareformin tarpeita palveli "sosiologian tiede", joka otti huomioon yhteiskuntakysymyksen fysiologiset ja psykologiset aspektit. Hobsonin "sosiologinen" yhteiskuntareformin kieli pyrki kultivoimaan yhteiskunnallisia tunteita (esimerkiksi ystävyys) ja kaventamaan atomististen yksiköiden (esimerkiksi perhe

ja yritys) itsenäisyyttä. Yksilöllisten tuntemusten ja tahtojen yhteisöllinen ilmaiseminen konkretisoitui demokratian hyvän toimintana.

Hobsonin näkemys kansainvälisestä politiikasta rakentui orgaanisen yhteiskuntakysymyksen periaatteille. Kansakunta (*nation*) ja imperiumi (*empire*) olivat yhteiskunnan orgaanisia laajentumia.

Vaikka territoriorajat eivät olleet hyötyfilosofiassa olennaisia, se ei rakentunut valloituspoliittisille sotilaallisen ja teollisen tehokkuuden määreille, sillä ne eivät olleet "sosiologisesti" valideja mittaamaan kykyä hyödyntää maailman voimavaroja. Hobson suhtautui kriittisesti valloituspolitiikan perusteluna käytettyyn "sivilisointityöhön". Näkemyksessään Hobson tukeutui ranskalaisen yhteiskuntapsykologin Gustave le Bonin rotupiirteiden määrittelyyn. Le Bonin mukaan rotupiirteet muodostuivat ympäristö- ja ilmastotekijöiden vaikutuksesta ja vuosisataisen prosessin tuloksena. Jotta sivilisointityö olisi ollut ylipäätään mahdollista, olisi valloituspolitiikan tullut suuntautua Britteinsaaria ympäristöltään ja ilmastoltaan muistuttaville alueille. Inhimillisen hyödyn tuhlaus toteutui, kun valloituspolitiikka suuntautui esimerkiksi Intiaan, Kiinaan tai Afrikkaan. Sivilisaatiokonfliktien aiheuttamat haitat olivat suurempia kuin mahdollisesti maailman voimavarojen tehokkaammasta hyödyntämisestä saatava etu. Kysymys kansallisten voimavarojen maksimoinnista sisälsi implikaatioita 1890-luvun valloituspolitiikan mielekkyyttä kohtaan, ja se mittasi aluelajennuksista saavutettua suhteellista hyötyä. Imperialismi muodosti yhteiskuntakysymyksen hankalimman yksittäisen aspektin.

Imperiumin etiikka

Britannian siirtomaahallinnon ja Etelä-Afrikan kahden tasavallan, Transvaalin ja Oranjen vapaavaltion välisten tulehtuneiden suhteiden kärjistyminen sodaksi (buurisota 1899–1902) lokakuussa 1899 tarjosi käytännöllisen esimerkin Hobsonin hyötyfilosofiselle suhtautumiselle valloituspolitiikkaa kohtaan. Kontekstissaan buurisota konkretisoi myös Hobsonin imperialismien merkityssisällön. Hobson käsitteli Etelä-Afrikan kriisiä useilla forumeilla yhtäaikaaisesti, eivätkä poliittiset kysymykset olleet myöskään vuonna 1898 perustetulle *Ethical Worldille* vieraita, vaikka lehden lukijakunta suhtautui ajoittain avoimen kriittisesti lehden poliittisuuteen. Hobsonin näkökannan mukaan *Ethical Worldin* politisointumista kritisoineet tahot olivat ymmärtäneet etiikan sisällön väärin. Ilman poliittisia ja eettisiä problematisointeja moraalifilosofia oli ainoastaan fraaseilla tuettuja "moraalisia latteuksia". Kun fraaseja materialisoitiin, oli taloudellisiin ja poliittisiin kysymyksiin palaaminen väistämätöntä. Talous ja politiikka olivat tässä mielessä etiikan jatkeita.

Vaikka Hobson oli kriittinen 1890-luvun valloituspolitiikkaa kohtaan, hän ei hylännyt automaattisesti imperiumia moraalisenä toimijana, vaan kysymys koski toimintamethodien perusteltavuutta ja orgaanisesta näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna myös inhimillistä kokonaisyhtä: "Opiskelemalla uskontoja, poliittisia ja muita yhteiskunnallisia instituutioita sekä ihmisten tapoja,

yrittämällä ymmärtää heidän [alkuperäiskansat] tämänhetkistä sielunelämäänsä ja sopeutumiskykyänsä ja opettelemalla kieltä ja historiaa meidän tulisi pyrkiä sovittamaan heidät ihmisen luonnonhistoriaan; samanlaisella tarkalla huomioinnilla maasta, jolla he elävät ... meidän tulisi pyrkiä saamaan ote heidän ympäristöstään ... ja avoimesti vastustaa hyväksikäyttävien [kauppa]komppanioiden ennenaikaisia ja yksityisiä yrityksiä ... turvata asemansa." (*British Friend*, kesäkuu 1902, 131) Hobsonin imperiumin etiikka oli eräänlaista "antropologista kolonialismia", joka perustui ennemminkin suostumukseen ja sanattomaan auktoriteettiin kuin kauppakomppanioiden edustamien yksityisintressien valtapoliittiseen ajamiseen.

Hobsonin imperiumin etiikkaan kuului myös "rotukonfliktien" kritisointi, mikä yksinkertaisimmillaan merkitsi epäluottamusta luonnonvalinnan tehokkuutta kohtaan. Rationaaliset syntyvyyden säätelymekanismit olisi tullut ulottaa koskemaan koko ihmisyyttä, mikä olisi parantanut ihmispopulaation "laatua" ja siirtänyt "rotujen" välisen kilvoittelun koskemaan materian sijasta myös korkeampia henkisiä arvoja. Yksityisintressien karsiminen kansainvälisestä politiikasta mahdollisti orgaanisen yhteistoiminnallisuuden toteutumisen. Hobson otti näin tulkittuna kantaa pikemmin internationalismin kuin brittiläisen imperialismin puolesta.

Hobsonin tavoin Ritchie tarkasteli luonnonoikeuskysymystä valtion toimintavaltuuksien laajentamisen sekä valtioiden välisten suhteiden valossa. Ritchien luonnonoikeusteorian naturalistisia tendenssejä kriittisesti arvioivassa "etiikan evoluutiossa" oikeudet eivät olleet luonnollisia, vaan ne derivoitiin yhteiskunnallisesta tarpeesta. Luonnonoikeusteorioita oli käsitelty ja kritisoitu jo aiemmin esimerkiksi Edmund Burken, Jeremy Benthamin ja Karl Marxin toimesta, mutta Ritchien lähtökohta oli, kuten brittiläisen idealismin yleisemminkin, pikemmin käytännöllinen kuin filosofinen. Hobson suhtautui varauksella Ritchien luonnonoikeuskritiikkiin, koska katsoi luonnonoikeuksien automaattisen kieltämisen johtavan kaikkien yksilöllisten oikeuksien hylkäämiseen.

Idealistit lähestyivät imperialismia pohtimalla, tuliko imperiumi nähdä yhteiskuntaorganismien laajentumana, jonka etujen puolustaminen oli perusteltua valtion oikeuksien tapaan. Idealisteilla ei ollut tarjota kysymykseen yhtenäistä mielipidettä. Ritchie asettui kannattamaan Etelä-Afrikan sotatoimia, koska piti buuritasavaltoja moraalisesti korruptoituneina. Ilman brittihallinnon toimia buuritasavallat olisivat muodostaneet oligarkkisen orjanomistajayhteisön, joka olisi toteuttanut alkuperäiskansojen loputonta riistoa. Ritchie kysyi orgaanista yhteiskunnanäkemyksestä mukaillen, olisiko Cromwell asettanut Englannin itsenäisyyden tai "rodun" edun ihmiskunnan poliittisen vapauden edelle. Ritchien etiikan evoluution erilaiset vaiheet oikeuttivat hyvinkin erilaisia yhteiskunnallisia instituutioita. Esimerkiksi orjuutta voitiin pitää hyväksyttävänä yhteiskunnallisena instituutiona, jos se palveli sen hetkistä yhteiskunnallista tarvetta. Etiikan evoluution näkökulmasta "rodut" olivat luonnollisesti eriarvoisia. Kontekstissaan buuritasavallat edustivat siirtomaahallintoa alhaisempaa yhteiskuntamuotoa, eivätkä sen vuoksi olleet olemassaoloonsa oikeutettuja.

Ritchien mukaan Hobsonin Etelä-Afrikan sodan vastainen kritiikki ei vaikuttanut brittiläisen imperiumin käytänteisiin, mutta se saattoi kasvattaa Venäjän anglofobisia tuntemuksia ja heikentää tällä tavoin esimerkiksi Suomen mahdollisuuksia hakea Britannialta tukea autonomisen asemansa säilyttämiseksi. Hobson piti imperialismin moraalista tuomitsemista perusteltuna, koska katsoi edustavansa eettiselle imperiumikäsitteellään isänmaallisuuden korkeampia ja kestävämpiä arvoja.

Sekä Hobson että Ritchie tarkastelivat yhteiskuntakysymystä orgaanisesta näkökulmasta. Toisin kuin Hobson oli ulottanut hyötyfilosofiansa koskettamaan myös kansallisten voimavarojen käyttöä, Ritchie hylkysi yksilön ja kansakunnan välisen metaforisen asetelman. Ritchie tarkasteli buuritasavaltojen asemaa luonnonoikeusteorian näkökulmasta. Buuritasavalloilla ei voinut olla luonnollista itsemääräämisoikeutta, koska kaikki oikeudet olivat yhteisöllisiä tuotoksia. Näkemys oli riittävä asettamaan Hobsonin ja Ritchien eri leireihin buuritasavaltojen itsemääräämisoikeutta ja imperialismia koskeneessa kiistassa.

Imperialismi oli Hobsonin ja Ritchien kiistassa merkityksellinen, koska käsitteelle annetut merkitykset jakoivat reformipolitiikkaa ajaneet tahot kilpaileviin leireihin ja hajaannuttivat edistysliikkeen yhtenäisyyden. Hobsonille imperialismi merkitsi edistysajattelun koetinkiveä, jonka aseman ja merkityksen ratkaisemattomuus esti yhteiskuntareformien toteuttamisen. Imperialismin käsitteen voimakkuutta kuvastaa, että ideologiset linjat syntyivät brittiläiseen imperialismiin muodostetun kannan mukaan. Imperialismilla tai kontekstissaan sen synonyymisillä merkityksillä (*pro-British, anti-Boer*) sekä antonyymeillä (*anti-British, pro-Boer*) oli mahdollista luoda poliittista tilaa kommunikoivan aikakauslehdistön sivuilla. Käsitteimerkityksien nyanssit olivat keskustelussa olennaisia, sillä edistysliikkeen parissa imperialismi tulkittiin yhä yleisesti traditio-naalisin määrein demokratian vastaisuudeksi.

Edistysliikkeen hajaannus suhteessa brittiläiseen imperialismiin kuvastaa yhtäältä poliittisen ajattelun monitahoisuutta. Liberaali politiikan teoria kommunikoi huonosti siirtomaatodellisuuden kanssa, minkä vuoksi evoluutio-opin luoma luonnollinen eriarvoisuus oli useimmille soveltuvampi poliittisen ajattelun muoto kuin vapauden, veljeyden ja tasa-arvon abstraktit periaatteet. Toisaalta imperialismi oli myös politiikan teon käsite, sillä käsitteeseen traditionaalisesti liitetyt merkitykset, kuten despoottinen hallintokulttuuri tai demokratian vastaisuus, olivat keinoja osoittaa emämaan yhteiskuntareformien keskeneräisyys.

Hobsonin antamat merkitykset käsitteelle imperialismi ovat kontekstissaan tulkittavissa julkilausumaksi yhteiskuntareformien puolesta sekä pyrkimykseksi alistaa kansainvälinen politiikka ja talous eettisille mittapuille. Aatehistoriallisesti mielenkiintoista Hobsonin poliittisessa ajattelussa on hänen liberalisminsa ja imperialisminsa vuoropuhelu. Lisäksi menneet aatteet voivat tarjota virikkeitä – jos kohta ei ratkaisuja – tämän päivän poliittisille kysymyksille. Idealia politiikan ja talouden alistamisesta eettiselle päätöksenteolle voi kaikesti kunnioittaa sellaisenaankin.

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