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TOWARD IDEATIONAL COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE NOTIONS OF COMMON GOOD AND OF THE STATE IN LATE 19TH CENTURY SOCIAL LIBERALISM

ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to analyze notions of common good and of the state in late 19th century British social liberalism and their relation to collective action of the citizens. The author shows that British social liberals argued for a type of state that uses top down strategy to encourage collective action in order to transform individuals into a socially responsible groups, i.e. good citizens. The paper focuses on philosophical works of F. H. Bradley, ethics of T. H. Green and political philosophy of B. Bosanquet, analyzing their efforts to reconceptualize ideas of classical liberalism and utilitarian doctrine of the individual, society and the state in light of emerging influence of leftist social movements. The author argues that the works of British social liberals are a foundation of the state and society which will dominate liberalism in the second half of 20th century, i.e. the idea of the welfare state.

Introduction

What is the relation between collective action and the state? Are their natures autonomous, intertwined or is there a ground to assert a single, coherent nature? These questions seem as important today as they ever were in the ages of social and political turmoil. Today's challenges of global security, economic stability, and quality of democracy in the context of a competition between neoliberal minimal and nation states on one hand and civic movements on the other are perpetually being discussed in academic circles, failing to provide a viable solution. If history of political ideas teaches us anything, that is when faced with the situation of intellectual conundrums, with no solution to be found anywhere, one should return to the classical writings to find at least an inspiration to remain on the problem-solving path. I'm not arguing that a solution for today's problems of society and the state can be found in classical writing, albeit that one can trace the source of current intellectual crisis and start from there.

One of the forgotten corridors of the history of ideas that had a sheer impact on the early and mid 20th century analytical political thinkers is late 19th

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century British social liberalism. This period, also referred to as British idealism period (Botcher and Vincent 2000), starts around 1870 and becomes key intellectual discourse in sociology and political philosophy, right up to late 1920. It is a period of intellectual attempts to combine and reconcile idealism and empiricism in philosophy, facts and norms in sociology and liberty and obligation in political philosophy in times when liberalism was heavily contested by socialism, whilst nationalism, racism and imperialism were starting to emerge as a menace for the future of mankind. The answer of British social liberalism to these threats was rather unique to some extent: they offered an account of human perfection by using potentials of institutional configurations of the state, trying to walk a thin line between liberty and authoritarianism. The uniqueness of social liberal accounts of the time lies in their basic postulates that (a) a society is composed of leveled realities, some being higher than others, implying that (b) the goal of the state is to provide institutional settings for reaching "the highest reality", steering a course for (c) self-perfection of an individual to evolve into an active citizen that strives to become the part of such reality, as the moral imperative of a civilized society.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the postulates of British social liberalism in order to describe the theoretical nature of the state in the late 19th century British social liberalism texts. I argue that British social liberalism set the foundations of what is later termed as welfare state, by giving justification of the state in a philosophical form that promotes the idea of liberty by creating social conditions for human self-perfection. What makes this justification political in its nature is that the promotion of this idea is done institutionally by the state; put differently, social policies that promote the common good such as free and equal education, medical care, social welfare for the poor etc., are political in their nature because a sovereign body imposes them as an obligation, represented by the law and coerced by the force. Since my approach is conceptual and analytical, and not historical, I do not follow the chronological development of the ideas of British social liberalism. Rather, I start from the philosophical account of leveled realities (F. H. Bradley), connecting this account with the idea of moral self-perfection of man as an obligation (T. H. Green), melding these accounts into a theory of state that uses its institutional agencies to promote common good as the highest form of social reality and the true motivation for collective action (B. Bosanquet).

Intellectual Order of Realities

British philosophical and social thought after the French revolution was dominated by utilitarianism and empiricsm, which merged into what is sometimes referred to as "philosophic radicalism" (Freeden and Stears 2013: 993). In a nutshell, the radicals argued that all ideas of a man and his position and ends in a society have their origin in his experiences and feelings while the mind has only a secondary role in classifying and calculating ideas. Two types of feelings are crucial in determining and explaining human action: ones of pleasure

and pain. Therefore, human beings are acting rational and being happy when they pursue pleasures and avoid pains. When it comes to a society, one can say that one lives in a good society, when all actions are taken into consideration, there is more pleasure then pain. Such society treasures liberty above all other values, since only a free man can choose actions that can ultimately bring him joy and not sorrow.

This (simplified) description of utilitarianism came under revision once Hegel's works were translated into English, in mid 19th century. Combined with J. S. Mill's liberalism and buttressed from the need for liberalism to find a modus vivendi with socialism, sprang British social liberalism. From this new liberalism's point of view, classification of ideas cannot be the only role that the mind has. If that were the case, it would imply that ideas are determined by experience and cannot have a development of their own. Put differently, utilitarianism reduced ideas to psychological states, making them contingent and not universal (Hylton 1990: 59 – 61). The peak of utilitarianism's psychologization of ideas came in Mill's (2011: 813 – 823) works on logic and epistemology. For those reasons, the critique of the philosophical radicals from social liberalism perspective had to start from reconfiguring the relation between experience and ideas. However, their aim was not simply epistemological in its nature, that is, British idealists didn't want only to answer the question about the origins of our knowledge. They were aiming at the level of ontology: what constitute the reality around us and therefore, what kind of objects exist in the world.

The philosophical and ontological revision of empiricism reached its peak in works of F. H. Bradley. To some extent forgotten today, Bradley's works on the nature of our knowledge and of the reality were widely appraised, insomuch that decades after his major publications, no one seriously took into a task to revise the speculation about the mind that he postulated. The starting point of Bradley's revision of empiricism is in the reduced role of mind to the classification of acts. He argues (Bradley 1908: 330) that the confusion in empiricism regarding what mind can and cannot do derives from the fact that mind indeed cannot create a perceptible world of its own. He acknowledges the facts that what we can feel with our senses are undeniable truths, albeit, from that it doesn't follow that mind has no ontological role in constituting the world around us. Put differently, empiricism creates a gap between our mind and the reality, the one that Bradley was trying to close (Ellis 2005: 104). His argument is metaphysical in its nature, since it's arguing for the mind and reality to be parts of a totality or the whole that we refer to as the truth. The role of the mind consists of giving meaning to the facts that we acquire from the "outside" world. Bradley concludes that facts are subjected to interpretations, which can change their meaning to the very core, making "foundation in truth (…) provisional merely" (Bradley 1909: 335). Put differently, mind cannot alter the existence of the facts, albeit it can change the meanings what does facts mean for human agents and thus asserting relativism instead of crude determinism.

The question that lies in the foundation of Bradley's revision is the one about the nature of the truth. The truth is a matter of coherence, and coherence is

achieved through what Bradley (1909: 330) refers to as "the test of the system". The test consists of ascribing a meaning to the facts by the mind, i.e. "the same act that transforms psychological images into logical ideas or meanings" (Allard 2005: 56). In doing so, the mind places a given fact into a preexisting intellectual "world-order" of the subject (Bradley 1909: 336). The outcome of such test is to verify weather new or old facts have an action related impact on the subject. If the fact cannot fit into a preexisting intellectual order, weather it is a new or old fact, it must be expelled from the mind. The fact doesn't cease to exist, albeit it becomes of lesser importance for the truth regarding the world. From there, Bradley developed the idea of lower and higher form of realities, higher being the ones that are closer to the truth and whose interpretation of facts are more action-driving.

As Boucher and Vincent (2000: 69) conclude, "Bradley's ontology was particularistic, communitarian and Hegelian". The ontological account of multi-leveled realities served as a foundation for ethics and political philosophy of British social liberalism. Although the nature of liberalism was already significantly changed in the works of T.H. Green, it was Bradley who gave them formal and philosophical shape. The central theme of social liberalism's ethics and political philosophy is summarized in the idea of self-realization, the one that can be only realized with state's intervention. In his *Ethical Studies*, Bradley (1951: 99) connects the idea of multi-leveled reality with moral self-realization in a flowing way:

> "We have self-realization left as the end, the self so far being defined as neither a collection of particular feelings nor an abstract universal. The self is to be realized as something not simply one or the other; it is to be realized further as will, will not being merely the natural will, or the will as it happens to exist and finds itself here or there, but the will as the good will, i.e., the will that realizes an end which is above this or that man, superior to them, and capable of confronting them in the shape of a law or an ought."

There are at least three ethical notions that are key to understanding the role of state in British social liberalism account: self-realization as *the end*, the idea of good will, and the idea of the common good ((given both in its normative (ought) and positive (law) form)). The idea of self-realization is *prima facie* moral foundation of liberalism. Both classical and utilitarian liberal doctrines argued for liberty as the key means and an end to achieving the best in a subject so that he or she may become a good citizen. Bradley accept the liberal tradition but refuses to reduce self-realization acts to collection of feelings, that of sense of pain or pleasure. Instead, self-realization is a part of human agency, and the key of self-realization is in acting and not in binary calculus of hurts and joys. For Bradley (1951: 13), both experiences are equally important for self-realization of a man, since the self is always and necessary "the whole self". One achieves self only when one reaches the limits of its self-realization as the highest form of one's social reality.

The criteria for validating that the self-realization process is completed by acquiring the quality of good will. Whilst the self-realization process is

consisted out of acting, the good will is a universal principle that is knowable only by the means of the mind. What makes this notion an ethical one is that it exceeds the particular need of a subject, treating its desires and ends as only secondary, and argues for higher reality. It is in the higher order of reality where a subject realizes that a morally founded intersubjective relation is of higher importance for the development of the society as whole than his or her individual interests. Not every subject can realize this ethical end, since people are limited by their natural intellectual abilities; therefore, a political principle of obligation needs to be added into the social account of liberalism.

The argument of self-realization as the subject's end is buttressed by the theory of human imperfection. The theory is common in liberal doctrine, but the solution of human imperfection provided by British social liberalism is unique. Rules and regulations are necessary to protect human beings from doing harm to each other. The negative perception of the law implies the negative acceptance of political obligation: I'm not obliged to give legitimacy to any law that is interfering in my actions, if those actions are not causing damage to property of the others. Social liberalism accepts that human moral imperfection requires the existence of laws, albeit it redefines its negative dimension toward positive form of political obligation. For them, political obligation is a sort of moral engineering process, that *pari passu* protects from harm and develops human agents to reach their full potential.

In Bradley's account of ethics, one can only find some pieces of the puzzle how political obligation leads to moral perfection. I already quoted Bradley's idea of the good will being materialized in acts of (normative) customs and laws. He makes no distinctive difference between these forms, only states that they are a part of what he refers to as "the social organism" (Bradley 1951: 104). The organicistic nature of society and of a subject is seen through their intertwining: "Personal morality and political and social institutions cannot exist apart, and (in general) the better the one the better the other. The community is moral because it realizes personal morality; personal morality is moral because and in so far as it realizes the moral whole" (Bradley 1951: 104). Therefore, only by accepting the duties that are prescribed by the state through the law, one can become the best version of oneself; and vice versa, only by nurturing the good citizens, state coercive actions acquire its legitimacy: "Within the moment of the 'social organism', there is quite definitely a different ontology at work, which could hardly be called crude sociological determinism. Basically, the self-realising individual is not asked to personally invent a moral content, conversely, the content comes to the individual in a pre-existing form of life" (Boucher and Vincent 2000: 73). The idea of social organism is buttressed by Hegelian idea of the objective mind (Boucher and Vincent 2000: 74), i.e. that what defines society and the state is the effort to promote the ideas of humanism, and not the bare idea of monopoly of power. For that reason, the notion of political obligation is treated as an antithesis of liberty, making a dialectical twist toward a synthesis that leads to ethical notion of the society as the main end of social liberals.

Political Obligation, Moral Epistemology and Human Perfection

Bradley's conceptualization of reality is characterized by a mind-object dualism. In order for this kind of epistemology to work properly, ontology needs to consist of a coherence between the ideas of the mind and the properties of an object that is a subject of knowledge. The question that remained open in Bradley's philosophy is what are social and political consequences of such ontology? It seems clear that in constructing a world from the perspective of British idealism, one needs to take into account a coherence between universality and particularity. How to fill this general notion with political content in order to correct liberal political philosophy and its views on state and society, making liberalism more humanistic?

From a history of political ideologies perspective, the question was perceived as a crucial one in the period of the late 19th century. Although 19th century is considered in most textbooks to be a century of liberalism, it is safe to say that in Great Britain as its cradle, liberalism was going through a severe crisis in the last three decades of 19th century (Freeden and Stears 2013). Liberal policies were heavily contested from both left and right side of ideological specter. Benjamin Disraeli's paternalism demonstrated that liberalism cannot ignore the fact of modernization that modern nation state is developing in an opposite direction from the idea of the minimal state. And from the left side of the ideological specter, socialist movements showed that growing influence of worker unions and their demands for social rights is a consequence of *laisses faire* politics of the free market. The pressure from the left and the right pushed liberalism toward center of ideological specter, making it more conservative in defending its core ideas, and changed the face of its devotion for progress. It is well known that liberal intellectual elite of that period were concentrated around Fabian society of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, a British version of social democrats who believed in a vision of evolutive socialistic revolution by using liberal institution and thus avoiding the violence and major political disasters. The new liberal formula was that if every living being is entitled by natural rights, the first end of a society is to make conditions for everyone to practice their God given rights. And who can better insure these conditions than the state, as the highest power in a society. Put in a more conceptual terms, the goal of social liberals was to provide a legitimacy account for practicing coercion as a means to interfere into person's life in order to enable him or her to become the best version of themselves, i.e. to achieve the end of self-perfection.

The change in ideological core of liberalism led to the need of redefinition of the concept of liberty, i.e. the substantial differentiation from the one that was used in classical and utilitarian liberalism. It is often argued that this task was taken by T. H. Green, resulting in the concept of positive liberty, i.e. the one that reconciles coercion with individual freedom. In his account made in *The Principle of Political Obligation*, the starting position is a classical liberal one that only lawful actions may constrain one's free action in order to allow

him or her to make no harm to others or himself (Green 1999: 5). Green is exploring where are the limits of legitimacy of constraint. Put formally: to which extent is it justifiable to condition that one must do X in order to achieve *p, q... n* that leads to his or her self-perfection; and in which context such justification make sense? For Green (1999: 6), justification can be deduced only if the object of intention has moral qualities, i.e. if coercing a person to act in a particular way X to obtain the qualities *p, q... n* of an object O (*p, q... n* are necessarily described by the society as good), then the final result of agent's adoption of qualities of O is his or her self-perfection.

However, goodness of O is necessary but not sufficient condition for self-perfection. The human (cognitive) imperfection may significantly limit the ability of a person to recognize goodness in O (Green 1999: 7). Again, this is a critique of a classical liberalism and its endorsement of empiricism. If my interests are related to the object O, and not its qualities, it becomes quite difficult to explain the value of O both for the agent and the community, respectfully. Put differently "it would be fallacious to draw conclusions about the agent's own good from claims about the goods she pursues. This seems to conflate the content and ownership of desires. Moreover, it makes an agent's interest in others dependent on her contingent desires; it does not explain why an agent who does not have such desires is making a mistake or why one who does have these desires should retain them" (Brink 2007: 42). To make goodness of O explicit for all members of the community, a political engineering needs to be put in motion.

Bradley's and Green's theory merge here. The coherence of knowledge of social reality is achieved when the abstract universalistic element is replaced with *natural rights* and particularistic one with that of *positive law*. In that respect, Green's inquiry is to define what makes a positive law good. Comparatively, in a utilitarian account, a law is good when it makes no harm to subjects of law, i.e. when it is in no clash with natural rights. However, as above-mentioned, this account explains only one feature of law, its intension: the role of a law is reduced to preserving the sense of natural rights. In that respect, the utilitarian theory of law is descriptive in its nature. What Green (1999: 14) is asserting is that a theory of law needs to include a justification criteria of obligation, that is, extension that is purely moral or prescriptive: "in what ways and how far do the main obligations enforced and rights maintained by law in all civilised societies contribute to the moral end described—to establish those conditions of life in which a true, i.e., a disinterested or unselfish, morality shall be possible?". In order to constitute such a theory of political obligation, Green needs to construct a sort of moral epistemology as a standpoint from which he can verify its premises.

The key question behind Green's moral epistemology is on the matter of both knowing the qualities of an object and interpreting a moral sense of them. Green argues that perception of the qualities of an object are possible due to its accumulation of meanings across the time. Every socially conceivable object has its own history and accumulated meanings, implying that perception allows us to describe the qualitative features of it. This part of Green's epistemology

is in line with empiricism; what goes under the part of interpretation can be summarized in the question of what makes qualities of an object moral? Note here that "meaning" is taken in plural, following the possibility of multitude of interpretations of the same object. Methodologically speaking, how we can verify that the accumulated meanings of the object of our enquiry are moral in their nature? If we take that verification in British idealism is tied to coherence, the answer to the question needs to include an overlap of experience and the mind. There must be some general notion of goodness that is always triggered by the senses, and that notion verifies weather the accumulated meanings have moral values for agents or not. When the coherence of universal goodness and particular good of an object is set, it can be inferred that actions of the one who is using the object are also good. It is clear that these types of actions go beyond the descriptive feelings of pleasure or pain – they are prescriptive in their nature, concentrating on issues of right and wrong. Finally, the focus of Green's (1999: 8) moral epistemology is on actions and their consequences for the human progress: "They arise as the individual's conception of the society on the well-being of which his own depends, and of the constituents of that well-being, becomes wider and fuller; and they are embodied in the laws, institutions, and social expectation, which make conventional morality. This growth of conventional morality forms the 'moral progress of mankind.' But it must be remembered that a merely conventional morality is not a true morality; that it becomes so only in so far as upon habits disciplined by conformity to conventional morality there supervenes an intelligent interest in some of the objects contributory to human perfection, which that conventional morality subserves and in so far as that interest becomes the dominant interest of the character."

As can be seen from the cited section, Green argues that acting in the name of progress is more than doing self-perfection acts, it ultimately leads to well-being of all members of a society. Such activism is the one that constitutes the core meaning of the concept of "good citizen", the one willing to dedicate to political participation and spreading political liberties. Therefore, being a citizen is a higher form of social reality than of being an individual. Again, coherence principle requires that citizen's actions are in a relation with particular type of social object. Green terms it as the common good, ascribing it social and political meaning that is applicable only in the frames of a community, differentiating it from the idea of a morally good.

If all moral actions are in the end valued through social acts (to use Green's term, external acting), then Green's moral epistemology is relativistic in its nature, rejecting crude determinism (Brink 2007: 110). The key redefinition of classical liberalism here is in refuting the idea of universal natural rights: they are always relative to the society in which they are practiced. As Dimova-Cookson (2001: 132) points out, Green's notion of rights is based on a social recognition act: "Green argues against the idea of natural rights as he does not believe that we can speak about the individual in a meaningful way without taking into account her social environment. He claims that rights exist to the extent

that they are recognised by society." Green is not arguing that freedom or life are not universal rights of human beings, albeit that there are social realities in which these rights are only secondary to other social goods, such as property, nation, or God's will. As stated before, social realities can be improved or constructed, where a dialectical dynamic of coherence takes place in explication: by determining that some natural rights have a greater value than others, and using the tools of the mind to establish the intellectual order of importance, active citizen can cancel the exiting social order of goods and create a new social reality. Active citizens, therefore, are a vital component for a good community: "The citizen, for Green, was not simply the passive recipient of rights, but rather an active self-realising being. Green viewed all political concepts from this standpoint. Rights, obligations, property or freedom were devices to allow individuals to realise their powers and abilities" (Boucher and Vincent 2000: 29).

Returning to rights, in Green's (1999: 87) political philosophy, they have a meaning only when they are in a coherence with obligations. That is why a coercive mechanism, i.e. institutions of the state, need to be introduced to protect the rights by forcing obligations. Not only in Green's political philosophy, albeit in every British social liberalism text that deals with the state, the main question is always related to making a balance between voluntary moral behavior and behavior conditioned from the fear of the punishment. For Green (1999: 88), fear is never sufficient to make a person accept obligations defined by the law, he or she necessarily have to have a sense for moral duty to act as a responsible citizen. Such a sense is derived from the notion of social good, that is the knowledge of one's own rights: "Thus the state, or the sovereign as a characteristic institution of the state, does not create rights, but gives fuller reality to rights already existing. It secures and extends the exercise of powers, which men, influenced in dealing with each other by an idea of common good, had recognised in each other as being capable of direction to that common good, and had already in a certain measure secured to each other in consequence of that recognition. It is not a state unless it does so." (Green 1999: 99)

The state needs to have an end in order to be defined and recognized as a sovereign one. Such an end is relative to the society in which coercion is being practiced albeit, what is equal for all societies is that the "fuller reality" is measured by success of the state of imposing obligations defined by laws. The final concern raised here is then connected with the end and the method achieving it. It is clear that in terms of a method, legitimate state actions are reducible to lawful ones, i.e. the state acts by enacting and conducting the laws. The end is, however, determined by the notion of a common good, which is a universal value since each society has one, yet relative to the particular society's culture and tradition. Put differently, laws are endogenous to a society, derived from the notion of natural rights that are in coherence with the society's moral culture. The justification criteria for every law is purely moral in its nature, whereas means to conducting them are political.

Political legitimacy in Green's political philosophy has little to do with the form of enacting laws, rather with lawmaker's (moral) intention. By imposing

obligations via law, the state is shaping the behavior of subjects of law to do good, i.e. conducting their actions in such a way to make contribution to common good of the society (Green 1999: 87). In practical terms, the state's duty is to impose such obligations in its social policies that lead to self-improvement of its citizens, such as general literacy, health care, free voting, free press, workers' rights, but also imposing certain versions of national history, patriotism, security measures etc. If treated as the means to the common good, coercion in Green's conception of liberty is legitimate, as long as it makes individuals realize that their own conception of reality and good life can be raised to a higher level, making them coherent with "fuller reality", one that living in a civilized society entails.

The Political State of Freedom

Although Green provides a justification criterion for political obligation from the moral point of view, it is still unclear why should I accept to be coerced to certain actions and necessarily give up parts of my freedom. Classical liberalism tried to solve this problem by reducing the role of the state to minimal actions, while Green introduced an external moral condition (the common/ social good). Which of these solutions are better for the state actions is a matter of ideological standpoint that dominates the society; both, however, fail to answer the question regarding individuals and their relation to the political – why should any of us accept any kind of coercion? It is this question that lies in the core of Bernard Bosanquet's philosophical theory of state, the one in which social liberalism's notion of the state reached its peak.

Bosanquet's theory of the state is philosophical for the reason of focusing on the questions of ontology, i.e. social reality. By the time Bosanquet's book *The Philosophical Theory of State* was published, moral and philosophical epistemological framework was firmly established for over a decade by Green and Bradley, respectfully. Purely political issues in their multi-level philosophy of reality were, however, left unanswered, which lead to unsolved paradox of political obligation. For Bosanquet (2001: 49), this paradox is best demonstrated in liberal idea of self-government. In utilitarianism, the idea has twofold meaning: individual and collective. Bosanquet argues that both levels determine the type of obligation paradox which haunts liberalism, respectfully: on the individual level, it is an ethical paradox of obligation; and on the collective it is a political one. Both of these are perhaps most visible in J. S. Mill's works.

In *On Liberty,* Mill (1975) puts forward his famous argument on individual self-government (i.e. autonomy), which is based on negative notion of freedom. Mill defends the idea of free society as the one in which every man is free to act in his best interest as long as he or she do no harm to the others. Mill defends this notion by setting a core of basic (not natural) rights that each society should accept as a necessary condition of progress. However, this optimistic view that each man shall always do what is best for him and (at least) not interfere with others is in a collision with the idea of collective self-government. As

Simendić (2011: 245) judiciously notes, to constitute the best form of government, Mill introduces a two-step procedure: a psychological theory of human desires for happiness and a specific view of collective progress. Seminal image of liberal society as an aggregation of individual interests to increase overall happiness implies that political forms of government need to be in coherence with notions of autonomy at the individual level. For that reason, in *Considerations on Representative Government* Mill (1975) passionately defends representation as a political form of self-government in which an individual, by act of voting, willingly transfers his political rights to a representative, who in turn becomes a political person, autonomous in his actions, and with an end to make progress in a society. A collection of these representatives makes a sovereign body that enacts laws, necessarily conducting and coercing behavior of individuals in order to achieve the end, i.e. the progress of a society. The paradox becomes quite clear: in order to achieve greater political freedoms, one must give up his own active and passive political right for a certain period of time (until next elections). The utilitarian justification for this is that representation and laws are a necessary evil, albeit the minimal one (Bosanquet 2001: 50). Social liberals don't settle with this kind of argument and seek further justification for political obligation. In Bosanquet work in particular, the aim is to reconcile collective and individual liberties by not minimalizing the powers and authority of the state on one hand, and actively encourage political participation of the citizens on the other.

When questioning the nature of obligation and its relation to sovereign political body, Bosanquet argues that the key ontological criteria for establishing a higher social reality is not reducible to epistemological coherence between individual and collective autonomy, i.e. between practices and the reason, or at least it is not a sufficient condition. For him, the act of constituting a sovereign body is not so much in transferring our political rights, albeit in transferring our rights to act. Being natural, our rights are always in our property and cannot be transferred – one cannot transfer its right to be free or alive. However, our actions, being necessarily social, are not necessarily in our property. For Bosanquet, actions can be willingly subjected to a higher will that directs them toward achieving greater social good. Put differently, in order to solve the paradox of political obligation, Bosanquet introduces a notion of will. His argument consists of detailed analysis of Rousseau's idea of general will and reconceptualizing it from moral to an ontological concept. What makes will an ontological criterion is that by transferring multiple individual wills to the sovereign body, a collective will is being established: "Our purpose, therefore, is to explain what is meant by saying that 'a will' can be embodied in the State, in society, in law and institutions; and how it is possible for the individual, as we know him, to be in an identity with this will, such as continually to vary, but never wholly to disappear. How can a man's real self lie in a great degree outside his normal self, and be something which he only now and then gets hold of distinctly, and never completely?" (Bosanquet 2001: 106).

Bosanquet's aim surpasses classical liberal and utilitarian image of the state and society as an aggregation of individual interests; he seeks "an identity" between the state and an individual. This identity is achieved once individual solves his or her internal ethical paradox of obligation, i.e. when they realize that their happiness is limited by their own natural talents for acquiring it. Bosanquet argues that his standpoint sheds a new light on the need for liberty to be put in certain limits, not because individuals are a danger for each other, albeit because of our own individual biological and psychological limitations. Each man achieves happiness when realizes what are his or her "fundamental logic of will" (Bosanquet 2001: 123), i.e. intellectual and social capacities for acting for happiness. What Bosanquet is pointing out are individual's limits to realize its own desires and wants in light of their own development: "For Bosanquet, the way humans organise elements in their own minds is analogous to the way social groups are organised. The associated crowd is often unaware of the ideas which motivate it. The organisation, however, is aware of the dominant operative ideas. Society is considered by Bosanquet as a vast conglomerate of such systems of ideas, some more conscious than others. Each group, trade or profession has its own dominant themes" (Boucher and Vincent 2000: 107).

In defining the capacities of the human development, classical and social liberalism are sharply divided: while the former argues for almost unlimited potential for individual progress, the latter takes a more moderate approach admitting that progress is limited by the need of those who are acting in the name of it. This is, however, only at the level of individual action. In the theory of social liberalism, from the collective action level seen, potential for human development is practically unlimited. As Allard (2005: 144) shows, this has to do with a fact that "knowledge grows over time as it progressively revises and enlarges itself" creating an analogy between development and "the ideal for of the organic system". This is why Bosanquet (2001: 121-122) sets twofold role of the state in his political philosophy account that overarches the classical minimal role (protection): one task is to create conditions for happiness of all people; the other is to show individuals what are their limits and therefore, what is their place in a society. Coercion is not the only way to realize these ends, they can also be done by "automatism and suggestion". In these three ways, the state gives social meaning to our action, making them intentional.

The will of the state in Bosanquet's account is determined by the notion of common good, the same idea that was delineated by Green before. The difference is the way how we can identify the common good. For Green, we find it in laws, i.e. the ones that endured the test of time and accumulated the moral meaning. For Bosanquet (2001: 125), the common good is a matter of collective actions. Laws only conduct acting in certain ways, making actions socially acceptable. They are not the embodiment of the common good, albeit representation of it. Therefore, Bosanquet (2001: 131) defines political obligation as a principle "according to which laws and institutions represented a real self or general will, recognised by individuals as implied in the common good which was imperative upon them." The imperative actions defined by common good

and the laws have a function to "liberate recourses of the character" (Bosanquet 2001: 127). The common good is not found, it is created by putting people in certain routines which make them good citizens. These kind of state actions Bosanquet (2001: 129; 131) terms "hindrance of hindrances": "Thus we may say that every law and institution, every external fact maintained by the public power, must be judged by the degree in which it sets at liberty a growth of mind and spirit. It is a problem partly of removing obstacles to growth, and partly of the division of labour between consciousness and automatism."

Bosanquet (2001: 128) argues for a "determined growth." It is a type of collective action which leads to progress, both on individual (increasing intellectual capacities) and collective level (creating common good). What is specific for Bosanquet and social liberals is that a strategy for achieving a determinate growth is a top down one. It is the state that should motivate individuals to become the best version of themselves. Taken in historical context of the turn of the century, this is not an unreasonable request. The state should use its institutional resources to motivate individuals to take active participation in social life by razing general literacy, life and work conditions, etc. Free education, free health care, social programs for unemployed workers, regulations of the free market, regulations in the field of political competition, correction facilities as resocialization institutions and not those of punishment are just some of the institutional means that state can put into motion. This kind of state is the one that has a positive influence on liberties, it actively encourages individuals to expand them (Bosanquet 2001: 131). As Bosanquet (2001: 132) puts, it is still on the individuals themselves to define their actions in the way that transforms them into active citizen, while the purpose of the state is purely moral: "The end of the State is a moral purpose, imperative on its members. But its distinctive action is restricted to removing hindrances to the end, that is, to lending its force to overcome —both in mind and in externals essential to mind— obstacles which otherwise would obstruct the realisation of the end."

Concluding Remarks

British social liberalism was a pioneer and a unique attempt to reconcile the growing power of the state and emerging social movements in the second half of the 19th century. There are at least three standpoints from which we can define this type of social liberalism. From a philosophical standpoint, British social liberalism is an attempt to understand and reconcile new emerging social realities that go beyond the interests of individuals. From a political perspective, these realities clash in their interest to gain control over the state, as the highest coercive power in the society. Finally, social liberalism recognizes the importance of grass-root movements, i.e. the new emerging collective actions of the citizens. Both the state and civic movements are creating a dialectic of conflict, which social liberalism is trying to solve from ethical and political view.

The second standpoint is, therefore, a merge of ethics and politics. Social liberalism believes that all collective actions can be beneficial for a society, if they are directed toward constituting the common good. As seen in Green's arguments, for social liberals, this is only possible if social actions are conducted according to the law. Finally, a political standpoint provides arguments for accepting the political obligation derived from the law. Again, in a dialectical manner, the thesis, i.e. the state, is changed by the demands of the anti-thesis (social movements), becoming responsible for the legitimacy of all social actions, not just the ones concerning protection. The dialectic is shifting the role of state from negative to positive one, which in turn has an impact to one's perception of what freedom is. The general will and goodness of collective action is achieved only if the state involves itself in the lives of its citizens, showing them positive examples how to become the best versions of themselves, thus making a society of higher reality.

What remains outside of British social liberalism conceptualization of the relation between the state and its citizens is the case of unwilling actions. What every social liberal is arguing for is a positive conditional that explicates that if the state acts good, the citizens will follow. The negative conditional is left unanswered however: if the state doesn't act good, albeit it forces its citizens to make unwilling actions by using or threatening them with physical force, or suggesting them to behave in certain ways that are not in the best interest of the society by using (e.g.) media and education, is the coercion legitimate? The answer here is clearly negative and undefendable from a liberal point of view, i.e. there is no true liberal perspective that could provide an answer that can justify state's action that forces individuals to behave in ways that are contrary to their interests and rights. Put differently, British social liberalism sees only a potential for goodness in the actions of the state, and not the dangers of its interventions into private life of the individuals. What social liberals somehow fail to notice is that social movements and citizens unsatisfaction and protests emerged for a reason. They saw them only as a potential social cleavage that needed to be bridged, and the state is the one that can construct that bridge. This overconfidence in the state's good intention only led liberalism to embrace more conservative stand, forgetting its progressive roots and becoming more tolerant to authoritarian options that allegedly defend freedom of collective entities. The idea of merging liberalism and socialism failed with the rise of the state as the solution for growing social tensions. For this reason, social liberalism failed to have more influence after the first generation of authors stopped publishing their works, and theoretically was revived only in the second half of the 20th century by redefining the positive influence of the state as the welfare state.

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Bojan Vranić

Prema ideacionom kolektivnom delanju: ideje opšteg dobra i države u socijalnom liberalizmu kasnog 19. Veka

Apstrakt

Cilj ovog rada je analiza ideja opšteg dobra i države u britanskom socijalnom liberalizmu kasnog 19. veka i njihovog odnosa prema građanskom kolektivnom delanju. Autor pokazuje da su britanski socijalni liberali iznosili argumente u prilog državi koja koristi strategiju odozgo na dole da bi podstakla delanje koje transformiše pojedince u društveno odgovorne grupe, tj. dobre građane. Rad se fokusira na filozofske spise F. H Bredlija, etiku T. H. Grina i političku filozofiju B. Bosankea, analizirajući njihove pokušaje da rekonceptualizuju ideje klasičnog liberalizma i doktrine utilitarizma o pojedincu, društvu i državi a u svetlu rastućeg uticaja levih društvenih pokreta. Autor pokazuje da su dela Britanskih socijalnih liberala temelj države i društva koje će dominirati liberalizmom u drugoj polovini 20. veka, tj. ideji o državi blagostanja.

Ključne reči: kolektivno delanje, prisila, socijalni liberalizam, sloboda