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**Perspectives on the Social
Question: Poverty and
Unemployment in Liberal and
Neoliberal Britain**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Politics and International Studies**

**University of Warwick, Department of Politics and
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Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and no portion of it has been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
BAAS	British Association for the Advancement of Science
BIT	Behavioural Insights Team
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
COS	Charity Organisation Society
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ERSA	Employment Related Services Association
IEP	Institute of Employability Professionals
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LSE	London School of Economics
MWA	Mandatory Work Activity
NCSS	National Council of Social Services
NUWM	National Unemployed Workers' Movement
NDYP	New Deal for Young People
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SDF	Social Democratic Foundation
TPE	Theory of Political Economy
WCA	Work Capability Assessment
WFI	Work-Focused Interview

Abstract

The thesis seeks to ask what we can learn from historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment in the liberal era for an understanding of poverty and unemployment in the neoliberal era. It does this through staging a series of historical interventions with figures and groups in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century (1870 to 1939) and then turning to the twenty-first century to look at how poverty and unemployment have been conceptualized and governed. It explores the continuing role of moralizing discourses targeted at the poor and unemployed, variously labelled as the “residuum”, “unemployables”, “habitual loafers”, “shirkers” and “scroungers”. In both the liberal and neoliberal eras, the objective is to explore how these discourses, and various practices of classifying and excluding the poor and unemployed, and seeking to conduct their behaviour, constitute a kind of “illiberal liberalism”. The thesis employs theoretical approaches from Marxist, Foucauldian and history of economic thought literatures to understand this in terms of different forms of “social control”. It finds that moralized judgements of behaviour, character and class significantly affect how poverty and unemployment are thought about, even as structural and economic understandings of these problems advance and become more “scientific”. The first set of perspectives it explores is from late-nineteenth century neoclassical economists William Stanley Jevons and Alfred Marshall. The second set explores the contributions of social reformers Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. The final set looks at the interwar era and includes the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement and a reading of George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*. The thesis draws from these perspectives to demonstrate the historical resonances of illiberal discourses and practices in the neoliberal workfare era, analysing the way that social control runs through the marketization of employment services and the renewed focus on “character”.

Introduction

The Rediscovery of Unemployment

Unemployment is a problem integral to capitalist society. How the problem of unemployment is framed, though, is fiercely contested. We can only begin to get a grip on how to understand the phenomenon of unemployment if we understand the distinct ways in which it has been comprehended over time. If investigated historically, unemployment comes to appear as something that must be continuously constituted and re-constituted. There are continuities in how it is understood, and in the nature of the measures taken to solve it, but we must not be fooled into thinking that it holds a self-evident meaning. Unemployment is *made* a problem of industrial society, of individual aspiration, of family breakdown, of state dependency, of economic demand, and so on. It becomes entangled within the wider problems of poverty, of work, of population and of political economy, subjects which Polanyi argued formed the 'discovery of society' and Foucault linked to the emergence of liberal government from the late eighteenth century onwards (Polanyi 2001: 108; Foucault 2007: 109).

There is a sense in which the imperative to know and understand unemployment comes from a desire to know society. In this regard, we find that unemployment and poverty are rediscovered over and over again, each time generating the sensation that it is a problem that distils and reflects wider social problems. In this thesis we will look at how this process has borne out in Britain historically and how it continues today. For example, today unemployment in Britain has been rediscovered by some as the consequence of an overbearing state and a 'broken' society, the latter characterized by an abandonment of traditional

marital values and a rejection of personal responsibility (Social Justice Policy Group 2006; Cabinet Office 2010; for a critical analysis see Slater 2014). It has also been rediscovered as an issue of health and wellbeing, whereby 'good work' is viewed as 'good for you' (Freud 2011; see also Black 2008: 21). Another important way in which it has been comprehended is as the consequence of labour markets not being "flexible" or "competitive" enough, an idea that permeates thinking across a number of countries and international institutions (Lewis 2009; Triantafillou 2011). The way this process of rediscovery takes place is of utmost importance. The ability to define successfully the meaning of poverty and unemployment, and their causes, is contingent upon power relations – political and sovereign power, class power, expert authority – and thus open to contestation. It is necessary to ask who is shaping the meaning of poverty and unemployment in any given period, and exactly how they are doing this.

If the meaning of unemployment is contested then the meaning of 'the unemployed' is no less so. Today there are ways of measuring statistically the number of people within the labour force who do not have a job but are still looking for one, that percentage of the population over 16 years-old not employed but seeking work. These measures give us figures that in a certain sense allow us to know who the unemployed are, and give a sense of historical continuity to the problem of unemployment. If we look at how they are constituted as subjects though – how they are represented as social subjects and made the subjects of government policy – then it appears evident that the raw statistical status of unemployed people is but one part of the picture. And if we consider the way in which unemployment figures are routinely manipulated to particular ends or how the meaning for a descriptor like 'employment' changes, then even the statistics do not prove reliable in telling us who the unemployed are (Whiteside 2014). One of

the underlying objectives in this thesis, then, is to pay attention to the subjectification of the unemployed, or the process of creating the unemployed subject.

The main question the thesis sets out to answer is: what can we learn from historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment in the liberal era for an understanding of poverty and unemployment in the neoliberal era? The thesis seeks to argue that gaining an understanding of historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment in liberal Britain helps us to understand better how they are constituted today, in neoliberal Britain. It aims to explore the historical antecedents to the way that poor and unemployed people are talked about and treated more contemporarily. Through a series of interventions with figures and groups from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, it seeks to show how poor and unemployed people came to be “known” and governed in different ways that stigmatized them and that shifted the responsibility of poverty and unemployment onto their shoulders. It will look to trace the “illiberal liberal” discourses and practices that constitute different forms of “social control” in the liberal and neoliberal eras, using elements of Marxist and Foucauldian theory as well as history of economic thought literature.

The need to look at how the unemployed are understood is partly analytical and theoretical, a desire to understand better how to denaturalize and historicize unemployment, to understand how it became a problem for government and other actors like charity organisations and how it was problematized in different ways over time. It is also based on political and ethical needs, which themselves are tied into the theoretical and analytical challenges. Current welfare reforms, and the language in which they are expressed, have

important consequences for the most vulnerable people in society; but the scapegoating of benefit claimants has deep historical antecedents.

There is a dual focus on poverty and unemployment in the thesis because of the intimate way in which the two are linked. Today, 'worklessness' is seen as the major determinant of poverty, even though half of working age adults who are classed as being in poverty live in a household where someone is in work (Patrick 2014: 64-65). Poverty and unemployment are also linked in so far as it is poor people who are more likely to rely on relief or assistance, and historically the poor have been identified and marginalized as a dependent, 'claiming class' (Dean H. 1991: 9). There is, therefore, an interpretation of poverty – combined with unemployment – that presents the poverty of the poor as the consequence of their inability or reluctance to secure their means of survival through paid employment. Both poverty and unemployment are cast as conditions of dependency and undeservingness.

Today the unemployed are made to feel that they are personally and individually responsible for their situations, they are made to internalize the problem of unemployment. Rhetoric about the unemployed abounds with these ideas about responsibility, or a lack of it. They are also made to negotiate a disciplinary, punitive and sometimes demeaning system of conditionality in order to retain the means for their own survival. This reality stems from a particular political rationality and welfare regime that glorifies work (either waged work or the unpaid simulation of waged work) and places punitive obligations on those in need of assistance. It is a regime that now goes by the popular name of "workfare" (Peck 2001; Grover & Stewart 1999; Handler 2003; Greer & Symon 2014).

Since the financial crisis, rhetoric against benefit claimants and the welfare system itself has grown increasingly hostile. Government ministers exclaim that claimants are too comfortable (despite ever more harsh conditionality), and that they are able to 'have a lifestyle off benefits' (Freud quoted in Jowit 2012). Prime Minister David Cameron has argued that '[t]he benefit system has created a benefit culture' and the Chancellor has contrasted the hard-working 'striver' going to their job in the morning with those behind 'closed blinds ... sleeping off a life on benefits' (Cameron 2011; Osborne 2012). Stigma in general against claimants is driven by perceptions that many are 'undeserving' of social assistance, a sentiment that has intensified in the last twenty years, and even more so since the recent financial crisis (Baumberg et al. 2012; Stanley 2014).

The division of claimant populations into deserving and undeserving, and the identification of a dependency culture have a long lineage in the history of welfare and relief (Dean & Taylor-Gooby 1992; Fraser & Gordon 1994; Spicker 1984). In the thesis, I want to explore this longer history, and look at how different perspectives on poverty and unemployment from a range of people and groups have come to constitute the poor and unemployed subject in ways that stigmatize them, that shift the burden of responsibility for their circumstances onto them and that seek to regulate them in a controlling manner. The thesis is interested in constructing an argument about the historical continuities and discontinuities of how the poor and unemployed are constituted as subjects, and the way that they attach themselves to a number of rationalities concerning deservingness, deterrence, discipline and the work ethic that mark them out for exceptional treatment.

Situating the Thesis Historically and Theoretically

The thesis situates itself within multiple fields of scholarship in order to explore the historical constitution of unemployment and poverty in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (1870-1939). Part of the impetus of this exploration, as the final chapter of the thesis reveals, is to situate the workfare era in Britain – which has a pre-history in the 1980s, but begins more fully in the late-1990s – within a longer history of how unemployment has been understood and governed. The literature engaged with includes: research in the history of economic thought; in the history of the welfare state and social policy; and in more contemporary work in critical social policy. The question of how to understand unemployment historically necessitates a theoretical discussion, and so this introduction outlines in more detail below how, as well as the literatures just mentioned, critical perspectives within Marxist and Foucauldian scholarship are engaged with and inform the approach the thesis takes.

What is not presented here is a narrative history of how unemployment has been governed across these periods. Instead, the major contribution that the thesis makes to the literature is delivered through a number of historical interventions focusing on “perspectives” on the Social Question (Gumpel 1892). The Social Question has particular origins in the late-nineteenth century. It was a question of how liberal society should respond to the ills of industrial capitalism – poverty, urban squalor, ill health, malnutrition – visited most acutely on the working class, and how social divisions might be lessened while averting protest or revolution (Judt 2010: 174; Stedman Jones 1984; Haggard 2001). Rather than limiting the Social Question to the peculiarity of the elite sympathies and anxieties of the Victorian age, though, the thesis uses it as a frame of reference to explore

how poverty and, more so, unemployment, were understood under liberal government in the late-Victorian and Edwardian age through to the interwar period. This historical analysis will then inform an investigation of how poverty and unemployment are understood under neoliberal government in the workfare era from the 1990s to the present.

The different historical perspectives that will be covered in the liberal era can be thought of as three different sets of perspectives, spanning 1870-1939:

- I. (c.1870-1890) Neoclassical economists, especially William Stanley Jevons and Alfred Marshall;
- II. (c.1890-1914) Policy-makers and social reformers, especially Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith;
- III. (c.1918-1939) Unemployed movements and literary representations, especially the National Unemployed Worker's Movement (NUWM) and George Orwell.

The periodization is not exact, because we will explore in some chapters the preceding context in which certain perspectives came to be formed and the later effects that some of them had, but it works as a general historical guide to the time periods covered. The thesis draws on original works by these authors as well as secondary literature to explore each set of perspectives. It employs some archival material in the form of documents pertaining to the development and reform of unemployment policy in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, such as the Royal Commission reports on the Poor Law, cabinet memoranda, select committee reports on unemployment and others. Biographical portraits of the figures listed above complement each set of perspectives, apart from the perspective of the NUWM, which is accompanied by a brief history of the movement instead.

Liberal government in this context should be understood with a small 'l', as opposed to the big 'L' of the Liberal Party. The anxieties that drive the Social Question match up well with the Foucauldian understanding of liberalism as an art or ethos of government (Foucault 2008). Nikolas Rose summarises this neatly:

Foucault himself suggested that liberalism should be seen neither as a historical period nor as a substantive doctrine of how to govern. Rather, liberalism denotes a certain ethos of governing, one which seeks to avoid the twin dangers of governing too much, and thereby distorting or destroying the operation of the natural laws of those zones upon which good government depends – families, markets, society, personal autonomy and responsibility – and governing too little, and thus failing to establish the conditions of civility, order, productivity and national wellbeing which make limited government possible.

(Rose 2004: 70)

In relation to the periods studied in the thesis, there is an emerging recognition that poverty and unemployment, as they came to be understood towards the end of the nineteenth century, had to be governed in new ways (Harris 1972). And within each set of perspectives, there is a coming to terms with how this must be done, based on how poor and unemployed people are themselves known and understood. The thesis makes an argument, though, that throughout the period covered, the way that the poor and unemployed, or segments of the poor and unemployed population, are spoken about and treated in ways that are distinctly “illiberal”. This idea is explored in the thesis under the rubric of “illiberal liberalism”, whereby the poor and unemployed are treated unequally – excluded, classified and coerced – in ways that contradict liberal principles of equality of

treatment and respect for individual autonomy (King 1999). This theme is explored further in the theoretical discussion below.

Representations of Class and Unemployment in History and Sociology

Although the thesis seeks to contribute to broader theoretical discussions on the history of social policy that are outlined below in the section on “Theorizing the Social”, it also engages with literature that looks at poverty and unemployment through representations of class. Of special interest is the role that is played by discursive constructions of the most marginal groups in society, such as the “residuum”, the “unemployables”, the “underclass” and “problem families”. This includes literature that looks at how these groupings are based on discourses that identify particular cultural and behavioural characteristics as problematic, and which themselves display historical continuity to varying extents (Jones 1984; McKibbin 1990; Dean & Taylor-Gooby 1992; Welshman 2013; Macnicol 1987; Bagguley 1998). The “underclass” concepts investigated in this literature have been linked to historical and more recent forms of discipline, social control and stigma (Dean, H. 1991; Harrison & Sanders 2014; Jones & Novak 1999;) and have permeated media and elite portrayals of working-class communities (Golding & Middleton 1982; Jones 2011; Hancock & Mooney 2013; McKenzie 2015). The contribution the thesis makes should be seen in part as a contribution to this literature.

Often the work that covers the formation and reproduction of class and other “marginal” identities comes from those working on the sociology of class. These often use the work of Pierre Bourdieu because of his focus on naming and classification (Crossley 2015). Skeggs (1997, 2004), for example, uses Bourdieu to

explore how value is attributed to different class, gender and race-based identities through processes of symbolic struggle. Sayer (2005) uses Bourdieu to explore the subjective experience of class and the complex ways in which class is constituted concretely. A recent survey on social class in Britain also emphasized a Bourdieusian approach that incorporates “cultural capital” for an understanding of class inequalities today (Savage 2013) and the enduring salience of ‘classed tastes, practices and discourse’ has been asserted against those who have posited the death of class-based identities (Atkinson 2010: 187). Tyler (2013) employs the notion of “social abjection” to look at how certain groups of people are figured as “revolting”, and how representational forms contribute to marginality and practices of exclusion, drawing on Rancière among others.

These explorations from sociology are important for understanding the discourses and practices that constitute class identities, and for asserting the enduring importance of class analysis for an understanding of how poverty and unemployment are constituted. Yet they fall short on three counts. Firstly, they sometimes display a lack of historical depth when it comes to exploring the (re)production of class and class representations. They share with critical social policy accounts a focus on how the unemployed are seen as irresponsible, dependent, workshy and inactive in neoliberal government discourse, and how this has legitimated policies of welfare retrenchment and harsher conditionality (Atkinson et al. 2013; Dwyer 2004; Levitas 2005; Lister 2011). But there is a much longer history to be explored, and more thoroughly, in terms of how the construction of unemployment developed around moralized conceptions of deservingness and dependency (Whiteside 2015).

Secondly, the focus on representations of class in these sociological accounts is too often divorced from analysis of historical changes in the labour market itself. Many, for example, draw on Gareth Stedman Jones' (1984) book *Outcast London* for its arguments about working class people, specifically casual labourers, being cast as dangerous and deviant figures. Commented on less is Stedman Jones' exploration of the structures of the casual labour market itself and how it was perceived. This point is important because understandings of unemployment have historically been formed against an idea of what constitutes "normal" employment (Walters 2000; Whiteside 2014), and systems of welfare and relief co-evolve with forms of labour market regulation (Jessop 2002; Peck 2001; Whiteside & Salais 1998). French sociological traditions demonstrate a richer analysis in this regard, looking at how the spread of wage labour and the insurance principle came about from the nineteenth century and before, and how these two phenomena are coming undone in the era of the 'New Social Question' since the 1970s (Rosanvallon 2000; Castel 2003).

Finally, sociological and social policy accounts of class representations and of unemployment rarely take account of how changes in economic thought over the long term have influenced the Social Question. Scholars critical of neoliberalism have noted its remarkable resilience since the financial crisis and have argued that we need to understand the ways in which market rule and competition are in fact reliant on state authority and intervention (Peck 2010; Davies 2014; Mirowski 2013; Crouch 2011). The economization of social and political life and the pervasiveness of neoliberal rationality is said to have established "*homo oeconomicus*" as an ideal model for existence today. Neoliberal welfare policies are seen to have instituted a 'reworking of the 'social question' as one of market rather than social citizenship' (Jayasuriya 2006: 17). Yet neoclassical

economics, bearer of the utility-maximizing individual, has a separate and longer history than neoliberalism (Brown 2015: 33; Mirowski 2013: 26). In order to consider the significance of this separate history and the relationship between the economic and the social, the thesis looks at the emergence of neoclassical economics in England and some of its earliest champions.

The Discovery of Unemployment and Perspectives on the Social Question

Unemployment was not a term in currency until the 1890s (Walters 2000: 12; Walters 1994) but vigorous debates on proposals to deal with those “in want of employment” and reform of the Poor Law system took place in and around this decade, and shortly thereafter settled on an insurance system as the principal means for tackling unemployment in the beginning of the twentieth century. Many histories of unemployment begin by looking at the establishment of this insurance system and the way that it constructed the category of unemployment as it was expanded in the interwar period (Garside 1980, 1990; Whiteside & Gillespie 1991; Whiteside 2014, 2015).

The thesis begins by looking at perspectives on the poverty and unemployment in an earlier era, before “unemployment” is discovered in economic thought. It looks at how judgements of deservingness and discourses of character were aimed at a pauper or residuum class, and sometimes at working-class people in general and how these were carried through to the interwar period. It seeks to question how, even as the problems of unemployment and poverty came to be related to structural conditions of the labour market, different perspectives sought to retain individualized, moralistic and behavioural explanations.

The discovery of unemployment is placed in the context of debates around the original Social Question. These debates were characterized by late-Victorian anxieties towards the social ills of 'industrial society', and discussions around governmental measures designed to deal with them. The "Question" is not singular; instead it pertains to a plethora of problems that come to be understood as "social" in nature. It incorporated hygiene, health and housing, "sweated" and casual labour, metropolitan criminality and the apparent moral depravity of slum life. It was intimately bound up with conceptions of social and economic progress and fuelled by the sensational journalism of the 1880s and the fears of middle-class society (Haggard 2001: Chapters Two, Three). This was also the period in which the labour and socialist movement emerged, and in which liberal consciousness of social problems became increasingly acute. It therefore represents an important turning point for a history of "the social".

As the Social Question encompasses so much, the thesis concentrates on exploring particular vantages or perspectives on poverty and unemployment. These perspectives cannot be detached from the wider context that generated the Social Question, but they form points of interest in explaining and understanding how more particular social problems came to be governed. To this end, the thesis explores the way in which the Social Question in general, and the government of unemployment in particular, plays out in three different sets of perspectives mentioned above and explained in more depth below.

1. The Neoclassical Economists

Debates surrounding the late-nineteenth century Social Question coincided with a number of intellectual developments within and outside of university walls.

From the 1870s, the discipline of economics began to emerge. In Britain this represented a transition from classical political economy to neoclassical economics, the latter embodied in the works of authors such as William Stanley Jevons and Alfred Marshall. For some historians of economic thought, this transition was seen as an emptying out of certain social conceptions of the economy and ethical concerns, evidenced by a shift away from explaining value through the relations of production to an individualized or subjective understanding of its creation (Dobb 1973; Meek 1974; Winch 1972; Milonakis & Fine 2009a: Chapter Six). It is also represented as the beginning of a narrow economic science that developed abstract techniques of thinking about, measuring and evaluating economic behaviour and rationalizing the economy which would later contribute to neoliberal rationalities of economization (Davies 2014: 26; Davies 2015: Chapter Two).

Although early neoclassical economists were writing before the discovery of unemployment, their theories of distribution and of labour supply had an important effect on later understandings of unemployment. In particular, they developed the idea of marginal productivity theory, which states that labour as a factor of production is paid in accordance with the productive contribution of each additional worker hired. Taken to its logical conclusion by later neoclassical economists, this theory states that workers will be paid what they are really worth through the market. This understanding feeds the idea that unemployment exists as a voluntary condition, brought about by wage demands that exceed the marginal product of labour. The upshot is that workers must adjust wage demands downward in order to secure employment in line with their market-given wage (Clay 1928; Cannan 1932; Hicks 1932).

The early neoclassical authors in England also felt compelled to address the social problems of Victorian society at the same time as they were compelled to develop economics as a respected, scientific discipline. They deserve attention in the context of the Social Question not least because they were motivated to write by it and were influenced by its existence. On the second page of Alfred Marshall's most influential work, he welcomes that:

... at last we are setting ourselves seriously to inquire whether it is necessary that there should be any so-called "lower classes" at all: that is, whether there need be large numbers of people doomed from their birth to hard work in order to provide for others the requisites of a refined and cultured life; while they themselves are prevented by their poverty and toil from having any share or part in that life.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 2-3)

Despite a voluminous literature on neoclassical economics and its standard-bearers, there remains scope to explore in their works how moral and economic reasoning relate to one another in the context of the Social Question. This allows for us to pursue at least two important tasks. First is the important task of disaggregating the long history of neoclassical economic thought or understanding it in what D uppe (2012a: 491) calls 'de-homogenized' terms. Too often the neoclassical tradition is thought of in monolithic terms; there is a need to understand the differences between economists who are said to constitute it (Milonakis & Fine 2009a: Chapter Seven). Second, to demonstrate how its pioneers negotiated the development of an abstract science while heeding the "social" character of problems of the period. In effect, this is a question of competing "economic" and "social" understandings of the Social Question, which reveal

themselves to be deeply intertwined. Both tasks speak to a question that is still pertinent today: ‘what is this “school” called neoclassical economics?’ (Lawson 2013: 947).

The path taken here is to consider two economists in particular – Jevons and Marshall – and how their understanding of a developing, abstract economic science was not divorced from the wider social and intellectual context in which they worked. This is done by concentrating on their more “abstract” economic texts – *The Theory of Political Economy* (Jevons [1911] 2013) first published in 1871 and *Principles of Economics* (Marshall [1920] 2013) first published in 1890 – alongside some of their other writings (e.g. Jevons 1866, 1869, 1882; Marshall & Marshall 1879; Marshall 1907). The thesis takes cues from those who have considered neoclassical economics and its relationship to the natural sciences (Mirowski 1989, 2002), early theories of psychology and the mind (Rafaelli 2001; Colander 2007; Cook 2005; Davies 2015) and assumptions around class, race and gender in Jevons’ and Marshall’s thought (White 1994a, 1994b; Pujol 1984; Peart 1996; Maas 2005; Cook 2009).

In particular, the two economists are read in terms of their understandings of character. Character had particular salience in the Victorian age (Collini 1985; Goodlad 2003), and we find that its presence in Jevons’ and Marshall’s works exhibit the morality and prejudices of the time in terms of attributing different work ethics to people of different race and character. These prejudices underpinned their understandings of labour supply and fed the idea that those of “lower” race, class and character were simply choosing not to offer their labour based on their inherent aversion to work. The education of character is also advanced by Marshall as the route to social and economic progress, and the thesis

explores how the burden of developing character is given a gendered perspective. Character is one of the core themes that runs through the thesis. Character discourses are traced from the works of early neoclassical economists through to the more recent workfare era, in which there is a growing focus on the psychology of the unemployed and character has emerged once again as an explanation for social progress.

II. Policy-Makers and Social Reformers

The second set of perspectives focuses on the Social Question in the period roughly from 1890 to 1914. This period presents an interesting broader problematic concerning the intersection of structural and behavioural explanations for poverty and unemployment among policy-makers and social reformers. It has been read as a transformative era of social policy in which government moved away from moralized conceptions of “the problem of the unemployed” to a more rational approach of “the problem of unemployment” that drew the responsibility of being unemployed away from individuals and onto the structures of industrial society (Harris 1972; Walters 2000). This is what is said to mark unemployment as a “discovery” in the history of welfare and relief, and it eventually allowed for the definition of unemployment as a problem of industrial society to be dealt with in the organization of the labour market through labour exchanges and the insurance system (Llewellyn Smith 1910; Beveridge 1912).

Yet, what we find on closer inspection is that behavioural explanations of poverty and unemployment are retained and even thrive throughout this era. The divisions of population into “deserving” and “undeserving” under the Poor Law

system finds a place in understandings of unemployment at the turn of the century (Whiteside 1979; Whiteside 1991).

The thesis investigates the continuing role of a moralizing discourses targeted at sections of the poor and unemployed population variously labelled as the “residuum”, “unemployables” and “habitual loafers”. It does this in more detail through portraits of three social reformers: Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. Their perspectives are read through the lenses, respectively, of social investigation, social work and social statistics and the thesis looks at how they identified and classified the poor and unemployed. Each explored poverty and unemployment in their own way, in ways that claimed to be more scientific and professional – through processes of mapping, social work and refining the statistical and definitional basis of unemployment. Part of the aim of exploring these perspectives is to understand how different ways of knowing the poor and unemployed led to various illiberal liberal strategies of exclusion, surveillance and control.

III. Unemployed Movements and Literary Representations

The third set of historical perspectives focuses on the representation of the unemployed. It does this by looking at the way in which they came to be represented and organized as a political force in the interwar period under the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement (NUWM). It also looks at how the unemployed were represented in literary terms by looking at “social explorer” literature (Keating 1976), and Orwell’s novel, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Orwell [1937] 1962).

The focus on the political representation of the unemployed demonstrates how perspectives of the poor and unemployed are challenged and developed in the context of oppositional discourses. The NUWM is part of a lineage of bodies that represented the unemployed – including the early Labour Party (Flanagan 1991) – and fought for the “right to work or full maintenance” from the state (Hannington 1977; Croucher 1987; Perry 2000). The thesis explores how this demand developed in the socialist and labour movement and was eventually taken on as part of a wide-ranging campaign by unemployed workers under the NUWM. The aim is to explore how stigma and illiberal policies are revealed through political contestation by the unemployed themselves. A secondary aim is to demonstrate how the radical demands of the unemployed are considered as excessive to liberal government in political and economic terms (Hanagan 1997). In this regard, we find that even those who speak for working-class interests, such as the interwar Labour Party, consider such demands excessive. This raises the idea of a “representational gap” between the radical demands of the unemployed and those who claim to represent them.

The inclusion of social explorer literature and Orwell’s novel in the thesis is justified by the idea that the poor and unemployed are constituted as subjects (of relief and welfare) in a variety of ways and through various media (Golding & Middleton 1982), including through “social novels” or working-class fiction (Fox 1994). Today, particular figures such as that of the “chav” are represented in excessive ways that reveal ‘class disgust’ (Tyler 2008: 19) and “demonization” of working-class people (Jones 2011). The claim is made that figuration of the unemployed has been historically contested ground, and that this is well evidenced in Orwell’s novel. *The Road to Wigan Pier* represents poverty and unemployment through several of the stigmatizing tropes and tools of social explorer literature,

however it also opens up the possibility for counter-narratives through ironic reflection on liberal, middle-class perspectives (Rae 1999).

The Social Question in the Workfare Era

The more recent period that the thesis focuses on is the period in which welfare-to-work – “workfare” from here onwards – is instituted in Britain. Workfare had antecedents in the shift to a supply-side focus on the employability of welfare recipients and the stricter conditionality under the Conservatives in the 1980s (Peck 2001). The first major workfare programmes were introduced by New Labour in 1998 and they have been expanded upon by successive governments ever since (Lyndsay & Dutton 2013). Workfare can be understood in simple terms as a policy regime that underpins the turn to “activation” in welfare, whereby unemployed people are made individually responsible for being out of work and are compelled to work on their own employability in order to get off benefits and back into work as soon as possible (Wright 2015). Eligibility for receiving benefits has been significantly tightened and a wealth of conditionality dictates that claimants must become increasingly “active” in their search for work (Dwyer 2004; Dwyer & Wright 2015). This often involves the imposition of work programmes or schemes on which claimants are made to “work for their benefits”, but for which they do not receive a wage.

Part of the intention of conducting an historical investigation is to make sense of the contemporary era of social policy and how the poor and unemployed are constituted as subjects today. Following the different perspectives on the Social Question from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the thesis turns to the era in which “workfare” has dominated as a policy paradigm in Britain. The

thesis therefore makes a claim to analyse both the liberal and neoliberal government of poverty and unemployment, as well as the “illiberal liberal” elements of both.

Notably absent is the era of the post-war welfare state itself. This missing middle is intentional though. The thesis is seeking to avoid the well-trodden ground of charting the erosion of a “golden age” of welfare by neoliberal government. In this approach the basic idea is that we have moved from an era of statutory labour market regulation in the post-war Keynesian era to market-based regulation in the neoliberal era (Standing 1999: 58-9). From this transition a new stratum of workers or class-in-the-making is emerging for whom precariousness and underemployment are the norm (Standing 2011). Instead the thesis is making a point about concentrating on what came before the welfare state, in order to explore historical resonances within the workfare era, understood by some as a ‘post-welfare’ settlement (Peck 2001: 129).

The thesis looks at the return of character discourses more recently and how, increasingly, workfare policies are targeting and laying claim to the psychology of the unemployed, extending the remit of previous “interventions” concerning employability. This has emerged in the context of significant interest from government in translating a mass of behavioural psychology and behavioural economics into policy (Jones, Pykett & Whitehead 2014). There is a need to question the new inequalities opened up by this policy context, and by the workfare industry, while also considering the way in which workfare is exacerbating inequality in established ways through disciplinary policies – conditionality and sanctioning – that enforce labour market precarity (Grover 2009; Wiggan 2015).

The thesis draws from the historical analysis of perspectives on the Social Question to investigate how “the social” might be understood today. In both the Social Question and the workfare eras the notion of illiberal liberal government is important for understanding how particular subjects and practices are constituted and carried out. In essence, this is a statement about the compatibility of certain illiberal or even authoritarian practices with liberal rationalities of government (Dean 2002; King 1999). Sovereign and non-sovereign institutions – from the Board of Trade or Department for Work and Pensions to the Charity Organisation Society or a private employment services provider – categorize, inscribe and value certain characteristics. In the neoliberal era, we explore how work as “the measure of society” has become totalizing in its effects, enforcing labour market discipline through harsh and punitive conditionality but also intensifying the interpretation of poverty and unemployment as an individual problem.

Theorizing the Social

The thesis attempts to construct a theoretical framework for understanding the history of unemployment as a social problem from three quite distinct sources. It draws on insights from the Marxist, Foucauldian and history of economic thought literatures in an attempt to make sense of “the social” both across the period of 1870-1939 and in the more recent era of workfare. In order to establish the compatibility of these literatures, and to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in using them together, this section explores how they approach the question of “the social”. Nikolas Rose once set out to remind his readers that “the social” ... does not represent an eternal existential sphere of human sociality. Rather, within a limited geographical and temporal field, it set the terms for the

way in which human intellectual, political and moral authorities ... thought about and acted upon their collective experience' (Rose 1996b: 329). Through an analysis of the social it becomes easy to see why the late-nineteenth century remains a focus for historical work and a highly productive period for investigation. Here I want to explore how "the social" has been understood in regard to understandings of "social rights" and "social control".

The Ambiguity of Social Citizenship

Traditionally, the period of the Social Question has been read as the primordial stirrings of the post-1945 welfare state ideology. T.H. Marshall's famous essay on 'Citizenship and Social Class', published in 1950, claimed that the period between Booth's survey of London (1889) and the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor (1895) 'saw the first big advancement in social rights ... [and] changes in the egalitarian principles expressed in citizenship' (Marshall & Bottomore 1992: 28). Universality in principle and provision of welfare has been understood as an outgrowth of the increased awareness of poverty and unemployment as a consequence of market failures, or a fact of industrial society, in this period.

The idea that the late-nineteenth century Social Question lies at the origins of the development of the welfare state, and set down an inexorable path towards greater "social rights", was long ago identified as a form of "Whig history" (Briggs 1961: 222).¹ Though there is something to the argument that the era witnessed a

¹ To give another example, Roberts starts from the basis that 'there can no longer be doubt that the origins of British collectivism run back to the Victorian era, alive with social reforms and bureaucratic growth.' Mid-Victorian England's 'paternalistic care for the lower classes' and pioneering administrative measures are read as welfare state origins already

reconceptualization of the social spaces of poverty and economic organization from the local to the national – bearing some resemblance to the centralization of the post-1945 welfare state – the pre-twentieth century focus of the Social Question was undeniably metropolitan and London-centric in outlook (Haggard 2001; Jones 1984). Moreover, reading the Social Question in this way might distract us from the reality that reform was piecemeal, tentative and experimental, as well as from the unintended consequences that administrative and legislative changes heralded.

The history of social rights relates to the government of unemployment in so far as the latter forms a wider part of the rights and duties of citizenship under the welfare state. So it is often highlighted that, from Beveridge to T.H. Marshall, theorists of the welfare state argued for the right to unemployment benefit under condition of an acceptance of the duty to work or seek work (Pierson 2004: 116). A point of basic importance here is that the universality of rights under the welfare state and the notion of social citizenship are, in fact, negotiated and conditional. It is through the ambiguity attached to the idea of social citizenship that we may begin to explore the contingent nature of equality and freedom in the liberal social policy tradition.

The factor that is often highlighted in T.H. Marshall's work is the territorial aspect of social citizenship, and how it came, eventually, to clarify a national space for rights and welfare institutions that was underpinned by a sense of equality. This notion that a formal and universal (within the nation) conception of social rights was the endpoint of a progressive march through different spheres of rights – civil, political and finally social – has faced many criticisms. We will come to the Marxist standpoint on the idea of the relief system and welfare state conferring

universal, social rights shortly. More recently, though, authors dedicated to close readings of T.H. Marshall's original understanding of social rights and citizenship have highlighted ambiguities in his original position on citizenship and community. These readings are incredibly revealing in how they demonstrate that our assumptions about social rights theorists are a lot more fragile, or even misleading, in the light of their original work. Powell (2002) has argued, for example, that T.H. Marshall in fact operated with a much more limited understanding of citizenship than is commonly assumed, one that was more concerned with removing stigma from the provision of public services than it was with universality. Furthermore, T.H. Marshall understood that citizenship did not strive for the eradication of inequality, but rather the lessening of some inequalities and the tolerance or recognition of others that would remain: 'citizenship was the architect of *legitimate* inequality' (Powell 2002: 234).

Wincott (2009), too, notes how Marshall acknowledged that citizenship validated certain inequalities. Using the example of wage bargaining, he demonstrates that Marshall accepted that occupational differences merit different remuneration based on hierarchies and classification of workers: 'the determination of status is conceived as a *social* and *political* process – negotiation or contest – in which some groups ultimately recognise that they *deserve less* than others' (Wincott 2009: 47).² The point is that reading T.H. Marshall on his own terms reveals the legitimisation and acceptance of class differences (and inequalities) as part of the terms of social justice. It is important to recognise that a major theorist, if not *the* major theorist of social citizenship, advanced an

² There are parallels, perhaps, with marginal productivity theory, which conceives the determination of the deserved wage as a strictly *economic* process.

understanding of the community of citizens that allows for inequality.³ One consequence of this, as Wincott points out, is that it becomes possible to argue for and expand upon 'legitimate' inequalities such as we see in neoliberal discourse regarding unemployment, and for government to act on these through welfare state retrenchment (Wincott 2009: 50).

It is possible, then, to point to significant distinctions concerning legitimate and illegitimate inequalities within the classical social citizenship literature, and in turn to the limitations of its radical or egalitarian consequences (Rees 1995: 360-361). To emphasize these limitations further, it is worth pointing to readings of the history of social policy that take as their starting point not the development of social rights but the development of forms of social regulation and control. This literature concentrates on the multitudinous ways in which the institutions, technologies, branches of knowledge and various practices of government facilitate and express different forms of control over populations, often isolating certain groups within society to which exceptional practices may apply. The concept of discipline is often central to this approach to the history of the social, and social relationships between government and the subjects of policy are understood in terms of how they are affected by the disciplinary structures of class, or the engendering of various power relations. But "control" can also be understood as the incorporation or inclusion of citizens in certain ways that seeks to govern their conduct and behaviour (Handler 2004; Jayasuriya 2006).

³ This is not to mention criticisms of T.H. Marshall's idea of social citizenship from feminist perspectives that highlight the patriarchal assumptions and consequences of his approach (see Pateman [1988] 2000; Lister 1990).

From Social Rights to Social Control

From a Marxist perspective, the development of the government of unemployment has been narrated as the disciplining and regulating of a market for labour. This view might be drawn from Marx himself, who dedicated a chapter in *Capital: Volume I* to 'Bloody Legislation against the Expropriated since the End of the Fifteenth Century': a particularly graphic story about everything from the Tudor and Elizabethan laws against vagabondage to Victorian legislation against combinations of workers (Marx 1976: 896-904). The state's power, as well as legislation regulating wages, the working day and the supply of labour was 'an essential aspect of so-called primitive accumulation' (Marx 1976: 900), the process by which producers are separated from the means of production, and come to depend on capital. It is a fundamental part of the process by which labour, or more accurately the worker's labour power, is made into a commodity to be bought and sold.

In the first half of the nineteenth century discipline was needed to press the labour force into fulfilling the requirements of the factory system. This was part of a long "bloody" history of disciplining labour that was still characterised by overtly coercive means of discipline, alongside developing forms of incentive and control (Saville 1994: 17; Pollard 1963). Chief among the new and developing forms of discipline was that of time discipline, which E.P. Thompson (1967a) so elegantly charted in the diffusion of clocks and watches at the end of the eighteenth century and the increasing importance of the "synchronization of labour" for the time-orientated factory system. Time was also central to Marx's analysis of class struggles over the working day, and how ultimately these were

also questions about the production of value and the appropriation of surplus value (Marx 1976: Chapter Ten).

The centrality of the institutions and laws designed to deal with the poor to bourgeois ideology was also a feature of Engels' chronicles of the condition of the working class, in his book of the same name (Engels [1845] 2009). He recounted the principle of "less eligibility" - that relief should come in a form less appealing than the lowest conditions of employment - through tales of pauper starvation. The thesis seeks to trace the imposition of this principle throughout the period that the historical perspectives cover and looks at how it has been re-animated in the workfare era through the development of what I call the "workfare industry" - the mass contracting-out of employment services to private contractors (Grover 2009).

In general though, at the core of many Marxist approaches to what might be termed the long history of social policy and welfare, we can say that there is a concern to identify how labour has historically been disciplined into becoming a factor of production. This involves everything from the processes of primitive accumulation and time discipline to managerial techniques in the workplace and the use of an 'industrial reserve army' of labour by capital (Marx 1976: 784). Marx was especially clear that changes in what he called the 'composition of capital' were important for understanding unemployment. The composition of capital is determined by the relationship between its 'constant' element made up of the means of production and its 'variable' element made up of living labour power and measured as wages (Marx 1976: 762). As capital accumulation progresses and the composition of capital changed - whether taking the form of the expansion or contraction of its constant or variable components or the concentration of the

former component – it had consequences for the labouring population. These included the possibility of ‘violent fluctuations and the temporary production of a surplus population, whether this takes the more striking form of the extrusion of workers already employed, or the less evident, but no less real, form of a greater difficulty in absorbing the additional working population through its customary outlets’ (Marx 1976: 782-3).

More contemporarily, Marxist political economists exploring the idea of social regulation have focused on the institutional or regulatory constellations that define the relationship between government and the labour market. Prominent among them is the regulation approach, developed in its Marxist guise by Jessop and others (Jessop 1993, 1997, 2002; see also Boyer 2002). This approach seeks to demonstrate how capitalism, and labour markets in particular, require continuous “extra-economic” interventions, such as the development of welfare state institutions, in order to reproduce a labour force. These interventions are always characterised by class struggles and political contestation over the role of social policy, but ultimately they become complementary to the requirements of the labour market in a given era. Thus the Keynesian Welfare State is to the Fordist regime of production what the “Schumpeterian Workfare State” is to neoliberal, flexible regimes of production (Jessop 1993). Jessop (2002: 25) has argued that a ‘relatively path-dependent structural coupling and co-evolution of economic and political regimes can be found in the forms of labour flexibility encouraged by different welfare regimes.’ Welfare states seen from this perspective thus provide a necessary, yet historically contingent – and importantly, contingent upon class *struggles* – structural function for capitalist society.

The regulation approach has by now established itself at the heart of critical approaches to the history of welfare and the ongoing permutations of workfare. In particular, economic geography has contributed to institutionalist perspectives of labour market and welfare history that adopt a “softer” regulation approach less wedded to Marxist analysis (Peck 2001; Theodore & Peck 2000a, 2000b). The scope of these studies is often wide, insofar as they take account of the ideological and institutional bases of government projects that have increasingly come to influence one another internationally (consider the transnational diffusion of ideas around welfare-to-work and active labour market policies). These same geographers also consider, understandably, the spatial dimension of social relations and social policy. Workfare has its own spatial politics, which involves a series of scales – the local, national, international – that are interwoven and constitute one another to produce particular institutional outcomes in welfare administration and provision (Peck 2002).

The longer-term evolution of these constellations or regulatory projects is made sense of historically through loose periodization; Peck (2001), for example, charts the British history moving from workhouse, to welfare, to workfare. The co-evolutionary aspect is important for these perspectives: a dominant institutional form of relief system and a dominant form of labour-market regulation constitutes each distinct “regime of regulation”. The workhouse regime was ‘definitionally minimalist, structured according to the principle of less eligibility and critically dependent on the deterrent effect of the poorhouse with its associated ceremonies of degradation’ (Peck 2001: 46). The era defined by Fordist systems of production was supported by welfare institutions that became increasingly national, standardized and bureaucratized, and rested on the assumption of full (male) employment (Peck 2001: 47). In the latest regulatory phase welfare-to-work

programmes are considered 'social policy analogues of flexible labour markets' (Theodore & Peck 2000b: 120): contingency and insecurity in jobs at the lower end of the labour market is fed by the gearing of the unemployed towards work of any kind by disciplinary means embodied in welfare conditionality.

Thus "the social" in Marxist thought concerning unemployment and the welfare state is contingent upon, and coterminous with the permeation of capitalist relations of production. The continuous contradictions that are generated in the process of making labour into a 'fictitious commodity' and the perpetual drive for capital to seek profit generate the need for extra-economic interventions to regulate and ensure capital's reproduction (Jessop 2002: 18). The reason why this is theoretically useful is that it provides an answer to the fundamental question of why unemployment exists and why institutions that regulate the labour market and ensure the reproduction of the labour force exist as they do. It gets at why wage-labour becomes, through often-violent and disciplinary processes, a dominant form for the necessary reproduction of the means of life.

The contradictory nature of the Marxist approach to the welfare state itself is one of the premises for Gough's (1979) classic study, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*. Acknowledging the positive improvements in standards of living that the welfare state enacts, while condemning it as a structural function of capitalism appears inconsistent. Gough maintains, however, that both are possible. The functionalist account which sees the social reproduction of the labour force as a historical necessity for capital's reproduction, and as part of the commodification and exploitation of workers and their labour power is incomplete without an appreciation of the actual process of class struggle over the form that this social

reproduction takes: for example, contestation over social policy. The “contradictory unity” reflects the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production in capitalist society. The welfare state:

... simultaneously embodies tendencies to enhance social welfare, to develop the powers of individuals, to exert social control over the blind play of market forces; and tendencies to repress and control people, to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy.

(Gough 1979: 11-12)

The thesis employs a similar analysis throughout, and argues for the permanent tension between the development of social rights and the strictures of social control.

Another strand of thinking that has roots in Marxist analysis looks at the steady growth of “social control” through the expansion of government and the increasing permeation of society by bourgeois norms. This concept advances the idea that “control” takes the form of the disciplining and “civilizing” efforts of bourgeois capitalist society. A muddy concept, social control is usually used to describe the processes of socialization in an ‘inter-class’ context, such as the imposition of bourgeois habits and opinions on working class people (Thompson 1981: 190). This literature first emerged within the set of social history perspectives in the 1950s and 1960s in an uneasy relationship between Marxist and functionalist explanations of social change, often focused on the decline of popular recreation and traditional (working class) forms of leisure in the face of an advancing capitalist logic (Jones 1983: 76-77, 86). The idea of social control was later employed in critiques of the repressive and disciplinary nature of the

administration of welfare historically, in its relationship to the penal system, for example (Garland 1981; Cohen & Scull 1983; Cohen 1985). Since then, it has been employed to understand the development of the post-war welfare state, as an explanation for expanding welfare bureaucracies and the role of labour market discipline (Offe 1984: 155-156).⁴ Later still it can be sensed in analyses that were theoretically eclectic – drawing on an array of theorists to understand the formation of class and gender identities – but which maintained the importance of ideas of moral/class authority as a determinant of social change and socialization (Skeggs 1997, 2004, 2005; Sayer 2005) and emphasizing the rise of new behavioural policies more recently (Harrison & Sanders 2014).

Foucault and Social Control

One strand of thinking close to the idea of social control found a home within literature that drew on Michel Foucault's work. In these accounts the vague idea of social control was complicated by detailed theoretical investigation of the relationship between changes in knowledge, expertise and measurement, and practices of social administration as well as the practice of government itself; this was research that explicitly rejected the functionalist or typical Marxist accounts of the relationship between government and its subjects. Rose's (1979) early work, for example, explored the connections between the development of psychology, eugenics, ideas of efficiency and the management of population (including paupers, the "mentally defective", "degenerates", etc.). This literature, which stands at the head of a considerable legacy of research that employs Foucault's framework of governmentality and genealogy, has sought to question the forms of knowledge

⁴ These have their counterparts in analyses of North American welfare state history (Piven & Cloward 1972; Wacquant 2009).

and the practical instruments of government that defined “the social” in a particular era (Hewitt 1983; Dean 1991; Walters 2000; Rose 1996a, 2004).

Within Foucault’s work itself there was a shift in the way that power was studied, or perhaps, more accurately, a shift in the focus of his analysis of power. First published in 1975, *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977) explored the emergence of the “disciplines” from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This entailed an investigation of the development of different techniques and forms of knowledge within a number of “disciplinary institutions” – the school, the factory, the hospital, the military, the prison – that constituted new means and new understandings of disciplining, controlling and punishing: ‘[w]hat was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it’ (1977: 138). This machinery operated like a ‘microscope of conduct’ that rendered visible individual behaviour through, among other means, processes of documenting and architectures of surveillance, and which had conditioning, obedience-inducing and normalizing effects (1977: 173-178). Above all, though, the turn to disciplinary power represented a shift away from the spectacular and overt exercise of punishment by the sovereign monarch towards the complex play of power relations at the smallest scale that sought to shape and discipline the individual.

Several years later, and partially in response to Marxist critics who claimed that *Discipline and Punish* failed to address larger-scale power relations between state and society (Gordon 1991: 4), Foucault turned his attention to the larger problem of understanding government in his 1977-78 lectures (Foucault 2007). Here he claimed that the same approach to the disciplines and the study of

techniques and practices of disciplinary power bearing on individuals within institutions such as the prison could be employed to look at the 'totalizing institution of the state' itself (Foucault 2007: 118-119). This analysis, rather than adopting a history of state forms, took the form of a history of governmental *practices* that investigated the idea of the 'pastorate' in Western Christianity and the functioning of pastoral power as the management of the 'everyday conduct' of individual souls (2007: 154). As well as being an experimental history of the rationality of power within the institutions of Western Christendom, these lectures were aimed at developing an understanding of the form that liberal governmental practice later took. The state, as he later noted, could be seen as 'a modern matrix of individualization, or a new form of pastoral power' (Foucault 1982: 783).

The important historical juncture in Foucault's lectures was the development of an "art of government" or "governmentality" in the eighteenth century, which, though it did not free itself from the pastoral mode of power entirely, constituted a novel rationality of government that took population as its focus. This work had antecedents in his understanding of an era of 'biopower' or the 'administering of life', which was marked by 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations' starting in the seventeenth century, and which was an 'indispensable element in the development of capitalism' throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Foucault 1978: 139-141).⁵

⁵ "The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable' (Foucault 1978: 141).

The important definition of this governmental rationality, or 'governmentality', is the 'conduct of conduct', described by Dean as:

[a]ny more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.

(Dean 2010: 18)

There is now a tradition of scholarship that investigates the social in relation to unemployment (Walters 2000; Dean 1995), the constitution of poverty (Dean 1991), the insurance method (Donzelot 1988) and the domain of social policy itself (Hewitt 1983) based on Foucault's work.

What has been described as the 'Foucault effect in the English-speaking world' (Donzelot & Gordon 2008: 48) has produced a particular concern to understand the nature of liberal government as a changing and multi-faceted set of techniques, practices and rationalities. Foucault (1982) noted that the exercise of power by government in the modern era, and in particular the process of conducting individuals, was conditional on freedom. 'To govern...is to structure the possible field of action of others' but 'individual or collective subjects ... are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse compartments may be realized' (1982: 790). He also turned his attention to the liberal art of government and its manifestations in German and American neoliberalism in his 1978-1979 lectures now published as *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 2008).

Those following Foucault's approach to liberalism since have sought to investigate the liberal art of government and its variability over time, including the changing nature of neoliberalism, or "advanced liberalism" as Rose preferred to call it (Rose 1996a, 2004). In late-nineteenth-century liberalism "the social" became a particular form of rule, through which expert authority was bound to the apparatus of government in an attempt to assuage 'the undesirable consequences of industrial life, wage labour and urban existence' (Rose 1996a: 39-40). 'Simultaneously', Rose notes, 'political forces would ... articulate their demand upon the State *in the name of the social*: the nation must be governed in the interests of social protection, social justice, social rights and social solidarity' (Rose 1996b: 329).

Foucauldian approaches to the social are theoretically useful for an understanding of unemployment because of their predilection for "how" questions. They seek out how particular rationalities of liberal government draw on certain techniques such as the social survey, certain technologies and practices such as the labour exchange system and certain forms of knowledge or disciplines such as psychology and economics. On unemployment specifically, William Walters' (2000) *Unemployment and Government* is undoubtedly still the most developed account within the tradition. Taking a genealogical approach to the social, it looks at how unemployment has been problematized:

... as a problem of labour markets and industrial disorganization (Beveridge); as a socio-psychological matter of "demoralization" amongst industrial workers (during the 1930s); as a risk which afflicts a given population (the insurance view); as a fully economic problem rooted in the

structure of the national economy (Keynes) or, more recently the local economy; and, most recently, as a question of individuals and communities which lack the skills and the capacity to adapt to the “information-economies” of the coming century.

(Walters 2000: 4)

Marxist-Foucauldian Engagement?

Is there prospect for compatibility between the Marxist and Foucauldian literatures? Walters is doubtful, arguing that genealogical approaches are averse to structuralist, political economy accounts. The latter, he argues, take as essential the systematizing effects of certain ‘trans-historical’ structures such as capital and the state, and advance explanations of social change that run from the general and universal down to the specific, the opposite of the genealogical method of study (2000: 10-11). Foucault does indeed appear to have been firm on the need to ‘make an ascending analysis of power ... begin with its infinitesimal mechanisms’ and work up to ‘general mechanisms and forms of overall domination’ from these (Foucault 2003: 30).

Yet, Walters’ arguments about the opposition between structuralist approaches to welfare states and those of Foucauldian approaches were penned before the publication in English of Foucault’s lecture series on governmentality (2003, 2007, 2008). Without arguing that there is something essential that might be captured from these lectures for seeking a relationship between so-called structuralist and post-structuralist readings of the welfare state, it appears that they open up the possibility of dialogue. Jessop (2007) has contended that Foucault increasingly sought to talk about the way in which certain power relations were crystallized in strategic articulations, how some technologies and

practices were selected and retained at a given time. There is thus potential to pursue how governmental practices are codified at a more “macro” scale in historical context, and evidence that Foucault himself did this when looking at how political economy became a constitutive knowledge for organizing the state and the economy along capitalist lines.

We might, as has been hinted at here, suggest that Marxist and Foucauldian approaches are better at asking different types of question about the social. So far it has been the suggestion that Marxist approaches capture the historic necessity within capitalism for institutions that reproduce labour as a factor of production or a fictitious commodity, and that these increasingly become embedded in particular historical regimes of capital accumulation. A Foucauldian approach might maintain that we can only see capitalist state development as a consequence of the multiple and complex power relations and practical projects that emerge through institutions distant from a single centre of sovereign power and that ultimately challenge the basis on which we might talk about the “essence” of the category “state”, let alone “capitalist state”. The broad difference suggested here, though, is that Marxists seem to get at the “why?” and Foucauldians at the “how?” of these developments. Indeed, Jessop claims that productive engagement might be sought along these very lines, paraphrasing Marsden’s (1999) reading, and noting that it seems that ‘while Marx seeks to explain the *why* of capital accumulation and state power, Foucault’s analyses of disciplinarity and governmentality try to explain the *how* of economic exploitation and political domination’ (Jessop 2007: 40; Dean, H. 1991: 33).

Similarly, Dean, in his book *Social Security and Social Control* (Dean, H. 1991) suggests that a Foucauldian analysis can complement a Marxist

understanding of social control by making concrete the abstract formulations of the latter:

It is only by marrying a sketchy, if sophisticated, development of Marxist theory (which does at least account for a source of power/domination) with a post-structuralist theory (which doesn't) that it seems we can come close to a plausible explanation of social control as a phenomenon which specifically directs individual behaviour.

(Dean, H. 1991: 29)

The thesis takes elements of both Marxist and Foucauldian approaches to social control and runs them through the historical perspectives it explores. The idea that, in essence, social control is structured by relations of domination between capital and labour and the need to reproduce the labour force must be qualified by looking at the particular logics and discourses that have defined social control in any given era. From the Marxist approach, the thesis takes the idea of the constant need for labour market discipline – particularly through ensuring the principle of “less eligibility” for those seeking assistance – and the focus on the co-evolution of labour market and relief/welfare institutions. From the Foucauldian approach, the thesis takes the emphasis on the different techniques, practices and forms of knowledge for surveilling, or knowing, and governing the conduct of particular populations.

A central focus in the thesis is on the moralized judgements aimed at the poor and unemployed and how these serve to classify and “partition” (Dean, H. 1991; Foucault 1977) them on the basis of deservingness. These judgements often give rise to the idea that segments of the poor and unemployed must be marked out for exceptional treatment: coerced, excluded or segregated (King 1999). From

the Foucauldian approach, the thesis takes the emphasis on how particular subjects are produced through forms of social control that might express a pastoral logic (Foucault 1982). This will be explored in terms of how different historical perspectives suggest governing conduct in different ways, seeking to influence character, moral dispositions, habits and attitudes.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One begins by looking at the transition from classical political economy to neoclassical economics. It explores how historians of economic thought and neoclassical economists have, respectively, read this transition as a narrowing of the social and normative concern of political economy and as the springboard for a more “scientific” economics. These arguments are investigated by looking at the methodological and explanatory changes in the move from an objective to a subjective theory of value in the “marginal revolution”. The second part of the Chapter goes on to contend that early English economists remained engaged with the Social Question of the late-nineteenth century but that their approaches to labour supply and marginal productivity theory paved the way for later neoclassical theories to conceptualize unemployment as a voluntary phenomenon that lays responsibility with workers themselves.

Chapter Two looks at the work of William Stanley Jevons and Alfred Marshall in more depth as the first in the series of historical perspectives explored in the thesis. It reads Jevons as a “neoclassical pioneer” and investigates the relationship between moral and economic reasoning (or registers) in his *Theory of Political Economy* ([1911] 2013). It focuses on the role of class, race and character in his economic thought and his suggestions for cultivating middle-class tastes and

habits in working-class people. The second part of Chapter Two looks at Alfred Marshall as “neoclassical professionalizer”. It emphasises his understanding of character and vigour as vehicles for the moral and social development of the nation and investigates his emphasis on the family and parenting as responsible architects of human capital.

Chapter Three explores the second set of historical perspectives on the Social Question. It contextualises these perspectives within the developing perceptions of social crisis and the growth of “expertise” in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras. The second part of the Chapter charts how poverty came to be identified and defined against pauperism and unemployment against and through the phenomenon of underemployment or casual labour. The third part explores the contributions of Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith to understandings of poverty and development. It reads these contributions through the techniques, discourses and practices of social investigation, social work and social statistics, aiming to uncover their “illiberal liberal” aspects.

Chapter Four looks at the third set of perspectives, exploring these through the idea of the “representation” of the unemployed. It investigates how the unemployed were represented in the interwar period politically by the NUWM and figuratively by George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier* ([1937] 1962). It sets each form of representation in context: the political representation of the unemployed in the context of various labour and socialist groups and parties that sought to campaign on their behalf; and the figurative or literary representation in the context of “social explorer” literature (Keating 1976) and its particular tools and themes. The Chapter also returns to economic conceptions of unemployment and seeks to construct connections between interwar perspectives of the unemployed

as “demoralized” and economic theories of unemployment later in the twentieth century that point towards “activation” as a policy solution.

Chapter Five covers the neoliberal, workfare era. It gives a brief historical overview of workfare in Britain and then explores the development of a “workfare industry” in the contracting out of employment services to private providers. In the second part of the Chapter, the apparently contradictory relationship between a punitive form of labour market discipline and an ethic of care expressed in “personalized” conditionality is studied. The third part of the Chapter explores the idea of “social exclusion” and the “Broken Society” under New Labour and the Coalition Governments respectively. It goes on to consider the return of character discourses under the Coalition and the intensification of behaviour change policies.

The Conclusion presents a summary of the main argument and findings of the thesis and draws out the relevance of each chapter to those findings. It considers why these are important and what methodological implications there are for writing a history of poverty and unemployment based on the chosen perspectives. Finally, the Conclusion reflects on future avenues for research and hopes for the possibilities that might be opened up by new perspectives on the history of poverty and unemployment.

Chapter One

The Neoclassical Transition

Introduction

The introductory chapter outlined how this thesis will explore historical perspectives on the Social Question. This chapter begins the investigation by looking at the development of political economy and economics in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, commonly designated as the period in which the neoclassical approach was established and marginal utility as an explanatory framework came to triumph. It will present an overview of the literature that deals with the transition from classical to neoclassical approaches, focusing on how the move to subjective theories of value is dealt with, and on portrayals of the “marginalist” scholars these theories are associated with. It will seek to question the standard narrative, that the shift from objective to subjective value marked an abrupt removal of distributional and social concerns from the field of economics and a clean break from classical political economy. The thesis goes on to show how it is important to consider the relationship between economic and social conceptions of the Social Question within neoclassical economics and demonstrates that early English neoclassical scholars remained engaged with the social problems of their time.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One, I will examine the so-called standard narrative mentioned above. Justifications will be made for beginning the analysis in 1870 through an exploration of why other authors have chosen this period as one of decisive change in economic thought. The chapter will then focus on perspectives from the history of economic thought that touch on the

subject of value and the move from classical, objective theories of value to neoclassical, subjective theories of value. It takes special account of the role that mathematics and psychology played in this transition. The contention advanced is that the dualism between objective and subjective value theory, while useful in many ways, masks the intricacies of what happens to social concerns within economics in this period. We would do better to uncover the changing nature of social and distributional concerns within the marginal utility tradition if we assessed the detail of authors' arguments, rather than only pushing larger contrasts as an explanation of what happened with the advent of neoclassical economics.

Part Two of the chapter examines neoclassical theorists in more detail. It breaks down the idea of a coherent body of thought among those advancing marginal utility and subjective value as a framework for understanding the economy. This will remain largely an examination of the secondary literature on neoclassical authors, as opposed to one that draws on the authors' arguments in their own words. A more thoroughgoing exploration of the original works will be reserved for the following chapter of the thesis. In this chapter the aim is to demonstrate that there exists history of economic thought literature that can aid us to problematize some of the claims made about the late-nineteenth century and to analyse in more depth how economic theorists and their ideas related to distributional concerns as well as the economic practices and policies that dealt with them.

Part Two does, however, reanimate a particular lineage of thinking concerning unemployment, and the neoclassical theory of distribution. Jevons and Marshall were both writing before "unemployment" was a term in currency, either

popularly or in economics. The thesis reads a lineage of thought around the idea of marginal productivity theory, attributed especially to Marshall, which leads to later conceptions of “voluntary unemployment”. An argument is made that early neoclassical economists bear responsibility for opening up the possibility for later neoclassical economists to theorize unemployment as a problem of labour not adjusting itself to the market-clearing real wage, thus rendering it voluntary. This is an understanding that Keynes comes to contend with in the 1930s, when he gives an understanding of involuntary unemployment and argues for state intervention to combat it (De Vroey 2004: Chapter Five). The thesis later picks up on this idea of the distinction between voluntary and involuntary unemployment in economic thought in the second half of the twentieth century (see Chapter Four). However, we will see that in looser terms, the voluntary and involuntary distinction is also one that maps on to ideas of (un)deservingness and the conditions of eligibility that attach to the receipt of benefits (see Chapter Three and Four). The idea that working class people, or the residuum or underclass, bear unemployment as their own responsibility consistently drives thinking in policy, in popular discourse and sometimes in economic thought. Chapter Two argues this in relation to Jevons’ and Marshall’s perspectives of poverty and unemployment and Chapter Three explores how Booth, Bosanquet and Llewellyn Smith retain moralizing judgements of the poor and unemployed.

For reasons of feasibility this chapter and the next will limit the detailed examination of neoclassical economists to William Stanley Jevons (1835 – 1882) and Alfred Marshall (1842 – 1924). Although the ideas of several other neoclassical economists will be engaged with, the decision to concentrate on these two authors, and the Jevonian and Marshallian traditions, is absolutely necessary. This is not a thesis that focuses entirely on the history of economic thought. Its focus is

perspectives on the Social Question, of which the economics tradition plays a large role. Choosing to limit the host of characters under closer discussion in this chapter and the next allows space for engagement with the other historical perspectives in the following chapters. This choice makes all the more sense because these two economists are the most prominent and influential figures in the Anglophone neoclassical canon. Jevons represents the first generation of marginal theorists, Marshall the second. The Marshallian tradition is more extensive, due to the fact that Marshall's *Principles of Economics* of 1890 became a popular and definitive textbook and that his student disciples became prominent and influential economists themselves (Milonakis & Fine 2009a: Chapter Seven). The Jevonian tradition is not embodied in disciples in the same way, but is no less important for that (see Flatau 2004).

The chapter as a whole will introduce the reader to one of the three sets of historical perspectives on the Social Question that the thesis aims to investigate. It will contribute to an understanding of how economics was evolving in this period and how it engaged with questions pertaining to distribution, unemployment and relief: that is, *social* questions. It will demonstrate how changes in the study of economics itself, changes in the way that economists defined the terms and concerns of their subject, proceeded in relation to some of the social questions of their day. Together, these two chapters form the starting ground of how the Social Question was conceptualized in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. They explore the relationship between the development of an abstract economic science and social conceptions of poverty and unemployment.

Part One: From Classical Political Economy to Neoclassical Economics

Representing the Marginal Revolution

Under the standard historiographical narrative, it is deemed that, sometime towards the end of the nineteenth century, neoclassical economics was born, eclipsing the field of enquiry known as classical political economy. Both these labels – neoclassical and classical – were originally employed with specific targets in mind and both in something of a derogatory sense: the former by Veblen in reference to one strand of ‘marginalist’ theorizing associated with Alfred Marshall (Veblen 1900: 261);⁶ the latter by Marx in reference to the work of David Ricardo and James Mill, among others, and their tendency for logical deduction (Watson 2005: 68; see also Marx [1867] 1976: 96). It is these kind of qualifications that hint at the difficulties of describing, let alone explaining, such a transition in the history of economic thought. We are dealing in terms that are supposed to define an array of scholars, and that are now used to conjure up the essence of their ontological, epistemological, methodological and normative approaches. Important nuances are bound to be lost in these broader categories. Part One will explore the work of those who have attempted to characterize the grand shifts in economic thought. It will concentrate on how they tackle the issues of what exactly it was that was changing, what this signified for economic theory and the emergence of the economics discipline, and what this meant for economists’ social concerns.

The standard means of accounting for the divide between classical and neoclassical economics is to take a set of economic theorists as representative of

⁶ N.B. “marginalist” is not Veblen’s word. It is thought that the earliest use of the term “marginalism” occurs in J.A. Hobson’s *Work and Wealth* in 1914. As with the prefixes classical and neoclassical it was originally used in a critical way (Groenewegen 2003: 246).

both “eras” and present shared assumptions that might define them against each other. From the classical era a common selection of theorists is Smith, Ricardo and Marx (e.g. Napoleoni 1975). From the neoclassical era (the 1870s onwards) it is the men who are deigned to have enacted the “marginal revolution” – William Stanley Jevons, Léon Walras and Carl Menger – and to have begun the task of founding economics as a professional discipline in its own right. With the rise of the latter set of theorists, a process of narrowing of the scope of what economic theorizing would include is said to have taken place. Where Smith’s writings had considered matters of jurisprudence and ethics, as well as the nature of economic relations, the marginal economists are held responsible for initiating the advance towards a restricted view of the economy, based on the behaviour of rational, utility-maximizing individuals. For later (neoclassical) economists themselves, it represented a positive advance in which the discipline was finally put on a more scientific footing (Samuelson 1983; Robbins 1932; Knight 1956; Stigler 1983).

The classical theorists are considered representative of a period in which economic theory displayed an avowed normative element and in which economic theorists held a social conception of economic relations. Such a conception might be based on the class dynamics of capitalist production, as was the case for Marx ([1867] 1976), or on the moral constitution of the individual in commercial society, as it was for Smith ([1776] 1981). This is part of the reason why contemporary political economists call for a renewal of the classical approach; it inspires 'genuine political engagement about preferred forms of modern social life' (Higgott & Watson 2007: 13). The marginal theorists, by contrast, are held responsible for instigating a neoclassical “counter-revolution” in which economics would become limited to the narrow, scientific study of ‘allocating scarce resources among various and competing ends’ (Tabb 1999: 91; Heilbroner 1997; Gamble

1995; Milonakis & Fine 2009a, 2009b). A more limited understanding of what economics was, what doing economics meant, is seen to have had an important impact on the unification of the discipline. To some, the transformation was total:

[A] new orthodoxy had asserted itself, and even if certain differences between the national schools were to last a long time, it had become clear to everybody that all over the world a single science was being studied and one language spoken; the neoclassical system had imposed itself.

(Screpanti & Zamagni 2005: 165)

After 1870 ... [t]he essence of the economic problem was to search for the conditions under which given productive services were allocated with optimal results among competing uses, optimal in the sense of maximizing consumers' satisfactions ... For the first time, economics truly became the science that studies the relationship between *given* ends and *given* scarce means that have alternative uses.

(Blaug 1985: 295)

Every student who has taken an introductory course in economics will feel a sense of familiarity reading that second quotation from Blaug. This is because it comes from Lionel Robbins' well-known definition of economics, written more than 60 years after 1870: 'Economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between given ends and scarce means which have alternative uses' (Robbins 1932: 15). Blaug's *Economic Theory in Retrospect* (1985) lives up to its title by reading a definition of economics coined in the 1930s retrospectively into

post-1870 economics. Interestingly, in his own book, Robbins reads his own definition in the same way, “homogenizing” the contribution of Jevons, Menger and Walras and linking this homogenized vision to his own definition of ‘Modern Economics’ (White 2004: 262-263). In the original Preface to his *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, he even states that, “[f]or the views which I have advanced, I make no claim whatever to originality ... in the main, my object has been to state, as simply as I could, propositions which are the common property of most modern economists (Robbins 1932: viii). Economists themselves are particularly guilty of reading back into the marginal revolution their own ideas about what economics constitutes.

The political, social and moral element severed from the economic, the marginal revolution is considered to have spawned an economics discipline that was not only isolated from other social sciences but that also sought to monopolize them.⁷ On the one hand, the marginal theorists are charged with viewing economics as ‘a disconnected sphere, a closed system following its own calculative logic’ (Patomäki 2009: 314). Such logic is said to imply the separation of concerns of efficiency from those of equity, a division that is traced back to “standard” neoclassical economists such as Pareto and Robbins (Klasen 2008). On the other hand, neoclassical economists stand accused of seeking to transfer their logic to other areas through a kind of “economics imperialism”, most often associated with a “1920s” or “pre-Keynesian” orthodoxy that replaced classical political economy and “discarded” the political (Michie, Oughton & Wilkinson 2002). But if the focus of economics became scarce means among competing ends only with Robbins’ 1932 definition of the subject, and even then it is considered to have taken another

⁷ Milonakis and Fine (2009b: 5) argue that this is the way economics imperialism necessarily proceeded: a reduction to accepted marginalist and neoclassical principles as definitive of the discipline proceeded by the expansion of economics based on these principles to other social sciences.

30 years for this definition to be accepted widely (Backhouse & Medema 2009b: 806), and for an economics imperialism to have triumphed (Milonakis & Fine 2009b: 1), then what defined the earlier development of economics?

The varying descriptors and persons associated with and said to be representative of neoclassical economics form part of the problem of identifying what changes occurred and how this had an impact on the development of economic theory. Later in Part One, the focus will be on problematizing the image of a homogenous “neoclassical tradition”. For now, it is enough to note that “marginalist”, “pre-Keynesian”, “orthodox” and even “neoclassical” itself are ambiguous enough terms for us to question (but not necessarily reject) their analytical worth for the historical study of economics. The chapter will, nevertheless, continue to explore what the neoclassical “logic” is supposed to have consisted of, some of the terms used to characterize the transition and what kind of picture this paints of the neoclassical economists before challenging the idea of homogeneity. First though, a note on why the thesis takes 1870 as the starting date for the period under study, with particular regard to neoclassical economics.

Timing the Neoclassical Revolution, or Why 1870?

The starting point for the period under study in this thesis is 1870. From the vantage of a history of economic thought scholar, there are good reasons to shun this date as the beginning of a revolution in economic theory. As is often noted, there are considerable overlaps in methodology and analytical concerns between the classical and neoclassical eras. Blaug (1972: 272) points to the argument that there were ‘multiple’ previous ‘discoveries’ of marginal utility throughout the nineteenth century, starting with Lloyd, Longfield and Senior in the

1830s and ranging through to Dupuit, Gossen (whom Jevons himself acknowledges as a precursor) and Jennings in the 1840s and 1850s (see also Waterman 2002: 23).⁸ Similarly, economic methodology seems to transcend 1870 if we look at the divide between deductive and inductive approaches. We might, for example, trace an 'empirically minimalist, ultra-deductivist doctrine' from Senior, Ricardo and both James Mill and J.S. Mill in and across the nineteenth century, through to Robbins in the 1930s (Hutchison 1998: 44). As a watershed moment in the history of economic thought, 1870 might look less and less like an appropriate choice.

Yet, there are many ways in which it makes sense as a beginning point, especially as a heuristic device. Indeed, the majority of history of economic thought scholars, whether out of individual convenience or some attempt at forming a consensus (or both), seem to consider it an acceptable point at which to commence an analysis of marginalism in England.⁹ Even Blaug, who issues fierce warnings about the tendency for scholars to confuse explanations of the origins of the marginal 'revolution' with its ultimate triumph, is forced to concede that the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a Kuhnian paradigm shift in economic theory (1972: 270, 274). This, he maintains, was principally due to the process of professionalization that economics underwent from the 1870s onwards and picked up with the publication of Marshall's *Principles of Economics* in 1890. This process might be told partly as the story of scholars making their mark as they passed through institutions, such as Jevons, who became first an economist and then an

⁸ It should be noted that Blaug views the precursors and simultaneous elaborations of marginal utility not as 'multiple discoveries' but instead as 'the temporal coincidence of three or more singletons' (Blaug 1972: 280). As already mentioned, he later presents this as the accomplishment of later economic thought – Robbins' definition of economic science – read back into the 1870s.

⁹ A.W. Coats, one of the organisers of the 1971 *History of Political Economy* conference on the marginal revolution that took place in Bellagio, Italy, states that it is 'the conventional view' that it was indeed a revolution and that it began in the 1870s (Coats 1972: 304).

academic (Black 1993: 162);¹⁰ it may also be told as the gradual institutionalization of economics in British universities, formed by the disciplinary divisions it made from the moral sciences and history, starting in the late-nineteenth century (Kadish & Tribe 1993: 2). Either way, the developments of political economy within the academy – what would very quickly become “economics” in the last decade of the century, thanks in great part to Marshall (Backhouse & Medema 2009a: 225) – bear heavily on the decision to start in 1870.

Other reasons to begin then are based on the relationship between economic theory and the wider societal developments at the end of the nineteenth century. Hutchison (1969), in an investigation into the relationship between economists and economic policy, stakes out the case for beginning his study in 1870 on the following basis:

1. In 1867 came the Second Reform Act – the most basic change from the preceding decades for the ultimate shaping of policy [widening the franchise to include urban, male, working class voters for the first time].
2. In 1869, with a very different kind of significance, there was Mill’s retraction regarding the wages-fund theory. The decline in credibility of the more rigorous forms of the classical distribution doctrines was perhaps more significant, in terms of policy developments, than the new departures in the theory of value.
3. In 1871 there was the appearance of Jevons’s theory which is usually taken as significant for these departures.

(Hutchison 1969: 231)

¹⁰ For a similar approach to the professionalization of economics in regard to Marshall’s personal story and the disagreements he had with Cunningham in what is often seen as the English version of the *Methodenstreit*, see Maloney (1976).

In an updated version of the essay some 25 years later, he stressed the changed nature of governmental action and economic 'interference' in the 1870s, and the way in which Jevons and other neoclassical economists kept 'in step' with these changes or even led them, as justification for this starting point (Hutchison 1994: 141-2). This was, as has already been noted, in the context of the Social Question, which came to prey on the minds of the late-Victorian middle classes and elites. It was also a time, granted more so from the 1880s, that the socialist movement gave a radical element to the Social Question, although trade union activity witnessed an upswing already in the 1870s following legislation that gave it considerably more freedom (Curthoys 2004). The making of British socialism in this period, as Bevir has noted, was set in the context of the collapse of classical political economy and the exploration of 'new policy instruments and utopian visions' (Bevir 2011: 17).

If the question is posed as to whether or not 1870, or 1871, was a "big bang" moment that instantly changed the face of economics, the response can of course only be negative. The permeation of marginal utility in economic thought and the establishment of an economics discipline were processes and not events. Nevertheless, this era should be of interest to scholars of political economy because of developments in economic thought that ultimately came to define economics in fundamental ways. That the arrival of neoclassical economics was seen, as suggested in the literature mentioned above, as a retreat into a narrower, less socially concerned and more professionalized area of study suggests that we should look carefully at this era. We turn next, therefore, to the concept that is considered as representative of the essential divide between classical and neoclassical economic theory: value.

Value as a Structuring Concept for Political Economy

The broad contrast that is employed to explain the shift from classical political economy to neoclassical economics is the divide over theories of value, and how different understandings of value came to alter the methodological and substantive focus of economic thought. Wide-ranging investigations of the causes of wealth and the nature of its distribution in capitalist society were superseded by the examination of individuals' economic behaviour under assumptions of market relations tied to the principles of marginal utility (Milonakis & Fine 2009a: 97). The divide between these two different exercises is explained through the rejection of classical cost-of-production, 'objective' theories of value by scholars who instead developed theories of value based on 'subjective' understandings of price determination (Spencer 2009: 69).

For proponents of the objective approach to value 'the study of Political Economy and the analysis of exchange-value necessarily *started* from those socio-economic conditions that shaped the class relations of society' (Dobb 1973: 31). Against this are contrasted Jevons, Menger and the Austrian school, who 'sought to derive an explanation of exchange-value from the attitudes of individual consumers towards commodities as use-values catering for the satisfaction of individual wants' (Dobb 1973: 32-33). The two analytical methods are representative of different 'explanatory principles' and demonstrate different visions of the economy, based on different economic subjects: human beings as producers and human beings as consumers (Meek 1974: 250). These contrasting approaches to value are seen as a fundamental dividing issue because of how important the presence or absence of a *political* understanding of price

determination within the production process is to economic theory (De Vroey 1975). Dobb identified this issue as follows:

In the system of determination envisaged by Ricardo, and *a fortiori* and more explicitly as envisaged by Marx, there was a crucial sense in which distribution was *prior* to exchange: namely, that price-relations or exchange-values could only be arrived at *after* the principle affecting distribution of the total product had been postulated. The determinants of distribution ... were sited in the conditions of production ... *Per contra*, the new orientation of economic analysis reduced the problem of distribution to the pricing of requisite inputs by a market process which simultaneously determined the inter-connected system of outputs and inputs.

(Dobb 1973: 169)

The issue of value for classical scholars was a distributional issue, and distribution was an eminently political issue, based on the organization of production. This was, of course, most openly manifested in Marx's labour theory of value but, in different ways, both Smith and Ricardo had endorsed a labour theory too (see, for example, Dooley 2005 for a comparison). By contrast, after the "marginal revolution", the issues of value (price) and distribution were determined by an abstract market mechanism through the interaction of supply and demand, a process that was itself attuned to the utility-based decisions of individual consumers.

Value has historic importance as a structuring element for economists' vision of the economy. This is true of how historians of economic thought evaluate

different approaches to the subject but it also applies to economists themselves. A labour theory of value was, as Meek points out, essential to Ricardo and Marx 'in its capacity both as a specific theory and as the crystallization or embodiment of a specific explanatory methodology' (Meek 1974: 252). Brown and Spencer noted recently that Lionel Robbins, in his defining *Essay* of 1932:

... saw a subjective theory of value as implanting a specific system-wide conception and scope, a specific "vision" of the system as a whole, into the essence of economic science. More generally, Robbins clearly saw the theory of value as the linchpin of economics; it was the initial abstraction that captured the way in which the system interconnects. It was the necessary first step of economic science.

(Brown & Spencer 2012: 789)

Yet the use of the value dichotomy objective/subjective with its attendant dualities producer/consumer, labour/utility etc., cannot give us an accurate picture of what occurs after 1870 in economic thought. These broad distinctions might be able to help us get a handle on some kind of essential element to the changes in economic theory but they leave far too many other developments out of the picture. Some even make the argument that value as a concept acts more as a mask for other, more defining concepts and analogies in economic theory. This appears to be Mirowski's position (1989 Chapter Five): he posits that "substance" theories of value (what we have described here as objective approaches), were grounded in natural science concepts of force and energy, and subsequently gave way to the idea of "fields" with the neoclassical transition, each era imitating the physical theory of its time. Others argue that, despite the rejection of classical theories of value by some neoclassical economists such as Jevons, the greater

debate in the late nineteenth century was between the use of induction and deduction (Blaug 1972: 279).

On the matter of the significance of value for the idea of a transition or revolution in economic thought, as Winch (1972) notes, accounts traditionally appeared stuck between two opposing positions. On the one hand, to those interested in how economics advanced towards greater scientific accuracy, and became an independent discipline and profession, the transition is a story of flawed theories of value and distribution being replaced by more rigorous analytical and methodological means. This view might be found in the work of economists and economic historians such as Stigler, Samuelson and Schumpeter.¹¹ On the other hand, there were those who saw the transition in ideological terms as one of 'retreat and evasion', a means to confine economics to questions of abstract and atomized market relationships and shield it from critiques of capitalism and the socioeconomic *status quo* (Winch 1972: 326). This is the position broadly represented in the paragraphs above. Nevertheless, both these positions tend to agree that the advent of neoclassical economics represented a fundamental break with its predecessor, classical economics.

There can be only superficial gains made from using value taxonomically. No doubt, it has some kind of structuring effect on visions of the economy, and is a good first step at understanding where an economist belongs in the history of their

¹¹ For example, Schumpeter claims that Jevons, Walras and Menger 'established what A. Smith, Ricardo and Marx had believed to be impossible, namely that exchange value can be explained in terms of use value ... in the "new" theory of exchange, *marginal utility analysis created an analytic tool of general applicability to economic problems*'. He stated too that 'there is a widely accepted standard, confined, of course, to a group of professionals, that enables us to array different theories of competitive price in a series, each member of which can be unambiguously labeled superior to the preceding one' (Schumpeter [1954] 2006: 879, 38, emphasis original).

subject. Yet it glosses over the important details of economists' contributions – that, say, Jevons maintained that costs were an important determinant of exchange value in the long run, despite his focus on utility (Schabas 1989: 61) – and the way in which their writings developed in historical context.

This thesis operates on the premise that viewing the neoclassical transition purely as scientific advancement shields the history of economics from critical interrogation during an era in which the subject field contained significant internal division. What scientific advancement meant, and what the appropriate means and subject matter of economic investigation was, remained contested.¹² On the other hand, the argument that neoclassical economics represented a mass retreat from social concerns for ideological purposes is unsatisfactory. It ignores the interactions that neoclassical economists had with social issues and policy questions and leaves untouched the nature of these interactions and the relationship they bore to the economic theory of the day. In this chapter, the thesis begins to move away from both of these explanations of what neoclassical economics was about and towards a narrative that focuses on the disaggregated nature of the neoclassicals and the significance of their work in regard to the Social Question. It continues to survey accounts of the neoclassical tradition but this time with a focus on the underlying elements such as subjectivity and utility, as well as the role of psychology and mathematics in the development of economic theory. All of which played an important underlying role in attempts to establish economics

¹² Furthermore, as Dobb notes (1973: 4), this endogenous explanation, present in such authors as Schumpeter, actively seeks to separate out 'economic analysis' as that which is 'governed by supra-historical standards and rules' from economic thought, which is 'inevitably ... ideologically conditioned.' In analyzing the 'scientific process' Schumpeter was keen to identify and 'eliminate' the 'ideological elements [that] may enter it'. This might be done through separating out the economist's 'Vision' with a capital 'V', defined as a 'preanalytic cognitive act', from their analysis *per se* (Schumpeter [1954] 2006: 38-39).

as a scientific discipline during the late nineteenth century as well as in the twentieth century.

Psychology and Mathematics, Subjectivity and Utility

For the early marginal theorists an explanation of value needed a psychological element to demonstrate how decisions based on utility could play a fundamental role in price determination as well as economic behaviour more generally. Later, the Austrian Böhm-Bawerk, a leading second-generation marginal theorist and a student of Menger's who popularized a mathematical version of his former teacher's theory, characterized the marginal revolution as 'the psychological school of political economy' (Böhm-Bawerk 1890 in Rothschild 2011: 749). Economics took a turn to investigations of human behaviour (especially actions as choices taken between given ends) and away from the focus on the accumulation of wealth held by classical economists (Backhouse & Medema 2009a: 224).

As utility-based decisions were central to early marginalism, psychological suppositions were influenced by utilitarian scholars such as Bentham and Mill. Jevons, for instance, employed the basic pleasure-pain principles in his 1871 book *The Theory of Political Economy* ([1911] 2013)¹³ arguing that:

... we may start from some obvious psychological law, as for instance, that a greater gain is preferred to a smaller one, and we may then reason downwards, and predict the phenomena which will be produced in society by such a law.

([1911] 2013: 16-17)

¹³ Hereafter referred to as *TPE*.

And individual actions based on these “laws” would be represented in the exchange-values, or prices of goods:

... just as we measure gravity by its effect in the motion of a pendulum, so we may estimate the equality or inequality of feelings by the decisions of the human mind. The will is our pendulum, and its oscillations are minutely registered in the price lists of the markets.

[[1911] 2013: 11-12)

Though the neoclassical approach is often classed as a “subjective” understanding of value, among neoclassical authors the subjective element tended to refer simply to the element of choice in economic behaviour – whether to buy a product, or more of a product, or whether to labour and for how long, for example. Indeed, what is enabled in quantitative analysis through such understandings of the subjective was much more important than what could be interpreted qualitatively about individuals’ behaviour. For Jevons, this meant that ‘[i]t was possible for economics to exist as a mathematical science of human enjoyment prior to the measurement of feelings’ (Winch 1972: 330). As Tabb notes, ‘[s]ubjective does not mean lacking precision. The ability to calculate rates of change using calculus lent a new exactness to economic analysis and started the profession down the road to its obsession with mathematics as the language of science’ (Tabb 1999: 92).

Similarly, the neoclassical idea of utility becomes elusive when unpacked beyond its superficial meaning as that which is useful. Robinson called it ‘a metaphysical concept of impregnable circularity’, because ‘utility is the quality in

commodities that makes individuals want to buy them, and the fact that individuals want to buy commodities shows that they have utility' (Robinson 1962: 48). Indeed, it was so clouded a term that it is considered to have played a lesser role in the development of economics as an exact science than did its prefix. Hutchison once remarked that 'what was important in marginal utility was the adjective rather than the noun', for, as a marginal quantity, utility became amenable to mathematical calculation (Hutchison in Milonakis & Fine 2009a: 98; see also Blaug 1985: 296). Nevertheless, utilitarian postulates allowed Jevons to build his theories of economic behaviour on the back of philosophical suppositions such as the pleasure and pain principles, and it is striking how much emphasis is placed on Benthamite logic and philosophy in his 1871 book.

The role of mathematics appears central to accounting for the neoclassical transition, but its exact role is nevertheless contested. Mirowski contends that the 'penetration of mathematical discourse into economic theory' is one of the reasons why we can characterize the changes in economics as an abrupt shift (Mirowski 1989: 195). Yet as Blaug argues, that mathematical language was being used to explain social phenomena would have been anathema to most nineteenth century audiences (Blaug 1972: 279). Certainly, it was not an essential tool for one of the early marginal theorists; the Austrian, Menger, felt that mathematics could neither capture the causality of economic relationships nor the *essence* of economic phenomena (Backhouse 2002: 177). Furthermore, even a figure as important as Marshall, who was mathematically trained, felt the need to banish and bury his formulas and diagrams to appendices and footnotes in the *Principles* (Groenewegen 2003: 250). It did, of course, play a greater role for some, especially the French neoclassical Walras, who against considerable opposition from his contemporaries focused his attention on the idea of general equilibrium – an

attempt to model prices across the whole economy – expressed through simultaneous equations (Van Daal & Jolink 1993: 3).

The contribution of psychology and mathematics to the theoretical underpinnings of marginal utility cannot be reduced to the simple explanations given above. Both these disciplines were part of a greater web of interaction between the neoclassical economists and those writing on the role of science and logic in the study of society and the economy (Backhouse 2002: 167). Jevons, for example, devoted several books to the study of logic (1870, [1874] 1909, 1880), and there is much of value to be gained by looking at his work in relation to the natural science communities, alongside the as of then undeveloped economics community (Black 1972: 369). Furthermore, he and Marshall were influenced by, and creatively employed, (hedonistic) associational psychology and an evolutionary form of psychology respectively, which gave particular expression to their explanatory methods as well as their vision of society (Veblen 1900: 260, 265).

Although the idea of a definitive “economic science” only came to fruition under Robbins in the 1930s, this early period of neoclassical economics existed in a mix of disciplinary frameworks, appropriating particular metaphors and explanatory methodologies from other scientific fields (see Mirowski 1989 on the links to physics), or fields similarly seeking a more refined scientific status such as psychology. Study of such particularities will be reserved for the next chapter, which analyses the original works of Jevons and Marshall directly; it is enough now to bear in mind that the appropriation of psychology and mathematics, as well as the use of concepts such as utility and ideas about subjectivity, are elusive in their metaphysical nature yet also traceable through intellectual lineages. Exploring

such lineages, even superficially, allows us to understand how they were appropriated in this period to serve the elaboration of economic theory.

Subdivision and Disciplinarity in the Formation of Economics

Subdivision within economics came to play an important role in the way that the boundaries of the discipline developed. It is commonly acknowledged that the fencing off, and prioritizing, of a “pure” economics led to the kind of isolation from normative concerns mentioned earlier. It is perceived as a road to a more deductive approach, one that based itself on a static view of the economy and a methodological individualism ultimately reached by the ‘neoclassical orthodoxy’ (Milonakis & Fine 2009a: 45). This first necessitated a definition of what “pure” itself, and accompanying subdivisions such as “applied” and “normative”, constituted. The idea of subdivision within economics might be traced back to Mill and others who precede the neoclassical transformation. However, neoclassical economics is deemed to have established the separation of economic methodologies and objectives through subdivision on a much stronger footing. Winch advances this argument neatly:

There is a great deal to be said for the view that marginalism enabled neoclassical economists to go further towards excluding historical and institutional categories from pure economics, so that even if the idea of drawing a clear boundary between pure and applied science was shared with the classical economists, there remain differences as to where the boundaries of pure science itself should be drawn.

(Winch 1972: 336-337)

John Neville Keynes, the father of the economist John Maynard Keynes, wrote one of the most extensive discussions of methodological division in 1891, titled *The Scope and Method of Political Economy*. In this book he made a tripartite division between positive economics, normative economics and applied economics or the “art of economics”. Although they were distinct, each branch of economics was not intended to be isolated from the other:

According to [JN] Keynes, positive economics is the study of what is and the way the economy works; it is pure science, not applied economics. Normative economics is the study of what should be; it is not applied economics. The art of economics is applied economics. It relates the lessons learned in positive economics to the normative goals determined in normative economics.

(Colander 1992: 192)

The question is whether or not such sub-division encouraged the means of avoiding political or normative issues by economists who dedicated themselves to pursuing ever more pure forms of economic theory that abstracted from real-world scenarios and issues. Colander seems to think that this had become the case eventually, and that the importance of interaction between the three branches had been lost in late twentieth century economics. At the centenary of Jevons’ publication of the *TPE* ([1911] 2013) Winch took a similar perspective on the marginalist authors in general and Jevons in particular. He argued that ‘[a]s far as pure theory is concerned, the essential idea on which [Jevons, Walras and Menger] concurred was in recognizing scarcity of given means in relation to alternative ends as *the* economic problem. According to Jevons, economic science was a

rational, logical, deductive, and ultimately mathematical pursuit' (Winch 1972: 328). Furthermore, as for how economics would proceed on the basis of a more refined economic *science*, '[s]ubdivision became Jevons' favorite remedy for the methodological dissension of his day' (1972: 328).

Yet these statements are open to challenge. As Hutchison notes, Jevons employed a mixture of methods and approaches to his work: 'while [he] recognized the mainly abstract and deductive methods of the fundamentals of microeconomic theory, or of utility, value and "distribution", he was most emphatically empirical and inductive regarding the fundamentals of macroeconomics, both in his methodological ideas and, in practice, in his actual, pioneering contributions' (Hutchison 1998: 54). Indeed, in the Preface to the second edition of *TPE*, Jevons admonishes Cliffe Leslie's efforts to remove altogether the deductive method, maintaining that 'he is in favour of simple deletion; I am for thorough reform and reconstruction' (Jevons [1911] 2013: xxxvii). Decades later Winch presents a picture of a more amenable Jevons, who thought 'there was no need to be exclusive when it came to choosing between methods; there was room for all positions on an enlarged, but sub-divided map of an expanding realm' (Winch 2009: 161).

On the matter of disciplinarity in the formation of economics, perhaps of most importance is to note the opposition that developed between sociology and economics towards the turn of the nineteenth century. This opposition is most commonly associated with the *Methodenstreit* or "battle of methods" and the clashes between Carl Menger representing the "Austrian School" (and the economics discipline) and Gustav Schmoller representing the German "Historical School" (and institutional/sociological approaches to the economy). There is not

enough space here to go into the important nuances of this debate and its significance in the history of economic thought and, although British economists were conscious of continental developments in the social sciences, this particular debate was a German-speaking affair. This said, a British version of the *Methodenstreit* is said to have manifested itself as a 'local offshoot' in the conflict between William Cunningham and Alfred Marshall at Cambridge University over the scientific nature of economics and the role of economic history in the study of economics (Maloney 1976: 440).

As Maloney argues, however, the British (or rather English) *Methodenstreit* between these two characters had important consequences for the professionalization of economics. Marshall's position was defined by 'conciliation without concessions', because '[h]e would not compromise his aspirations for a genuinely scientific economics for the sake of peace, and his election to the Professorship of Political Economy at Cambridge in 1884 made this resolve an issue in the professional lives of others beside himself' (Maloney 1976: 440-441). Cunningham saw himself as the defender of a properly historical economics and attacked Marshall's story in the *Principles* of the gradual triumph of utility-maximising behaviour in economic life, later even attempting to thwart Marshall's proposed Economic Tripos at Cambridge in 1903 (Maloney 1976: 445). In this he was unsuccessful, and after the turn of the century an increasingly professionalized economics was erecting higher and more complex theoretical barriers around the discipline.

To return to sociology though, there is a sense in which the very foundations of the discipline, and certainly much of the continuing disciplinary boundary-marking, has relied on setting itself apart from economics, especially

neoclassical economics. 'As a separate discipline', write Milonakis and Fine, 'sociology was to concern itself with the "social", defined negatively as the "non-economic", or, more exactly, non-economics' (Milonakis & Fine 2009a: 217). In this way, sociology came to rely on the representation of economics as a study of the individual and sociology as a study of the social. We might say that these distinctions served to erect barriers between the disciplines, but it would be more accurate to say that they defined the very disciplines that sought to separate themselves from one another. Hodgson (2001: 120) has argued that influential scholars such as Lionel Robbins, Joseph Schumpeter and Talcott Parsons carry the responsibility for increasing partition of the social sciences from the 1930s onwards, as a means to resolve apparently insurmountable methodological differences. It would seem that these authors subsequently took it upon themselves to portray these divisions as the natural emergence of substantially different methodological choices rather than divisions that they had in essence helped to construct themselves. Furthermore, and despite some efforts by Schumpeter and others to create a "social economics", the oppositions between sociology and economics served to reinforce the image of economics as an asocial study, with neoclassical authors as its standard-bearers.

The conclusion that we can draw from this first part of the chapter is that the transition to neoclassical economics was an extremely complex affair, from which there is still much to learn. It was a process and not an event, but might be classed as "revolutionary" in terms of the history of economic thought if we understand the term to signify 'fundamental reconstruction' (Black 1972: 365). However, the broad-brush divides between objective and subjective theories of value that are used to characterize the differences between neoclassical and classical authors mask interesting and significant areas of investigation into the

way that neoclassical economics developed. The mixtures of mathematical economics, psychological assumptions and theories of human nature fed into a quite diverse array of positions within neoclassical economics. How disciplinary boundaries came to be formed in the social sciences shaped the way that the orthodoxy of economics was founded. The way in which these positions also fed into the concerns that economists held for social problems and economic policy remains to be explored. In Part Two, we begin to investigate these connections.

Part Two: Neoclassical Economics and the Social Question

Economic Policy and Economic Thought

Why is it necessary to gain an overview of how the advent of neoclassical economics and marginal utility is accounted for? The question is especially apposite considering one of the tasks at hand in this thesis, that is, an attempt at a plausible reconstruction of the relationship between economic theory and social questions around welfare, unemployment and distribution. As noted, the prominent historian of economic thought, Mark Blaug, has questioned the description of the advent of marginal utility theorizing as a wide-ranging 'revolution', and has even argued that '[i]n matters of economic policy, there was in fact continuity with classical thinking, and when Jevons and Walras wrote on policy questions, as they did, there was little or no connection between practical recommendations and their views on value theory' (Blaug 1972: 269). Establishing meaningful connections between welfare or relief and neoclassical thought would appear at first-hand a lost cause.

Part of the reason to explore the neoclassical period and how its economists related to social questions is that this very connection has all too often been

ignored or distorted in perspectives of the era.¹⁴ For example, it comes as a surprise to some that there was serious engagement from socialists with marginal theories of value, and it is left to those who have explored the fragmented streams of British socialist and radical thought (Bevir 2011), or produced dedicated volumes on socialism and marginalism (Steedman 1995), to expose the links between social concerns and marginalist thought beyond the usual offhand remarks contained in histories of economic thought.

Some would also contend Blaug's stark claims about the division between Jevons' value theory and his recommendations on economic policy. Hutchison, for example, argued that '[f]or Jevons ... political economy was first and last a fruit-bearing subject concerned, above all, with the alleviation of real-world problems of poverty, insecurity and efficiency' (Hutchison 1994: 127). If not straightforward, there is an evident relationship between the philosophical and methodological assumptions behind Jevons' economics and his approach to questions of economic policy. In Part Two some of the literature that explores these connections will be brought to bear on the issue of divisions between economic theory and economic policy in the neoclassical period.

Besides this, another reason to pursue the connection between neoclassical economists' abstract economic thought and the development of policy on welfare, unemployment and distribution speaks directly to Blaug's claim above. As he mentions, neoclassical authors such as Jevons did write on policy questions of the day, but the influence of their economic works appears, if not absent then

¹⁴ A good example is Schumpeter, who, in defending a cursory treatment of economists' social reforming tendencies said of his approach: '[t]his is a history of economic analysis, a history of the attempts of men to apply their reason to the task of understanding things, not a history of the attempts of men to apply their reason—and volition—to the task of changing them' (Schumpeter [1954] 2006: 725-726).

submerged, in these commentaries. Interesting questions follow from the idea that neoclassical economists, who evidently retained social concerns and voiced these through commentary, reserved a separate way of speaking about the economy in their theoretical works. There is much to be gained from exploring the different registers in which these authors wrote, and how this reflected the relationship between what happened to economic theory in this period and the kind of social concerns that were raised on the matters of poverty and unemployment.

A third area of interest relates to the longer context of the history of economic thought. If it is true that neoclassical thought did not represent a wholesale emptying out of social and distributional concerns – indeed, Blaug (2003) maintains that it was not until the 1950s that marginalism truly triumphed in a way that prized mathematical modelling and the form of economic arguments over their content – then how do we reconcile the view that neoclassical economic theory was normatively bereft with the (social) concerns about poverty, distribution and welfare they held? Robinson once noted that ‘[f]or Jevons, and in his less cautious moments for Marshall, the consumer is “a man”, a Robinson Crusoe, an individual with his tight, impermeable, insulated equipment of desires and tastes’ (1962: 51). Is this a fair representation? And if so how does this view of man or woman as an island stand against what Jevons, Marshall or their disciples had to say about the social questions of their day? This will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter where some of the broader issues on neoclassical economics and the Social Question will be explored.

Socialism and Marginalism

It is hard to imagine that neoclassical economics and socialism could ever have been bedfellows in any way, shape or form. Today, political economists are given serious warnings to combat the importation of apolitical neoclassical tenets and methodology into their own, more politicized, more normative realm (Wade 2009). We have already noted, however, that Jevons and Marshall, each in their different ways, were neoclassical social reformers. Winch reveals that Foxwell, who held the Chair of Economics at University College London following Jevons, 'shared a belief [with Marshall] in the importance of demonstrating that as far as remedies to the "social question" were concerned, economists were on the "progressive" wing of British politics' (Winch 2009: 238). They wrote, as mentioned in the above section on the timing of the neoclassical revolution, in a period in which the state began to intervene increasingly in the economy. It was also, from the 1880s onwards, the beginning of the creation of a socialist movement in Britain and the gradual development of the trade unions' role in the labour market. In a sense this compelled them to engage with the emerging movement and to offer commentaries on the role of the state in relation to the economy.

The relationship between socialism and marginalism is difficult to characterize in straightforward terms. Indeed, as Steedman believes, any simple summary of the relationship normally derives its impetus from the basic and oversimplified oppositions we have already noted, such as that between objective and subjective value theory (Steedman 1995: 1). It was a two-way relationship – it saw marginalist economists discuss socialist ideas and socialists discuss marginal theory – and was principally conducted by intellectuals, whether inside the

academy or not. Of course, it was not always a congenial affair. The marginal productivity theory of distribution, which in effect stated that workers would be hired and paid only up until the point after which they no longer contributed to the marginal revenue of a firm (and that workers' wages would come to equal what they contributed to output), was 'widely and consciously used' in opposition to the Marxist labour theory of value (Meek 1972: 503). As we will see below, it also opened up later understandings of "voluntary unemployment" that put the responsibility for unemployment on workers' shoulders.

Meek once acknowledged that a tendency for conspiracy theories among Marxists analyzing marginalism – which says that neoclassicals were engaging in some kind of bourgeois 'apologetics' – is counterproductive (Meek 1972: 502). More convincing is that, compared to revolutionary socialist critics of capitalism, the neoclassicals appear concerned with the social regulation of capitalism so as to preserve class harmony in a period of disharmony (Clarke 1982: 129). This manifested itself, so this argument goes, in a search among marginalists for social equilibrium and optimization through determination of economic equilibrium and optimization. As Dobb notes, '[a] particular by-product of the new structure and methodology that was to yield corollaries of striking ideological *tendenz* was the habit of optimising' (Dobb 1973: 174). The neoclassicals acknowledged social ills and sought a better, more harmonious society.

The productive connections or tensions between socialism and marginalism were extensive both across time and space (see Steedman 1995 for a country by country analysis). In Britain, the group of socialists who were most amenable to marginalism were the Fabians, especially George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Indeed, their understanding of "collectivism" – partially

defined as employing the surplus of land, capital and income appropriated by taxation for communal or public ends – relied on marginalist and neoclassical theories of rent and taxation (Bevir 2011: 170, 185).¹⁵ It was the potential to identify and quantify the unearned increment or surplus of the capitalist and landowner so as to tax and redistribute it that was the principal attraction of marginalism to socialism.

It is in many ways understandable that socialists had an interest in marginalism, and conversely that marginalists were led by their social reforming tendencies to pronounce themselves socialist, or “socialistic”.¹⁶ Marshall’s arguments concerning the diminishing marginal utility of money – which suggested imposing progressive forms of income taxation due to the fact that the marginal utility of money was less for a rich person than it was for a poor labourer – might be easily appropriated as part of a socialist(ic) programme (Stabile 1996: 119, and see Marshall [1920] 2013: 108).¹⁷ Marginalism offered a means to support with greater “scientific” backing a programme of legislation focusing on redistribution, regulation (and reduction) of the working day, and more.

Yet, Jevons and Marshall themselves did not fit the picture of what a socialist might desire in terms of a policy agenda. Jevons, for example, vigorously advocated the encouragement of ‘self-reliance’ (Peart 1996: 141) and was, up until

¹⁵ As Winch (2009: 86) notes Webb and others traced these theories of rent back to Ricardo and Mill as much as they did to neoclassical economists. However, the Fabians actively supported a ‘Jevonsian’ theory of value against that of, or as a more realistic version of, Marx’s theory of value.

¹⁶ Throughout the letters between neoclassical economists cited in Winch’s *Wealth and Life* (2009) the term “socialistic” is preferred to socialist, perhaps due to a wariness about endorsing or being associated with full state socialism.

¹⁷ This same argument, of course, re-emerged in the work of Marshall’s student, Keynes, in the form of the “marginal propensity to consume”. Because poor people have a higher marginal propensity to consume, redistributing money towards them was part of Keynes’ cure (alongside cheap-money policy) for deficiencies in effective demand that led to involuntary unemployment (Tily 2007: 3).

the mid-to-late 1870s sceptical of state provision of services for paupers (Jevons 1869). Though he became increasingly resigned to state interference, and in 1876 even claimed that the need for a dedicated approach in economics to investigate the limits of *laissez-faire* had presented itself, his approach to problems of poverty often remained paternalistic (Hutchison 1994: 144). The statement he made in 1869 to the Manchester Statistical Society, argued that '[p]auperism is the general resultant of all the bad and all the omitted legislation of the last five hundred years'. A few lines later, though, we are told that '[a]s pauperism is the general resultant of all that is wrong in our social arrangements it cannot be destroyed by any single measure; it can only be reduced by such exertions as raise the intelligence and provident habits of the people' (Jevons 1869: 7). General education, repression of drunkenness and encouragement of prudence and thrift were the solutions to pursue for the amelioration of the pauper. The New Poor Law of 1834, which maintained strict separation between the "deserving" and "undeserving", and sought to deter the latter through harsh workhouse tests and maintaining the status of the indoor pauper as "less eligible", was, according to Jevons, 'one of the wisest measures ever concerted by any Government' (1869: 13).

Similarly, though he had possessed a "youthful tendency to socialism" and was led into studying economics by a desire to improve the material and moral standards of the working class, Marshall later felt that human nature (as so far developed) would trump the possibilities of any kind of radical egalitarianism and warned against socialist utopias. Further to this, in one of his last major addresses in 1907, 'The Social Possibilities of Economic Chivalry' (Marshall 1907), he argued for curbing state activities to municipal works and presented competition and private enterprise as the greatest means to deliver social goals (Groenewegen 2007: 119-120). In Book VI of his *Principles*, Marshall lays bare his aversion to

radical change – ‘ill-considered changes might result in grave disaster’ – arguing of “Collectivism” that, ‘as things are, too great a risk would be involved by entrusting to a pure democracy the accumulation of the resources needed for acquiring yet further command over nature’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 593). He even betrays an element of complacency with the progress made on inequality:

The main drift of this study of Distribution then suggests that the social and economic forces already at work are changing the distribution of wealth for the better ... we are bound to reflect that the distribution of the national dividend, though bad, is not nearly as bad as is commonly supposed.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 592-593)

Throughout Jevons’ and Marshall’s works, there is an acknowledgement of inherently *social* ills, including inequalities in material wealth and all the accompanying (educational, health, workplace) inequalities. Often, though, there is a tendency to either ascribe the causes of relative impoverishment to an absence of individual moral standards (e.g. intemperance) or the undeveloped or irrational nature of working-class habits (e.g. a lack of thrift or saving). And though they are approving of state intervention to deal with pauperism and provide education, there is always a great emphasis put on the dangers of both too much intervention for stifling free enterprise and discouraging self-responsibility (see Groenewegen 1994: 283).¹⁸ The language reserved for discussion of paupers or segments of the

¹⁸ Following Parsons, Whitaker (1977: 178) suggests that ‘it is probable that Marshall would have favored free enterprise because of its beneficial effects on human character even if it had involved a sacrifice of material living standards’. Several of Jevons’ and Marshall’s followers were more amenable to socialist ideas. Sidgwick, for example, was happy to describe himself as a follower of Jevons, yet heavily invested his work in proposals such as land tenure reform, co-operatives,

working-class remains deeply moralistic. For example, special consideration, or what Marshall terms 'exceptional treatment', is reserved for the "Residuum" of persons who are physically, mentally, or morally incapable of doing a good day's work with which to earn a good day's wage' and 'a paternal discipline something like that which prevails in Germany' is recommended (Marshall [1920] 2013: 594).

Of Marshall's perspective on the residuum, Whitaker points out that:

... he recognized the existence of a feckless class of the hopelessly poor ... to which the tenets of economic liberalism could not possibly apply ... Underlying some of these views is a distinctly nonutilitarian tendency to distinguish workers' actual preferences, "artificially" inculcated by adverse circumstances, from the "true" preferences they would have under more favourable conditions, and to regard the latter as the relevant preferences for welfare judgments.

(Whitaker 1977: 176, fn.34)

Exposed here is one of the main contentions of the thesis, that liberalism often reserves illiberal practices and rhetoric for some segments of the population, often based on perceptions of the relationship to work held by such groups. In Marshall's case here, the residuum does not accord with the "normal" or "true" preferences expected of other workers, and therefore must submit to a "paternal discipline". In economic theory, as in social investigation and unemployment policy (explored in Chapter Three), these illiberal liberal exceptions are applied to "underclass" groups such as the residuum, for whom "normal" incentives do not

public ownership of industry and taxation of unearned increment, an approach to policy that has seen him labelled as a 'rationalist utilitarian' wedded to economic socialism (Winch 2009: 207, 219, 232).

apply. In the next chapter we look at this phenomenon in closer detail through an exploration of “character” in Jevons’ and Marshall’s works. It is these tensions between the moralistic and economic elements of their works, which point to exceptional treatment for certain groups, that are of interest for this study.

Poverty and Unemployment

What of the main focus of the Social Question in this thesis: different perspectives on poverty and unemployment? It is difficult to grasp an understanding of how early neoclassical authors viewed unemployment, for the reason that it was not a term in currency until the mid-1890s (Walters 2000: 12). J.A. Hobson, who is credited with one of the earliest uses, began developing his “underconsumptionist” theory of the over-supply of labour from the late 1880s onwards, positing that it was an excess of saving by the wealthy that contributed to the problem of unemployment in industrial society (Clarke 1978: 48-51). But Jevons died in 1882, years before such works appeared, and this is perhaps why we find that in discussing the problem of poverty, he retains a focus on *pauperism* and weds it to issues of bad habit, particularly intemperance (Jevons 1869). His admiration for the New Poor Law and very gradual warming to state intervention in later life (Jevons 1883), mark him out as someone with one foot in the mid-Victorian era and another in the era of the emerging late-Victorian Social Question.

Marshall discussed unemployment insofar as he analysed “irregularity of employment”, both in his submission to the Gold and Silver Commission in 1887 and as a member of the Labour Commission in 1891-94 (Groenewegen 1994;

1996: 86).¹⁹ In the latter he attributed the phenomenon to: '(1) industrial fluctuations affecting a trade, or trade district as a whole; (2) to chronic excess of the supply of labour over the demand for it in particular industries; (3) to the ordinary vicissitudes of work in a normal state of trade' (Marshall in Groenewegen 1996: 98). The second of these reasons sounds remarkably similar to the Marxist "reserve army" explanation for unemployment outlined in the Introduction. Such an understanding of unemployment was no doubt in part owing to Marshall's extensive participation in the Labour Commission, in which he came into contact with many trade union leaders, workers and socialist thinkers such as Sidney Webb and Tom Mann, discussing trades such as dock work, in which there was a chronic over-supply of workers (see Groenewegen 1994).

In the history of economic thought a proper theory of unemployment at the macroeconomic level is not considered to have appeared until John Maynard Keynes' (1978) *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in 1936 (Chick 1983). In particular, what we do not get a proper theory of until Keynes is the idea of "involuntary" unemployment. Involuntary unemployment is perhaps best explained by starting with the concept of "voluntary" unemployment in neoclassical economics. Spencer neatly summarises this concept as follows:

From a neoclassical perspective, employment and unemployment simply represent alternative uses of time. Individual workers are assumed effectively to "choose" whether they work or not and also how long they work, depending on their (given) preferences and the level of real wages ... what amounts to "unemployment" is actually voluntary leisure which workers undertake because their

¹⁹ Marshall also refers the reader to Foxwell's (1886) lecture on *Irregularity of Employment and Fluctuations of Prices* in his *Principles* ([1920] 2013: 462 fn.2).

reservation wage is not met by available job offers and represents a desirable use of their time (i.e., it yields positive marginal utility).

(Spencer 2006: 459)

Keynes argued that the idea of voluntary unemployment rested on what he called the 'classical theory of economics' and its misguided 'postulates' (Keynes 1978: 4). By this he meant what we would call the neoclassical tradition following Marshall (including A.C. Pigou in Cambridge, Edwin Cannan in London and Henry Clay in Manchester), which contended that, in essence, unemployment resulted because wage levels were too high, a failure of workers to accept the market-clearing real wage (De Vroey 2004: 55; Dimand 1988: 180; Boianovsky & Trautwein 2003: 388).²⁰ This idea depended on a neoclassical theory of distribution that accorded capital and labour its earnings in relation to its marginal productivity.

Though he did not posit the theory in its most extreme version, Marshall had provided a cost of production theory that stated that labour as a factor of production is compensated in proportion to its marginal productivity (Whitaker 1988). Capital and labour, he said, 'in general ... draw from [the national dividend] their earnings in the measure of their respective (marginal) efficiencies' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 355, 446-448, 451).²¹ Around the turn of the century, other neoclassical economists such as J.B. Clark, Wicksteed and Wicksell developed this into a marginal productivity theory which, for the first of these three at least,

²⁰ It should be noted though, that the definition of voluntary employment cited here in Spencer (2006) owes more to Austrian neoclassical understandings, which 'came to view the supply of labour as a simple trade-off between income and leisure' and stressed the 'opportunity cost' of work time (Spencer 2009: 70).

²¹ Expressed 'in close harmony with ... common sayings of every-day life ... "everything tends to find its own level" ... [and] "most men earn just about what they are worth"' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 355).

stated that market forces would deliver a ‘fair’ and ‘efficient’ return to both labour and capital (Blaug 1985: 425-427). Some have argued, too, that there is evidence of a marginal productivity theory in the 1879 Preface of Jevons’ *TPE* (Pullen 2010: 156) and that Jevons’ one “disciple”, Wicksteed, strongly owed the development of his marginal productivity theory of distribution to Jevons (Flatau 2004).

Jevons also bore responsibility for the concept of voluntary unemployment because of his understanding of the labour supply – the decision to work – as a marginal choice based on the (dis)utility of work: ‘the painful exertion which we undergo to ward off pains of greater amount, or to procure pleasures which leave a balance in our favour’ (Jevons [1911] 2013: 167). As Spencer says, ‘[i]n arguing that workers could equate the marginal disutility of labour and the marginal utility of consumption, Jevons had effectively assumed that the supply of labour was discretionary’ (Spencer 2009: 77).

Keynes’ rejection of the neoclassical idea of voluntary unemployment was in part a political argument against those who continued to maintain that, rather than government intervention in the economy to boost aggregate demand and tackle unemployment, workers had to accept lower wages. Such views remained prominent even after years of mass unemployment in Britain. For example, in the midst of the Great Depression, Edwin Cannan, who was the leading economist at the London School of Economics (LSE) from its opening in 1895 until his retirement in 1926, delivered his 1932 Presidential Address to the Royal Economic Society on the ‘Demand for Labour’, beginning:

If everything were as it should be, the demand for labour would be too elementary a subject for me to take in addressing the Fellows of the Royal Economic Society...

And concluding that:

... general unemployment is in reality to be explained almost in the same way as particular unemployment. In a particular employment, provided demand for its product is elastic, more people can be employed if they work for less remuneration. General unemployment appears when asking too much is a general phenomenon.

The upshot being that:

... [the world] should learn to submit to declines of money-incomes without squealing.

(Cannan 1932: 357, 367, 369)

Hicks (1932) developed a similar understanding that high wages, including those wrought by trade union action, were a cause of unemployment and, in developing further such a 'neoclassical distribution theory', suggested that little had changed in economics since Marshall's *Principles* (Flatau 2002: 44).

We can see then, that, although Jevons and Marshall did not themselves develop a full understanding of unemployment, the developments they made in marginalist thinking led later neoclassical economists to theories that put the burden of adjustment on labour in the resolution of unemployment. In Chapter Four we will explore this position further, looking at economists in the 1970s and 1980s who rejected fiscal policy as a means of tackling unemployment and developed the idea that unemployment could be explained by privileged "insider"

workers, and the rigidities resulting from employment regulation and trade unions. In a looser sense the distinction runs through other perspectives on poverty and unemployment, including the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor that we explore in Chapter Three and the opposition between the “genuinely” unemployed and the “habitual pauper” that determines the eligibility for unemployment benefit, explored in the same chapter. Voluntary and involuntary unemployment are not just economic theories which point to different theoretical perspectives; they are concepts intertwined with political stances on the responsibility for unemployment and are entangled in the policies that consistently distinguish as exceptional the residuum, underclass or scrounger from the honest and hard-working, genuinely unemployed labourer. This is a process I link throughout the thesis to the illiberal liberal rhetoric and practices targeting these groups. In the next chapter we explore this process of “exception-making” in Jevons’ and Marshall’s perspectives on work and character.

Conclusion

The aim in this chapter has been to explore accounts of the transition from classical political economy to neoclassical economics with the added aim to problematize the idea that simple oppositions between objective and subjective theories of value are adequate for such accounts. It has demonstrated that we must take account of the role of other disciplines, such as psychology and mathematics, as well as some of the natural sciences, in order to understand the neoclassical authors. In terms of how this chapter fits into the thesis as a whole, it presents us with opportunities to explore what was happening in the development of economics in this period in which the Social Question came to the fore. The usual judgement or “standard narrative”, that neoclassical authors were responsible for

an emptying out of social concerns and the normative impoverishment of the emerging discipline, appears wrong-headed. Neoclassical authors grappled with social and economic policy, and the most influential in an Anglophone context – Jevons and Marshall – were drawn to economics as a means to understand and address poverty. Their analyses relied on philosophical and psychological suppositions, which in many cases were also inseparable from the methodological approach they took. After all these considerations, the simple framing reference of subjective versus objective value theory, though it has evidently had a structuring effect on economic thought, appears inadequate for a full understanding of the neoclassical phenomenon.

One interesting and important finding to take forward into the next chapter is that the language that neoclassical authors employed when discussing abstract theoretical problems differed to that which they used for discussion of social issues. They were writing at a time of increasing state intervention and recognized problems that were gaining in acknowledgement and attention from policy-makers and the general public. Perhaps then, it was a result of their evolving stature as authorities on economic issues that led them to employ language that would be more familiar to a policy audience, or even a wider audience, of the time. However, we must be careful not to read discussion of various policy issues as simple indications of the influence these authors had on those issues. What might be more convincing is to frame their contributions as ‘interventions’ (see Dean 1991: 87) in a newly emerging field of discussion about the state and the economy, in which ethical and economic rationales existed side by side and, very often, became indistinguishable.

Marx once wrote that ‘... the opposition between political economy and morality is only an *apparent* one. It is both an opposition and not an opposition. Political economy merely gives expression to moral laws *in its own way*’ (Marx 1992: 363). Though he was referring to a different era of political economists, this, I believe, is the way in which the neoclassical economists’ relationship to morality and normative action should be understood. By normative action, I mean those practical choices or recommendations (of, say, economists, government, individuals or families) that are guided by ethical and perhaps customary reasoning. Although a different language is employed for discussion of social problems than for abstract economy theory, this must not be allowed to imply a pure separation between the two exercises.²² That the separation is apparent, as Marx notes, is itself a reflection of political economists’, and in our case, economists’, presentation of “economic issues” as scientific, law-like or analytically distinct from social or moral issues, and therefore impervious to the same means of consideration. As we have seen in this chapter, however, this apparent separation is often more a reflection of how neoclassical economics has been recorded in the history of economic thought than it was a reality for the economists themselves.

If it is the case that economics only became a mathematical and formulistic “science”, defined on a narrow basis in the second half of the twentieth century (Blaug 2003; Backhouse & Medema 2009b), then we are compelled to consider neoclassical economics as the broader and more diverse tradition –

²² A point on the differences between generations of neoclassical economists should be made here. The further one moves down the generations towards Robbins (1932), the less this separation of registers is apparent. That is, neoclassical economists got more adept throughout the separate stages of their discipline’s professionalization at forcing the discussion of policy issues to reflect the language of their economic theories.

philosophically, psychologically, morally etc. – that it was. Yet, it was shown here that significant moves were made by early neoclassical authors to cement the hegemony of marginalism and utility and that this had particular consequences in regard to unemployment.²³ The marginal productivity theory became part of a lineage of thought which placed the burden of adjustment for problems like unemployment onto labour, but it also became a ground for political contestation about responsibility for unemployment in this regard. Chapter Four explores the idea of responsibility for unemployment between the 1880s and 1930s from the perspective of unemployed workers’ movements and those who represented them, particularly around the idea and demand for a “Right to Work”. We will return there to some of the economic theories of unemployment that emerge from the 1960s onwards, and look at how they too placed the burden of responsibility on labour and the unemployed themselves. These lead us, theoretically, to justifications for workfare as a policy regime that places a great burden of responsibility on the unemployed.

To close this chapter I want to point to some of the important issues that have arisen from my assessment of the neoclassical transition for an understanding of the neoclassical economists themselves. The way that neoclassical economics is commonly presented, as a tradition that consumed the discipline with an overpowering orthodoxy not long after 1870, is fundamentally misleading. Not only were there many other approaches to economics – now read back into the history of economic thought as the “heterodoxy” – that competed

²³ Again a generational split is apparent. Robbins (1932) wrote about all the wrong turns his predecessors in the neoclassical camp had made in flirting openly with psychological hedonism as an explanation for how utility was manifested. In 1947, Samuelson (1983) went even further in trying to remove all references to utility from the canon of neoclassical economics.

with, and gained as much importance as neoclassical economics, there were also considerable differences between different neoclassical authors themselves. This is especially the case if we understand the evolution of neoclassical economics in terms of successive generations.

It is possible to identify roughly four generations of neoclassical economists in England defined by figures who were working within the broader period the thesis considers (1870-1940):

1. The first defined by Jevons' (1835-1882) contribution.
2. Subsequently, Alfred Marshall (1842-1924), accompanied perhaps by Francis Edgeworth (1845-1926) and Philip Wicksteed (1844-1927).
3. Marshall's students, such as Pigou (1877-1959) and Keynes (1883-1946 and not a neoclassical, of course) as well as Edwin Cannan (1861-1935).
4. Finally, Lionel Robbins (1898-1984) and John Hicks (1904-1989).

The list is far from exhaustive but these generational divisions can go some way to helping us understand the differences between neoclassical economists. One thing to note is the relationship between each generation and the classical political economists. Jevons, though an avowed anti-classical in his opposition to Ricardo and Mill, nevertheless engaged directly and fairly extensively with the latter's writings, and relied heavily on Benthamite logic and philosophy as noted in Part One of this chapter. Alfred Marshall, though critical of Ricardo's deductivism and Mill's 'abstractionist methodology' (Hutchison 1998: 56), aimed to present the transition from classical to neoclassical economics as evolutionary and gradualist, based on continuity rather than revolutionary change (Mirowski 1989: 263). As we will see from the next chapter, both Jevons and Marshall retained much of the

moral vocabulary and thinking of the nineteenth century Social Question. By the time we reach the fourth generation and Lionel Robbins, a different relationship with the classical canon emerges. Robbins was sufficiently removed from the first generation of neoclassicals that he could lecture on the marginal revolution (a phrase he was happy to employ) as an innovatory phase that inaugurated modern economic science, as he himself understood it (see Robbins' 1979-1981 lectures in Robbins 1998).

Another means to get a sense of a disaggregated tradition of neoclassical economics would be to examine the emergence of different schools of economic thought based around different universities. Jevons began at Manchester and then moved to University College London; Marshall cemented his base at Cambridge and taught a generation of economists who would themselves be vastly influential figures; and Robbins was based at the LSE, and developed a tradition there in opposition to the Marshallian tradition at Cambridge.²⁴ The story of economics at these universities in the 1870-1939 period explains, albeit only in the English context, the professionalization of the discipline and the consolidation of neoclassical economics in its different guises.

Although it is possible to understand the emergence of neoclassical thinking in Britain as a revolutionary process in the history of economic thought, it was neither a "big bang" event, nor a process that belonged to a single author. Granted, it is possible to isolate influential figures, just as this thesis does by highlighting Jevons and Marshall. But it remains an important task to disaggregate the idea of a singular neoclassical tradition. There is a lot to learn from the

²⁴ The LSE being of double interest as it was both founded by the Fabians and set the task of 'creating an institute in which economists could dedicate themselves to the teaching and study of their subject' (Kadish in Kadish & Tribe 1993: 233).

differences between Jevons and Marshall alone, and the next chapter will explore some of these differences in detail. In this chapter it was enough to demonstrate that each had a particular approach to the social questions of their day, that there are different registers at play when they discuss different kinds of questions and that the advent of neoclassical economics was an eclectic phase in the history of economic thought.

Chapter Two

Jevons and Marshall between the Science of Economics and the Social Questions of the Day

Introduction

This chapter takes a more in-depth look at neoclassical economics through closer analysis of two of its most prominent authors in the English-language tradition: William Stanley Jevons and Alfred Marshall. In doing so, the hope is that further support is given to the idea of a disaggregated neoclassical tradition, suggested in the previous chapter. It includes a more detailed investigation of these two authors' original texts so as to elaborate on the proposition that different registers are being employed for economic and moral reasoning, but that these also overlap in ways which demonstrate the inseparability of normative judgements from the "science" of economics.

As was shown in the previous chapter, there is a tendency to view neoclassical economics as a homogenous tradition, and to describe and explain its emergence through a standard narrative, which operates through generalized contrasts with classical political economy and gives 1871 a *post hoc* reading as the birth date of "modern economic science". If we accept that this standard narrative is misleading, then we must seek a more authentic historiographical understanding of economics. The logical place to begin is with the original texts of neoclassical scholars. Reasons for focusing on Jevons and Marshall were examined in the last chapter and should by now be evident; they are well deserving of their labels as "pioneer" and "professionalizer" of English neoclassical economics respectively. As demonstrated, those within economics tend to operate with

generalizations of what neoclassical economics was and avoid analysis of certain original texts. The same cannot, on the whole, be said of historians of economic thought, who have performed thorough exegeses of the texts that will be examined in this chapter. For this reason, the chapter will engage with a number of authors who have conducted studies of Jevons and Marshall within that subject field. If the essence of the neoclassical “school” seems elusive once we compare all its profilers’ suggestions (Lawson 2013), then our attention should turn to the neoclassical authors’ texts themselves.

The thesis does not speak only to the history of economic thought audience, though. It appropriates literature from that field for its own ends, which includes an investigation of the connections between economic thought and the different perspectives on the Social Question in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Britain. Furthermore, the chapter will act as a means to challenge the conventional periodization of the neoclassical turn, demonstrating that this era of economics should not be seen simply as the embryonic form of the later, more abstract, formalist neoclassical economics.²⁵ Overall, then, the claim to originality in this chapter lies in the new perspective given to this period. Normally, those studying the Social Question would not resort to thorough analysis of neoclassical economics; and, inversely, those studying neoclassical economics would not do so by placing it in the context of multiple perspectives on the Social Question. The conventional boundaries of social policy, sociology and economics halt thorough cross-disciplinary discussion of this era. Although the relationship

²⁵ For a thorough account of the history of this more formalist neoclassical economics, especially in the US, see Mirowski (2002). Mirowski divides US neoclassical economics into three strands in the postwar period – ‘the Chicago Doctrine, the Cowles approach, and the MIT style’ (2002: 191) – of which the first strand, the Chicago School, would seem the closest relative to Jevons’ and Marshall’s focus on character explored in this chapter. These connections would necessitate far more delicate elaboration and are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present thesis.

between the neoclassical authors and government intervention has received some attention (e.g. Hutchison 1994), the interplay between moral and economic reasoning remains ripe for analysis.

The chapter is divided into three further parts. The first deals with Jevons, and his position as the neoclassical pioneer in England. It analyses his moral and academic formation as a background influence to his political economy and then moves to a comparative evaluation of his abstract theory and his social commentary. Here the different registers at play in his work will be discussed, and there will be a focus on how the difference of register reflects different forms of reasoning and an understanding of the separation of the positive and normative alien to later economists. A different treatment is given to Marshall in the following part. He is considered as an unambiguous moralizer and the focus is on how he advocated for various ideas of moral and mental progress based on “character” and “vigour”. The final part concludes the chapter and discusses how the insights into the early neoclassical tradition in England fits in with the analysis given later in the thesis of other perspectives on the Social Question.

The chapter aims to address how, in these authors’ works, moralizing and stigmatizing assumptions based on character, race, class and gender underlie economic and social conceptions of the Social Question. This helps us to understand how even though these neoclassical economists engaged with social problems, they held assumptions that individualized the problems of poverty and unemployment. It contributes to the overall research question in so far as it establishes core themes around character and moralized explanations of work ethic that are reproduced by others throughout the liberal period in similar ways.

Part One: William Stanley Jevons: Neoclassical Pioneer

*In the science of Economics we treat men not as they ought to be,
but as they are.*

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 38)

A Portrait of the Economist

William Stanley Jevons had many different interests before he became a recognized economist in Britain. Born in 1835, he grew up in Liverpool and attended University College School in London, before abandoning his undergraduate studies in chemistry to move to Australia for five years and work as an assayer at the newly opened Sydney Mint. One of his first publications was a study in 1857, 'On Clouds' and 'their various formations' (Inoue & White 1993). Alongside his meteorological research he had an interest in, and was publishing on, the governance of the railways in Australia. In 1859 he returned to England and completed his BA degree, with coursework covering logic, philosophy, political economy, mathematics, classics and history.

A few years later, in 1862, he began to air his 'Theory of Economy' in public, publishing at his own private cost, without much recognition. One paper, his 'Notice of a General Mathematical Theory of Political Economy', which he presented in Cambridge to the British Association, anticipated the work that would mark him out as a marginalist pioneer a decade later. As Peart notes, '[h]is discussion of the laws of utility and exchange in 1871 served to elaborate upon, but not to alter fundamentally, the 1862 analysis' (Peart 1996: 66). It was only after he published *The Coal Question*, in 1864, that an audience developed for his work. Very soon he had plaudits from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Gladstone, and J.S. Mill, who spoke of its merits in the House of Commons. Not long

after he became a lecturer of political economy and logic at Owens College, Manchester, where he remained until 1876 and his transfer to University College London (UCL).

It was the 1870s that saw the height of Jevons' academic prowess. In 1869, at just thirty-four years old, he was elected President of the Manchester Statistical Society, as well as President of the Economic Science and Statistics Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). He used his inaugural address to the former organization to extol the importance of statistics to attend to 'public discussion of various questions now bearing or likely to bear benefit to the State' (Jevons 1870: 2). In 1871 the first edition of his *Theory of Political Economy (TPE)* was issued, and as established in the first chapter, is now identified as the instigation of marginalism in England, despite various precedents. He would continue to publish on economics, logic and the philosophy of science, as well as natural science questions, throughout the 1870s. Professional burdens and ill health compelled him to resign in 1880. Two years later, he drowned while swimming off the English coast at the age of forty-six.

This brief biography, including bibliographical references, is an important starting point for getting to the bottom of Jevons' contribution to the Social Question of his day. Depending on what is mentioned, and what is not, we get quite a different picture of the man. For example, his letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of October 7th 1858 on 'The Social Cesspools of Sydney' alerts us to the fact that he took an interest in "the social" from a young age. And that though he was willing to use provocative language in what were preliminary forays into classifying individuals based on occupation, social class and geographical location (Peart 1996: 3), he did so anonymously, signing off as "A Correspondent" (Inoue & White

1993: 126). All of this contributes to an understanding of what motivated Jevons to write, and what he was motivated to write about.

Indeed, if we gain a sense of his moral formation, we gain deeper insight into the nature of his academic choices, and the positions he adopted on various social issues. One interesting biographical note on Jevons made by Mosselmans tells us that his concern for ‘the sanitary conditions of the poor was probably derived from Charles Dickens’s work (*Barnaby Rudge* was Jevons’s favourite novel)’ (Mosselmans 2001: 223). In Chapter Four we explore the role of social literature, specifically “social explorer” literature and Orwell’s *Wigan Pier*, on the formation of perspectives on poverty and unemployment. Here we might note that there is an influence that runs from social reformers to Dickens and his texts. Goodlad (2003: Chapter 3) demonstrates the connections between the sanitary reform movement – from Edwin Chadwick’s 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* onwards – and Dickens’ 1852 novel, *Bleak House*. She argues that *Bleak House* ‘memorably dramatizes the need for pastorship in a society of allegedly self-reliant individuals’ but remains sceptical about the modern forms of (state) authority that might deliver change (2003: 87). This is reflected, she contends, in Dickens’ ‘search for authoritative pastorship’ between Britain’s emerging middle-class professional elite and its established voluntarist traditions. While expressing contradictory positions on organized philanthropy, ‘the conclusion of *Bleak House* favors the normative self-reliance, local autonomy, and ardent voluntary ethic of the Gladstonean liberal era to come’ (Goodlad 2003: 104).²⁶ The impression we get from Jevons is that he was captured by a similar preference for self-reliance and scepticism of state intervention

²⁶ This is particularly clear, as Goodlad (2003: 108) argues, in the ‘seemingly irreproachable form of guidance’ offered by ‘[s]elfless feminine domesticity’.

throughout much of his life, which was only altered belatedly by the changing social and political climate.

Though we know a good amount about Jevons' life and thought it is unclear how utilitarianism, and more specifically Benthamite utilitarianism, first came to form the philosophical stance of choice for his work. It is likely that his family's Unitarian beliefs led him to embrace utilitarianism and a particular form of social conscience (Black 1990: 7-8). Middle-class Unitarians of the time, such as the Booths, dedicated themselves to advancing the social good through science and reason, and were engaged in literary, philosophical and statistical societies, as well as the incipient sanitary movement (Maas in Jevons [1911] 2013: xi). As to utilitarian academic influences, it seems that it was only when Jevons began to develop his 'Theory of Economy' in 1860 that he discovered the potential of Bentham for his work (Black 1990: 8).

His motivations for embracing Benthamite reasoning appear split in his *TPE*. At times, he seems to be suggesting that Bentham provides a philosophical language which is compatible with the mechanistic analogies he borrows from physics and which allows for an understanding of the economy as a truly integrated and logically coherent system:

In this work I have attempted to treat Economy as a Calculus of Pleasure and Pain ... The Theory of Economy thus treated presents a close analogy to the science of Statical Mechanics, and the Laws of Exchange are found to resemble the Laws of Equilibrium of a lever...

(Jevons [1911] 2013: xxviii-xxix)

At other times Bentham's hedonistic calculus appears to capture his very *Weltanschauung*. As Davies (2015: 57) puts it, to Jevons '[t]he market was a vast psychological audit, discovering and representing the desires of society.'

Unearthing the influences behind his work, contemporary and historical, speculative and established, can aid us in gaining a portrait of the economist.²⁷ What it can also assist with is forming a better comprehension of the major dichotomy I seek to explore in this chapter. Here, I want to get to the heart of how Jevons established a 'Science of Economics' at the same time as maintaining an interest in social questions the legislative interventions for which were 'not a science at all' (Jevons 1882: 9). The two different areas of his work – the economic and the social – appear to operate through different forms of reasoning: the mechanistic logic of marginal utility drives the decisions of individual agents, forming the essence of the economic realm; the social, on the other hand, is characterized by a focus on industrial groups and classes, and influenced by custom, habit, public opinion and principles of the social good based on various ideas of character. There often seems to be a different language or register reserved for the economic and the social, even though both arenas may be under discussion in the same text. Yet, there are also instances such as his explanation of labour supply, in which, although attempts are made to separate analytically the two realms, they remain deeply entangled.

The Science of Economics in the Theory of Political Economy

We have already noted in the previous chapter that the marginal revolution has typically been viewed as a process through which the economic was

²⁷ For an excellent example of the dividends paid by giving close attention to the individual psychology of economists, see D ppe (2012b) on Gerard Debreu.

“isolated” from the social and the ethical. Having established, however, that the early marginalists remained concerned with, and indeed were driven by social concerns, it seems appropriate to question further why such isolation has been perceived. In this section, we will look at the language and register used in Jevons’ *TPE*. This will then be compared in the next section with the language he uses in such works as *The State in Relation to Labour* (1882) and *Methods of Social Reform* (1883). Doing so will help us to determine how a separation might be inferred, but more importantly still, why in our analysis of these works we should seek to ascertain how such segregation proved either an impossibility or undesirable for authors such as Jevons and Marshall.

The process of isolating the economic is associated with the changing of the term Political Economy for Economics. In a revealing passage contained in the Preface to the second edition of *TPE* published in 1879, Jevons raises the issue of using the new term. This provides us with the evidence that he was well aware of the benefits of establishing himself as a pioneer of the new discipline, and that he was among others who had recognized the same:

I cannot help thinking that it would be well to discard, as quickly as possible, the old troublesome double-worded name of our Science. Several authors have tried to introduce totally new names, such as Plutology, Chrematistics, Catallactics, etc. But why do we need anything better than Economics? This term, besides being more familiar and closely related to the old term, is perfectly analogous in form to *Mathematics, Ethics, Aesthetics*, and the names of various other branches of knowledge, and it has moreover the authority of usage from the time of Aristotle.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: xxxv-xxxvi)

After remarking on Marshall's adoption of the new term, and with what seems like a tone of regret, Jevons acknowledged that '[t]hough employing the new name in the text, it was obviously undesirable to alter the title-page of the book' ([1911] 2013: xxxvi). Nevertheless, he writes with confidence on the matter of what should happen to the disciplinary landscape around economics, and how a master science of economics might be identified across this terrain. This emerges further on in the Preface to the second edition, where we are treated to Jevons' solution for what a 'Science of Economics' might look like: fragmented by sub-division, yet held together by certain fundamentals.

[A]s all the physical sciences have their basis more or less obviously in the general principles of mechanics, so all branches and divisions of economic science must be pervaded by certain general principles. It is to the investigation of such principles – to the tracing out of the *mechanics of self-interest and utility*, that this essay has been devoted. The establishment of such a theory is a necessary preliminary to any definite drafting of the superstructure of the aggregate science.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: xxxviii-xxxix, emphasis added)

The language of self-interest and utility, with its Benthamite, utilitarian underpinnings in the *TPE*, forms the defining register to Jevons' political economy. As is evident from the last quotation, this was presented in mechanistic terms via natural laws or "general principles" of behaviour. These laws, pertaining especially to consumption and labour, were the reason why it could be said that economics had been placed on a scientific footing and so it is worth spending some time exploring their basis.

The Benthamite element to Jevons' analysis provided the basis for the basic balance of pleasure and pain logic that was said to determine human action, including economic behaviour. It also gave the much needed basis for establishing the 'quantitative character of the subject' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 10), allowing for the numerical measurement of some of the fundamental categories of economic science, primarily utility. The pleasurable and painful feelings, as noted in Chapter One, were said to have their reflection, their 'quantitative effects', in the actions of 'buying and selling, borrowing and lending, labouring and resting, producing and consuming' ([1911] 2013: 11). Yet, the pleasure and pain logic does not tell us exactly how Jevons understood the "mechanics" of human action, or how he theorized the process by which physiological and psychological stimuli induced particular economic behaviour.

Of course, more pleasure and less pain is the preferable scenario, but how does this principle work, what is at play behind what Jevons admits is an 'obvious psychological law' ([1911] 2013: 16)? He tells us more when he writes of 'the simple inductions on which we can proceed to reason deductively with great confidence', which include: 'every person will choose the greater apparent good; that human wants are more or less quickly satiated; that prolonged labour becomes more and more painful' ([1911] 2013: 18). This is supplemented by a breakdown of how pleasure or pain might be quantified by:

- (1) Its *intensity*.
- (2) Its *duration*.
- (3) Its *certainty* or *uncertainty*.
- (4) Its *propinquity* or *remoteness*.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 28)

Again though, this does not inform us of how he understood the mechanics of human action, or said another way, how Jevons justified his theory of economic behaviour in such mechanistic terms. For that we have to return to the kind of psychological literature that influenced political economy in the nineteenth century and eventually made its way into Jevons' work.

Physiological Psychology and the Mechanics of Economic Behaviour

The prominent Jevons scholar, Michael V. White, is one of the few historians of economic thought to have traced the behavioural theory in the *TPE* to origins other than Bentham. Instead he attributes the mechanical metaphors to Richard Jennings' *Natural Elements of Political Economy* (1855), a text 'which drew upon the discourse of physiological psychology to present "natural laws" of economic behavior in functional terms' (White 1994a: 198; see also Mirowski 1989: 117-119). Jevons appropriated the same discourse to present his marginalist behavioural theory in an attempt to establish universal laws of economic behaviour. This entailed adoption of 'mechanical metaphors' such as the lever in equilibrium, balances of force and gravitational force fields (White 1994a: 206). These metaphors were then applied to the relationship between the physical, and physiological, aspects of motivation and mental reactions or reflexes.

As White argues, to build such connections between physical and psychological reflexes and particular forms of economic behaviour, Jevons subscribed to the idea of "physiological psychology". This idea can be understood as a convergence of associationist psychology and ideas about the sensory-motor reflexes of the body that arose in the mid-nineteenth century. The former 'considered that complex mental events, such as knowledge and experience, could

be accounted for by a combination of sensations and perceptions felt by the body and registered in the mind' (White 1994a: 208).²⁸ These associations could be recorded, remembered and drawn upon for future situations. The latter set of ideas included physiological studies of sensory processes whose conclusions pointed to 'an explanation for the body's spontaneous movements that were prior to and independent of previous external stimuli and consequently mental "associations"' (White 1994a: 210). Movements, or behaviours, could be considered 'motor impulses' that came about through associations of pleasure or pain that were, depending on the view of the author, either purposive and willed, or automatic and unconscious (White 1994a: 213).

Together, this formed the basis of the claim that particular natural laws existed that explained economic behaviour. As Maas notes, 'Jevons used Bentham's felicific calculus to formulate his theory of pleasure and pain, but psychophysiology helped Jevons to think of these feelings in functional form' (Maas in Jevons [1911] 2013: xx). As White (1994a) stresses, Jevons' conclusions on these matters were built on foundations laid by various others, such as Alexander Bain, William Carpenter and Richard Jennings, all of whom receive acknowledgement in *TPE*. Neither was Jevons alone in advancing physiological psychology. In Victorian Britain it had 'wider cultural significance' and 'was an aspect of a general movement towards a naturalistic understanding of man', where the science of the mind could be pursued through the methods of the physical sciences (Jacyna 1981: 109-110).

²⁸ This understanding of the mind-body relationship in physiological psychology was also indebted to the experiments of Gustav Fechner in 1850, who argued for the idea of a 'mathematical harmony' between the two realms, which he attempted to ascertain through recording the difference of feeling as he lifted objects of varying weights (see Davies 2015: 27-30).

Yet we should not confuse Jevons' theory of economic, or human action, with that which pertains to the automaton of *homo economicus* in later neoclassical economic theory (Morgan 2006). Jevons struggled with the idea that free will was being erased from explanations of human behaviour in the physiological psychology approach (White 1994a). Indeed, he struggled with the application of the scientific method in general in this regard, as was clear from his thoughts in *The Principles of Science* (1913), first published in 1874:

No apparent limit exists to the success of scientific method in weighing and measuring, and reducing beneath the sway of law, the phenomena both of matter and of mind. And if mental phenomena be thus capable of treatment by the balance and the micrometer, can we any longer hold that mind is distinct from matter? Must not the same inexorable reign of law which is apparent in the motions of brute matter be extended to the subtle feelings of the human heart? Are not plants and animals, and ultimately man himself, merely crystals, as it were, of a complicated form? If so, our boasted free will becomes a delusion, moral responsibility a fiction, spirit a mere name for the more curious manifestations of material energy. All that happens, whether right or wrong, pleasurable or painful, is but the outcome of the necessary relations of time and space and force.

(Jevons 1913: 736)

Such a scenario was clearly anathema to Jevons, and in the *TPE* he navigated around the idea that free will had been jettisoned from his theory of economic behaviour by simply stating the opposite: we still 'manifest the will' in indicating our estimation of pleasure and pain; our '*voluntary* action' is driven by these same 'two great classes of stimulants'; our calculations are made '*[a]lmost*

unconsciously' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 13, 26, 36 emphasis added). As White notes, however, this escape from physiological determinism appears incoherent alongside his appropriation of the discourse of physiological psychology to explain economic behaviour (White 1994a: 219). The latter was simply too useful in its provision of a functional explanation for actions that accorded with the idea of marginal utility and registered themselves in market prices. Philip Mirowski conveys the usefulness of mechanics and the machine for Jevons' political economy in similar terms: the metaphors spoke to 'Jevons's faith in unified science and the importance of analogy for transporting the concepts of one developed science to its lesser developed cousins' (Mirowski 2002: 40).

The Law of Averages and the Bosom of the Individual

Jevons sought to circumscribe the idea that actions proceed via involuntary, psychophysiological mechanisms by other means. His focus on average behaviour, on the so-called *homme moyenne*, is an attempt to break from the difficult arguments surrounding the role of the individual mind and will in the economy. 'Providing that we have a sufficient number of independent cases,' he argued, 'we may then detect the effect of any *tendency*, however slight. Accordingly, questions that appear, and perhaps are, quite indeterminate as regards individuals, may be capable of exact investigation and solution in regard to great masses and wide averages' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 16).²⁹ What he called the 'average or fictitious mean' was 'of the highest scientific importance', in that 'it enables us to make a

²⁹ An anonymous reviewer of the first edition of *TPE* identified the novel aspect of Jevons' book in these elements: 'Each man is regarded as an instrument moved by pain and pleasure; and the arrangements of society at large are determined by the aggregate impulses of all its individual members' (cited in Maas 2005: 277).

hypothetical simplification of a problem, and avoid complexity without committing error' (Jevons 1913: 363). The average was a get-out clause.

Alternatively, means of evading the complexities of individual motives and interfering social influences were sought in the idea of the atomistic economic agent. The justification for representing the motives of the individual with a balance of pleasure and pain in the individual mind was made through Jevons' insistence that interpersonal comparison of feelings is not only impossible, but unnecessary: '[e]very mind is ... inscrutable to every other mind, and no common denominator of feeling seems to be possible ... the motive in one mind is weighed only against other motives in the same mind, never against the motives in other minds ... Hence the weighing of motives must always be confined to the bosom of the individual' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 14). This is perhaps where we get the greatest sense of Jevons' advancement of the individualized economic agent as both the unit of analysis and the *explanans* for market prices. As Mirowski argues, these two routes circumnavigating the difficulties raised by the mechanical-psychophysiological approach – the aggregate and the representative individual – comprised 'a vision of the economic process that was solipsistically confined within a single consciousness, or at best, a "trading body" that was indistinguishable from a solitary economic man' (2002: 43).

There were also ways in which he mapped out the appropriate arenas of different forms of analysis, including the appropriateness of the scientific method. In particular, a separation between "higher" and "lower" motives allowed him to delineate questions of ethics and duty, issues of a so-called "higher calculus" from those appropriate to the domain of economic science. On this latter domain he reminds us in the *TPE* that '[i]t is the lowest rank of feelings which we here treat.

The calculus of utility aims at supplying the ordinary wants of man at the least cost of labour' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 27). Higher questions, by contrast, dealt with issues 'of mental and moral feelings of several degrees of elevation', to include 'the claims of a family', 'the safety of a nation' and ultimately 'the supreme motives which should guide the mind' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 25).

Mechanical metaphors, the language of physiological psychology, the law of averages and the atomized individual: all these allowed Jevons to develop a theory of the behaviour of the marginalist economic agent. Without these discursive elements, the argument for a basic utilitarian explanation that we would immediately associate with Jevons would falter. The methodological and moral difficulties that he faced were navigated, sometimes convincingly, sometimes not, with the above elements drawn from his natural sciences background and an interest in developments in psychology relating to the theory of mind and body. Drawn together they formed the basis of a separate economic science, relating to "lower" feelings, motives and questions. This hierarchy might be construed as Jevons' supreme desire to isolate economics from questions of ethics entirely. In this next section we turn to an analysis of Jevons' social commentaries, and works on economic policy, to demonstrate that this is not an accurate portrayal.

The Social Questions of the Day and the Role of Character

As was established in Chapter One, Jevons wrote a great deal of social commentary, including recommendations for and analysis of economic policy. His writing in these areas was driven by a concern for the amelioration of poor and working class people, and principally to see them provided with the means for their own self-improvement (Peart 1996). Although much of this commentary is to

be found in texts separate from those concerning economic science such as *Methods of Social Reform* (1883) and *The State in Relation to Labour* (1882), this section will demonstrate that the moralizing aspect of his thought ran through every area of his work, including *TPE*.

Interestingly, the division between “higher” and “lower” questions that allowed Jevons to delineate an economic science from ethics is also present within his commentaries on economic policy. In *The State in Relation to Labour* ‘[w]e deal here’, he writes, ‘only with a lower class of relations, and have nothing directly to do with those higher questions of ethical science, of moral obligation, of conscience, of religious conviction’ (Jevons 1882: 6). His approach to questions of policymaking relied on utilitarian considerations of the greatest good, and he rationalized individual policies through such evaluations (Peart 1996: 136-137). Policy analysis, however, was not a straightforward science, and neither were there eternal principles to guide the legislator: ‘in practical legislation, the first step is to throw aside all supposed absolute rights or inflexible principles ... [legislation] is a matter of practical work, creating human institutions’ (Jevons 1882: 9).

The legislator, we are told, must simultaneously consider different branches of science and amalgamate these considerations in ‘the complex calculus of probabilities’ (1882: 29). Often the most important deliberations would involve consideration of public opinion and custom. The public were thought of in his work as aggregates of individuals in different industrial groupings, and in the *State in Relation to Labour* we are treated to his ruminations on the role of trade unions and employers in the economy. This even extended to an acknowledgement that legislation ‘with regard to labour has always been class-legislation. It is the effort

of some dominant body to keep down a lower class, which had begun to show inconvenient aspirations' (1882: 34). It was incumbent on Jevons to reflect on the growing presence of trade unions in industrial bargaining, and though he was hesitatingly supportive of workers having an organized voice to represent them, he issued warnings about the 'noxious' potential 'to the community' that they could have in demanding higher wages and an 'unfair share of the public expenditure' (1882: 88, 106).

Explaining Jevons' approach to policymaking as a utilitarian calculation of the greater good leaves us with the question of how he recognized the greater good and how he thought it might be facilitated. To do this, we must consider Jevons' policy recommendations and economic analysis in the context of his moral stance on working-class people, paupers and those of different race. His utilitarianism, Peart argues, 'was intimately bound up with subjective judgments concerning the general development of society and the amelioration of working class conditions' (Peart 1990: 287-88). I suggest that we can understand a great deal of Jevons' approach to social reform as the advocacy of cultivating "higher", middle-class tastes, refinements and habits as a means of delivering the poor and ignorant labourer from poverty. An important target for reform, and the subject of this next section, was "character".

Class, Race and Character in the Work of Jevons

Jevons advocated various social goods in areas we might take for granted today. Most obviously he supported the provision of education, but he also championed public libraries and museums as well as restricting the employment of children in manufacturing. However, it is not the fact that he advocated social

goods, but the way in which he advocated them, that is of interest. His explanations for poverty and unemployment are especially important for establishing the interlinking forms of economic and moral reasoning he operated with. In one of his earliest works, *The Coal Question*, he identified the problem of, and solutions for, poverty in the following terms:

It is a melancholy fact which no Englishman dare deny or attempt to palliate, that the whole structure of our wealth and refined civilization is built upon a basis of ignorance and pauperism and vice, into the particulars of which we hardly care to inquire ... The ignorance, improvidence, and brutish drunkenness of our lower working classes must be dispelled by a general system of education, which may effect for a future generation what is hopeless for the present generation.

(Jevons 1866: 30-31)

These themes of ‘ignorance, improvidence, and brutish drunkenness’ formed the basis of many of his recommendations for social interventions that would “improve” working-class people and the condition of their lives. Class was thus defined not in terms of position in the social relations of production but rather in terms of particular social behaviours ‘evaluated by the Victorian yardstick of “civilised” actions’ (White 1994b: 440). Discussion of these behaviours was also present within his analysis of economic behaviour on topics such as the determination of work hours. ‘[T]he Victorian morality’, White argues, ‘was not simply an embarrassing dross which can be separated from the “pure” economics’ (1994b: 442). This intermingling of moral judgement with “scientific” economic analysis suggests a failure on Jevons’ part to adhere to his stated separation of these analytical realms.

In his inaugural address to the Manchester Statistical Society in 1869 Jevons spoke of the need to 'raise the intelligence and provident habits of the people' so as to reduce pauperism. An absence of sense when it came to saving and improper consumption, he argued, was the cause of descent into the workhouse: 'however high the wages of an artizan may be, they may be spent intemperately.' The result was that a population such as that of Manchester, who had access to 'all the comforts of life as any in the world', was 'ever ready upon the least breath of adversity to come upon the public funds' (Jevons 1869: 7).

These last comments, from Jevons' address, were explicitly attending to the 'social questions of the day'. Yet, in his more straightforwardly "economic" work, the role of particular habits and character traits were acknowledged as important factors in explaining economic behaviour. In *TPE* the importance of providence is acknowledged both for an understanding of how the "remoteness" or "propinquity" of pleasure or pain is felt and as a standard of civilization reflecting differences of character and race:

Now, between the actual amount of feeling anticipated and that which is felt there must be some natural relation, very variable no doubt according to circumstances, the intellectual standing of the race, or the character of the individual; and yet subject to some general laws of variation.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 34)

Jevons claimed that the ordinary working class person could not be incentivized to work more by higher wages in the same way as those of higher professions:

English labourers enjoying little more than the necessities of life, will work harder the less they produce; or, which comes to the same thing, will work less hard as the produce increases.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 180)

Foresight is recognised as an important explaining factor for why different people are willing to labour for different periods of time. Those with greater foresight will understand and be able to anticipate future gains; those without it possess an infantile obsession for instant satisfaction. Crucially, the possession of foresight is considered conditional on the presence of a “state of civilisation”:

This power of anticipation must have a large influence in Economics; for upon it is based all accumulation of stocks of commodity to be consumed at a future time. That class or race of men who have the most foresight will work most for the future. The untutored savage, like the child, is wholly occupied with the pleasures of the moment; the morrow is dimly felt; the limit of his horizon is but a few days off. The wants of a future year, or of a lifetime, are wholly unforeseen. But, in a state of civilisation, a vague though powerful feeling of the future is the main incentive to industry and saving.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 35)

Later in *TPE*, on considering the relationship between wages and hours of work supplied, he writes:

It is evident that questions of this kind depend greatly upon the character of the race. Persons of an energetic disposition feel labour less painfully than their fellow-men, and, if they happen to be endowed with various and acute sensibilities, their desire of further acquisition never ceases. A man of lower race, a negro for instance, enjoys possession less, and loathes labour more; his exertions, therefore, soon stop. A poor savage would be content to gather the almost gratuitous fruits of nature, if they were sufficient to give sustenance; it is only physical want which drives him to exertion. The rich man in modern society is supplied apparently with all he can desire, and yet he often labours unceasingly for more.

(Jevons [1911] 2013: 182-183)

The focus on different experiences of time is a recurrent trope for Victorian era discussions of character. A personal disposition founded upon restraining impulsive behaviour and cultivating habits that demonstrated willpower and a preparedness for an uncertain future might have been contrasted against fecklessness, impulsivity and an incapacity for self-maintenance (Collini 1985: 34). In Jevons' analysis, the dispositions of the *homme moyenne*, the representative marginal economic agent, appear automatically aligned with a kind of maximised work drive: individuals will labour until that point at which the balance of pleasure tips in favour of pain. The disutility of labour, as mentioned in Part Two of the previous chapter, performs a functional role in explaining economic behaviour. This stands in opposition, though, to the more elastic social

behaviour of various groups, for whom differences of character, class and race produce assorted dispositions.

Jevons also acknowledges these differences across different occupations. Considerations of work motivation applied to those of different professions as it did to the residuum or those of “lower” race. Artisans, mill-hands and merchants ‘seem generally to prefer greater ease to greater wealth’, but the attractions of greater reputation mean that ‘a successful barrister or physician generally labours more severely as his success increases.’ Finally, ‘in the highest kinds of labour, such as those of philosopher, scientific discoverer, artist, etc., it is questionable how far great success is compatible with ease; the mental powers must be kept in perfect training by constant exertion, just as a racehorse or an oarsman needs to be constantly exercised’ (Jevons [1911] 2013: 181-182).

The interest shown in the quality and subjective experience of work in Jevons’ analysis is lost in the Austrian neoclassical tradition following Menger and promoted by Wieser and Böhm-Bawerk. They instead emphasised labour as a mere means to utility, and the ends as final consumption, with no consideration of the quality of work (Spencer 2009: Chapter Five). Both traditions, however, have an important bearing on the neoclassical understanding of labour supply and the development of the idea of voluntary unemployment. As we saw in the previous chapter, this idea of voluntary unemployment led to understandings that labour had to bear the burden of wage adjustment to its market price in order for unemployment to fall. In the next chapter, we will see how the idea of voluntary unemployment takes on a more common sense meaning – reflecting Jevons’ assumptions above – when applied to understandings of the “habitual loafer” who, for reasons of character, is deemed to have an aversion to regular work.

How was it that Jevons could hold to certain universal or natural laws of economic behaviour yet discriminate on the basis of race and character? White (1994b) argues that Jevons was able to move between different discursive domains – the domain of economic science and that of moral judgement of social behaviour – without apparent contradiction because he did not distinguish between positive and normative propositions in the way that later neoclassical economists would, but instead between questions of economic science and questions of ethics and duty. Jevons was able to adopt a moral stance on social behaviour in his “scientific” work because he operated with a naturalistic theory of behaviour as utilitarian, which was supposed to hold true *on average*.³⁰ His explanation of reduced working hours as a preference for more leisure over wealth, laden with racial and class prejudice, therefore sat alongside illustrations of what was considered the “natural”, “universal” behaviour of the utility-maximising individual. In this sense, Jevons was not operating with an assumption of rational behaviour but with ‘the maximization of utility arising from the satisfaction of “lower pleasures” in material welfare’ (White 1994b). As White notes (1994b: 440), different utility functions with different slopes were thus attributed to different races and classes when looked at in the concrete. The relationship between these racial and class prejudices and the scientific principles of economic behaviour were accommodated within one realm due to a different framework of ethics than simple positive/normative divides.

The reliance on temporal argumentation and delayed gratification to posit a distinction between bourgeois and working-class characters displays a definite, classical political economy sensitivity. Adam Smith relied on the virtue of delayed

³⁰ See above section on ‘The Law of Averages and the Bosom of the Individual’.

gratification to suggest that the bourgeois character was exceptionally well suited to flourishing within nascent capitalist markets (McCloskey 2006: 122; Watson 2012). His master economic concept, prudence, was displayed as both an economic and a moral good in this regard, and the Victorian editor of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Edwin Cannan, caricatured the emphasis it received in Smith's work as 'sane men save' (Cannan [1926] 1993: 25). When we explore the "return of character" in Part Three of Chapter Five, we will see that a related language (and relatedly class-based language) that describes "holding out" – "grit", "perseverance", "resilience", "application", "delayed gratification" and "self-control" – attaches itself to character education and explanations for successful, socially mobile citizens (Paterson, Tyler & Lexmond 2014; Arthur et al. 2015).

Amusements of the People

Where Jevons did engage with questions of policy-making as separate from those of economic science there was explicit acknowledgement of the need to improve the character and habits of the working class through proper consumption and leisure pursuits. This is only hinted at in *TPE* through praise of Banfield's idea that 'the satisfaction of every lower want ... creates a desire of a higher character' (Banfield in Jevons 2013: 42). In his posthumously published collection of essays that forms *Methods of Social Reform* (1883) Jevons suggests a fast track method to raising the character of the working classes. Nowhere is this more explicit than in his lengthy call for the provision to working-class people of 'good moral public amusements, especially musical entertainments' (Jevons 1883: 2).

If the citadel of poverty and ignorance and vice is to be taken at all, it must be besieged from every point of the compass – from below, from above, from within; and no

kind of arm must be neglected which will tend to secure the ultimate victory of morality and culture.

(Jevons 1883: 2)

'Amusements of the People' first appeared as an essay in 1878 and advocated the cultivation of higher tastes and progress towards a more civilised society by calling for "pure music" to be available in the form of free concerts in public parks. This kind of 'physiological aesthetics' was influential among authors of the time, such as Herbert Spencer, Alexander Bain and Grant Allen (Maas 2005: 211). Jevons argued that 'popular amusements are no trivial matter, but rather one that has great influence on national manners and character' (1883: 2).³¹ The kind of entertainment he was recommending would be a replacement for the vulgar amusements found in the tap houses and music halls of places like London's East End or the manufacturing districts of Manchester.

Interestingly, Jevons saw these cultured diversions for the masses not in terms of the active stimulation they produced for an audience but in terms of the rest and recovery they provided from the working day. 'For Jevons', Maas asserts, 'partaking in popular amusement involved a minimum of work of the mind, a minimum of waste of mental energy. Popular amusement consisted of the art of forgetting' (Maas 2005: 213). A musical performance (with audience seated) could induce 'perfect repose ... [t]here is no straining of the nerves or muscles, no effort of any kind, but mere passive abandonment of the mind to the train of ideas and emotions suggested by the strains' (Jevons 1883: 9). They would also enact an

³¹ "Manners" is a decidedly eighteenth-century term, which arrived as part of a discourse of "politeness" that included a wider vocabulary of "refinement", "character", "breeding" and "distinction". This discourse of politeness, Klein argues, was given political weight by its association with the tradition of civic liberty (Klein 1989).

important 'mingling' of all classes, with the effect that the "lower" classes would be drawn to, or elevated towards, the respectable behaviour of the middle and upper classes, and away from the drunkenness and rowdiness of their usual venues (1883: 17-18). The clear sense of paternalistic class prejudice and fear of the disorder of the residuum in this piece – he mentions the recent 'fear of collecting the residuum' in public gardens (1883: 12-13) – is indicative of the desires for social control through the conduct of conduct.

In his works addressing the Social Question, Jevons appears caught between a moderate reformist optimism and a deep pessimism towards the supposed ignorance and vice of working-class people. He appears to have a dim view of the possibility of immediate social progress for the masses of society. He wrote in 1879 that:

Human nature is one of the last things which can be called "pliable". Granite rocks can be more easily moulded than the poor savages that hide among them. We are all of us full of deep springs of unconquerable character, which education may in some degree soften or develop, but can neither create nor destroy.

(Jevons cited in Peart 1996: 138)

Yet, he began to display a utilitarian reform-mindedness sensitive to the anti-*laissez-faire* strains of the Social Question of the late 1870s and early 1880s in some of his final works (1882, 1883). Indeed there can be no doubt that he was affected by the mood for increasing legislative intervention of the time. In advance of the publication of *The State in Relation to Labour* (1882), Herbert Foxwell, one of Jevons' closest friends, wrote to Jevons expressing a hope that he had assumed 'well

I won't say a Socialistic position because some dislike the word: but at all events a position from which you recognize the obligation of the individual to society, and the necessity of some control, in the public interest, of his endeavours to secure his private gain.' 'It vexes me', he continued, 'to hear the authority of Political Economy always appealed to by the selfish rich on the other side. I don't think it will be so much longer, from what I see of the younger generation of economists.' Jevons replied in the affirmative that 'I fancy the new book will almost exactly meet your views' (Foxwell/Jevons in Black 1973: 186-187). Jevons was caught between the emerging state interventionist logics of the Social Question and an older commitment to Victorian pastoral power, exemplified in his suggestions for inter-class mingling at "civilized" events.

Part Two turns to Marshall, who was caught between championing marginal utility and the concern to retain ideas of moral and social progress within his economics. Instead of focusing on Marshall's economics, the chapter focuses on his vision of the relationship between mental and moral progress, and his emphasis on the development of character.

Part Two: Alfred Marshall: Neoclassical Moralizer

[Economists] deal with man as he is: not with an abstract or "economic" man; but a man of flesh and blood.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 22)

The Mathematical and Moral Education of an Economist

Alfred Marshall's 1890 work, *Principles of Economics* ([1920] 2013), which went through eight editions in its first thirty years, has earned the title of "a true classic in the literature of economics". It has educated generations of economists in the foundational elements of their subject and shaped the language of economics in ways that are often no longer acknowledged (Groenewegen 2013: ix). Although there is considerable literature on Marshall and his role in the history of economics it is worthwhile giving a brief biographical note as was given on Jevons, above. This serves to present him as an important author for the professionalization of economics, but also reminds us of the breadth of his interests and how they informed a wide-ranging body of work.³²

Alfred Marshall was raised in a family of moderate means. His father, William Marshall, was a Bank of England employee who earned enough to provide young Alfred with a good education at public schools. A personal interest in mathematics and natural sciences led him to undergraduate study at Cambridge in 1861, rather than the Oxford education and clerical career his devoutly religious father might have preferred. Cambridge in the 1860s was an elite institution catering for the children of the educated professional classes. It was also a place of intense and competitive learning, not least within the Mathematical Tripos, with

³² The following biographical overview is indebted to Groenewegen's (2007) work on the life and scholarship of Alfred Marshall, especially Chapters Two and Three.

students ‘increasingly disciplined and drilled by private coaches to perform as efficient calculating machines’ (Cook 2005: 691), always with one eye on the prize of becoming “senior wrangler” (achieving the top first-class score of that year).

Marshall graduated at Cambridge with the title of “second wrangler” (i.e. second in his year for the Mathematical Tripos). He went on to teach Mathematics at Cambridge but, partly through colleagues, developed an interest in metaphysics, which itself spurred a fascination with psychology. In his philosophical studies, he went so far as to read Kant in the original German, and Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* had a great impact on his thought (Groenewegen 2007: 30), still present twenty something years later in his *Principles*. In 1868 he secured a college lectureship at St John’s in the Moral Sciences and, around the same time, joined several philosophical clubs, such as the Grote Club, of which Sidgwick was also a member.

Sometime in this period, between 1867 and 1872, Marshall wrote four papers on various aspects of mental philosophy, epistemology and metaphysics. The most significant of these is understood to be ‘Ye Machine’ (Cook 2005). This paper gives us a chance to discuss some important elements of Marshall’s understanding of the mind, and to relate these and his university experiences to the way in which he discussed decision-making, economic agents and social progress later in his *Principles*.

Marshall’s Mental Mechanics

‘Ye Machine’ outlines Marshall’s model of the mind and mental processes, drawing on the same sources as Jevons does – Bain, Carpenter, Babbage – to

develop a similar vision to Jevons, mixing the mechanistic language of psychophysiology with associationist mental science. Cook summarizes it as ‘an attempt to explore the possibilities of an entirely mechanical psychophysiology’ (2005: 697). Marshall’s comprehension of machinery was undoubtedly much more basic than that of the other authors above. Mirowski notes that in ‘Ye Machine’, ‘Marshall simply equates mind with mechanism without apology or motivation ... the impossible was merely confused with the abstract in [his] machine dreams’ (2002: 41). The rigour of his mechanical understanding aside, the text gives us interesting insight into the way that Marshall understood the mind and reveals concepts such as “vigour” and “character”, later to emerge in his economic writings. These ideas are important for establishing the relations he saw between mind and society. A leading Marshall scholar, Raffaelli, captures this neatly: ‘social progress, Marshall seemed to believe, was bound to follow the guidelines of mental progress’ (Raffaelli 2001: 217).

Marshall outlined a picture of the machine mind as a dual circuit. The “lower circuit” contained thinking that could be considered analogous to the unconscious: it drove routine, habitual behaviour that is performed automatically without the need for concerted or conscious effort. The “upper circuit” would be called into action when the “machine” encountered unfamiliar scenarios, resulting in ‘a series of experimental nervous combinations that, once an effective result has been attained, leads to the establishment of new automatic routines’ (Cook 2005: 698).³³ A third plane of mental activity could intervene in the dual circuit,

³³ I am struck by the similarities between Marshall’s dual model of the mind and Daniel Kahneman’s (2011) recent popular behavioural psychology book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. In the latter, distinction is made between “System 1” type thinking – instantaneous, automatic, unconscious – and “System 2” type thinking – effortful, conscious, and deliberative.

consisting of “creative speculation” or vigour such that Marshall’s picture of the mind formed a “three-way interface”:

1. automatic behavior dictated by unconscious routine;
2. attentive deliberation and experimental innovation;
3. and creative vigor.

(Cook 2005: 698)

This representation of the mind as a relationship between different realms of innovative spontaneity and automaticity was a development in Marshall’s thinking that later echoed itself in Marshall’s *Principles*, as noted earlier. While it seems evident that Marshall appreciates routine behaviour as the sign of an established order, he reserves the highest praise for vigour as an indication of industrial efficiency, entrepreneurialism and general social progress. In Book IV of the *Principles* we find reference to “vigour” on no less than 31 occasions. It is left undefined as a concept and there appears to be no way of measuring it in exact terms (Marshall [1920] 2013: 162); instead, it might be understood as a rough assessment of the ‘strength or force of a man’s character’ (Cook 2005: 705), and a very important yardstick for social progress. Here is Marshall’s elaboration:

Although the power of sustaining great muscular exertion seems to rest on constitutional strength and other physical conditions, yet even it depends also on force of will, and strength of character. Energy of this kind, which may perhaps be taken to be the strength of the man, as distinguished from that of his body, is moral rather than physical; but yet it depends on the physical condition of nervous strength. This strength of the man himself, this resolution, energy and self-mastery, or in short this "vigour"

is the source of all progress: it shows itself in great deeds, in great thoughts and in the capacity for true religious feeling.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 161-2)

Thus vigour is a distinctly “manly” property and a kind of display of (masculine) moral strength against adversity. The physical and the moral are intimately bound up in the idea of vigour, and this no doubt was a reflection of wider, ingrained Victorian cultural and political persuasions that reigned at the time, such as ‘muscular liberalism’ (Collini 1985: 45-6).

As with Jevons, character in Marshall’s work needs to be seen through its intersections with class, gender and race. As a cultural trope of the late-nineteenth century, I agree with Collini that it should not merely be seen as ‘a weapon fashioned to suit the purposes of middle-class moralists frightened by the possible consequences of the poor’s apparent indifference to respectable values’ (Collini 1985: 48). However, it clearly played an important moralising role in Marshall’s work, as well as being tied to concerns for the development of what today we might call “human capital”. It appears that, where Jevons was more intent on separating out questions of higher ethical concerns from his economic texts, Marshall was content to not only leave them in but to thoroughly and explicitly integrate them into his economic proposals. As the opening lines of *Principles* state: ‘Political Economy or Economics is ... on the one side a study of wealth; and on the other, and more important side, a part of the study of man’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 1).

We might interpret Marshall’s rejection of economic man, as seen in the quotation at the beginning of Part Two here, as one instance of this intertwining of

moral and economic reasoning. He rejected a static picture of the individual and their motives in favour of a focus on the individual as part of social life (Marshall [1920] 2013: 21). They had the potential to develop new forms of human nature and character more amenable to economic and moral wellbeing (Marshall [1920] 2013: 40). It is true that Marshall often conceived of alternative motives such as 'public esteem' and 'moral satisfaction' in the same manner as pecuniary gain, or indeed that 'higher-order' goods such as a sense of duty might be corrupted for the right financial reward (Whitaker 1977: 164). Yet the overall register of the *Principles* was edifying; Schumpeter (2006 [1954]: 739) noted how Marshall was part of a bourgeois crowd that 'preserved the ethical inheritance of Christianity' in terms of 'attitude' rather than overt religiosity. One economist, in an assessment of the 'Victorian relevance for modern economics', where 'modern' was 1970s America, even claimed that 'ultimately what Marshall preached was not so much economics as it was moral and aesthetic development' (Levitt 1976: 429). This would be an unlikely response to the question of "what is neoclassical economics?" if it were posed to economists today.

Marshall as "preacher" had a great deal to sermonize about. In this next section we turn to examples of how Marshall used "character", as well as some of the other moralizing tendencies present in his work. It appears evident that certain positions he adopted were reflections of more widely held beliefs and others were peculiar to his own experiences. In the latter category, for example, Marshall's education was a formative influence for his ideas on work and leisure and the more particular habits he espoused. In the former his assessments of "strength of character" appear more general expressions of the late-Victorian concern with the standing of the nation and the health – physical, mental and moral – of its population.

Character, Education and Human Capital

What exactly did character constitute for Marshall? The answer is not exactly straightforward. If we take its first instance in the *Principles*, on the very first page, we are told that ‘man’s character has been moulded by his every-day work, and the material resources which he thereby procures’. Furthermore, during the business of earning one’s livelihood, ‘his character is being formed by the way in which he uses his faculties in his work, by the thoughts and the feelings which it suggests, and by his relations to his associates in work, his employers or his employees’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 1). Character is thus contingent upon mental ‘faculties’ and changes with the circumstances of the working environment. It is adaptable, then, in the same way that he saw human nature as a dynamic force. Raffaelli (2003: x) claims that, for Marshall, ‘[c]haracter ... this most elusive concept of Victorian culture, is explainable by the dialectical mechanism which causes the growth of the mind. Its individual and social evolution accounts for the “pliability” of human nature, against the classical economists’ view of its constancy, crystallized in the model of the “economic man”.’

Marshall’s politics were classically liberal, and his policy prescriptions became increasingly amenable to the business and managerial stratum of society, as demonstrated in his address in 1907 on ‘The Social Possibilities of Economic Chivalry’, in which he equated tough business decisions with the ‘mediæval chivalry of war’ (1907: 14). Though his choice to focus on economics was a consequence of his wanting to ameliorate the wellbeing, economic and moral, of “the poor” and the working class, ultimately he emphasized ‘self-help and individual initiative’ as the answers to poverty and unemployment (Groenewegen 2007: 121).

Furthermore:

Industry and punctuality, thrift and politeness, a healthy and frugal life style were the desirable characteristics which the working class should, and could, adopt through self-cultivation and its own institutions.

(Groenewegen 2007: 121)

The attainment of a higher, nobler life, though potentially within the grasp of working-class men, would only be available to those who were prepared to work for it. ‘The truth seems to be’, wrote Marshall, ‘that as human nature is constituted, man rapidly degenerates unless he has some hard work to do, some difficulties to overcome; and that some strenuous exertion is necessary for physical health’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 112). But ‘for those who have no strong ambitions ... a moderate income earned by moderate and fairly steady work offers the best opportunity for the growth of those habits of body, mind, and spirit in which alone there is true happiness’ ([1920] 2013: 113). This is the expression of a ‘Gospel of Work’ (Breton 2005) common to Victorian thought that perseveres, as we shall see in Chapter Four, into the twentieth century and finds a home even among writers such as George Orwell.

We can see in Marshall’s perspective of the Social Question an emphasis on the same kind of character traits that are propounded by Jevons and shared by others, explored in Chapter Three. He said of the ‘fundamental characteristics of modern industrial life’, that:

They are ... a certain independence and habit of choosing one’s own course for oneself, a self-reliance; a deliberation

and yet a promptness of choice and judgment, and a habit of forecasting the future and of shaping one's course with reference to distant aims.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 4)

These were also the principles that the Charity Organisation Society (COS) shared when it came to the judgement of deserving applicants for poor relief. The COS emerged in around 1870 with 'the belief that it was the responsibility of the better-off to protect and develop the character of the poorer elements of society' (Humphreys 2001: 1). Through in-depth background checks they ascertained whether or not individuals were deserving of their assistance, and those who were not were referred to the Poor Law Guardians. Theirs was thus a thoroughly individualizing analysis of poverty. Marshall was a long-term supporter of the COS, and though he rejected some of its more zealous proposals, his support extended as far as suggesting to the Royal Commission in 1895 that it might be well placed to administer relief to the aged poor, through classification 'according to thrift and past conduct' (Marshall in Humphreys 2001: 102). In more general terms, he railed against the damage that poor relief did to working-class habits, for it had been 'distributed among them in inverse proportion to their industry and thrift and forethought, so that many thought it foolish to make provision for the future' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 188). We will explore the COS through one of its leading advocates, Helen Bosanquet, in the next chapter. Here we see echoes of Jevons' remarks on forethought, self-reliance and thrift as a foundation of poverty alleviation.

Character infused Marshall's economic analysis too; as with Jevons, we see that the supply of labour of a particular individual is conditional on character and race. The relevant passage is worth reproducing at length:

It depends then on the individual, whether with growing pay new wants arise, and new desires to provide comforts for others or for himself in after years; or he is soon satiated with those enjoyments that can be gained only by work, and then craves more rest, and more opportunities for activities that are themselves pleasurable. No universal rule can be laid down; but experience seems to show that the more ignorant and phlegmatic of races and of individuals, especially if they live in a southern clime, will stay at their work a shorter time, and will exert themselves less while at it, if the rate of pay rises so as to give them their accustomed enjoyments in return for less work than before. But those whose mental horizon is wider, and who have more firmness and elasticity of character, will work the harder and the longer the higher the rate of pay which is open to them; unless indeed they prefer to divert their activities to higher aims than work for material gain.

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 438-439)

Again, we see moralizing, stigmatizing and racist exceptions to understandings of work and social progress. For the individual whose character is developed, the maximizing work ethic is the general rule. Those who are not socialized into modern industrial life are denied the mental, moral and material progress it brings.

It is possible to identify more specific ways in which Marshall advocated for character. In particular, he argued for education as an essential part of the

development of strong character. This included universal provision of a decent education for children. In his encouragement of such provision he saw education as a basis for national industrial efficiency: ‘the wisdom of expending public and private funds on education is not to be measured by its direct fruits alone. It will be profitable as a mere investment, to give the masses of the people much greater opportunities than they can generally avail themselves of’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 179). Increasing opportunities generation after generation, and the march of “mechanical progress”, especially for the children of unskilled or semi-skilled workers, would also require a particular form of learning:

Education must be made more thorough. The schoolmaster must learn that his main duty is not to impart knowledge, for a few shillings will buy more printed knowledge than a man’s brain can hold. It is to educate character, faculties and activities ...

(Marshall [1920] 2013: 597)

This reflects Marshall’s desire to see national moral development alongside higher economic wellbeing, and the responsibility of the educator to impart the personal tools, with their civilizing overtones, to attain such development.³⁴ Parents, however, were given ultimate responsibility for bringing up children in a healthy, civilized manner. Raising children to a high standard required that parents possess ‘a certain habit of mind which is as yet not very common ... the habit of distinctly realizing the future ... [a habit that is] seldom fully developed except among the middle and upper classes of the more cultivated nations’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 180). Consideration of the future in this regard requires parents to

³⁴ A similar stance would no doubt be supported by economic historian McCloskey: ‘education without the new bourgeois rhetoric is merely a desirable human ornament, not the way to human riches’ (McCloskey 2010: 144).

bear the burden of reproducing the labour supply: 'the investment of capital in the rearing and early training of the workers of England is limited by the resources of parents in the various grades of society, by their power of forecasting the future, and by their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 467). Failure to make the appropriate sacrifices, most common in 'the lower ranks of society', would yield an intergenerational problem of the ill-educated, improvident poor. As Marshall warned: 'this evil is cumulative' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 467-8).³⁵

Even more specifically, Marshall argued that mothers were responsible for creating and maintaining a 'true home' and 'investing their efforts in the personal capital of their children's character and abilities' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 570; Marshall & Marshall 1879: 12). His arguments that women should remain housebound, and that they should ensure the decent upbringing of their offspring, who must attend school 'with bodies clean and fairly well fed' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 594-5 fn2), can be interpreted as a reflection of his 'bourgeois Victorian values' and class bias (Pujol 1984).

It appears that he held this bias with an enthusiasm that can be classified as nothing less than misogyny. Beatrice Webb in her autobiography notes a lunch with Marshall, at which he espoused his views on men and women: 'he holding that woman was a subordinate being, and that, if she ceased to be subordinate, there would be no object for a man to marry... *Contrast* was the essence of the matrimonial relation: feminine weakness contrasted with masculine strength: masculine egotism with feminine self-devotion' (Webb 1938 [II]: 398).

³⁵ Of course, this neglects the fact that artisans and working class people had long engaged in forms of saving and insurance in the form of Friendly Societies (Cordery 2003).

Marshall's focus on parenting is an excellent reminder that liberals and neoliberals (who may consider themselves "classic liberals") often take the family or family organisation as the basic unit of analysis: '[t]he ultimate operative unit in our society is the family, not the individual' (Friedman 2002: 33). Gary Becker appropriates Marshall (as well as Smith and Mill) for his arguments concerning 'human capital', quoting Marshall's line that '[t]he most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings' (Becker 1993: 27). But he does not cite the two lines either side: 'degradation of the working-classes varies almost uniformly with the amount of rough work done by women' and 'of that capital [invested in human beings] the most precious part is the result of the care and influence of the mother, so long as she retains her tender and unselfish instincts, and has not been hardened by the strain and stress of unfeminine work' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 469).

In Part Three of Chapter Five we will be exploring briefly the reinvigorated emphasis on parenting and the family within the context of "Broken Britain" and "Big Society" explanations of poverty and unemployment. Here I simply want to note that the burden of "human capital" investment today is placed on the individual, but parents and mothers have become increasingly "implicated" in explanations for social breakdown and poverty while the social services they rely on are cut back (Social Justice Policy Group 2006). The result is that increasingly the costs of social reproduction are loaded onto the unwaged realm of the home (Dowling & Harvie 2014). Marshall, it appears, imagined a similar gendered division of burden in advocating so strongly for the male-breadwinner and placing the burden of character development with mothers.

The different perspectives that Marshall adopts towards different classes of people appear to point in different directions. On the one hand, in echoes of Smith, he is explicit in advancing an economics that ‘call[s] for and develop[s] the faculty of sympathy, and especially that rare sympathy which enables people to put themselves in the place, not only of their comrades, but also of other classes’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 38). It is also evident that he believed that there was a structural basis to ‘poverty per se’, for which strong intervention, and not the free operation of market forces was the solution (Levitt 1976: 431-2).

Yet, he adopts a moralizing and patronizing register towards working class people, the “Residuum”, the morally incapable, etc., which identifies weaknesses of character endemic to their social group as a causal factor for their poverty and the slow progress of their standard of life. Indeed, he even asserts that it might be preferable that ‘[their] rise ... be distributed over two generations’ (Marshall [1920] 2013: 259), for responsible character emerges only gradually through the diffusion of good habits.

Conclusion

The exploration of Jevons’ and Marshall’s writings in this chapter testifies to the complex interrelationship of moral and economic reasoning in their works. Psychological explanations of economic agents and their actions are complemented in the case of both authors by value judgements about what actions are commendable and exemplary. The separation of the economic and the moral in Jevons’ work operates only on his own terms, whereby higher questions of ethics and duty are separated from their lower counterparts manifest in either the representative individual’s hedonistic psyche or the concrete behaviour of

different classes and races. The “scientific” form of analysis relies on mechanistic metaphors of the mind-body relationship, which speak to an analysis of economic behaviour grounded in the common sense appeal of the utilitarian balance of pleasure and pain.

Class and race sneak their way into his conception of the representative utility-calculating agent in the question of working hours: only ‘[t]hat class or race of men who have the most foresight’ appear to conform to utilitarian principles. Simply put, Jevons holds to a deeply class prejudiced and racist understanding of the work ethic, which, while reflected in his views on pauperism, is also a part of his economic science. For Jevons, as with Marshall, character, class and race define the “illiberal” exception to liberal economics. In the next chapter, we will see how character operates in perspectives on poverty and unemployment in social investigation, social work and social statistics and how it is transposed to questions of assistance for the deserving poor. There we will see how Jevons’ theory of the labour supply are cited by Helen Bosanquet at the end of the nineteenth century to make sense of the behaviour of the “residuum” (Dendy 1893).

Class prejudice and the liberal desire to shape conduct through aspirations of social elevation is also rife in Jevons’ suggestions for social policy and the appropriate kind of leisure pursuits that might temper the brashness of working-class entertainment. There was a distinctly archaic form to the kind of pastorship recommended for the working classes, focusing on “manners” as an important factor in social progress. This could be contrasted with his growing acceptance of legislative interference in a number of areas.

Marshall, the preacher of evolutionary progress, remains the antithesis of the amoral neoclassical economist. He advances an economics that 'does not ignore the mental and spiritual side of life' (Marshall [1920] 2013: 14) and that questions whether poverty is a necessary product of contemporary society (Marshall [1920] 2013: 2-3). Beatrice Webb claimed that he was an artefact of 'the mid-Victorian time-spirit – the union of faith in the scientific method with the transference of the emotion of self-sacrificing service from God to man' (Webb 1938: 214)

Nevertheless, there appears a disjuncture in his work between a position of "class sympathy" and an approach that demands self-reliance and a prescribed set of habits that taken together form "strength of character" for the worker. In his work we see the tension between, on the one hand, an understanding of the individual as a social being and the need for redistributive intervention to ameliorate the social circumstances of certain groups, and, on the other, a register that is thoroughly patronizing and individualizing in its perspective of working-class poverty.

Many registers overlap within their writings. The language of mechanistic metaphors speaks to the attempts at a science of economics that can connect automatism and spontaneous calculation with the economic behaviour of the utilitarian individual. Beneath character is a mass, associated vocabulary including: "vigour", "thrift", "temperance", "providence", "manliness", "faculties", and so on. These different registers interact with the authors' perspectives on a number of concepts, such as civilization, development and progress, the nation as the arena of the social, the gendered division of labour and the role of education and "human capital". The idea that economics became a pure science of rational behaviour with the neoclassical turn is evidently misleading. Of course, we can read elements of

later neoclassical theory back into the works of these authors – the “as if” assumption of the behaviour of the representative (marginalist) economic agent, for example – but this is not good historiographical practice.

Misleading also is the idea that economics became more concerned with the discussion of social interventions to alleviate poverty that did not presume moral failings. Moral failings in the form of an inability to conform to ideas of good character were still an important part of the answer to the Social Question for Jevons and Marshall. This chapter and Chapter One have demonstrated that while early neoclassical economists were sensitive to the structural failings of industrial capitalism and the need for state intervention, they clung to a number of individualizing tropes such as character, self-reliance, thrift and forethought as both explanations for poverty and recommendations for its cure.

Chapter Three turns to the perspective of policy-makers and social reformers from 1890 and into the early-twentieth century. The assumption here is similar: that social reform increasingly acknowledged the problems of poverty and unemployment as structural failings of industrial capitalism instead of as moral failings of the individual. Consequently, so the narrative goes, there was a period of rationalization in social policy that dealt with (investigated, administered and provided relief for) the poor and unemployed in more progressive terms. This is a narrative that the thesis would like to question through a closer look at the language used by social reformers and policy-makers for the poor and unemployed, for, as this chapter has already suggested, character was carried over into late-nineteenth century social reform.

Chapter Three

The Social Question, 1880-1914: Between Rational Bureaucracy and Moralizing Credo

Introduction

This chapter explores the development of perspectives on poverty and unemployment within the realm of policy-making. It follows the elaboration of the neoclassical perspective in the previous chapter and delves into the language that characterized policy discussions, which had a more direct impact on the administration of unemployment. This allows for exploration of the Social Question, not just of the specific questions asked – such as whether or not there should be a system of public works for the unemployed – but also of the assumptions it made of the subjects to be governed and the ways in which the problems of unemployment were posed. It is not a straightforward analysis of policy evolution; rather it questions the ontological and epistemological basis of the Social Question: what or whom did it take as the target of governance and how was knowledge of such governance developed and framed?

The last twenty years of the nineteenth century capture the essence of the Social Question with regard to unemployment: agitation from labour and socialist organisers; the slow breakdown of the Poor Law system documented in a series of government commissioned reports; social investigation from a set of politically diverse authors attempting to build an evidence base for understanding poverty and unemployment; sensational media portrayals of metropolitan poverty; and a

general anxiety and cognizance by the 1890s among elites that there was a policy vacuum for dealing with the newly constituted “problem of unemployment”.

The era is an interesting moment of transition in regards to the development of social assistance. It encompasses broad debates about who the poor and unemployed were, how they behaved and what was the best course of action to “deal” with them. This chapter attempts to make sense of the Social Question by exploring the terms with which poverty and unemployment, and *the poor* and *the unemployed*, were spoken of and how they were identified. The policy-making perspective was formed of an elite nexus of: social reformers interested in the administrative means for relieving unemployment and poverty; politicians receptive to social reform; and those charged with devising and instituting reform at local and central government level. The first group was made up of figures such as Charles Booth and Joseph Rowntree, Helen Bosanquet, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The second group was composed of figures of the Liberal Governments of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith such as Lloyd-George and Churchill who legislated for reforms such as those that introduced social insurance and labour exchanges. The third group includes prominent civil servants such as Geoffrey Drage, Hubert Llewellyn Smith and William Beveridge. Some, such as Hubert Llewellyn Smith, could be placed in both the first and third of these groups, as a social investigator turned Labour Commissioner for the Board of Trade.

In this chapter I want to focus on three individuals in particular: Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. For each of them, the chapter explores how they identified and classified the poor and unemployed, and the consequences this had for their solutions to the Social Question. Booth’s

contribution is framed as “social investigation”, Bosanquet’s as “social work” and Llewellyn Smith’s as “social statistics”. Through the portraits of these important figures, the chapter paints a picture of the way in which policy identified and dealt with the poor and unemployed, often in disciplinary ways. It exposes the way that unemployment in particular was constructed in highly normative terms by looking at the methods and assumptions of these three.

Although it is focused on policy-making perspectives, the chapter does not focus on the second group above. This is because much more can be gleaned from the writings of the other groups about the methods of classification and the reasoning behind particular explanations of poverty and unemployment than from the politicians of the second group. Those who legislate employed these classifications, definitions and explanations but did not do the groundwork that generated them. The other groups, however, were both active in developing the methods for investigation of the Social Question and the solutions to its problems, and their perspectives on poverty and unemployment are open to clearer interpretation in their written works.

Where today we assume a concrete and identifiable “real” rate of unemployment, historical analysis demonstrates that the phenomenon is contingent on political and normative assumptions, which have wide-ranging effects on the path that labour management, industrial relations and the general organisation of the labour market take (see Whiteside 2014). Looking at the way in which unemployment was constructed in the socio-political context of the late-nineteenth-century Social Question provides analytical cues for how we might think about how it has been constructed more contemporarily. Chapter Five will

then look in more detail at how the historical construction of unemployment can aid in our understanding of unemployment in the 'workfare era'.

This chapter also puts emphasis on the late-Victorian and Edwardian Social Question as an era of liberal government – understood as a political rationality, or an art or ethos of government, that aims to give specific form and content to individual conduct in a way that is sensitive to undue intervention (Burchell 1996). But it also focuses on those exceptions where liberalism simultaneously exhibits distinctly “illiberal” traits. The history of social policy is rarely focused on this paradox, but it is deeply present in this era of the Social Question, from the ‘illiberal flank of “New Liberalism” and “Fabianism”’ (Jones 1984: xviii) and the proposals of the eugenics movement (MacKenzie 1981) to the qualified, ‘limited Socialism’ of Booth (Booth 1902: 166-167) that sought to preserve individualism alongside strong interference in the lives of the very poor (a mixture of these are explored below). This argument is part of a broader claim in the thesis that liberal government is entirely consistent with, and even actively calls for, illiberal practices to be directed at certain segments of the population (see King 1999; Dean 2002).

The illiberal qualities of liberal government are understood in the framework of social control outlined in the Introduction. We find that in determining the nature of “the poor” and “the unemployed” a process of classifying, segregating and controlling different groups within the population according to assumptions concerning their behaviour becomes formalized. This is what Hartley Dean (1991: 68) calls ‘partitioning’, a process that constitutes poverty as an object of social policy around which a formal, state social security system is gradually instituted. It is epitomized by the distinction made between the

deserving wage-labourer thrown out of work involuntarily by the fluctuations of trade, and the habitual pauper or “loafer” who chooses to lead a life premised upon remaining as idle as possible, securing his/her existence by immoral or criminal methods and languishing in dependence on state relief.

The means of social investigation, social work and social policy employed to answer the Social Question, became a way of exposing these divides among the poor and unemployed, as well as ensuring the sanctity of wage-labour and the efficient reproduction of the labour force in the name of, *inter alia*: national efficiency and competitiveness; social harmony and the avoidance of revolutionary tendencies or disorder; a Victorian faith in the power of educating and forming character; and a sympathetically expressed dedication to the improvement of working class conditions.

Marxist authors stress that this period of the Social Question is marked by class conflict between the interests of capital – which may include a desired role for the state in reproducing a healthy, productive and efficient workforce – and a growing industrial proletariat placing pressures on the state for greater provision of welfare (Gough 1979: 56-57; Saville 1958). It is also a period in which class fractions become complicated around this conflict; with the development of the labour movement, including its representation inside parliament, and the expansion of state bureaucracy, came the advancement of a “labour aristocracy” (Hobsbawm 1968; Moorhouse 1978) and the rise of a professional elite (Perkin 2002), respectively. The Marxist social control approach emphasizes that social policy is, in essence, a product of the dominant social classes or class fractions, serving their interests and values (Davidson 1985: 12; Hay 1977; Higgins 1980).

Foucauldian authors point to the emergence of new technologies and forms of knowledge that come to influence the development of social security and understandings of poverty and unemployment (Walters 2000; Procacci 1989). Hacking (1991: 183), for example, argues that in the nineteenth century, statistics gave a certain 'official form' to the class structure of industrial society and generated categorizations and distinctions in the study of populations between 'normalcy' and 'deviancy'. The development of statistics from the 1870s is marked by a particular biopolitical concern for the health and efficiency of the population, which initiated successive waves of eugenic thought (Mackenzie 1981). In the 1880-1914 period this is matched by crisis perceptions of imperial decline, urban degradation and concerns about the efficiency and fitness of labour, which gives social investigation a loose Social Darwinist inflection (Harris 1995).

Donzelot (1979), working in the Foucauldian tradition, also points out that it is a period in which the family becomes more intensely regulated as a site of moral policing, through the increased surveillance of the domestic realm by philanthropic organizations. We touch on this in Part Three of the chapter below on Helen Bosanquet and the social work of the Charity Organisation Society.

Much of the chapter looks at different techniques for counting, categorizing and coming to *know* the poor and unemployed and this is read broadly through the lens of social control understandings outlined above. Emerging techniques of defining poverty and unemployment permitted the reworking of eligibility that met assumptions concerning deservingness and upheld regularity of work, temperance and foresight as standards of judgement. It should be noted, however, that these techniques also opened up opportunities for politically progressive alternatives that might elude or flow around/through the original plane of

intention, certain “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guatarri 1988). In his Preface to the first German edition of *Capital*, Marx lamented the abysmal state of social statistics in Germany in comparison to England and its record of factory inspection, warning that ‘Perseus wore a magic cap down over his eyes and ears as a make-believe that there are no monsters’ (Marx [1867] 1976: 91). Counting the poor and unemployed and investigating their living conditions opens up the possibility for new demands to be made on the state for improving those conditions. The enduring tension between social rights and social control discussed in the Introduction is thoroughly embedded in the development of social statistics. In the next chapter we will explore how this tension runs through the policy of public works for the unemployed.

The chapter is divided into three further parts. Part One explores how poverty and unemployment came to be identified by government in more general terms. It outlines the narrative that the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century era witnessed a fundamental shift in policies of social assistance, and the language of such policies, that transposed the blame for lack of work from the unemployed to industrial society itself (Hobson 1896). It also attempts to outline a rough periodization of the Social Question based on different perceptions of crisis from the 1880s until 1914.

Part Two explores in more detail the means by which “the poor” and “the unemployed” were identified. It looks at how the poor became a category of concern above and beyond the “destitute” and how the process of identifying the poor and the unemployed was imbued with moralizing assumptions that partitioned the pauper from the poor, the respectable unemployed from the

unemployable, and the regular wage-labourer from the casual, underemployed residuum.

Part Three looks at three figures already mentioned in more depth: Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. This is a survey of the explanations of and remedies for unemployment from what Harris (1972: 11) describes as 'a group of intellectual hybrids, who were concerned partly with general economic hypotheses, partly with sociological investigation, and partly with administrative reform.' It explores how they conceived the problems of poverty and unemployment, the techniques and forms of knowledge they drew upon and how this relates to different notions of social control. The final section concludes the chapter.

Part One: Framing the Social Question, 1880-1914

One of the typical ways to explore the Social Question is through analyses of Liberal and social-democratic politics and its evolution in the late-nineteenth century (e.g. Clarke 1978; Freedon 2005). Late-Victorian Liberals voiced the anxieties of the Social Question most forcefully, especially as a problem of 'anomalous social conditions', of enduring poverty amidst plenty (Gumpel 1892: 271). At the turn of the century, New Liberal social reformers and economists emphasized the need for sensitivity to working class opportunities, expectations and desires. J.A. Hobson (1896: 28) argued for a measurement of poverty in which '[t]he difference between felt wants and the power to satisfy them' is genuine deprivation. For some at the time this was seen as a case of social anxiety confined to a shaken elite, 'the social conscience of the Victorian middle and upper classes

[having] finally outstripped working class progress' (Haggard 2001: 22). Whether it was the spark of social consciousness ignited by New Liberalism or an uneasy paranoia among elite commentators, the Social Question was intimately bound up with conceptions of crisis within social progress and what it meant for different groups within society.

Bound up in this sense of on-going poverty amidst increasing plenty was a multitude of perspectives on how to explain and solve the problem of unemployment. What this chapter is partly concerned with is the increasingly professional, bureaucratized and governmental nature of the response to the Social Question and its associated crises. Where we looked at the establishment of a professional discipline of economics in the previous chapter, here we are looking at the establishment of professional government and social administration. In terms of how expanded social investigation and bureaucracy responded to, but also constituted the Social Question, we can usefully think, following Davidson (1993: 245), in terms of two periods of crisis perception: from the early 1880s to 1900; and from 1900 to 1914.

Crisis Perception and the Social Question

The first period of crisis perception in the 1880s and 1890s was characterized by both antagonistic industrial relations and 'the apparent socioeconomic crisis of the urban (and specifically metropolitan) economy' (Davidson 1993: 245). The unemployed came to be viewed as a distinct group politically in the 1880s, as they started to organise under the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) from 1884 onwards, culminating in protest and riots in 1886-7 as well as a major dock strike in 1889 in London (Burnett 1994: 146). The reaction

from middle-class society and the government to these events was serious and concerted, and revealed the level of fear of the casual residuum (Jones 1984: 292).³⁶ The charitable Mansion House Fund “for relieving distress” increased from £3,000 to £42,000 immediately after the riots in London in 1886, and the president of the Local Government Board, Joseph Chamberlain, released a circular calling for the local provision of public works for the unemployed (Flanagan 1991: 30-31).³⁷ In the next chapter, we explore in fuller detail the politics of the provision of public employment, the “right to work” and how this pushed against established thinking on unemployment.

Emphasizing this fear is not necessarily a suggestion that the unemployed as a political group drove the direction of social policy. Indeed, as we will see, fear of the revolutionary potential of the working class or unemployed movements abated slightly during the Edwardian period to be replaced by concerns about the physical and mental capacities of the labouring population. However, perception of the unemployed as a disruptive force, a force of social disorder was a genuine fear before the turn of the century (Harris 1972). After 1900, the formation of the Labour Party, the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 and the Right to Work campaign all had the effect of constructing the problem of unemployment in national terms and as a state responsibility (Flanagan 1991: 56-7). So while the emphasis in this chapter is on elite perceptions of the Social Question, these must

³⁶ For example, Salisbury’s Conservative Government, following the shock of intense industrial unrest in the early 1890s, initiated the Royal Commission on Labour of 1891-4. Part of its remit was to consider whether ‘modern disputes between employers and employed’ could be ‘pacifically settled without actual conflict in the shape of strikes or lock-outs’ (Royal Commission 1894: 8).

³⁷ Importantly, as Flanagan notes, Chamberlain’s circular was intended to neutralize unemployed protest and its support, not to make concessions to it. ‘Chamberlain was not concerned to alleviate the plight of the unemployed as an end in itself but as a means of ensuring control over the casual poor, and of maintaining the notion of respectability in other sections of the working class’ (Flanagan 1991: 31).

be considered in the context of intermittent and increasing political agitation by the unemployed and those who organized them, explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The second crisis phase, beginning around the turn of the century and lasting until 1914, developed from the perception of urban degradation and underemployment into anxieties over the 'health, motivation, and efficiency of the work force', and the performance of the British economy (and Empire) internationally (Davidson 1993: 246). In this second phase of crisis perception, arguments about "national efficiency" and international competitiveness were prominent in the work of British eugenicists such as Karl Pearson, who themselves happened to be among the pioneers of professional statistical science (MacKenzie 1981). A broad spectrum of professional and political elites spoke the language of eugenics, even if the practical vision of eugenicists was never realized.³⁸ Internationally, the 'science of work' became established in the first decade of the twentieth century as a sub-division of 'social hygiene', advancing the vision that 'society was best served by equilibrium and threatened by chaos', and that social statistics could proffer a politically neutral answer to the Social Question (Rabinbach 1990: 206).

One of the clearest socio-cultural expressions of this anxiety over imperial decline and national efficiency was the birth of the Boy Scout movement in 1908. Baden Powell, its founder, conceived it as an answer to Britain's 'moral, physical and military weakness' (Rosenthal 1986: 3). The Scouting movement would instil self-discipline and obedience and improve the moral and physical health of the

³⁸ Although eugenics was many different things to many different people, it is telling that its appeal stretched across the "respectable" elite of Edwardian society, to such figures as William Beveridge and John Maynard Keynes (Mackenzie 1981: 33).

nation (and particularly of working-class boys) through education in character and physical activities modelled on public school ideals – a ‘Character Factory’, as Rosenthal (1986) has named it.

Fears of declining economic and military power, suggested by the rise of the German and American economies and defeat in the Boer War, also stoked ‘social imperialism’ within Conservative, Liberal and Fabian ranks, and launched the campaign for Tariff Reform in 1903, with the now Conservative politician, Chamberlain, seeking to connect the need to protect the nation’s foreign (and imperial) trading position with the problem of unemployment (Perkin 2002: 158-159). As Walters notes, although the arguments based around Tariff Reform did not remain prominent once insurance as a technology of government was developed, an enduring legacy was established that ‘associates unemployment with a variety of threats posed to the integrity of the nation.’ These threats may be framed in the form of foreign goods flooding the domestic market, but have often taken ‘more overtly racialized forms’ in populist rhetoric against immigrants (Walters 2000: 40-41).

Indeed, the prominence of arguments about job displacement and unemployment present within racist populist rhetoric against migrants from Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Middle East and North Africa today, across the main political parties in Britain and in much of the media, is testimony to the endurance of such thinking. And we might legitimately read the language of the “Global Race” espoused by David Cameron and others (Cameron in Morris 2013), and used to admonish the “idle” British worker by the far right of the Conservative Party (Beckett 2013; see Kwarteng et al. 2012), as part of the legacy of social imperialism.

The Nineteenth-Century Growth of Expertise

The discussions of, and solutions to, the Social Question in this period bore the mark of the professional ideal, submitting social organization to 'the rule of the expert' (Beveridge quoted in Perkin 2002: 168) and formulating responses to the newly pressing problem of unemployment that were in harmony with prevailing ideological forces (and fears). The mark of success of policy-making came to be the extent to which it could demonstrate a scientific method of investigation.

It remains difficult to strike at the essence of "policy-making" perspectives in this era. It might be more accurate to talk of a range of increasingly professional experts that were drawn into government and social administration over the course of the nineteenth century. "Expertise" was a term that entered the vocabulary of social investigation in the 1860s. At this time a small number of "elite intellectual forums" such as the Statistical Society of London, the British Academy for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) and the Social Science Association were in the process of professionalization (Goldman 1993: 99-104). This process was slow, however, and the dividing line between governmental and extra-governmental research was unclear, only becoming sharper late in the nineteenth century, when a professional bureaucracy began to be fed by classically-educated Oxbridge graduates (Goldman 1993: 105, 111).

Over the course of the late-nineteenth century there was strong contestation over what different kinds of professional expertise would look like

and be used for.³⁹ The prominent eugenicist, Francis Galton, led calls in the late 1870s for 'Section F' of the BAAS – the Economics and Statistics Section – to be shut down on the basis that it was using statistics for clearly political reasons (see Galton 1877). As was discussed in Chapters One and Two, Jevons and Marshall represented a professionalization of the economics discipline to the effect of separating out (if not isolating) social concerns. Similarly, and simultaneously, battles were fought over the appropriate means and ends for statistics with figures such as Galton seeking to defend it as a science of economic laws immune to political appropriation (see Schweber 2006; Redman 1997).

By the late-nineteenth century, however, there was a growth in government expertise and statistical knowledge applied to social problems. This was, remember, the period in which Alfred Marshall sat as a member of the Royal Commission on Labour (1891-94). For our purposes here, narrowing down what content is of interest for understanding the specific question of unemployment becomes complicated by the fact that it remained attached to so many other issues and areas of expertise. As Mansfield notes, 'the intellectual division of labour separating employment from other domains of social life did not exist prior to the "invention of unemployment" itself' (Mansfield 2008: 167) and, as discussed in Chapter One, Marshall was still only talking about irregularity of employment in 1894, rather than unemployment *per se*.

³⁹ 'The rationale of professionalisation', Mackenzie claims, 'is to give an occupation special status by implying that its work is based on its accredited possession of a body of systematic knowledge, to erect barriers controlling access to this knowledge and to membership of the occupational group, and to free the group as much as possible from control by outsiders or "laymen", while claiming it can be relied upon to provide disinterested service to the community' (MacKenzie 1981: 27).

After the turn of the century, we still find that irregular employment, rather than unemployment, is discussed in government reports in relation to, for example, working-class housing (Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes 1906) and mental and physical deficiency (Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration 1904). There are, however, general terms on which we can understand the idea of “the social” with regard to the emergence or “discovery” of unemployment in the late-Victorian era. These allow us to set the context against which we can explore in more detail in the second half of the chapter perspectives on poverty and unemployment.

From the Problem of the Unemployed to the Problem of Unemployment

It is possible to see unemployment in this era in much the same way as Dean (1991: 4) sees pauperism earlier in the nineteenth century: as an event, rupturing the nature of social assistance and marking an important transition in social, discursive and governmental realms. For the first time, unemployment itself, rather than “the unemployed”, was made a subject of understanding as a structural, social phenomenon, entering the vocabulary of economic policy with J.A. Hobson’s study (1895).

Following José Harris’ (1972) classic text *Unemployment and Politics, A Study in English Social Policy 1886-1914*, Walters (2000: 22, 30-31) frames the shift in this period as a movement from ‘the problem of the unemployed’ to ‘the problem of unemployment’. That is, a movement away from an understanding of lack of employment as either a voluntary condition or an individual moral failing, or both, towards an understanding that acknowledged the economic nature of the problem and advanced structural causes of the labour market as an explanation.

This preceded the development of government intervention designed to deal with the industrial conditions that caused unemployment and to relieve the “distress” of unemployment itself. As Walters puts it, ‘[o]nce it is possible to conceive of an economic condition of “unemployment”, which is distinct from its bearers, the possibility of other ways of acting upon poverty is opened up’ (Walters 2000: 22). It was, then, a reworking of the problematization of lack of work that defined unemployment as a social problem or question to be attended to.

This broader transformation Harris frames in the following terms: ‘How did it come about that Victorian social welfare provision – largely purveyed through face-to-face relationships within the medium of civil society – evolved into the most “rational” and bureaucratic of modern welfare states?’ (Harris 1992: 117). Walters’ response is to separate out this much longer history and point to the way in which various agencies and individuals began to conceptualize unemployment as a problem of liberal government. This was a process of ‘inadvertent and contingent discoveries’ of social forms, ‘which [were] subsequently captured, rationalized, and pressed into governmental service’ yielding further unintended consequences (Walters 2000: 11). It included the development of various technologies and administrative forms – the labour exchange, the social survey, the employment counsellor etc. – that facilitated the practical governance of unemployment, and new forms of political reasoning such as governing unemployment as a risk to be insured against, which would feed into the later development of the welfare state.

Yet it was only with the turn of the century and the first decade thereafter (around 1906-7) that an increasingly confident claim emerged that labour exchanges and insuring the unemployed worker was the best means for

attenuating the problem of unemployment.⁴⁰ What is more, such a solution would, in Beveridge's words, 'aim at preventing, not unemployment itself, but the distress which it now involves' (Beveridge 1912: 220). The pre-1914 framing of the Social Question is characterized more by uncertainty and anxiety in relation to the question of the unemployed and unemployment, within the periods of crisis perception outlined earlier.

Overall, it can be read as an era in which, despite rising standards of living for working class people, a sense of social disharmony and relative deprivation lent itself to a heightened awareness that the rich and poor live such different lives that it seemed as if they inhabited two different societies. It is this sentiment that E.P. Thompson was striking at when he wrote that Henry Mayhew, in the mid-nineteenth century, 'discovered not poverty, but a middle-class consciousness of poverty' later to be forgotten and 'rediscovered' in the 1880s (Thompson 1967b: 43, 62). This impression of a society split apart is what ignites the Social Question.

The chapter as a whole will be framed in a slightly different light to the unemployed-unemployment transition, for, much like the classical-to-neoclassical transition in economics, changes in the governance of unemployment are not as straightforward as this narrative suggests. In asserting this shift as a ruptural event it is necessary to remain sensitive to the persistence of elements of the old order, what flows through the rupture you might say, contaminating the new

⁴⁰ In 1902, then Prime Minister Arthur Balfour could brush off Labour leader Keir Hardie's calls for a debate on unemployment and distress. Although this could be put down to party political differences, it is indicative of the times that Balfour could voice continuing faith in the workhouses and charitable organizations. Referring Hardie to the 1896 Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment he concluded, 'the results of its labours certainly do not indicate that any profitable result would follow for the distressed classes from further debate in this House' (Hansard 1902: col. 666-8).

modes of understanding and novel administrative practices of government. In this case, what we are dealing with is what Haggard (2001) has called “the persistence of Victorian Liberalism.”

This persistence manifested itself in the deeply moralized discourse targeted at the poor and unemployed that lasted well into the twentieth century and beyond. Indeed, this thesis allies itself to the literature that argues that moralized representations of the poor and unemployed are a consistent feature of capitalist society (Seabrook 2013; Jones & Novak 1999; Welshman 2013). The important task is to make distinct these representations in historical, conceptual and concrete terms. In the next two sections, the continued role of moralizing discourses will be explored as they appeared in the forms of administrative and bureaucratic categorization that applied to the poor and unemployed: the relief they received, the manner in which those with influence over policy talked about unemployment and its causes, as well as about the behaviour of the unemployed themselves. The narrative that the late-Victorian period enacted a rationalization of state administration and a redefinition of poverty and unemployment that removed the blame for these conditions from the poor and unemployed themselves, will be tested.

What we discover is that many of the behavioural characteristics upheld by neoclassical economists such as Jevons and Marshall in the previous chapter for their role in civilizational progress and upward social mobility are present in the language of policy-makers and social reformers. In particular the importance of individual responsibility, self-reliance, character, good habits – especially as part of a work ethic – and the emphasis on foresight. Among policy-makers, and those who influenced them, certain classes or groups are also isolated as “problem groups”, giving continuity to the concept of the residuum used by Marshall and

Jevons. We find at the turn of the century that there is an idea not only of a class that remains voluntarily unemployed, but also increasing claims about a class that is “unemployable” because of inherent or developed physical or moral “degeneracy” (Welshman 2013: Chapter Two).

Part Two: The Construction of Unemployment and Poverty

The place to begin determining how poverty and unemployment were made into particular problems, and how the poor and unemployed were dealt with, is perhaps by asking how these latter categories were identified and defined. This section looks at how definitions of poverty emerged as distinct from pauperism and how unemployment came to be defined and conceptualized through the issue of casual labour and underemployment.

Defining Poverty and the Poor

In the late-nineteenth century, poverty was generally held to be a condition of “destitution”, which was made visible by those paupers who either crossed the threshold of the workhouse to seek poor relief or who were granted relief outside of the workhouse. Poor relief statistics show that in 1871, the number of “indoor paupers” in England and Wales stood at 140,467, a rate of 6.2 per 1000 of the estimated population (see Figures 1 and 2 below). “Outdoor paupers” including ‘causals and the insane’ stood at 843,455, or a rate of 37.5 per 1000 of the estimated population (Higginbotham 2014: 307).⁴¹ By 1893 the figures were

⁴¹ Higginbotham (2014: 306) notes that, until 1901, poor relief statistics were unreliable for ‘casuals’ due to issues such as the potential for double counting them as they moved between workhouses.

169,155 for indoor paupers and 505,449 for outdoor paupers including ‘casuals and the insane’, with respective rates per 1000 of the estimated population of 5.7 and 17.2. By 1914 it was 387,208 for outdoor paupers and 254,624 for indoor paupers, with respective rates of 10.6 and 7.0 (Higginbotham 2014: 308).

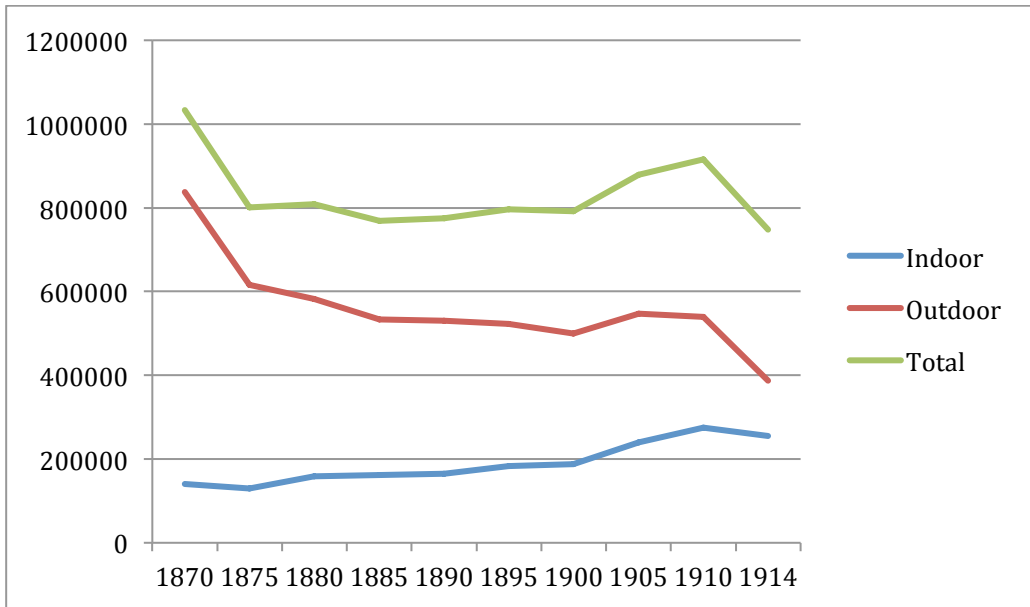


Figure 1. Number of paupers relieved in England & Wales 1870-1914, indoor, outdoor and total. Adapted from Higginbotham (2014: 306-308).

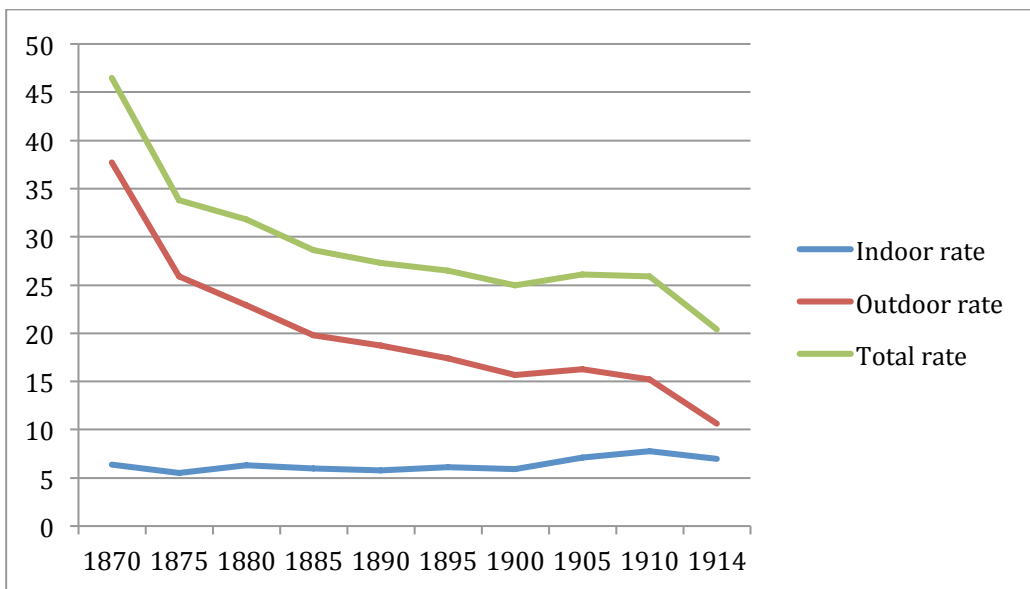


Figure 2. Indoor, outdoor and total number of paupers in England & Wales 1870-1914, expressed as a proportion of the estimated population (rate per 1000 of population). Adapted from Higginbotham (2014: 306-8).

The number of “indoor” paupers, those who received relief inside the workhouse, grew over the period 1870-1914, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the estimated population (see Figures 1 and 2). This was as a result of a reaffirmation of the New Poor Law or the ‘principles of 1834’ from the end of the 1860s onwards, which included stricter provision of outdoor relief and increased use of the ‘workhouse test’ (Wood 1991: 126). In nineteenth century Britain, poor law debates were overly concerned with contrasting the ‘dependence of the pauper with the independence of the wage-labourer’, with preserving the status of the latter and with the ‘institutional barriers to the taking up of wage-labour by the poor’ (Dean 1991: 200). ‘The category of the pauper,’ Rose writes:

functioned as a metaphoric condensation of a series of forms of conduct whose common feature was precisely this refusal of socialisation: mobility, promiscuity, improvidence, ignorance, insubordination, immorality, in short a rejection of all those relations which are essential in the formation of the social.

(Rose 1979: 23)

The workhouse was an institutional space designed to oversee the ‘moral regulation’ of the poor through reformation of individual conduct, much in the same way as the prison, as Foucault described it, increasingly came to work through disciplining individuals through routine, classification and intense surveillance (Driver 1993: 11). Similarly, other institutions, such as pauper schools, asylums and public baths adopted ‘the characteristic form of enclosed sites for the manufacture of character’ (Rose 2004: 103), though all had their peculiar logics and forms of intervention.

The distinction in the nineteenth century made between the destitute pauper – who relied on poor relief and might have entered the workhouse – and “the poor” was considered administratively important. ‘[F]or poor-law purposes,’ writes Gillie, ‘there was no need to identify people in poverty who were not destitute, or to devise a criterion distinguishing the poor (who were in poverty) from the better off’ (Gillie 2008: 302). The destitute only needed to reveal themselves by presenting at the workhouse; so long as conditions there remained “less eligible” than the lowest conditions of waged work, then the system of relief was seen as effective. As Garland (1981) shows, the Victorian prison system shared the principle of less eligibility as a general strategy of deterrence, combined with reformation of the individual subject. The poor law system and the penal system operated against any assumption that structural conditions cause poverty, criminality, destitution, and so on, instead reducing these problems to moral failings of the individual.

These conditions, in which the possibility of a distinction between the pauper and the independent, responsible (male) wage-labourer could be made, were fundamental for the posing of the Social Question in the late-nineteenth century. In regard to liberal governance, the Poor Law system functioned to ‘constitute wage-labour as a solution to the fiscal and moral crisis of pauperism’ (Dean 2002: 217). It defined the limits of state intervention in relieving the poor on this basis, and constituted the working class ‘as a clearly unified entity for state administration and political calculation, and also displaced earlier notions of “the labouring poor” or the “labouring classes”’ (Dean 2002: 217).

It is important to acknowledge too, that Poor Law relief practices were attached to particular ideas of how the labour market should be regulated and the

social distribution of waged work. 'A persistent theme in relief debates through the centuries', Peck argues, 'is the manipulation of the social and institutional boundaries between those who are expected to work and those who might for some reason be legitimately excused or excluded' (Peck 2001: 41). We have acknowledged in this chapter and the last how these boundaries were set by understandings of deservingness and character. We should not forget to emphasize though, that there was a gendered aspect that was fundamental to the construction of deservingness, or what Levine-Clark calls 'honest poverty':

Honest poverty describes a model of working-class masculine status built on the pillars of the male breadwinner ideal: the *work imperative*, which required men to demonstrate that they were willing to work, and *family liability*, which required men to support their families responsibly.

(Levine-Clark 2015: 2)

This gendered aspect to deservingness and the social division of labour was evident in Marshall's perspective on the women's burden of fostering human capital. It is something that, as Levine-Clark (2015) demonstrates, colours the whole history that we cover here. As we shall see in Chapter Five, it becomes disturbed in the workfare era, as non-employment becomes an object of government, and previously excluded people such as the disabled, lone parents and the partners of those already working are drawn into the (waged) work imperative (Walters 1996).

The process of identifying "the poor" as a category of the population beyond the destitute pauper is commonly understood to have begun with the work

of poverty surveys in the 1880s.⁴² These surveys, as we shall see below, offered ways of mapping out the terrain of metropolitan poverty, confined as they were to cities like London and York. The process of mapping was itself a particularly Victorian form of expertise and expressed a desire to render space in abstract, objective terms, just as the science of statistics sought to do in governing society (Joyce 2002: 98). Mapping methods, such as triangulation, that could record and present spaces in standardized, ordered and objective terms were developed by the British in early-nineteenth-century colonial India and employed in projects like the Ordnance Survey in Britain and Ireland. These methods were subsequently turned to different, social ends.

“Social mapping” was developed in the mid-century. It began to account for population(s) and such factors as incidence of diseases, developing maps that presented the sanitary condition of cities across Britain. This form of social mapping was also constitutive of new “moral geographies” (Driver 1988); it followed anxieties concerning the (in)sanitary conditions of cities, and urban living spaces that were thought to breed ‘both immorality and ill health’ (Joyce 2002: 102-3). It also represented a liberal form of government that put ‘an emphasis on *seeing, knowing and securing* ... “society” as the free play of goods, information and persons’ which nevertheless required the intervention of government (Joyce 2002: 105, emphasis added).

Poverty was therefore exposed by the techniques of the social mapper and conditions of poverty defined in relation to the danger of “pauperization”. After 1900, even the pauper was the object of the drive to *know* and understand poverty

⁴² In fact, Gillie (1996, 2008) has demonstrated that poverty lines were a phenomenon that emerged from the way assistance was delivered by local government school boards as early as the 1870s.

as a means for its prevention and cure. The post-1870 'crusade' against out-relief, Williams argues, 'was an educative strategy that sought to promote a knowledge *by* the poor of relief practice; this knowledge might deter applications and modify behaviour.' In the strategy following 1900, 'the poor law guardians were to develop a knowledge *of* paupers; this knowledge was necessary to the administration of proper treatment' (Williams 1981: 130). Liberal governance in this period thus took on an increased biopolitical concern, searching for techniques that would develop knowledge of different populations, and the population as a whole.

Defining Unemployment and the Unemployed

The word "unemployed", though at first sight it may appear specific enough, is really an ambiguous term.

(Board of Trade 1893: 7)

It remained difficult for policy-makers and social reformers to approach any kind of consensus on a definition of unemployment well into the twentieth century. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the age range of "the workforce" and the population that could be defined, potentially, as "out of work" was delimited by factory legislation. Children were excluded from the labour market by regulation, and by the extension of compulsory education. In this respect, '[f]actory legislation ... laid the foundation for measurable unemployment' (Perry 2000: 15). At the other end of the life span elderly people were increasingly considered deserving of relief and maintenance, and began to be removed from the labour market. The parameters of the potentially unemployed population were set initially by particular understandings of who could be working, as well as who should be working.

Unemployment was also deeply imbricated with developing understandings of the labour market, and particular forms of employment. One basic way of identifying the unemployed began through defining them in opposition to the increasingly regularized employed. This remained difficult, however, because of the murky borders between “work” and “out of work”. The casual labour market, where a constant and abundant supply of unskilled labourers chased after a relentlessly fluctuating volume of work, became the overriding issue against which the social problem of unemployment was constructed (Whiteside 2014; Jones 1984; Rose 1979; Walters 2000). The words “against which” are appropriate because certain moral articulations of the work ethic formed in opposition to the irregularity of casual labour, and did the work of separating out different segments of the population accordingly.

As a remedy to the evils of casual labour, a strategy of “de-casualization” was embarked upon in the late-nineteenth century. Walters elaborates on this policy, for which casual labour ‘represented the grey area impeding a proper differentiation of the industrious worker and the unemployable ...’:

It was to separate out a body of workers capable of working regularly, from a surplus which was deemed to be in need of restorative treatment, retraining, and possibly retirement. It was to fabricate regular work regimes for the majority, so that they would be capable of governing themselves and their families on a properly independent basis. And it was to reveal the less-efficient members of the workforce who must be the subjects of greater discipline.

(Walters 2000: 44)

Identifying casual labourers was thus an administrative task of mapping the labour market that was also imbued with moral assumptions about different parts of the population. This was signalled by the counting of workers who were in 'genuine ... distress from want of employment' (Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment 1896: 47). The difficult task of identifying unemployment seemed to rely upon this statistical, moral mapping of the casual labour market that delineated those who were forced to turn to casual labour because of trade fluctuations (the involuntarily unemployed) and those who embodied irregularity in their lives and habits, and sought to avail of relief at any opportunity (the voluntarily unemployed).⁴³

Casual labour disrupted the ability to delineate between the deserving and the undeserving because it would draw both groups into its grip for different reasons. The former, as Beveridge would later say, might have been thrown out of work 'by changes in industrial structure or by advancing years' and discover in casual labour 'a resource from immediate want'; the latter, perhaps 'the man displaced through personal fault or inefficiency and the sturdy loafer find in casual employment a livelihood' (Beveridge 1912: 146). In a sense, the discovery of "legitimate" unemployment was the identification of the way in which different parts of the working population related to the condition of casual labour or underemployment.

The unemployed were therefore defined in relation to their regularity of work, and the "real" or deserving unemployed were defined in opposition to the figure of the habitual pauper. The aforementioned select committee report of

⁴³ This distinction is still found in Beveridge's description of types of unemployed men in his seminal *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry* (1912: 146) as well as in Hubert Llewellyn Smith's categorization of the unemployed in his discussion of social insurance (see below, Part Three, III).

1896, the final report in a series on establishing the identity of the unemployed, is overwhelmingly preoccupied with ‘the means of discriminating in cases of exceptional distress between “the deserving man forced to become dependent upon public aid” and the ordinary claimants for parish relief’ (Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment 1896: ii). This remained a concern, as we shall see in Part Three in the section on Hubert Llewellyn Smith, right through to the design of the social insurance system, that key technology of the welfare state.

There remained also, the fear of the respectable worker becoming “demoralised” by proximity to the habitual pauper in the process of receiving relief for want of employment (Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment 1896). Before the advent of the labour exchange system (in 1909) and social insurance (in 1911), a mixture of public works and charitable relief were provided for those in distress from want of employment. There were concerns that outdoor relief, which was conditional on the ‘labour test’, was bringing into contact the ‘loafing class’ with the deserving unemployed in the stoneyard, where all were set to work (Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment 1896: 22, 41). These anxieties expressed a desire for a more rigorous system for separating out the respectable from the loafers, and avoiding cross-contamination from “demoralizing” the former. As we shall see in Chapter Four, in the inter-war period demoralization becomes an important subject of study and spawns new literatures and forms of knowledge through observation of the long-term unemployed. Pre-1914, however, the overwhelming concern remains to segregate and exclude the habitual pauper from the systems of unemployed relief.

The partitioning of the deserving and undeserving and the efficient and unemployable was cast in almost epidemiological terms of contagion, containment

and segregation. In Part Three we look at different figures and how they contributed to the techniques of partitioning the population.

Part Three: Intellectual Hybrids and the Social Question

The work of surveying the condition of the poor and the unemployed and the provision of descriptions and classifications that would be amenable to administrative measures fell to a set of professional experts. This process was embodied in the work engaged in by the intellectual hybrids mentioned above in the introduction and was, in essence, the work of *defining unemployment*. It was also, though, defining the problems that were attendant to unemployment, and those that caused it. In Part Three we look in more depth at three people in order to understand how the unemployed were understood at the turn of the century and how this came to define unemployment and its solutions. In turn, Charles Booth, Helen Bosanquet and Hubert Llewellyn Smith are profiled, their contributions set in the context of the Social Question and the problem of unemployment, alongside other contributions in their field of work.

1. Social Investigation – Charles Booth

Charles Booth is renowned as a pioneer in social investigation for his efforts at surveying the extent of poverty in London, and especially its East End, in the late-nineteenth century. His schematic mapping of different classes across London was the first major endeavour of its kind, and used the idea of a line of

poverty to test the claim that one third of London was in poverty (Booth 1902).⁴⁴ Booth, and his colleagues and admirers (including Sidney and Beatrice Webb and William Beveridge) presented the surveys as *scientific* enterprises, the first comprehensive empirical investigations of poverty in London published in instalments from 1889 to 1902 (Brown 1968). He was a well-connected man among social elites, who dedicated much of his life to social investigation, and was invited to serve on several royal commissions concerning the poor laws, housing, unemployment and old age pensions (see Box 3.1).

This section looks at his methods of social investigation and how they lent themselves to particular explanations for, and some solutions to, the problems of poverty and unemployment. Booth's influence on government understandings of unemployment is evident throughout the entirety of the era under discussion in this chapter. For example, the Select Committee's report on distress from want of employment in 1896 mentions Charles Booth and Hubert Llewellyn Smith (looked at below) as '[a]mong witnesses who have exceptional opportunities for investigating this subject and to whose conclusions it would be natural to attach unusual weight' (1896: iv).

⁴⁴ As Himmelfarb notes (1991: 103-104), Booth chose not to use the term "poverty line", and opted for "line of poverty" instead. Rowntree's study of York in 1901, by contrast, used the term extensively.

Box 3.1 Charles Booth (1840-1916)

Charles Booth was a prominent businessman and social reformer in the late nineteenth century. He was born in Liverpool in 1840, into a Unitarian family. His father was a corn merchant and shipowner, whose wealth he and his brother, Alfred, inherited in 1862 and used to build up a business of their own in the leather and shipping industries, with offices in Liverpool and New York.

Charles had a keen interest in politics, but his brushes with political campaigning convinced him that party politics was a dead-end pursuit. Still, his impressions of poverty in the slums of Toxteth while canvassing left a lasting effect on him.

He married Mary Macauley in 1871 and they eventually moved to London in 1874. Their social circle included many important figures pushing for social reform: Beatrice Potter (Mary's cousin, later Beatrice Webb), Octavia Hill of the Charity Organisation Society and Canon Samuel Barnett.

In the mid-1880s Charles provided assistance to the Lord Mayor of London's Relief fund by analysing census returns. He was struck by the paucity and substandard quality of the census, and it was not long after that he set out on a project of his own design to measure the levels of poverty in London. This would go on to form the basis of the series of books published as Life and Labour of the People in London (1889-1902). Booth served on the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1893, was made a Privy Councillor in 1904 and went on to serve on the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1909 (but did not put his signature to either the Majority or Minority Report).

He died in 1916 following a stroke while at his country home in Thringstone, Leicestershire, and is buried there.

Booth embodied the exploring spirit of the late-Victorian reformer, as well as the commitment to certain elements of the morality of his era. Here we explore how his contribution to social investigation represented a particular form of liberal government, which included illiberal elements.

The best place to begin with Booth's contribution to the Social Question is his surveys of London. These surveys were driven by Booth's ceaseless dedication

to investigating and understanding the lives of the poor. Hennock (1976) has demonstrated how Booth's contribution drew on ideas of social progress from the previous two decades and found a wider audience in the heightened social conflict of the late 1880s. Englander and O'Day have shown how this conflict influenced Booth via contact with advocates of socialism, and that through this contact and that of other reformers such as Samuel Barnett he became 'motivated not only purely by a desire to describe *how* the poor lived but by a need to discover *why* they lived like this' (Englander & O'Day 1995: 19, emphasis added). His surveys sought to connect the incidence of urban poverty to its causes, including the nature of employment (especially irregular or casual employment) as well as 'questions of habit' and 'questions of circumstance' (Booth 1902: 140). His approach thus appeared to straddle the dividing line between behavioural and environmental approaches, and between the individual and the structural. A look at the survey methods tells us more about how poverty was seen and explained.

Though claiming a scientific basis, the rigour of the surveys was in question at the time at which they were published. Methods involved inferring intuitively a household's income bracket from what the house itself looked like; one collaborator described the survey as 'a statistical record of impressions of degrees of poverty' (quoted in Hennock 1987: 208). Booth himself acknowledged 'the special difficulty of making an accurate picture of so shifting a scene as the low-class streets in East London' (Booth 1902: 26). The data was gathered through interviews with School Board Visitors working in the East End of London in order to get street-by-street information on the living conditions of those families with school-age children, with which the visitors were in regular contact. The surveys, however, were not merely basic standard of living (SOL) measures; they also assessed levels of aspiration and 'sought to associate the moral conduct of

households with outcomes in terms of employment' (Mansfield 2008: 168). From a cursory glance at the categories he developed to divide up the population under scrutiny, the focus on the relationship between economic circumstances and moral conduct is evident.

In Booth's survey, the population under investigation was divided into the following eight classes:

- A. The lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers, and semi-criminals.
 - B. Casual earnings – "very poor".
 - C. Intermittent earnings.
 - D. Small regular earnings.
- } Together the "poor".

-
- E. Regular standard earnings – above the line of poverty.
 - F. Higher class labour.
 - G. Lower middle class.
 - H. Upper middle class.

Figure 3. *Booth's classification of the London population (adapted from Booth 1902: 33).*

Class A, the 'savage semi-criminal class of people' was above all considered a nuisance by Booth. The problems associated with them could be solved through destroying the housing in which they lived and a state policy of '[p]ersistent dispersion ... for to scatter them is necessarily to place them under better influences' (Booth 1902: 175).

The 'very poor' formed a repugnant but also a small margin of the total: 'They are barbarians but a handful ... a disgrace but not a danger' (Booth quoted in

Brown 1968: 351).⁴⁵ Yet Class B was also the focus of Booth's solutions for improving the lives of the poor in London.

Here, in Class B, we have the crux of the social problem. Every other class can take care of itself, or could do so, if Class B were out of the way. These unfortunate people form a sort of quagmire underlying the social structure, and to dry up this quagmire must be our principal aim.

(Booth 1902: 176)

Booth considered Class B a drain on the nation, an unbearable cost, and a drag on the classes above them. He recommended, therefore, a policy of segregating and removing them into industrial or labour colonies (Booth 1902: 164). As noted, though, he provided reassurances that this class was not a danger, but rather a case of social waste, surplus to industrial requirements (1902: 163).

The identification of Class B was important and influential in a shift in discourse from the concept of the residuum to one of the "unemployable". Welshman (2013: 36-41) has demonstrated that other social investigators such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb increasingly used the latter term rather than the former, and that Beveridge himself employed an understanding of the unemployable (see Part Three, III below on Llewellyn Smith). The problem of unemployment thus came to pose itself in part as an issue of superfluous populations and what might be done with them. The work of classification not only lent itself to ideas of partitioning the poor, but to the more drastic idea of segregation and removal.

⁴⁵ Importantly, when Booth spoke of this "very poor" class, he was not talking about "paupers" as such: 'Class B must not be confounded with paupers. They are rather the material from which paupers are made' (Booth 1902: 176).

Booth's surveys made clear for administrative purposes which classes were the problem, and provided explanations for these social problems as well as tentative solutions. Fears about the revolutionary potential of the very poor were transformed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. After the Dock Strike of 1889 a more exact dividing line was drawn between the "respectable working class" – who had proven their "legitimate" claims – and the residuum; the latter 'was no longer a vast horde capable of holding the capital to ransom, but a small and hopeless remnant, a nuisance to administrators rather than a threat to civilization' (Jones 1984: 320).

In exploring the general problem of poverty, Booth remained committed in part to an individualized perspective, despite his growing acknowledgement of irregular employment as a cause. In his first series of investigations, he said of the unemployed that '[they] are, as a class, a selection of the unfit, and, on the whole, those most in want are the most unfit' (Booth 1902: 150). This language of fitness and industrial efficiency came to the fore just after the turn of the century, and as noted above was catalyzed by defeat in the Boer War. Concerns about the workforce that employed such language could be found in government, for example, in the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904, which was spurred by the large number of rejections on physical grounds of applicants to the army.

One repeated suggestion, which was common to several reformers, including Booth and later Beveridge (1906), was a system of labour colonies onto which the unemployables and their families could be transported to work and live. More than a decade after he began his original surveys, Booth was to distance himself from this plan. In his witness statement for the committee on Physical

Deterioration in 1904 he noted the idealistic character of his earlier suggestions for segregating the very poor in industrial homes or colonies (Command Papers 1904: 48). Yet he re-iterated the desirability of removing the competition among the poor and the very poor, and acknowledged the worthiness of schemes such as the Salvation Army and Church Army colonies.

Harris (1995) has provided a nuanced overview of evolutionary language in the late-Victorian (1880s-) and Edwardian eras. She claims that Booth and many others used evolutionary language – the “unfit”, the “residuum”, “national efficiency”, and so on – in a variety of ways, and often quite loosely. ‘Booth’s “residuum” or “quagmire” was ... a cultural phenomenon susceptible to social pressure and manipulation, rather than the product of an inexorable natural law’ (Harris 1995: 80). The interaction of biological and deterministic language with a faith in the improvement that could be wrought from administrative intervention appears a defining characteristic of prominent figures such as Booth writing on the Social Question at the turn of the century. This manifested itself in an amalgam of explanations that suggested both environmental and behavioural foundations to poverty.

It cannot be overlooked, however, that Booth’s suggestion for labour colonies was enthusiastically approved by the Fabian society⁴⁶, and his social categories of British society employed as natural markers of physical fitness by the eugenicist Francis Galton (MacKenzie 1981: 17, 79). Furthermore, a number of fact-finding trips to the continent were undertaken by a “Labour Colonies Committee” to explore the manner in which the unemployed and unemployable were dealt with in Holland, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland (Royal Commission 1910).

⁴⁶ And by Beveridge (1906). See Komine (2004) for a summary of the development of Beveridge’s thought on unemployables and labour colonies.

Booth's descriptions of different classes of the poor could give a certain authority and legitimacy to ideas such as intergenerationally transmitted degeneracy. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration Report even cited his thoughts on 'hereditary casuals', who 'have a constitutional hatred to regularity and forethought' (Booth in Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration 1904: 6). However tentative Booth was about advocating labour colonies as a solution to metropolitan poverty later in his career, his suggestion was explored and championed by a host of other parties inside and outside of government.

Perhaps more important than the loose suggestions for labour colonies was Booth's enduring commitment to questions of character. Brown suggests that 'Booth's immediate influence should be seen not in terms of the proposal to remove class B from society, but more generally in the way it preserved a concern for personal character within an empirical approach to the study of poverty' (Brown 1971: 111). Harris concurs and notes that Booth's analysis was more committed to the role of 'personal character and rational choice' than it was invested in evolutionary arguments. For Booth, character and trade cycles operated in synchrony '... trade fluctuations acted as a kind of utilitarian "distress meter" which unerringly weeded out the marginal man.' Ultimately, she argues, '[his] thought - and that of many other residuum theorists of the 1880s and 90s - owed more to the psychology of classical economics or to the newer political economy of marginalism than to evolutionary thought of any kind' (Harris 1995: 80). The view that character determined labour supply, explored in the works of Jevons and Marshall in Chapter Two, was also sought after, and embedded in, the social investigation of poverty.

Booth's surveys made an impression at the highest level of policy-making, not least because there was overlap between reforming social scientists and government itself. Hubert Llewellyn Smith, who had been close to the trade union movement and a collaborator on Booth's survey, became the first ever Labour Commissioner of the Board of Trade in 1893. In a cabinet memo of 1895 he reproduced Booth's classifications and, while doubtful of the government's capacity or need to carry out a similar inquiry, heaped praise upon the investigation (Llewellyn Smith 1895: 6-7). The fact that Booth's surveys did not consider the effects of the trade cycle, or that people may move between classes, was not an impediment to their popularity and acceptance in the 1890s in policy-making circles.

Geoffrey Drage, secretary of the 1891-1894 Royal Commission on Labour, reproduced a dual-track explanation based on the personal and environmental causes of unemployment similar to Llewellyn Smith's above as a response to Booth's remarks about the "fitness" of the unemployed. Even after considering the effects of economic fluctuation, he emphasized the 'character' of the unemployed as a major factor for explaining their situation (Brown 1968: 354-355). Percy Alden, who had been Warden of Mansfield House Settlement in East London and a member of the Mansion House Unemployed Committee, and who was to become a Liberal MP in 1906, was influenced by Booth's classifications. In particular he imported the idea of a class of "unemployables" into his 1905 study of unemployment, identifying issues of character, idleness and mental deficiency as among the causes of "unemployability" and suggesting policies such as labour colonies, identification cards and relief stations (Welshman 2013: 38).

There are several conclusions to take away from Booth's perspective on the Social Question. Firstly, his classifications gave a sense of reassurance and "governability" to the problem of poverty. Having been identified and mapped, the unemployables of Class B could become the subject of administrative debates. '[T]he whole point of Booth's work', Reeder argues, 'was to reveal the regularities in the metropolitan condition, to expose its orderliness, and thus to make London comprehensible once again' (Reeder 1995: 325).

Secondly, Booth was important in so far as he advanced both structural and behavioural explanations for the Social Question simultaneously. Character and bad habits remained an important determinant of poverty, and became an important object of policy that was understood in relation to regularity of work and the desire, or lack of desire, for regular work. In tackling casual labour, '[t]he trick was to ensure that better employment conditions went to those who displayed a desire for more work and possibly greater regularity' (Mansfield 2008: 178). The relationship between structural and behavioural factors is an enduring tension within the Social Question. We saw it in Jevons' acknowledgement of the need for state intervention alongside his focus on character and self-reliance. It remains a tension, as we shall see below, in the development of unemployment insurance and labour exchanges.

Finally, although they were advanced in terms of scientific studies of the Social Question, Booth's surveys were testimony to the power of impressions. The effect of surveys and classification, of the efforts to make sense of, describe and explain unemployment, was that *typologies* of the poor and unemployed increasingly came to be treated as *taxonomies*. Typologies are primarily conceptual in nature, whereas taxonomies are said to classify groups on the basis of

empirically observable characteristics (Smith 2002: 381). This meant that conceptual categories of analysis based on impressions of moral conduct were reified as social problems for which policy solutions had to fit.⁴⁷ The categories do not merely describe different segments of the population, they actively constitute them as such. In this next section, we turn to how moral categories operated in philanthropic social work in a similar fashion.

II. *Social Work – Helen Bosanquet*

In *Rich and Poor*, Helen Bosanquet writes '[n]othing but an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which our poorer neighbours live, can give us true sympathy with their lives and enable us to divine where their real difficulties lie' (Bosanquet 1896: 6). The woman who became a figurehead for the Charity Organisation Society (COS)⁴⁸ and championed the use of the "intimate knowledge" that could be gathered from social work dedicated much of her life to the rifts between rich and poor (see Box 2).⁴⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones argues in his classic *Outcast London* that Victorian philanthropy could partly be explained by the 'social domination of London by non-industrial forms of capital', that fraction of capital involved in rent, banking and commerce. The absence of direct economic links between the rich and poor '... largely explains the particular importance of charitable activity in London both as a mode of interpreting the behaviour of the poor and as a means of attempting to control them' (Jones 1984: 239-240). The

⁴⁷ Significantly, we continue to see the power of impressions of poverty and unemployment related to irregularity, work ethic and criminality today in understandings of "Broken Britain" (Slater 2014). One gets the feeling, however, that even Booth would be horrified at the 'decision-based evidence-making' (Slater 2014: 955) undertaken in the name of objective research today.

⁴⁸ The full, formal name of the COS was: 'The Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity' (Humphreys 2001: 63).

⁴⁹ This biography relies on the entry on Helen Bosanquet by Jose Harris (2004) to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

origins and founding members of the Charity Organisation movement from around 1870, drawn from wealthy gentlemen and supported by royalty, confirm this portrait of Victorian philanthropy (Humphreys 2001: Chapter One).

Box 3.2 Helen Bosanquet (1860-1925)

Helen Bosanquet (née Dendy) was a prominent social reformer, social theorist and advocate of social work at the turn of the century. She was born in Manchester in 1860 to parents of non-conformist, Unitarian background: her father was a minister and her mother the daughter of a minister. In 1886 she went to study at Newnham College, Cambridge University, where she became one of the first women to gain a first class honours in the Cambridge Moral Sciences Tripos (specializing in political economy) in 1889.

She moved to London and began working for the Charity Organisation Society (COS), quickly becoming an organizer and district secretary of its Shoreditch Branch. In 1895 she married the philosopher Bernard Bosanquet and from then on dedicated herself to writing and the COS. Her major published works include Rich and Poor (1896), The Standard of Life and Other Studies (1898), The Strength of the People (1902) and The Family (1906).

Bosanquet's emphasis on social work training, to include detailed, professional casework as well as general civic education, remained influential throughout the twentieth century. The COS school of sociology was even absorbed into the London School of Economics' social sciences department in 1912.

In 1905 she became a member of the Royal Commission on the poor laws, contributing a defence of private charity to the majority report published several years later. This stood in well-known opposition to Beatrice Webb's minority report contribution, whose personal account of Helen Bosanquet did much to tarnish the latter's reputation.

She suffered a great deal of ill health in later life, and eventually died in 1925 at her home in Golders Green, London.

Bosanquet is commonly cited as one of the important propagators of theories of the residuum (Harris 1995; Welshman 2013). She is most interesting in terms of how she embodied the COS' intense focus on character as 'both means and end of social improvement' (Collini 1976: 92). She saw character and self-reliance as the fundamentals of an effective and sensible approach to relieving poverty. For her and her husband, the philosopher Bernard Bosanquet, a scientific approach to tackling society's problems came from an understanding of the mind. State support and indiscriminate charity risked exacerbating the problem of poverty. Instead,

... [t]he less obvious, but more effective remedy, is to approach the problem by striking at its roots in the minds of the people themselves; to stimulate their energies, to insist upon their responsibilities, to train their faculties. In short, to make them efficient.

(Bosanquet 1902: 114)

These roots, the COS believed, could only be discovered and tackled, if social workers went to the poor where they lived. The COS operated with a network of visiting social workers that developed individual case studies of families seeking relief. There was also, though, a particularly gendered aspect to their investigations: scrutiny was given to 'cooking, marketing, child-rearing, dress, fashion, cleanliness, dirt, and above all the housekeeping money' (McKibbin 1990: 170). On this basis, the population was divided into those deserving of charitable assistance, who displayed strong character and the right habits, such as foresight and temperance, and the undeserving, who were rejected for assistance and passed over to the poor relief officer. A COS Paper in 1886 divided the unemployed into: '[t]hrifty and careful men'; '[m]en of different grades of respectability, with a decent home'; and '[t]he idle, loafing class, or those brought low by drink or vice'

(Charity Organisation Society 1886: 1). Men in the first group would be considered for assistance; men in the second group were to be sent to the workhouse and their families to be given COS relief; men in the third group were to be left to the Poor Law.

Although there was an inherent disapproval of all but the most stringent state relief of poverty, the COS desired to retain charity work as one element of the relief system in cooperation with the Poor Law (Humphreys 2001: 26). And this was reciprocated by government officials, who consistently recommended '[w]ise cooperation between boards of guardians and the agencies for charity and thrift', so as 'to procure assistance for the deserving poor otherwise than from the rates' (HoC 1896: xvi). Indeed, it is important to stress the enduring support for collaboration between the state and charity societies, which remained a policy recommendation for Beveridge, the architect of the post-war welfare state (see Beveridge 1948).

The concentration on the domestic realm in late-nineteenth century philanthropy signals the opening up of a new site of "responsibilization" for women in the provision of relief and charity. Typically, Poor Law relief worked to shore up the idea that a male breadwinner earned the 'family wage', and that women were 'dependents' whose wage-earning contributions were seen as negligible, even if in actuality the opposite was true (Levine-Clark 2006: 74). 'Family liability' thus became part of the obligations of male working-class citizenship, and increasingly so as the principles of 1834 were re-asserted from 1870 onwards (Levine-Clark 2010: 303-304). At the turn of the century the Poor Law system reached further into the working-class home to establish control over

mothers' parenting practices, for example, condemning and penalizing 'mutual responsibility for children among working-class women' (Skeggs 1997: 44).

The concentration on management of the family budget and cooking practices in COS visits established a similarly penetrating and condemnatory gaze into the household. A close focus on checking habits and behaviour developed the conditional, contractual nature of relief. Donzelot, working in the Foucauldian tradition, points to the simultaneous rise of "the social" in the late-nineteenth century in the development of laws relating to labour and those seeking to regulate and organize the family, indicating an 'interplay between the rise of protective norms and the development of contractualization', or what he called a 'tutelary complex' (1979: xxvi-xxvii, 103). Organizations like the COS developed a 'casework' approach to the investigation of poverty, which, as Dean argues, was a 'refined technique of disciplinary surveillance' that prefigured twentieth-century approaches to means testing (Dean, H. 1991: 57).

In relation to Bosanquet's focus on the mind of the people as the basis for intervention, there is an important direct connection to make between her understanding of character and that outlined in Chapter Two. Bosanquet and her husband had a mixed relationship with political economy. On the one hand, they eschewed "abstract economic" explanations for unemployment that apportioned its causes to structural factors, and chastised economics for its lack of concrete focus and ethical depth (Bosanquet 1895). On the other hand, Helen Bosanquet, before she met her future husband, published a paper on the 'Industrial Residuum' in the *Economic Journal*, and showed an admiration for neoclassical economics, in particular the work of Jevons (Dendy 1893). She used Jevons' analysis of "economic man" and his theory of labour as an explanation for the behaviour of the

members of the residuum, whom she argued experienced pleasure and pain in fundamentally different ways to the ordinary working-class person.

Bosanquet wrote that, while ‘the ideal economic man ... is remarkable for his foresight and self-control ... in the Residuum these qualities are entirely absent’ (Dendy 1893: 601). She repeated Jevons’ remarks about the child-like qualities of the residuum, and noted, as he does in *TPE*, how they live only for the present. Furthermore, she appropriates his diagrammatic representation of the labour supply to show that the residuum experienced the balance of pleasure and pain from labour and its reward lower down on an indifference curve; for the member of the residuum, ‘the curve represents a constantly recurring process. With his debts cleared off, and a week’s wages in hand, the final utility of the reward is so small that he has absolutely no inducement to work’ (Dendy 1893: 603). Bosanquet thus appropriated Jevons’ argument, explored in Chapter Two, of how the residuum’s experiences of time were related to a character or mind unfamiliar with the idea of regularity, and with no conception of the future.

The appreciation ran both ways between Bosanquet and neoclassical economists. In the preface to the second edition of *The Strength of the People*, Bosanquet includes an exchange of letters between Alfred Marshall and herself concerning a particular passage of the book on the relationship between the rich and poor. Marshall attempts to convey his disagreement with her over the need for redistribution, which, he argues, would provide for important public goods. ‘[T]he high consumption of the rich seems to me excessive’, he writes, ‘and to necessitate in effect a meagre life on the part of others’ (Marshall in Bosanquet 1903: vii). However, he concedes to her that ‘I have always held that poverty and pain, disease and death are evils of greatly less importance than they appear, except in

so far as they lead to weakness of life and character' (1903: viii). Bosanquet rebuffs, arguing that despite the 'vulgar and foolish extravagance' of the rich, redistribution was an attempt to improve the lives of some while 'diminishing the wealth of others' (1903: ix). Much better, she claimed, would be to increase the efficiency of the lowest classes, so as to drag the whole population upwards.

Bosanquet and the COS rejected in principle state intervention to assist the poor outside of strictly controlled institutions such as the workhouse. However, we also find crucial exceptions to this rule. In advocating for the social elevation of the poor, she and other charity organizers proposed a mixture of "impersonal and unforced" processes as well as top-down pressure from specific institutions. The former included a faith in the effect of social mimicry of the middle and upper classes to improve working-class behaviour; the latter, however, incorporated support for compulsory education 'desirable for its extra-curricular effects, on deportment, demeanour, and regularity of habits' as well as a variety of medical and sanitary interventions. Thus, despite hostility to state intervention and collectivist answers to the Social Question, charity organizers could also fall back on 'the state as coercer of last resort' (McKibbin 1990: 184-187, 196). The relationship between voluntary organization and state tutelage was thus more entangled than expected.

It is interesting to note the interaction of thought in Bosanquet's writings, whereby condemnation of certain elements of the population as deserving or undeserving – over the course of the 1890s this was refined into the 'helpable' and the 'unhelpable' (Welshman 2013: 32) – existed alongside an absolute dedication to improving the lives of working-class people. As Lewis has noted, Bosanquet offered considerably more sympathy to the residuum than either Beatrice Webb or

Charles Booth (Lewis 1995: 61). Here we see that liberal governmentality and the policing of individual conduct are compatible with a caring or pastoral ethic, and not just a deterrent logic.

This pastoral ethic was, however, intimately linked to the possibility of abandonment to the Poor Law and was *conditional* on displaying the outward signs of respectability and revealing the private details of family life. ‘The new benevolence projected a line inside family life, distinguishing, on the basis of criteria inherent in the family setup, between the possibility of autonomy through saving and that of relief payments in conjunction with a supercilious tutelage’ (Donzelot 1979: 69). We can read a long history of conditional assistance and family surveillance that became increasingly entangled with state tutelage and support over the course of the twentieth century; the Household Means Test of 1931 mentioned in the next chapter is but one example. It is an entanglement that endures to this day too, in the Family Intervention projects under New Labour and the Coalition Government’s identification of 120,000 ‘Troubled Families’, both of which operate with an ‘intensive’ focus on the family as a site of dysfunction, ‘worklessness’, bad parenting but also the source of homes ‘fit to live in’ (DCLG 2012: 12, 21; see also Welshman 2013: Chapter Ten; Crossley 2015).

We will return to the relationship between a disciplinary logic and a pastoral ethic of care in Chapter Five, where we look at how workfare employs deeply sympathetic language and individualized support in the context of a system built on harsh conditionality and punishment. In this next section, we turn to a perspective on the Social Question from within the State, exploring how considerations of character even found their way into official categorizations of unemployment.

III. Social Statistics - Hubert Llewellyn Smith

Hubert Llewellyn Smith is a relatively under-researched figure among the pantheon of characters in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century social policy.⁵⁰ He makes for an interesting study because at different stages of his life he worked for Booth, the COS and the Civil Service (see Box 3.3). He played a prominent role in the most important legislation of the pre-1914 era, including the introduction of labour exchanges and social insurance schemes, in addition to his contribution to labour statistics. His role as senior civil servant and promoter of social statistics is interesting for the way in which it highlights the double-edged nature of social investigation. This means that, on the one hand, social statistics are a potential source of claims on the state and a means to illustrate the conditions of the poorest as a way of eliciting change to those conditions. On the other hand, they can be seen as a function of social control that permits more subtle forms of partitioning populations and governing behaviour.

⁵⁰ The only thorough appraisals of Llewellyn Smith's role I am aware of are found in the work of Roger Davidson (1985, 1993, 2004), to which this section is indebted.

Box 3.3 Hubert Llewellyn Smith (1864-1945)

Hubert Llewellyn Smith was born to a middle-class Quaker family in Bristol in 1864. He received his university education at Oxford, where he became a disciple of John Ruskin and was involved in the university settlement movement that sought to work among and educate working-class people.

Llewellyn Smith traversed the full range of social reform movements after university. He worked at Toynbee Hall in the East End of London, on Charles Booth's inquiry into poverty in London and with the Charity Organisation Society. He was also close to the New Unionism movement, helped the union cause around several prominent strikes in 1889 and identified with the progressive wing of the Liberal Party while remaining on good terms with Labour politicians.

Most importantly, Llewellyn Smith played a pivotal role in the advance of social and administrative statistics. His role in the Booth inquiry was the background to later projects for the Royal Statistical and Economic Societies. In 1893 he became the first ever Labour Commissioner for the Board of Trade, and set about rapidly expanding the department's statistical collections and pioneering the modern framework for analysing and classifying unemployment. The Board's data provided an important basis for development of a system of labour bureaux and insurance programmes. He later became Comptroller-General of the Commercial, Labour and Statistical branch and eventually Permanent Secretary of the Board from 1907 until 1919.

Llewellyn Smith played an important role in wartime government, devising war-risk insurance and organizing the Ministry of Munitions. He later held roles for the British Government within the League of Nations (1920-1927) and then, upon retiring, worked on updated household surveys in the vein of the Booth inquiry with the London School of Economics (LSE) that were published between 1930 and 1935. He died in Wiltshire in September 1945.

Llewellyn Smith can be placed on the progressive or radical wing of politics in this era. Davidson notes that he held the 'characteristic missionary perspective of late-Victorian social radicalism ... [i]n his view, social progress had to

incorporate both the moral and the material advancement of labor, and this could be achieved only by maintaining overall social harmony during a process of gradual change' (Davidson 1993: 255). His approach was strongly informed by the Booth inquiry and sought to establish labour statistics on rigorous, scientific grounds so as to provide objective reasons for pursuing pragmatic reform of the labour market (Davidson 1985: 119-120). We see this in his reports to the Cabinet on methods for estimating the numbers of unemployed across the country, in which he praises Booth's inquiry yet notes that government measurements of unemployment must rest on even more factually accurate methods (Llewellyn Smith 1895: 6-7).

One of Llewellyn Smith's major early contributions was his widely used 1893 "two-dimensional classification" of unemployment, which focused on types of trade fluctuation and types of unemployed workmen. Fluctuations included seasonal and cyclical trends in industry and trade: workmen might be in short-work and always moving between jobs; unemployed due to trade fluctuations; 'economically superfluous' due to oversupply of labour in their industries; or unemployed because of 'personal defects' or inefficiencies (quoted in Harris 1972: 12-13). The vagueness of these categories was noted at the time, even by the author himself, yet it became one of several typologies, such as that had been earlier presented by the Fabian Society in 1886, which developed the definition of unemployment in a similar direction to Llewellyn Smith, around trade fluctuations and types of unemployed workers (Fabian Society 1886).

Before 1886, labour statistics were, Davidson claims, 'deficient, chaotic and unmanageable' (1985: 79). Until 1912, when employment and unemployment estimates could be refined on the basis of benefit claims at the labour exchanges

(which still excluded a large proportion of the non-insured, unskilled workforce), government had to rely on a mixture of trade union and employer returns (Garside 1980: 25-27). It was this context in which Llewellyn Smith made a pragmatic appeal to expanded statistics so that trends in employment and unemployment might be better estimated.

It was also, it should be remembered, a period of crisis perception based on the increasing militancy of labour and fears of the restless urban residuum. The collection of labour statistics in this period of growing militancy had the potential, so Whitehall feared, to encourage Socialist movements to stir up more labour unrest. Davidson makes a compelling argument that the Board of Trade in the 1886-1914 period sought to limit the focus and open publication of labour statistics, reflecting 'the overriding concern of late-Victorian and Edwardian policy-makers to contain social unrest, to re-establish industrial consensus and to secure a stable environment within which the vitality of the British economy might be restored' (Davidson 1985: 255-256).

On unemployment, the Board frequently presented a more optimistic picture of the labour market than was warranted through massaging figures and regularly used official statistics to counter Socialist and other radical proposals, including the eight-hour working-day movement and the Right to Work campaign for public employment schemes that we will be looking at in the next chapter (Davidson 1985: 266). Although statistics were also deployed to counter the more radical right-wing suggestions such as segregation of the unemployed, the Board's 'categories of analysis', Davidson argues, 'retained strong overtones of conventional middle-class individualism, echoing Whitehall's intention to preserve

within welfare measures the moral and economic sanctions of “less-eligibility” (Davidson 1985: 257).

As Labour Commissioner and Permanent Secretary to the Board, Llewellyn Smith rejected the more radical solutions to the Social Question. Since his Oxford University prize-winning essay on *The Economic Aspects of State Socialism* in 1886, he had held that revolutionary socialist tendencies in the labour movement could be tamed, on the basis that, with the provision to legislators of the correct knowledge concerning the labour market and the condition of the working class, progressive reforms would triumph (Davidson 2004). For him and Beveridge, the pragmatic solution settled on after 1906-1907 was for the efficient organization of the labour market through a system of public labour exchanges and an insurance system.

In his long history of the public employment service in Britain, *Office of Hope*, Price (2000: 3) provides a useful distinction between three models or ideal types that have existed, sometimes in competition with one another, since the inception of the service in 1910 with the birth of the labour exchange. These are:

- the *labour market transparency* model;
- the *benefit control* model;
- and the *social welfare* model.

It is evident that Llewellyn Smith, like Beveridge, conceived the labour exchange system as embodying the first of these models. It was a means to organize the labour market along more efficient lines through points of information exchange between workers willing to supply their labour and employers needing such labour (Beveridge 1912). Yet for both men, labour

exchanges and the insurance system were to operate along the lines of the second model too (see Price 2000: 3-4 in regard to Beveridge). The benefit control model functions on the basis of identifying the “genuine unemployed”, or rather, those “genuinely seeking work” through the work test. We will see in the next chapter how this latter principle was explicitly built into the administration of benefits after World War I. Before the war, however, the problem was how to effect the efficient organization of the labour market while controlling the administration of benefits on an actuarial basis (Whiteside 2015: 151), but with less stigma attached than the Poor Law.

The key to what Beveridge and Llewellyn Smith identified as a non-, or rather less, stigmatizing system of benefit control was automaticity. In his Presidential Address to Section F of the BAAS in 1910, Llewellyn Smith implored that the insurance scheme must retain the discrimination between the deserving and undeserving unemployed:

If, then, it is necessary, as it certainly is for the success of a scheme, that it should discriminate against unemployment due either to exceptional defects or to causes within the control of the individual, this discrimination must be effected *automatically* in the course of the working of the scheme itself rather than by any rule professing to exclude ineligible cases from its scope.

The crucial question from a practical point of view is, therefore, whether it is possible to devise a scheme of insurance which, while nominally covering unemployment due to all causes other than those which can be definitely excluded, shall *automatically* discriminate as between the

classes of unemployment for which insurance is or is not an appropriate remedy.

(Llewellyn Smith 1910: 526-527, emphasis added)

Similarly, for Beveridge the answer was to change the focus from investigating individual causes of unemployment to developing a classificatory schema that men would fall into automatically. He prefaces his 1909 book by arguing that:

The inquiry must be one into unemployment rather than into the unemployed. It will appear at once, indeed it is manifest from the start, that any one unemployed individual may represent, and commonly does represent, the concurrence of many different forces, some industrial, some personal ... Classification of men according to the causes of their unemployment is, strictly speaking, an impossibility. The only possible course is to classify the causes or types of unemployment themselves.

(Beveridge 1912: 3)

Benefits were controlled, however, by confining eligibility only to those who had made enough contributions: 'there would be no benefit in the first week and no more than one week's benefit for every five contributions paid and no more than 15 weeks benefit in any year' (Price 2000: 23).⁵¹ The rate of benefit was also held significantly below ordinary wage levels at seven shillings a week. Furthermore, and at the behest of Llewellyn Smith, workers who had lost their job through misconduct or had voluntarily left work without 'just cause' were

⁵¹ The scheme covered 17 per cent of the workforce, limiting eligibility to 'building, construction of works, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, ironfounding, construction of vehicles, sawmilling' (Price 2000: 23).

disqualified from claiming for six weeks (Price 2000: 23). This is the opening up of a new contract between the state and the unemployed of social rights and responsibilities that could be acted upon to affect all kinds of behaviour and motivations towards work. The eligibility for drawing contributory benefits were intended as an effective means of separating the inefficient and chronically casual element of the workforce.

We can see, therefore, that even in the development of a less-stigmatizing, impersonal understanding of the problem of unemployment, the distinctions between the deserving and undeserving, and the voluntarily and involuntarily unemployed survived. The insurance and labour exchange system delivered the means to ensure work incentives and labour market discipline were protected automatically. In the Majority Report of the Poor Law Commission, the Commissioners had suggested that the problem of casual labour was that it does 'not give the material for building up an industrial "character"' (Royal Commission 1909: 337). They suggested an 'industrial *dossier*' should be provided to workers, so that in discriminating between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' applicants for relief or distress work, 'the duration and value of their jobs would appear to their credit' (Royal Commission 1909: 337).

The labour exchange, together with the insurance system, provided a whole new way for unemployed workers to be known in this regard, for it provided a wealth of social knowledge 'taking the form of millions of standardized forms, insurance cards, and dossiers' (Walters 2000: 49). The exchanges, said Churchill, should be the 'Intelligence Department of Labour' (Churchill 1908: 5). Unemployment insurance was also designed to be productive of new 'thrifty subjects', 'to engender a situation in which more and more workers would be in a

situation where they could adopt the practice and ethos of the insuree: thinking and planning for the future' (Walters 2000: 67). 'Actuarial calculation identified the regular worker' (Whiteside 2014: 74), and workers were encouraged to take and hold regular employment. It was an arms-length enforcement of the regularly working, saving man and the construction of genuine unemployment.

Thanks to the system devised by Beveridge, Llewellyn Smith and others, unemployed people could make a claim to benefit payments that would sustain them in between work, the labour market would be better organized and more efficient, and the state would develop the capacity to act on the behaviour of individual claimants and their motivations towards work through the exchanges. In this way, it reflected the socialization of the claimant as a self-reliant subject, but also as a new 'individual juridical subject ... a bearer of rights' (Dean, H. 1991: 58). As before, the tension between control and rights reveals itself. The deterrent logic of the Poor Law began to be replaced with more subtle administrative controls, fed by an increasing wealth of knowledge and statistics concerning claimants. A portion of the unemployed became possessors of social rights, but as we have noted, these rights were strictly controlled and conditional. In the next chapter, we will look at how the "excessive" demands of the unemployed for the "Right to Work of Full Maintenance" came into existence in the interwar period, as the actuarial basis of the insurance system broke down, and how the long-term unemployed became a new object of administration and study alongside the casually or irregularly employed.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the period from the 1880s to 1914 witnessed the discovery of unemployment as a problem of casual labour markets, of identifying the genuinely unemployed as opposed to the loafer and pauper, and as a result of poor character. It is an important period of transition, which was driven by the constant sense of crisis in social harmony between different classes and subsequently the search for its resolution among experts in social investigation, social work and social statistics. This sense of crisis and social breakdown, which in this period lends itself to concerns over national efficiency and imperial decline, is a crucial element of the Social Question in every era, and is what gives form to the (re)discovery of unemployment.

The unemployed begin to emerge as the object of social policy in this era through the development of techniques of mapping, counting and visiting the poor that distinguish them according to their labour market status but also in relation to their moral conduct. This begins with efforts to partition the honest poor from the pauper and is transformed by Booth's social surveys of London. Different classes of the poor come to be defined and mapped by their criminality, vice, and character but also in their relation to the labour market and particularly to casual employment. Character and employment are thus set in a dynamic relationship with one another around the problem of underemployment. Genuine unemployment is identified in terms of how individuals relate to irregular or casual labour on the basis of whether it is the involuntary result of trade fluctuations or the voluntary decision on the part of the habitual casual.

Our different perspectives also illustrated different forms of liberal government in this era. The concerns over urban degradation and the social waste of the unemployable “Class B” prompted the illiberal liberal proposals for segregation and exclusion that were shared by a prominent set of experts and policy-makers. On the other hand, the emergence of social work and the focus on the household and family sphere lent itself to a pastoral ethic that sought to guide conduct through socialization into good habits – temperance, cleanliness, and thrift. Social statistics became a means to count the unemployed more accurately, but also, once the labour exchanges and insurance system were established, identified the ordinarily efficient, regular worker as the legitimately unemployed benefit claimant.

Finally, we also saw how the tension between social control and social rights exerted itself. There is no doubt that the apparatus of social policy became rationalized in this period, in so far as the state began to take on the task of organizing the labour market and new, more refined categories and classifications of unemployment were spawned. This process culminated before 1914 in the offer to a select population of regular workers of the right to small amounts of money to insure a living while out of work. However, the concern to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving claimant remained in the form of the concern to exclude the inefficient casual labourer from the insurance system. ‘[T]he growth of a scientific analysis of unemployment was paralleled by the growth of a harsher and more pessimistic attitude towards its victims’, Harris claims, ‘which was directed primarily against those who failed to support themselves but extended also to all who became unemployed’ (Harris 1972: 43).

Perhaps we are used to thinking that social statistics inherently imply a solidaristic notion of the social: 'If the best way to "know" the poor was by establishing numerical data, then the political implication of knowing the poor was a collectivist one. If the best way to "know" them was via a kind of cultural archaeology dependent upon imaginative and apparently informed observation, then the political implication was individualist' (McKibbin 1990: 168). We have seen, by focusing on the relationship between character and employment, that these different ways of knowing the poor are far more entangled than might be expected. In the next chapter, we explore how the politics of the unemployed and of unemployed movements began to construct a political vision around demands for rights that directly challenged established ideas of responsibility for unemployment, as well as the social and institutional boundaries that defined the distribution of wage labour and the maintenance of the unemployed.

Chapter Four

Representing the Unemployed: The NUWM and Orwell

Introduction

This chapter of the thesis explores the third set of historical perspectives on the Social Question. The general theme of the chapter is the representation of the unemployed, and it explores this theme both in political and figurative terms. The previous chapter focused on how the unemployed came to be known through social investigation, social work and social statistics; the chapter before on how leading neoclassical economists expressed knowledge about the poor and unemployed despite trying to demarcate the social as a realm that existed beyond economics. This chapter looks at how the unemployed came to be known as a political force and as the subject of a particular genre of literature. It takes into account the politics of the unemployed and the political organization of unemployed peoples' movements, both pre-1914 and in the interwar period. It also explores literary representations of the poor and unemployed from the late-Victorian period onwards, with a focus on "social explorer" literature exemplified by analysis of George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* ([1937] 1962).

The aims of the chapter are several. Firstly, to acknowledge that the unemployed themselves were a political force that was organized by different groups and movements, and that representing the unemployed was a politically contested process. Secondly, to show how the political agenda pursued by some of these movements strove to constitute unemployment as a problem for the state for

which radical solutions were necessary that pushed beyond the boundaries of acceptable liberal government. Thirdly, to gain some insight into how the condition of unemployment came to be known and represented within the genre of social explorer literature and how Orwell's work both captured and challenged stigmatized perspectives of the poor and unemployed.

The chapter draws on existing social histories of unemployment that focus on the experience of unemployment and the politicization of the unemployed (Perry 2000; Flanagan 1991; Burnett 1994). They are accompanied by investigation of histories and original texts from the prominent interwar unemployed movement, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) active from 1921 to 1939 (see Croucher 1987; Katz 2001; Hannington 1928, 1977; London District Council of Unemployed 1921). The chapter investigates these histories to develop an understanding of how political representation of the unemployed sought to challenge forms of social control engendered by national and local relief provision with a set of demands that would ameliorate the position of workers both in and out of employment and eventually eliminate unemployment itself.

Identifying sites of contestation focuses our attention on those practices and institutions of control and exploitation felt most acutely by unemployed people. When we do this, we can also inquire as to how unemployed people advanced a positive vision or critique of the Social Question. In the case of the NUWM what we witness is the advancement of a labourist or workerist vision, captured in the "right to work" campaign, which was present already in the 1880s and rose to prominence in the first ten years of the twentieth century around the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 (Flanagan 1991: 57). In the interwar period unemployment became the object of economic policy as well as that of social administration

(Tomlinson 1981: 62). In this context and alongside liberal discussions of public works we contrast the NUWM's demands for '[p]lans of socially necessary schemes of work' (Hannington 1977: 324), which were a central demand on the state, and showed that the distribution of wage labour was a practical consideration for their activism.

As discussed in Chapter One, this was the time at which most economic conceptions of unemployment, based on Marshallian analysis, still held to the idea that wage rates had to adjust downwards to ensure more employment (De Vroey 2004: 55). This Chapter demonstrates, then, how the NUWM were indirectly contesting this by asserting the existence of involuntary unemployment and the need for intervention to tackle it. We will consider how this position related to Keynes' proposals for public works and how intellectual, political and administrative impediments held back proposals for radical intervention. The chapter reveals, therefore, how the existence of involuntary unemployment was asserted from below through mass political campaigning as well as from economists such as Keynes.

The NUWM also subverted long established stigmatized conceptions of deservingness that characterized unemployment as a moral failing of the individual and challenged new conceptions of the unemployed as 'demoralized' that emerged in the interwar period. They stand in opposition to the notion of voluntary unemployment outlined in all of the previous chapters, both in the technical, economic sense that says that labour need only reduce its wage demands to market-clearing levels to reduce unemployment (Chapter One), and in the sense that the unemployed choose not to work because of an absence of character and its

associated habits and dispositions of “forethought”, “temperance”, “thrift” and “self-reliance” (Chapters Two and Three).

Part Two of the chapter looks at representations of poverty and unemployment in “social explorer” literature (Keating 1976). Public consciousness of poverty, as was noted in Chapter Three, was stirred by scandalous accounts of urban working-class life. Despite the emergence of social statistics and a more “scientific” form of investigating poverty and unemployment driven by figures such as Booth, Bosanquet, Beveridge and Llewellyn Smith, literary representations remained prominent in the interwar period. The poor and the unemployed are not merely statistics, they are figuratively imagined, represented and interpreted through all manner of media: newspapers, novels, plays, film and television. Especially important in the late-nineteenth century was popular journalism aimed at a middle and “lower-middle” class audience: the number of local daily newspapers increased from 2 in 1850 to 196 in 1900, and weeklies from 400 to over 2,000 across the same period (Golding & Middleton 1982: 29). Here, we look at the genre of social explorer literature to analyse representations of the poor and unemployed that were aimed at similar audiences.

Part Two focuses its investigation on portraits of poverty and unemployment in George Orwell’s travelogue, *The Road to Wigan Pier* ([1937] 1962). The focus is on this book but it is set in context within the genre of social explorer literature from the nineteenth century onwards that shares elements of the themes and style employed in Orwell’s book. The social explorers delve into what they consider the urban “jungle” to expose scandalous living conditions, eventually crossing back into “civilized” territory to recount their tales. In Orwell we investigate the blurred line between fictionalized poverty and documentary, the partially idealized nature

of work and the working class and the class prejudices surrounding unemployment and its relief. While he presents an ambiguous picture of the unemployed, emphasizing the dirt and smells of their everyday lives, his style of ironizing middle-class preconceptions of unemployment is important for its contribution to the idea of involuntary unemployment. As with other perspectives in the thesis, we find an acknowledgement in Orwell's text that unemployment is a structural phenomenon, but description of the environment and behaviour of the poor lends itself to stigmatizing positions.

In both parts of the chapter, we find the sense of a representational gap regarding the unemployed. Politically, the extents of their demands are represented as dangerous or unworkable, and there is a distance between how the Labour Party represents the unemployed from above and how the NUWM represents them from below (Penketh & Pratt 2000). Alongside this, the invention of the category of the long-term, demoralized unemployed enables new representations of the psychology of the unemployed, and new administrative forms to deal with this category of the unemployed population (Walters 2000: chapter 4; McKibbin 1990: chapter 5).

Figuratively, within the social explorer literature the poor and unemployed are often cast within a colonial imaginary that exhibits the same kind of moral mapping that Charles Booth undertook. This remains present in Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and forms part of the ambiguous divide between fact and fiction in his documentation of the North of England. The poor and unemployed occupy spaces that are figured by dirt, foul smells and stagnancy. But the representational gap takes on different forms in Orwell's reification of the "noble miner" and his ironic presentation of class prejudices around unemployment that open up

possibilities for challenging stigma and arguing for a conception of involuntary unemployment.

The chapter also returns to the interrelationship of economic and social conceptions of unemployment. Part One concludes with noting how the interwar concept of demoralization plays into later conceptions of the long-term unemployed within labour market theory under the rubric of “hysteresis” (Webster 2005). This connects our focus on conceptions of voluntary unemployment in economic thought outlined in Chapter One with later neoclassical thought and welfare today. Demoralization is appropriated to legitimate the idea that unemployed people are made idle and passive by benefits and that they must be “activated” through the welfare system.

The chapter is split into two further parts and a conclusion. Part One begins by looking at the development of political representation of the unemployed from the 1880s onwards, focusing on the demands for a “right to work”. It then explores how the nature of interwar unemployment and the various strategies and policies that the NUWM pursued in fighting for the unemployed. After this, the notion of “demoralization” is explored and how it came to validate later economic theories of unemployment.

Part Two traces the emergence and development of social explorer literature and the themes and tools it drew upon from the nineteenth century onwards. It then explores the way that the poor and unemployed are figured in Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier* in ambiguous terms, finally discussing the potential for class prejudices to be challenged through the text. The Conclusion includes some

reflections on the importance of representation of the unemployed today, and the role of counter-narratives to stigmatizing discourses.

Part One: The Politics of the Unemployed

Unemployed people's political activity rose to its height in the interwar period amidst mass unemployment, especially in the early 1920s and again in the early-to-mid 1930s. This part of the chapter looks at the role and nature of these movements in relation to the governance of unemployment and the Social Question. While the focus is on the NUWM, which was formed in 1921, it is necessary to give context to the emergence of this movement by looking at the politics of the unemployed prior to 1914, and how they fed into the interwar struggles. There is good reason why we should explore the politics of the unemployed when looking at perspectives on unemployment. We must, following Richard Flanagan, 'break the tyranny of those who look at the unemployed only in terms of their suffering' (1991: 5):

The assumption that the unemployed were dispirited and destroyed by unemployment is based on the belief that unemployment was a rare event for working-class people that they were unaccustomed to, rather than a structural part of their existence (being regularly in and out of work) that they were familiar with and had evolved techniques to deal with, and against which they had a history of struggle.

(Flanagan 1991: 4)

We must turn to unemployed people's resistance as a means to capture them as active agents in the constitution of unemployment itself (see Annetts et al. 2009).⁵² It is evident that there is a tendency to treat the unemployed solely as passive subjects, the targets of measures of control developed to deal with them. Policy histories are particularly susceptible to such treatments and even critical or radical approaches can be prone to advancing the multifarious ways in which the unemployed are commodified and subjectified without inquiring into the history of those who have resisted such processes. This also directly relates to criticisms of the social control literature that emphasize the need to consider that working class people generated their own values, rules and practices to deal with poverty and unemployment (Thompson 1981; Jones 1983).

Walters acknowledges the absence of historical focus on the unemployed as a missing piece in our understanding of the subject of rights, that is, the social citizen as legitimate "claimant". 'This figure', he urges, '... deserves a genealogy of its own' (Walters 2000: 71-72). The NUWM, he argues, engaged in 'the more molecular, pedagogical, and practical work', such as advising claimants on how to negotiate the technicalities of the benefits system, not to facilitate the smooth operation of the system itself, but to recruit members to their organization and further their subversive agenda. The construction of the claimant subject was forged as such between oppositional groups and ruling ideologies and institutions (Walters 2000: 72). While it is not possible to answer fully Walters' call for a genealogy here, what we can do is take into consideration some of the evolving claims made by the unemployed, and by those claiming to represent them and organize them into a political force. In the next chapter we will be looking at how

⁵² We may of course note the irony of attempts to portray unemployed people as 'active' subjects in an era in which 'activation' is the broad policy framework that compels them through heightened conditionality to work for their benefits.

unemployed people have today been constituted (and compelled) as “active” subjects within the welfare system in a way that subjects them to close surveillance and control (Wright 2015). We cannot assume that the unemployed are only active when activated by the government or other welfare agencies. Here we consider the historical constitution of the unemployed as a political and oppositional force. This begins with a note on the iconic role of the Jarrow March, before an overview of how the unemployed were organized before 1914.

Jarrow as the False Apotheosis of Unemployed Resistance

Etched onto the British public’s historical consciousness of mass unemployment in the 1930s is the Jarrow Crusade that took place in October 1936. Around 200 men marched from the town of Jarrow, located on the Tyne in between South Shields and Newcastle, down to London, 300 miles away. It was, and remains, an evocative image of unemployment in the Great Depression. The marchers sought to raise awareness of the plight of the unemployed in Northern towns and cities and a petition was delivered to Parliament to this effect.

Later marches attest to the enduring legacy of the march. In 1981 the People’s March for Jobs, where 500 unemployed people walked from Liverpool to London, drew on the Jarrow Crusade for inspiration, and authors then used it as a figurative benchmark for understanding the history of unemployment (e.g. Smith 1985). More recently, in 2011, trade unions and campaign groups re-enacted the Jarrow march calling for the government to create more jobs, and in 2014 a Jarrow March in support of the National Health Service and against its privatization took place, demonstrating the malleability of the march’s legacy (BBC News 2011; Musgrove 2014).

The representation of the original marchers was important for how seriously they were to be taken at the time. They were presented as respectable and non-threatening citizens, advancing their cause with dignity despite the circumstances from whence they came. James Ede MP, a Labour politician and trade union activist representing South Shields argued that '[The marchers] have stated their case wherever they have had the opportunity with a restraint and a temperance which have secured for them the respect, as well as the sympathy, of the people they have met, and there is no indication that, if they were granted an interview with the Prime Minister or the appropriate Members of the Cabinet, they would pursue any different course' (Hansard 1936: col. 981). Clement Attlee contended that '[i]t is impossible to suggest that this march is simply a Communist manifestation' (Hansard 1936: col. 959), alluding to criticisms that dismissed the marchers as revolutionaries. Overall, the impression is one of dignified failure – the marchers returned by train without a meeting – that nevertheless garnered popular support and engrained itself on the historical imaginary of the Depression years. The passivity of such a respectful march and petition was presented as embodying the best of British values.

This vision of the Jarrow Crusade as the apotheosis of unemployed peoples' struggles in the interwar period is fundamentally misleading. As Matt Perry has argued, it 'confirms the enduring myth of British history that extra-parliamentary action is symbolic and marginal rather than agitational and effective' (Perry 2000: 103; see also Penketh & Pratt 2000).⁵³ Rarely associated with Jarrow's legacy is the fact that the NUWM's leadership advised the organisers of the march and arranged

⁵³ I do not wish to denigrate the Jarrow marchers in any way; I consider the march a courageous act, which raised the profile of unemployed people significantly. My reflections here should be taken as a consequence of the framing of the march at the time and representations of it since.

its welcome reception in London (Perry 2000: 114) or that it was one among many regional and national hunger marches that the NUWM had been organizing since the winter of 1922-23.⁵⁴

While the NUWM also exploited the idea of respectability on their hunger marches, drawn initially from the militarized discipline of ex-servicemen (Croucher 1987), they asserted their demands in ways that often brought them into direct and violent confrontation with the state as well as employers; this is a history in direct conflict with revisionist perspectives of the interwar period in Britain which emphasize its consensual politics (Perry 2000: 23-27).⁵⁵ In light of the need for some sense of how unemployed people organized (and were organized), sketched in basic outline here is a history of political agitation for and by unemployed people from the last fifteen years or so of the nineteenth century through to the interwar period, concentrating on the emergence of the notion of the 'right to work'.

An Historical Overview of the Unemployed as a Political Force

Beginning from the mid-1880s, the Social Democratic Foundation (SDF), Britain's first Marxist party, dominated the organization of the unemployed until the turn of the century. This activity centred almost entirely in London and saw periods of dormancy punctuated by major protest, such as in February 1886 and

⁵⁴ NUWM-organised national hunger marches took place in 1922, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1934 and 1936 (Perry 2000: 104).

⁵⁵ Police violence and arrest of the NUWM's leadership was a common occurrence at demonstrations. Violence occurred most notably at protests in Manchester and Glasgow in 1931, in Castleford at a protest against the Means Test where an NUWM member was killed by a police baton charge, and in Birkenhead and Belfast (where two were shot dead and fifteen wounded) in 1932. The violent and illegal disruption of 'constitutional meetings' by the state led to the creation of the National Council for Civil Liberties (today 'Liberty') but also to popular associations of the NUWM with violence (Vernon 2007: 248).

November 1887, when unemployed demonstrations turned violent in London's West End and Trafalgar Square, and again (more peacefully) in 1903-5. The difference between the demands posed in these protests and earlier agitation such as the bread riots of the mid-century was that the SDF made work a major demand, and held 'the desire to engage with the state as a distinct entity, rather than as a random assortment of authorities who are to be intimidated for short-term gain' (Flanagan 1991: 24).

And while they pushed for engagement with the state, there was a distinct advantage for unemployed protest in the localized distribution of relief and public works during this period; local boards for relief could be pressured with great effect to supply better rates or put on employment schemes. The "politics of the street", as Flanagan (1991) labels it, had an effect through striking fear into middle-class and elite society and forcing government action to address unemployment. By 1888, *The Times* was warning that unemployment was 'the fundamental problem of modern society, in comparison with which almost every question in politics seems diminutive' (The Times in Burnett 1994: 147). As mentioned in Chapter Three, the government was quick to respond with extra emergency funds for the relief of the unemployed in the wake of the demonstrations in Trafalgar Square.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) with representation in Parliament from Keir Hardie, began to advocate on behalf of the unemployed. Flanagan (1991) has demonstrated how the foundation of the Labour Party in the early twentieth century was bound up with its efforts to represent the unemployed. Various leading socialists had cut their teeth in the labour movement through involvement in unemployed struggles in the 1880s. In

addition, the New Unionist movement helped to widen the scope of unionism to trades such as dockworkers and match-making. This wider representation of workers could not help but advance the unemployed as a political force, for the reason that the worlds of casual labour and unemployment heavily overlapped in these trades (Flanagan 1991: 37).⁵⁶

Unemployment subsequently took on an ideological and programmatic centrality within the labour movement. Both the ILP and the SDF shared the idea that abolishing unemployment would precipitate the end of capitalism. In 1895 H. Russell Smart first proposed the idea of enshrining the 'Right to Work' within legislation to the party (Flanagan 1991: 45) and together ILP and SDF activists envisioned it as a central part of their agenda, alongside a programme of nationalisation and reduction of the working day (for example, Mann 1895). The notion of a "right to work" was in part an extension of an established radical liberal rhetoric, associated with universalist rights and the politics of Thomas Paine. Until the turn of the century, the labour movement had framed demands in the language of reformist Liberal and Conservative politics, but it started to push a liberal framework of rights beyond its accepted limits with the right to work (Hanagan 1997: 461-2).

There was an often-fraught relationship between those seeking to represent the unemployed and unemployed people themselves; these groups did not always spurn the divisive classifications of the unemployed characteristic of the era. Although the SDF did much to advance the cause of the unemployed politically, many of its leadership adhered to the distinction between respectable workers and the undeserving unemployed or "unemployable" (Flanagan 1991: 51).

⁵⁶ These socialists included figures such as: H.H Champion, Will Thorne, Eleanor Marx and Tom Mann (Flanagan 1991: 37).

Purportedly for reasons of political expediency, both the ILP and the SDF lent support to the Conservative Government's Unemployed Workmen Bill of 1905, which emphasized the distinction between deserving and undeserving and offered a reduced rate of compensation for relief works (Flanagan 1991: 59).⁵⁷ The advancement of the "right to work" cause and the recognition of state responsibility for the unemployed were paramount, but it was a right and recognition limited, in the main, to so-called respectable workers. This reveals a representational gap between the labour movement and the unemployed that would develop under the Labour Party in the interwar period.

Nevertheless the pressure brought by these groups representing the unemployed, and unemployed people as an increasingly organized force, pushed the issue of the state's duty to provide work onto the policy agenda. Though it failed in its efforts, the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 was an attempt to provide more systematized methods for dealing with the problem of unemployment, with "Distress Committees" set up in the main areas of industry to record, regulate and relieve unemployed men outside of the Poor Law system. Beveridge understood it as a combination of the work and operating principles of existing agencies – the Poor Law, municipal relief works and charities (Beveridge 1912: 164-165).

The Labour Party followed up this Act with proposals for an "Unemployed Workmen Bill" or "Right to Work Bill" as it came to be known, in 1908, advancing the proposals first suggested by Smart years earlier. When this proposal was presented for discussion to the cabinet of the Liberal Government in March 1908, it

⁵⁷ The Act offered assistance only to 'deserving cases': 'the applicant [who is] honestly desirous of getting work, but is unable to do so from exceptional causes over which he has no control.' (Burns 1908: 2).

was understood by John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, that 'the essential features of the measure are at once so dangerous and so far-reaching in their consequences that it is impossible to accept it' (Burns 1908: 1). The bill proposed making the provision of work an obligation for public authorities, and that this work be given at the 'standard' rate of wages existing locally for such employment and paid for out of local rates; where work could not be found immediately it was proposed that 'full maintenance' for the unemployed worker and their dependants be given (Burns 1908: 3).

In light of these proposals, Burns complained that:

... [p]ractically all the circumstances which under the present system deter persons from applying to the Distress Committee (e.g., searching investigation, lower wages, employment, if any, limited in amount, &c.) are absent ... There will be little or no inducement for any one to look for work, no casual labourer will be willing to take on a temporary job, unless at a very high rate of remuneration, if he can get a permanent employment from the Unemployment Committee. How great might be the eventual interference with existing conditions of industry by this process it is scarcely possible to estimate.

(Burns 1908: 3-4)

Again, as in Chapter Three, we see how the fear of the dependent "habitual casual" and their etiolated work ethic is used as a threat against broad relief programmes.

Walters notes how the fundamental similarity of the 1905 Act and the 1908 proposals 'illustrates ... the relative *scarcity* of governmental techniques' (Walters

2000: 39, emphasis original). While he is not incorrect, it is perhaps important here to note how it exhibits the permanent and irresolvable tension between the advancement of social rights and the administration of social control. The demands placed through the right to work are seen as excessive, economically and socially; the 1905 Act exhibits a concessionary stance that retains control over important categorical (and moral) divides like the deserving and undeserving. In this regard social control is expressed as the containment of excess in working-class demands and unemployment remains a social problem of the unemployed themselves. And yet, 1905 begins the recognition of unemployment as an economic problem and an issue of state interference, against which more conservative forces were compelled to argue (Proper 1907).

However, the Labour Party would quickly abandon its commitment to the Right to Work campaign and its association with the SDF. Violent protests across the country in Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield and Nottingham as well as across London deterred them from supporting the campaign, and the publication of the Minority and Majority Reports of the Poor Law Commission in early 1909 – neither of which endorsed state support for the right to work at standard wages – withdrew their attention from it (Burnett 1994: 197-8).⁵⁸ The political representation of the unemployed in the pre-1914 period points to how the labour movement and radical groups such as the SDF were not free from the divisive representations of the unemployed, and came to abandon the more radical proposals they had held with the arrival of government of unemployment by insurance.

⁵⁸ It should be mentioned again, that this was the Commission on which both Charles Booth and Helen Bosanquet sat, producing the Majority Report.

The early history of the Labour Party is coloured by contestation over its objectives and its methods, perhaps crudely suggested by the divisions between the leading, middle-class, Fabian technocracy on its right and a subordinated ILP on its left (Nairn 1964). In the interwar period, however, the right to work was again picked up, but this time by a movement not just *by* the unemployed, but also *of* the unemployed. The political representation of the unemployed, we can argue, is thus suggestive of two different ‘souls’ of socialism that operate ‘from below’ and ‘from above’ in different ways (Penketh & Pratt 2000: 117; also Hayburn 1983). The former, we suggest below, continuously sought to exceed established liberal discourse of rights in demanding the right to work.

The National Unemployed Workers’ Movement, 1921-1939

Box 4.1 NUWM Call to Join

FELLOW WORKERS

Are you Unemployed? Are you Organised?

If the former; why not the latter?

We desire to help you; to fight for you; to fight with you.

The only way we can do this is to know you.

We know you.

Do you know us?

If you do not, get into your local committee.

No fees. No subscriptions.

Just the Organising of the Unemployed by the unemployed, with the desire to form our fellow unfortunates into a strong body so that we shall have the strength and power to fight for the right to live, the right to work.

(London District Council of Unemployed 1921:4)

The interwar National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) is understood to have 'represented a highpoint of unemployed organisation in British history' (Croucher 1987: 11). While there is not room to do full justice to its history here, it is necessary to outline a brief narrative of how the NUWM came about and what it did, upon which we can assess the nature and aims of the resistance it undertook against the government and other agencies. Founded in 1921, it was most active in the early 1920s and again from 1931-1936 following the defeat of the Labour Government and mass demonstration against cuts in the dole and the Household Means Test (Perry 2000: 106). By 1939 it had all but petered out. In this time, its resistance and campaigning were formed of different activities, from organising marches to providing advice to the unemployed who were navigating the relief system. To lay the ground for understanding these activities, we have to begin with the context in which it was possible for, and incumbent upon, the NUWM to organize the unemployed.

Two things need to be considered briefly in explaining the context of the NUWM's creation and its success as an unemployed movement from 1921. First is the nature of interwar unemployment, including the numbers and type of people unemployed. Second is the system of relief that was in place throughout the 1920s and 1930s, including the localised nature of provision, the coverage and conditions of relief, the role of charity and the introduction of means-testing.

The ranks and leadership of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, as it was known when it was founded, were formed principally of ex-servicemen as well as workers from staple industries such as shipbuilding, coalmining and engineering. Unemployment was high among these groups and, as they were concentrated in industrial centres, political organization of the

unemployed followed patterns of urban industrial unemployment (Garside 1990: 9, 11; Flanagan 1991: chapter 4).⁵⁹ These workers also came to represent the unemployment problem in the 1920s, as the casually unemployed had done before the war, despite the continuity of the problem of casual labour in the interwar period (Tomlinson 1981: 62-65; Whiteside & Gillespie 1991).

Table 4.1 below shows national unemployment rates between 1912 and 1936. Unemployment stood at consistently between 10 and 15 per cent throughout the 1920s and rose above 20 per cent in the early 1930s, only falling below 10 per cent by the time war broke out again in 1939. It is estimated that the number of people unemployed never dropped below one million in the interwar period, and peaked at about three million in 1932 (Garside 1990:7). It was at the peaks of unemployment that the unemployed movement made its greatest mark, struggling in the intervening period of 1923-27 when the labour market picked up. Perhaps, as Croucher suggests, this was because '[w]hen there was some real hope of work, the workless used their energies in looking for it' (1987: 59).

Table 4.1 *Percentage rates of unemployment*

Britain, 1912-1936.

1912-1913	1922	1929	1932	1936
3.9	15.2	9.7	22.9	12.6

Source: Richard Flanagan (1991) *Parish-Fed Bastards: A History of the Politics of the Unemployed in Britain, 1884-1939*, p. 118.

⁵⁹ Cronin argues that a more rebellious working class culture also emerged after World War I as housing in industrial areas became more segregated along class lines (Cronin 1984: 27, 31). Coal, cotton, wool textiles, mechanical engineering, shipbuilding and iron and steel accounted for about half the total of insured unemployed in June 1929 (Garside 1990: 11).

The self-designation of the NUWM as a 'workers' movement' that appealed to 'fellow [unemployed] workers' (see Box 4.1) reflects the transitory nature of work in the period. People would move in and out of work, such that working-class people were sympathetic towards the unemployed because of their proximity to such a situation.⁶⁰ Where divisions might have emerged - for example between skilled, unionized, insured workers and those outside of the insurance system reliant on poor relief - these were, no doubt, to some extent eroded by the mass unemployment of the early 1930s and the inability of the insurance system to cope. The NUWM regularly drew crowds of 20,000 at its unemployment demonstrations, and occasionally as many as 100,000 and more at its national protests in London (Hannington 1977: 248). The organization had a membership of 40,000 at its height in the early 1930s, and an estimated 400,000 supporters over the course of its existence, but this related only to its paid up members, and its real strength was as an organized movement that could engage much larger numbers than its direct base boasted (Perry 2000: 114-5).

The relationship between the NUWM and the Labour Party was perpetually strained. After refusing to give support to direct action at the inception of the NUWM, the Party remained somewhere between passive and hostile towards the movement (Flanagan 1991: 134). The first Labour Government of 1924 was noted for its change in stance over commitments to welfare provision made while in opposition. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald rejected unemployment as a

⁶⁰ It is difficult to gain an accurate picture of unemployment duration in the interwar period, for the reason that regular, monthly data was only officially recorded from 1930 (Garside 1980: 184). However, Garside has used the available figures to compare 'the average number of claims current at any given date with the estimated number of separate individuals with claims during the year.' In 1929, for example, the average on any one date represented about 27% of the total number of separate individuals claiming across the year. This rises to 42% in 1933 and falls back to 36% by 1936. So in this last case, claimants for benefits or assistance were unemployed *on average and in the aggregate* for about a third of the year (Garside 1980: 186-187).

priority and the Labour right-wing, led by Philip Snowden as Chancellor, held to a commitment to budgetary restraint and the Gold Standard which was to prove disastrous by the time of the second Labour Government in 1931 (Penketh & Pratt 2000: 126-7; Polanyi 2001: 236). The thing that defined the gap between the Labour Party in government and the NUWM was the latter's enduring commitment to 'socialism from below':

... based on the principle of the self-emancipation of the masses struggling to take charge of their own destiny and which attempts to win people to this goal via a 'transitional politics', aimed at convincing increasing numbers of workers – by argument and in practice – that meeting human need is incompatible with capitalism.

(Penketh & Pratt 2000: 118)

This 'transitional politics' focused on unemployment as an internal contradiction to capitalism that was intimately related to the organization of work and its distribution. The continuing presence in the interwar period of short-time working as a labour management technique, and of worker-led work-sharing systems, meant that any sharp distinction between the "employed" and "unemployed" did not fully emerge until the second half of the twentieth century (Whiteside & Gillespie 1991). The persistence of traditional forms of labour management from the Edwardian period and widespread underemployment signalled political contestation over the distribution of work by trade unions, the TUC and employers, as well as the non-intervention of government to regulate working hours throughout the interwar era (Garside 1990: 92-3).

The working day for many unionized workers decreased to eight hours after an intense period of campaigning and strikes between 1919 and 1921, but it had not been set in law (Hermann 2015: 115). For full-time workers average hours had been 2,753 in 1913 (56.4 hours per week for 48.8 weeks); by 1924 they were 2,219 (46.6 hours per week for 47.6 weeks) but by 1937 they were back up to 2,293 (48.2 hours per week over 47.5 weeks) (Brown & Mohun 2011: 1054).

Throughout its early active years the NUWM would campaign against the provision of overtime as a source of unnecessary unemployment, sometimes occupying factories and holding management hostage (Hannington 1977: 46-47; Croucher 1987: 49-52). In this way, it formed part of the resistance to the national insurance schemes and government efforts to sharpen the divide between the employed and unemployed (Whiteside & Gillespie 1991: 675). These schemes, as we noted in Chapter Three, sought to establish regular employment as the norm, and as a condition of unemployment benefit, and exclude the inefficient or habitual casual. The NUWM contested the distribution of wage labour and either called on the government to provide public works or, as with the factory occupations against overtime, took matters into their own hands.

The movement recognized a relationship in the labour market between unemployed and employed workers in other ways too. A reserve army analysis of unemployment led them to organize as bulwarks against the practice of 'using the unemployed to undermine the established trade-union standards and conditions ... or as a blacklegging force during any industrial dispute' (Hannington 1977: 25). This was perhaps most famously exhibited in their support for the engineering employers' national 'lock-out' of their workers in 1922, during which employers had attempted to assert a 'right to manage' overtime and pay reductions (Croucher

1987: 52; Perry 2000: 106). The organization of the unemployed was thus seen as an important part of the protection of employment as well as a critique of overworking. In general, the movement expressed ambitions for 'one big union' of the employed and unemployed, an idea borrowed from the International Workers of the World (also known as the Wobblies) (Flanagan 1991: 122, 150-152).

Local Protest and National Public Works

The NUWM advocated for national, centralized maintenance of the unemployed. The local nature of relief, however, was both an obstacle for and a catalyst to the creation of the inter-war unemployment movement. The NUWM railed against the idea that ex-servicemen, and the unemployed generally, should either be the object of charity or left to the whims of the local Poor Law Guardians (Katz 2001: 67). The idea of nationally-organized maintenance of the unemployed followed the argument, advanced by the NUWM, that unemployment was a structural feature of industrial life, and of capitalism generally, which nevertheless could be eradicated via public employment schemes paying union wages (Hannington 1977: 325).

Yet the local nature of provision meant that there was an identifiable target against which NUWM members could protest. Poor Law Guardian officers were repeatedly held hostage to bands of unemployed people, such that many were compelled to offer more generous relief or less onerous rates (Hannington 1977: 35). Until the 1930s, this localized nature of relief allowed the NUWM to build a sense of community solidarity in particular areas, such as the Rhondda valley in South Wales, that mobilized a belief in the 'primacy of people's needs over the strictures of formal law' (Bagguley 1992: 454).

In 1921, the government passed a bill that made special provision for unemployed ex-servicemen and civilians, including a “donation” benefit that anticipated the surge in workless people following the full employment of the wartime period and responding to mass discontent from ex-servicemen. This was considered an ‘awkward precedent’, as it extended relief far beyond insured workers and came directly from the Exchequer and not the Insurance Fund (Flanagan 1991: 89). It would also lay the ground for later demands by the NUWM that maintenance of the unemployed be the responsibility of the national Exchequer, and not local authorities (see Hannington 1928: 5). This so-called uncovenanted benefit was also significant in that it undid or even reversed the sharp distinction sought in the original insurance system between the genuinely unemployed person who was normally in regular work and the casual labourer. Successive governments throughout the 1920s thus worked to restrict access to these benefits in a bid to control the bill for unemployment (Whiteside & Gillespie 1991: 676-677).

Though it could claim national coverage, the NUWM struggled to maintain full control over the direction of the movement. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), which professed to stand behind the NUWM, provided much of the rhetoric and, more concretely, resources for the movement. While it is fair to say that the politics of the movement were roughly aligned with the CPGB, there were many other radical currents at play. As Flanagan notes, ‘the politics of the unemployed continued often to be spontaneous, rarely disciplined, and almost impossible to subjugate to the whims of democratic centralism’, the CPGB’s organisational principle (Flanagan 1991: 121; for a more nuanced account of the relationship see Campbell & McIlroy 2008). Katz points out that, although the

leadership continuously pushed a radical agenda, 'success or failure for the NUWM was based on its ability to secure changes immediately, no matter to what degree, in order to ease the daily lives of desperate people' (Katz 2001: 82).

The government and elite in Britain also recognized that maintaining the localized nature of relief would contain the political discontent of the unemployed and that "the dole" provided a means for disciplining such discontent through manipulation of conditionality and threat of withdrawal. This had been evident already in 1922, when in April of that year the government introduced a five-week 'gap' to the right of unemployment benefit once a worker had exhausted contributions-based, covenanted benefit, a policy which was overturned following a summer of agitation (Perry 2000: 106).⁶¹ Indeed, as established in the section on social insurance in Chapter Three, eligibility was an essential part of policing the "voluntarily" unemployed and those dismissed because of misconduct involved in trade disputes.⁶²

As McKibbin argues, then, 'the dole was the ransom property was prepared to pay' (McKibbin 1990: 252); the alternative was a more revolutionary scenario in which the state would have to take on much greater responsibility for unemployment. Yet it is important to acknowledge that such a scenario was not absent from political debate at the time. Keynes and Henderson's tract for the Liberal Party, *Can Lloyd George Do It?*, proposed eliminating unemployment

⁶¹ Manipulation of timing for eligibility in this way remains a salient issue. In June 2013, the Coalition government announced plans to extend the period from which unemployment benefit (Jobseeker's Allowance or JSA) could be initially claimed after becoming unemployed from 3 days to a week, arguing that it would encourage more to look for work immediately rather than start claiming benefit, and generate savings that could be funnelled into back-to-work programmes (BBC News 2013a).

⁶² These 'principles' of labour discipline were still in existence in the mid-1980s, at which point the maximum period of suspension was extended to thirteen weeks, and in 1988, to six months (Dean, H. 1991: 104).

through a scheme of loan-financed public works, and promised that the ‘cumulative effect of renewed prosperity’ would more than outweigh the costs of government inaction (Keynes & Henderson 1929: 8).⁶³ These suggestions met opposition from Baldwin’s Government and the ‘Treasury View’ of unemployment, which held to ‘pre-Keynesian’ economic orthodoxy beliefs that government spending would divert money from, or crowd out, a private sector-led recovery (Winch 1972: 119; Peden 1984: 170).⁶⁴ Joan Robinson would brand these beliefs as ‘neo-classical theory in action’ and attribute them to ‘Marshall’s pupils’ in the Treasury (Robinson 1962: 71).

However, as others have pointed out, the argument that economic theory presented the main obstacle to public works has been exaggerated. Important also were the administrative and political barriers to the proposals, including the absence of state capacity for dealing with unemployment through public works on a more permanent basis and the constraints of refinancing the national debt (Tomlinson 1981: chapter 5, 100-103; Middleton 1982, 1985; Peden 1984; McKibbin 1975: 104). It is only once the notion of rights and the idea of public works meets a changed political and economic policy context after the war, with Keynesian demand management and full employment policy as the tool and

⁶³ The pamphlet contains ‘the germs ... of [Keynes’] later *theoretical* position’, including: ‘an insistence of the separation of savings and investment decisions, concern over the problem of finding offsets to “excessive” saving, abandonment of wage reduction as a feasible remedy for unemployment, and a rudimentary attempt to calculate the multiplier effects of public investment’ (Winch 1966: 170-171).

⁶⁴ The ‘Treasury View’ is said to have found its fullest expression in the memoranda on unemployment of 1929, in which the danger of ‘State-aided public work’ for drawing off labour from ‘normal industry’ is highlighted (Steel-Maitland 1929: 10-11). Although, as noted here, the picture was more complex than this critique of the ‘Treasury View’, it is interesting to note the legacy of opposition to fiscal stimulus based on the idea of the state ‘crowding out’ private sector recovery. Keynesian economic historians identified it as a manifestation of the Ricardian equivalence proposition (Winch 1972: 118) which, to simplify, assumes government debt-financed expenditure is ineffective because consumers factor in future tax liabilities to their spending decisions (see Barro 1974). The Coalition government of 2010-2015 assumed this crowding out discourse from the beginning of its term in office, advocating a ‘market-led’ recovery following the financial crisis that also prioritized ‘fiscal consolidation’ (e.g. HMT & BIS 2010: 27, 35).

objective for a national economy, that the government of unemployment is given a more 'democratic inflection' (Walters 2000: 39).

This does not, of course, relieve Labour of the charges of betrayal from the unemployed movement (see Penketh & Pratt 2000: 130; Croucher 1987: 118; Hayburn 1983) and even defenders of Labour's second government acknowledge the problematic nature of its commitment to the idea that Britain was 'inextricably entangled in the world economy, and that this entanglement imposed its own restrictions on British economic policies' (McKibbin 1975: 103). The impression that the fate of unemployed people was sacrificed to the interests of international capital could not be avoided. The Labour Party elite had shared in the liberal critique of the unemployed movement's radical excess. As Hannington put it: '[o]ne might say that the characteristic of the 1929 Labour government was that of proving that capitalism was quite safe in the hands of the Labour administration. It was upon this rock that the Labour government was wrecked in September 1931' (Hannington 1977: 201).

Advice, Stigma and Demoralization

The NUWM engaged in efforts to advise the unemployed on their rights and entitlements. This extended to representational work such as helping claimants to appeal disqualifications from benefits and uphold complaints. Such was the NUWM's expertise that it came to support nearly half of all cases brought to the National Insurance Umpire in 1932 and its leaders were invited to advise official committees on the insurance system at the behest of William Beveridge (Croucher 1987: 114). There is no doubt that this 'more mundane work of schooling people in the practicalities of how to operationalize one's 'rights' – *how to claim*' went

towards constituting the figure of 'the claimant' (Walters 2000: 72). Crucially though, practices of advising the unemployed opened up possibilities of critique – of capitalism, of work, of social stigma, and of administrative systems – in unpredictable ways.

The NUWM might, in hindsight, be accused of certain “reformist” tendencies as an advisory body for the unemployed. Where this was converted into more radical critiques was in the movement’s insistence that state practice was the real cause of hardship amongst the unemployed and in the demand for a better distribution of wage labour tied to conditions of shorter hours and trade union rates of pay. Fighting stigma and propaganda was also a primary aim for the organization. Here is Hannington in hyperbolic style on the early days of the movement:

The capitalist press began to collect information about the amounts received by unemployed families and ran scare headlines about the “luxury of the unemployed at the expense of the rate payers” ... But agitation was too strong to be stemmed by such propaganda. The slogan of “Work or Full Maintenance” became the popular battle-cry of the unemployed and in fighting for it we certainly revolutionised the whole system of poor law relief.

(Hannington 1977: 21)

Stigma became attached to new subjects in this era of the Social Question. The interwar period witnessed the cultivation of the idea of the ‘demoralised, long-term unemployed’ as a distinct group, who then became the object of new forms of administrative and governmental practice such as unemployment assistance – a successor to the uncovenanted benefit introduced in 1921 – and the Means Test,

which limited public spending and heightened the surveillance of claimants (Walters 2000: 79, 90-94).⁶⁵ For the government, the problem was essentially one of what to do with the unsustainable situation of a large number of unemployed people not covered by, or who had exhausted, contribution-based, covenanted benefits.

In 1934, the Unemployment Act established an Unemployment Assistance Board to deal with this portion of the unemployed population, as well as those able-bodied people between 16 and 65 years-old receiving Poor Law relief (Garside 1990: 72). These changes refigured the claimant population, and partitioned a population of the long-term unemployed from a short-term population, around divisions of entitlement and need. The Means Test was made statutory by the Act, and only those in need were provided with assistance. 'Since the underlying purpose of the scheme was to establish a clear division between those with and those without entitlement to benefit based on contributions,' writes Garside, 'it was critical to establish the point that insurance was a matter of rights and assistance a matter of needs' (Garside 1990: 73).

This marked a shift to a new basis for assistance where 'governance through need' had to be translated from a 'political-moral register into an administrative one' (Walters 2000: 94). There is an important history of how need is governed in social policy that the thesis does not have space to cover. We might note, though, that the present day is full of examples of this translation from the moral to the administrative register. For example, the Coalition Government made

⁶⁵ An Order of Council introduced by the new 'National' government in November 1931, after the fall of the Labour government, limited the length of receipt of statutory benefit relief to 26 weeks in a year and enforced a Family Means Test on all claimants (852,000 when it was first applied), which demanded full details of the income of every family member (Croucher 1987: 119-120).

a moral argument that under the welfare state families might receive a total amount of money that is deemed too high, and therefore introduced a 'benefit cap' set at an arbitrary figure of £500 a week for couples and lone-parents and £350 a week for single people (Citizens Advice 2015). Such arguments represent a remoralization of unemployment as a social problem separate from the structural, economic conditions that might determine people's needs.

Here, though, I want to emphasize the way in which the demoralized and long-term unemployed were represented and investigated; in line with Chapter Three it is a question of how they came to be known. However, I also want to stress that such representation has been challenged and appropriated in different ways. The idea that demoralization emerged from an abstract realm of long-term unemployment into which claimants passed at an arbitrary point in time was challenged by the NUWM. Instead, they asserted the government's responsibility for demoralization. Demoralization of the long-term unemployed in the 1930s was also picked up in economic thought later in the twentieth century and used to validate theories of unemployment that pointed to activation of the unemployed and eventually workfare as a policy regime.

The representation of the long-term unemployed was validated by an array of social psychological studies and surveys, especially from 1930 onwards (McKibbin 1990: chapter 8; Walters 2000: 82-88). Studies such as the influential research conducted in Marienthal in 1931 (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld & Zeisel 2002) even spawned the idea that there was a defined set of 'stages' through which the unemployed would travel as the time out of work passed – a 'stage theory' – culminating in them accepting unemployment as a 'normal state' (Butchart 1997:

10).⁶⁶ Medical practitioners and bodies also reflected this focus on the development of the unemployed mind. James Halliday, Regional Medical Officer for the Department of Health in Scotland, wrote in the *British Medical Journal* in 1935 about 'psychoneurosis' among unemployed people, suggesting that:

... after falling out of work there is a short period of a sense of release (a holiday freedom); gradually anxiety and depression set in with loss of mental equilibrium; finally, after several years, adaptation takes place to a new and debased level of life, lacking hope as well as fear of the future.

(Halliday 1935: 100)

This investigating of and hypothesizing about unemployed people's minds was ripe territory for a number of expert domains in the interwar period. Macnicol (1987: 300-301) has demonstrated how it drew in new forms of therapeutic intervention and, more conservatively, attracted ideas of inherited degeneracy similar to those that had been applied to the residuum and unemployable before 1914. Demoralization also attracted literary attention – it is in this context that Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* ([1937] 1962) appears, and we will touch on this below.

The NUWM's approach, however, was to subvert the idea that long-term unemployment itself was the source of demoralization through arguing that the systems of relief and insurance, their attendant conditionality and political passivity were its true origin, and that alternatives for creating work existed

⁶⁶ As McKibbin notes, the Marienthal study which adopted the 'stage theory' approach, and influenced exercises in Britain like the Pilgrim Trust report of 1938 on unemployment, drew conclusions from a small empirical sample and narrow set of guiding questions that did not consider the historical and social circumstances of the community surveyed (McKibbin 1990: 253-4).

(Croucher 1987: 163). We can point to a particular source to exemplify this contestation that would have been read by the unemployed themselves.

The NUWM's official newspaper, *Out of Work*, which ran in the early 1920s and resurfaced in less popular forms under different names in the 1930s, played an important role in informing unemployed people of local activities and educating them on legal and benefit questions (Croucher 1987: 130-131). But it also appears to have a function in representing the active power that local branches of the NUWM could wield, and in subverting shame and stigma. Shame has a multivalent presence in working-class literature and culture, and a diverse role as theory within histories of working-class literature and culture (Fox 1994: 10-20). Radical working-class writers such as Robert Tressell 'identified shame as one "step" in the process of class consciousness' (Fox 1994: 15) and there are grounds to see shame as a similar resource or function in *Out of Work*.

For example, in one local news item from London, it was reported that a magistrate in Tottenham who had summoned an unemployed worker for non-payment of rates had claimed that unemployment was no good excuse when there was plenty of work. The paper details how a march of four hundred organized by the Tottenham Unemployed Committee visited the courthouse the next day, demanding to be found employment from the 'perfidious individual' (London District Council of Unemployed 1921: 3). In the same issue, a story about 'Bill and Tom', two engineers who, disparagingly, observe a march of the 'Out of Works' and refuse to contribute to their collection, find themselves unemployed at the end of the week and joining the NUWM eight weeks later. In many other instances the paper exploits stigma and shaming with irony and tongue-in-cheek ridicule that

lays bare the treatment of the unemployed and points at available solutions.⁶⁷ It also displays an unending optimism about the movement and its cause, what Bagguley has characterized as a ‘messianic communism’ that bolstered local branches and cemented the NUWM’s ‘oppositional culture’ within communities (Bagguley 1992: 453)

For the NUWM, as the unemployment levels rose in the early 1930s, demoralization came not from the experience of unemployment by itself but the schemes and surveillance that the unemployed were compelled to undergo. This included test and task work, where Poor Law Guardians put recipients of relief to work ‘on roads, parks, sewerage, wood-chopping, stone-breaking, etc., in return for which they receive[d] no recognised wages, but a scale of relief’ (Hannington 1977: 207). When the unemployment crisis escalated in the late 1920s, the Ministry of Labour began to establish a system of ‘Instructional Centres’ or work camps in which the unemployed would perform hard manual labour. In total, it is estimated that 200,000 (mostly young) men passed through these camps between 1929 and 1938 (Field 2009: 1). As Field (2009: 4) suggests, they demonstrated a preoccupation with the male working-class body and its ‘reconditioning’, and the fear that men were going ‘soft’, a fear echoed by Orwell, as we will see below.⁶⁸

The camps were unpopular with the unemployed themselves (Whiteside 1991: 153) and Hannington equated such schemes to a ‘cheap slave labour system’

⁶⁷ In one issue, the author of a piece entitled ‘Point of Information’ asks ‘Is it true that Queen Mary was seen one day at a Labour Exchange?’ (London District Council of Unemployed 1921: 3).

⁶⁸ The NUWM had an understandably hostile view of schemes like work camps. Interestingly, they organised rival social events to the government’s National Council of Social Services (NCSS) Centres, designed to provide recreational and educational activities to the unemployed (Croucher 1987: 165-167).

(Hannington 1977: 208). Indeed, he appears ahead of his time when in 1936 he asked ‘what of the future?’:

An even more serious danger is now revealing itself in Britain in the schemes of the government and of certain social service centres to encourage the unemployed to work without wages ... The government and the social service leaders advance the argument that it is better that the unemployed should be working, even though they are not receiving wages, than hanging about and doing nothing and becoming demoralised.

(Hannington 1977: 324)

These words could very well be spoken of the government’s mandatory unpaid work schemes today, explored in the next chapter. Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), in which claimants are compelled under threat of benefit sanction to perform unwaged work for weeks at a time, is said ‘to establish the discipline and habits of working life, such as attending on time regularly, carrying out specific tasks and working under supervision while delivering a contribution to the community’ (DWP 2015: 6).⁶⁹ A recent programme, the Community Work Placement (CWP) sees claimants working unwaged for up to six months at a time, often in landscaping and other outdoor work (Gani 2015). The focus is on so-called incentives for work and explicitly targets the psychology and attitude of the long-term unemployed.

The idea of reconditioning centres in the interwar period was that hard work of any kind, including unpaid work, was necessary for ‘rekindling the work

⁶⁹ Of the simple daily routine of hard labour in the work camp, Field (2009: 14) notes ‘[p]urposive work had a pedagogic purpose, and was placed at the core of every day camp life.’

ethic', and like the psychological surveys of the unemployed its evidence base was broadly unsubstantiated (King 1999: 158). In the next chapter we will explore how certain ideas about how the unemployed are psychologically deficient drive a policy-base and policy-rhetoric that is also largely unsubstantiated; for now, we can note that the historical resonances are striking and illuminate how perspectives of the unemployed that emphasize psychological or physical deficiency have a long and varied history.

The 1930s and 'the Invention of Hysteresis'⁷⁰

In concluding this section, it is worth emphasizing the effects of the interwar period on later economic theories of unemployment, and subsequently on social policy itself. There is an interesting link to pursue between the concern with the long-term unemployed and their demoralization in the interwar period on the one hand, and the development of theories of unemployment later in the twentieth century on the other. This returns us to the theme of the entanglement of economic and social conceptions of unemployment and its causes.

The 1930s are an important period for the economics discipline and the analysis of capitalist crisis, around which careers have been continuously fashioned. Samman (2012: 214) uses the image of a 'black mirror', in which the Great Depression serves economists and financial journalists of today as a canvas to reflect, or rather, produce the 'truth of capitalist history' and legitimate their stance on the economic crisis today (see also Crafts & Fearon 2010). Here I suggest a relationship between the "discovery" of long-term unemployment and demoralization in the interwar period and the later invention of the economic

⁷⁰ This phrase is borrowed from Webster (2005).

concept of “hysteresis” that points to a solution for unemployment in supply-side policies and eventually finds expression in the welfare-to-work policy agenda, discussed in the next chapter.

In the 1980s, another period of mass unemployment across Europe spawned a literature that developed theories of unemployment, and in particular long-term unemployment. It invoked the experience of the 1930s as a comparator and the “insider” protection of excessive labour market regulation and high wages for those in work as an impediment to reducing unemployment for “outsiders” out of work (Blanchard & Summers 1986; Lindbeck & Snower 1984, 1988; Holmlund 1991).⁷¹ This can be seen as another instance, though through narrower economic argumentation, of how labour is compelled to bear the burden of adjustment to alleviate unemployment.

These developments in economic thought were a response to a wave of macroeconomic approaches to the labour market underpinned by certain microeconomic assumptions of individual behaviour (Sargent & Wallace 1975; Lucas & Sargent 1981) and indebted to various (anti-Keynesian) neoclassical understandings of the economy, such as Friedman (1968), which essentially said that government action to combat unemployment was/is ineffective. Some even argued that the insurance and assistance schemes of the interwar era were the reason for higher unemployment, citing neoclassical economists of the time such as Cannan, discussed in Chapter One, to justify their case (Benjamin & Kochin 1979: 468-469).

⁷¹ ‘... a fundamental asymmetry in the wage-setting process between insiders who are employed and outsiders who want jobs’ (Blanchard & Summers 1986: 16).

This was the start of an era of economic thought in which a certain amount of unemployment was to be tolerated as a natural state of affairs. Among the micro-macro assumptions mentioned above was '[t]he construction of the macro-economy as a general equilibrium', which 'rationalised the notion of the natural rate of unemployment, that level of joblessness that is warranted even where the market is working "ideally"' (Fine 1998: 36). These theories of the natural rate of unemployment then reasoned away persistently higher levels of unemployment that had plagued Europe with the idea of a 'moving natural rate' explained by short-run market imperfections (Fine 1998: 39; see Layard & Bean 1989).

When persistently high levels of unemployment could not be explained away by appeal to a natural rate, economists built upon insider-outsider theory and generated the idea of "hysteresis" (Blanchard & Summers 1986; Layard et al 1991; Nickell 1988; Nickell & Wadhvani 1990). Hysteresis, in essence, is the idea that higher levels of unemployment tend to persist once established, and more specifically 'that an increase in unemployment produces an increase in long-term unemployment which is not simply reversible by an increase in demand for labour' (Webster 2005: 975).

Economists appropriated the idea of demoralization from the 1930s – reading it in their "black mirror" as hysteresis – for a new era in which unemployment blighted people's lives, with "debilitating" effects; but also used it as an explanation for a 'natural rate' of unemployment: '[p]eople are changed by the experience of unemployment and so is the natural rate (Cross 1987: 84). Rod Cross even adopted his metaphors from the Pilgrim Trust's 1938 report on the unemployed to explain hysteresis:

... shocks to the actual rate of unemployment are accompanied by changes in the number of people who experience the debilitating effects of long spells of unemployment, thus changing the characteristics of the stock of people who constitute the labour force. *People cannot be placed in cold storage should they become unemployed for long spells.* Rather, they experience an actual or perceived decline in their productivity or capacity to work. Byegones are not byegones.

(Cross 1987: 86, emphasis added)⁷²

The result of hysteresis is that unemployed people, and especially the long-term unemployed, must be activated through various supply-side means (kept warm as the cold storage metaphor goes?) so that they might return to work. This is an analysis that is directly taken up in the policy agenda internationally (OECD 1994, 1996; see also Triantafillou 2011). The generosity of benefit levels is taken into account as one motivating factor for the persistence of unemployment: '[u]nemployment benefits are a subsidy to idleness, and it should not be surprising if they lead to an increase in idleness' (Layard 1997: 334). Benefit conditionality changes, a focus on employability and activation, and increasing use of work schemes – all of which we come to know of as “workfare” – is the eventual outcome of this trend in economic thought (Webster 2005: 990).

⁷² The original passage from the Pilgrim Trust report reads '[u]nemployed men are not simply units of employability who can, through the medium of the dole, be put into cold storage, and taken out immediately when they are needed. While they are in cold storage, things are liable to happen to them' (Pilgrim Trust 1938: 67). Curiously, 'byegones are not byegones' is almost certainly a reference to Jevons. In rejecting the classical argument that cost determines value, he contended that '*labour once spent has no influence on the future value of any article: it is gone and lost forever. In commerce byegones are for ever byegones; and we are always starting clear at each moment, judging the values of things with a view to future utility*' (Jevons [1911] 2013: 164, emphasis original).

From Political to Literary Representation

The next part of the Chapter moves to looking at literary representations of the unemployed. It should not be considered a leap away from the other perspectives looked at in the previous chapters, or the politics of the unemployed explored above. How the unemployed are represented figuratively, how their living conditions are described and their behaviour analysed matters a great deal for the Social Question in both the liberal and neoliberal period. We considered how Booth mapped the moral and social geography of London in the previous chapter, and in a sense Orwell is doing no different for the areas of the North of England he is documenting. Indeed several of the perspectives surveyed portray representative figures and/or scenery to advance their understandings of poverty and unemployment: the calculating man and the infantile savage in Jevons' theory of the labour supply; the "unemployable" of London's slums for Booth; the "casual loafer" for Llewellyn Smith.

And in this chapter so far, we have considered how the NUWM asserted the existence of involuntary unemployment through political organisation, evoking it in part through narratives of resistance. Similarly, we will see below how Orwell asserts the existence of involuntary unemployment through ironic exposure of middle-class prejudice, as well as through documenting the lives of the unemployed themselves. The addition of a literary perspective should not appear as the "odd one out" among the historical perspectives. Looking at the social divisions between classes, between North and South, between working-class figures Orwell admires and those who revolt him, allows us to get a sense of how the interwar Social Question was represented popularly. It allows us to understand the different tools and themes used to make sense of poverty and unemployment,

and how they might be connected to stigmatizing representations; or it can open up counter-narratives to such representations, through puncturing the vision of poverty and unemployment belonging to those comfortably unaware of its toll.

Part Two: Literary Representations of the Unemployed

This part of the chapter explores the experiences of unemployment through literary works, concentrating on Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* ([1937] 1962). As has already been noted, the representation of poverty and unemployment in media scandals was an important cause of elite and public anxiety over these issues. Andrew Mearns' (1883) *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* sensationalized metropolitan destitution and its associated ills. Although, as we saw in Chapter Three, the push from the 1880s onwards was for a more accurate picture and statistical mapping and understanding of poverty and unemployment, literary representations continued to play a part in representing and framing the Social Question. These literary representations were how the reading public came to "know" the unemployed, and the areas experiencing urban poverty.

The genre of social explorer literature is especially important in this regard, in that it could convey powerful images of the "unknown" worlds of, say, the East End of London or the industrial slums of Salford and Wigan. Representations of the poor, working-class and unemployed people are themselves important for how they can portray people as dependent, demoralized and quiescent or active and rebellious (as in *Out of Work*, above); these representations are politically contested in literary representations (see Fox 1994) as much as they are in other fields such as sociology (e.g. Cole 2008; Tyler 2013; McKenzie 2015; Skeggs 1997,

2004, 2005), social policy (Dean 2012; Wright 2015; Hills 2015) and history (Macnicol 1987; Bagguley 1998; Bagguley & Mann 1992; Welshman 2013).

Origins of the Social Explorer

The origins of social explorer literature can be seen as a response to the Social Question as it is posed from the 1830s onwards. In response to Thomas Carlyle's (2010 [1831]: 13) question 'What is the actual condition of Society?' and Disraeli's (1845: 149) worrying proposition of 'Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets', comes the mission of willing adventurers to know how the mass of people live and work. The social explorer genre is, as Keating notes, a particular though pervasive branch of modern literature, 'in which a representative of one class consciously sets out to explore, analyse, and report upon, the life of another class lower on the social scale than his own: the reverse procedure being, of course, not really possible, except in satire' (Keating 1976: 13). These explorations have shaped how the unemployed are represented, how they are thought about and the kinds of solutions that are posed for dealing with them.

Although the anxieties of two nations alien to one another are present in Carlyle and Disraeli, social explorer literature appears to owe as much to the 'reforming texts' of the 1830s and 1840s such as Chadwick's 1842 report on the 'sanitary conditions of the labouring population', which sold 10,000 copies on publication (Stallybrass & White 1986: 125). Social explorers adopt the style of scientific investigation, but often interspersed their texts with emotive techniques such as the 'vivid brief vignette' (Keating 1976: 23), building a narrative that

claims rigour and incites fascination and horror all at once. Keating even argues for seeing Charles Booth's (1902) *Life and Labour* as part of the genre and claims that the language of twentieth-century exploration is fundamentally influenced by professional sociology (1976: 27).⁷³ Thus, while the genre can claim motivations that originate with the social novels of the mid-nineteenth century, in its late nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms it is often documentary in style. In this part of the chapter, we explore some of the tools and themes of the social explorer genre from the late-nineteenth century and how it manifests itself in the work of George Orwell in the interwar period.

The genre has a long and diverse lineage, and as such it is difficult to pin down any essence to exploratory writings. Just as we have seen from previous chapters there were a multitude of reasons for which the unknown worlds of poverty were rendered known, serving diverse political agendas and pointing to practical solutions for dealing with the problems revealed. Undoubtedly, the majority of social explorer literature was intended for a middle-class readership. Yet how the explorer related to his (and it was almost always a man) readers varied. The founder of the Salvation Army, the Methodist preacher 'General' William Booth, presented *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), as its title suggests, to advocate for the philanthropic and social work that his organization had begun to provide in the 1880s.⁷⁴ Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (2001 [1903]), on the

⁷³ 'The imagination of the exotic explorer is needed as much as ever, even in one sense a great deal more, but he is no longer the courageous, death-defying individual, but the leader of a team of professional experts who know how to catalogue, estimate, and quantify everything from the amount of food it takes to keep a workman working to the number of times in a year that he or his wife visits the public library' (Keating 1976: 27).

⁷⁴ I employ the term 'presented' here as acknowledgement of the fact that it is rumored, with good evidence, that W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 1883-1889, was the real author of *In Darkest England* (Valverde 1996: 508 fn5). Stead himself had written social explorer pieces that emphasized sexual danger in metropolitan life, whipping up public outcry and moral panic. As Walkowitz argues

other hand, formed part of a literary career, not absent of self-promotion, which served to champion a socialist cause against the metropolitan horrors of industrial capitalism. Issues of representing the poor and unemployed, as we saw above, had important political and economic consequences. Might it be the case that the leading elements of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the 1920s and 1930s were only able to engage with working-class demands through social explorer-type lenses, in a way that divorced them from the demands of the NUWM and other groups?

What we can do to begin making sense of this genre, before looking at Orwell and his text, is to look into *how* the social explorer wrote, and to investigate certain themes as they emerge in and across texts, asking what exactly it is these themes are doing.

The Jungle and Travelling "As the Poor"

The obvious theme that the genre adopts is that of exploration, but exploration of what? A common trope is that adventures were made into unknown territory, sometimes cast as an urban 'jungle'. In the opening pages of William Booth's *In Darkest England* we learn that the mission has direct parallels with Stanley's journeys to 'Darkest Africa', published that same year:

As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England? ... May we not find a parallel at our own doors, and discover within a stone's throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest?

(Booth 1890: 11)

though, his journalism also made way for women to assert their own narratives in the public domain in opposition to elite male discourse (Walkowitz 1992).

The jungle is an important image for social explorers and has an important role in motivating reactions of horror and intrigue in the Victorian public. It drew on a particular colonial imagination, and reflected quite directly some of the techniques and images of colonial accounts to develop knowledge of slum conditions. Valverde (1996) understands this as a “dialectic of the familiar and the unfamiliar” that needs to be understood as more than general, shared, racial or sexist stereotypes. It is a ‘traffic of metaphors’, in which

... unexamined ‘commonsense’ views about familiar situations are used to produce ‘knowledge’ about some unfamiliar topic, a knowledge which is then imported back into the more ‘familiar’ arena from which it came in order to provide it with scientific authorisation.

(Valverde 1996: 494)

Urban cartographers and social investigators appropriated quite specific images and devices to justify and extol the importance of their own endeavours. The two-way traffic was thus *productive* of new social knowledge and understanding, yet based on “commonsense” views of the Other (whether the colonial subject or slum-dweller). This commonsense is arguably as much present in Jevons’ portrayal of infantile savages without a sense of the future explored in Chapter Two, which facilitate his explanations for the ideal logical, calculating man. The colonial Other thus acts as a crutch for explanations of the mind, economic behaviour and social progress.

As discussed in Chapter Three, mapping was a device employed by both colonizing states and urban social investigators. In social explorer literature we see a focus on mapping the terrain but it forms through *lurid* descriptions of the city or

slum environment as squalid. As Valverde points out, there is a mixing of the scientific and ‘moralistic philanthropic descriptions’ in this discourse, ‘ascribing to places human features such as deviance and vice. The moral character of buildings, determined by scientific methods such as measuring the amount of air in a room or the number of windows in a house, and usually aggregated to form the “character” of a street, then haunts and stigmatises the inhabitants’ (Valverde 1996: 497). These moral accounts of place are related to, though distantly, the more contemporary ‘territorial stigmatization’ of today, in which labels such as ‘sink estate’ assign immorality, criminality and degradation to urban areas considered autonomous from the nation (Wacquant, Slater & Pereira 2014: 1273; see also McKenzie 2015).

In narrating prevailing social problems, it is remarkable how vividly particular, isolated sites can contain the personal tale or transformative experience of the social explorer as well as capture the public imagination; in other words, these are *social* narratives. Critical social policy has increasingly pointed to how dependency narratives are themselves linked to very particular geographies marked by urban disinvestment (Mooney 2009; Gray & Mooney 2011). This mixture of scientific and moralistic language and moral mapping and representation of place is also present within the lives and works of the early English neoclassical economists, as explored in Chapter Two; Jevons piqued his social conscience at an early age with walks through working-class neighbourhoods in England and Australia, even penning an anonymous commentary that conveyed stagnation in the ‘Social cesspools’ of Sydney (Jevons in Peart 1996: 3). It was, of course, integral to the mapping exercises of Booth and the COS mission to transform working-class domestic practice as discussed in Chapter Three as well.

In regards to *how* social exploration is conducted, another prominent theme is “going undercover” among the poor. Social explorers sought to pass as one of the poor by living “as they did”, temporarily, in a tradition exemplified by Orwell and Jack London but that stretches back at least as far as James Greenwood, the ‘amateur casual’, who spent a night in a workhouse and published the results in 1866 (Keating 1976: 16). In part it was a strategy to heighten the intrigue and scandal for newspaper copy and book sales. Yet it could also serve as a way of reflecting more readily on one’s own class prejudice,⁷⁵ to an extent that sometimes tips into the search for absolution. Here is Keating on Charles Masterman, who was a social explorer and journalist turned Liberal politician, and a man close to the Liberal reforms of the Edwardian era:

Masterman’s exploration was as much inwards as outwards, laying naked of his own guilty conscience against which the demands and values of working-class life could be constantly tested. Out of this self-probing there develops the desire not simply to visit the poor in disguise, but to effect a cultural transformation, shedding the trappings of the middle-class in order to adopt those of the workers.

(Keating 1976: 29)

As we shall see, this is a passage that could have very easily been written of Orwell. And in the latter’s case the desire for transformation, despite working alongside miners and staying in lodging-houses, proves futile. But the space between the Othering gaze of the social explorer and a working-class perspective

⁷⁵ ‘No sooner was I out on the streets than I was impressed by the difference in status effected by my clothes. All servility vanished from the demeanour of the common people with whom I came in contact. Presto! In the twinkling of an eye, so to say, I had become one of them’ (London 2001 [1903]: 6).

is also ambiguous. It is interesting to note in this regard that Upton Sinclair, who came from a mixed background of riches and poverty, used the image of the jungle for a novel of the same name to effect reform in the meat-packing factories of Chicago (Sinclair 1906).

The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell and Historicity

*The Road to Wigan Pier*⁷⁶ (Orwell [1937] 1962) is commonly considered a historical document of its time and is referred to not as fiction but as a mix of social reportage on work and living conditions and commentary on class relations and socialism. These two elements of the text are quite distinct, and most of the historical interest has been in the former, with the latter half attracting widespread controversy on publication (see Box 4.2). Yet Pearce, who has held an interest in the historicity of Orwell's work (Pearce 1992, 1997), has revealed through comparisons between the text of the published book and Orwell's diaries the stark inconsistencies and questionable accuracy present in "Part One" of the book. The questions of historicity and fictional portrayal in the book extend from minor inaccuracies concerning the reports on wages and expenses of working-class households to embellishment of the encounters he had with working-class people and their environment. Even the stretch of time that Orwell spent "on the road" appears misleading; instead of 'some months', it was likely around seven weeks (Pearce 1997: 418).

Pearce's judgement is harsh, but convincing: '[Orwell] came up with an exaggerated and fictionalized version of the worst conditions in Wigan and then, perversely, described them as typical' (1997: 417). The result is that Pearce finds

⁷⁶ Hereafter, *Wigan Pier*.

the second half of the book, dedicated to an autobiographical account of the class prejudices Orwell was taught growing up in a 'lower-upper-middle-class' family ('the lower classes smell' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 112)) and the diatribe against bourgeois socialists of various kinds, the more honest representation. Of course, he maintains, this does not mean that the book holds no historical value, but rather it implies we must be aware of such inconsistencies if we are seeking a historically accurate account.

Box 4.2 The Road to Wigan Pier (1937) by George Orwell

George Orwell (1903-1950), real name Eric Arthur Blair, composed The Road to Wigan Pier from his diary entries, recorded during his travels across the North of England. This was a period of continuing mass unemployment across the industrial areas of the North and Orwell set out to document the living and working conditions in various towns and cities, including Sheffield, Barnsley and, of course, Wigan.

The book is a text of two halves: Part One focuses on Orwell's travels across Yorkshire and Lancashire, and the work and housing of coal miners; Part Two presents an autobiographical account of 'class relations' (106) and class prejudice, and gives a commentary on Orwell's encounter with socialism and socialists of various ilk. Critical reviews of the book focused on its second half, in which Orwell variously denounces vegetarians, feminists, 'fruit-juice drinker[s]', pacifists, and so on (152). Even Victor Gollancz, who commissioned and published the work, and contributed a preface, distanced himself from its more controversial opinions.

Despite this The Road to Wigan Pier 'made Orwell's name' as an author and sold nearly 40,000 copies, 'four times more than his previous four books combined' (Pearce 1997: 410-11).

It is evident that, aside the more obvious gross embellishments, such as the opening scenes of the book set in the Brookers' house, which we will come to shortly, Orwell recognized the worth of *Wigan Pier* as a documentary source. Midway through his detailing of housing conditions – size of rooms, rent, toilet facilities, “good” or “bad” landlord – he draws a knowing aside:

... mere notes like these are only valuable as reminders to myself ... they cannot in themselves give much idea of what conditions are like in those fearful northern slums. Words are such feeble things. What is the use of a brief phrase like ‘roof leaks’ or ‘four beds for eight people’? It is the kind of thing your eye slides over, registering nothing. And yet what a wealth of misery it can cover!

(Orwell [1937] 1962: 50)

The honest tone and humble stance betrays an obvious recognition that words, indeed these words, are anything but feeble. They are a direct challenge to a middle-class readership to pay attention, and an acknowledgement of the power of the documentary style to illustrate the dramatic extent of poverty. And if as a repeated wake-up call to middle-class conscience, on the next page Orwell notes the rumoured danger of working-class inbreeding.⁷⁷ Such a relationship between shocking portraits or vignettes of poverty, and a statistical record of private life, is typical of the social explorer genre.

The analysis of historicity in *Wigan Pier*, though, can also provide an interesting set of prompts for seeing the text as historical-literary reportage. In particular, it points us to the role of figuration in the historical imagination, and

⁷⁷ ‘... you cannot let adolescent youths and girls sleep in the same bed’ (51).

construction, of working-class life and unemployment (see Skeggs 1997, 2004, 2005; Tyler 2008, 2013). Of his objectives for the travels across Lancashire and Yorkshire, Orwell explicitly states 'I went there partly because I wanted to see what mass-unemployment is like at its worst, partly in order to see the most typical section of the English working class at close quarters' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 106). As standard of social explorer literature, we get a telling of unemployment and its effect *through* investigation of the intimate spaces of everyday working-class life, which is then rendered "typical". Important in Orwell's texts are the various figures – idealized, repugnant – that develop a picture of unemployed behaviour and unemployed life.

It is worth conceding that, to Orwell's middle-class contemporaries, certainly in southern Britain, mass unemployment would have seemed like something of a foreign concept. Regional estimates for unemployment show that in the interwar period (from 1923-38) London, the south of Britain generally and the Midlands endured rates of unemployment below the national average; in the south, insured unemployment went from a pre-depression rate of 6.4% in 1929 to 14.9% in 1932 and back to 7.9% in 1936, when Orwell was writing *Wigan Pier* (Garside 1990: 9-10). The aggregate rate in the north east, north west, Scotland and Wales, by contrast, began at 14.6% in 1929 climbed to 29.6% in 1932 and fell only to 20.5% by 1936 (calculated from Garside 1990: 10). '[W]hat contemporaries came to describe as "Outer Britain",' writes Garside (1990: 9), 'bore the heaviest burden of registered unemployment, and to considerably more than a marginal degree.'

'To study unemployment and its effects', wrote Orwell, 'you have got to go to the industrial areas. In the South unemployment exists, but it is scattered and queerly unobtrusive' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 75). This unobtrusiveness may have

been a reflection of the types of casual labour markets in London still thriving at this time, which to those not looking would not have revealed a problem of unemployment (see Whiteside & Gillespie 1991). The consequence is that the defining image of unemployment we get from the interwar period is the mass of long-term unemployed in staple industries of the North, rather than the casualized labourer of the tailoring workshops of London.⁷⁸

Working-Class Figures on the Road to Wigan

Of the prominent figures that are worth highlighting in *Wigan Pier*, here I will note the “disgusting” Mr and Mrs Brooker of the opening scenes and the “noble” figure of the coal miner.

Mr and Mrs Brooker occupy a prominent role in *Wigan Pier*'s opening scenes that are imbued with a ‘Dickensian accumulation of detail’ (Hammond cited in Pearce 1997: 416). The owners of a tripe shop above which Orwell lodges, Mrs Brooker appears ‘permanently ill ... I suspect that her only real trouble was over-eating’, while Mr Brooker ‘was a dark, small-boned, sour, Irish-looking man, and astonishingly dirty. I don’t think I ever once saw his hands clean’ (Orwell [1937] 1962: 6-7). Through details of Mr Brooker’s black hands tainting everything, including the meals served, and Mrs Brooker’s foul habits and noted immobility – she does not move from the sofa – and the both of them likened to ‘blackbeetles’, a revolting scene ‘of stagnant meaningless decay’ is constructed (15). The significance of this scene is that it is considered representative: people like the Brookers ‘exist in tens and hundreds of thousands; they are one of the

⁷⁸ Even Beveridge (1930: 353) was forced to admit in 1930, in Hubert Llewellyn Smith’s Booth-inspired volume *New Survey of London Life and Labour* that ‘in London today unemployment is much the same in type and in volume as it was a generation ago.’

characteristic by-products of the modern world' (15). The embellishment of disgust is no doubt designed to draw the reader in, but results in a wider representation of working-class people as revolting.

In a now unsurprising twist, Pearce (1997: 416-17) reveals that Orwell has exaggerated or conjured up certain details of his time at the tripe shop, including his hasty departure from these hellish scenes. But the 'subterranean place' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 15) speaks to a metaphor of a sunken and stagnant world inhabited by infantile people common to other social explorer literature. Later, colonial comparisons creep in to familiarize and legitimize the poverty of the scenery elsewhere in the North, *pace* Valverde (1996), when the fixed 'caravan-dwellings' are likened to 'the filthy kennels in which I have seen Indian coolies living in Burma' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 54). Some of these portraits of dirtiness and repulsive smells in working-class homes echo representations of the "problem family" which emerges in the 1940s (Macnicol 1987) and most recently of "troubled families" whose dirty and chaotic households are associated with a loss of control and responsibility over their lives (Crossley 2015; Welshman 2013: 213).⁷⁹ The associations with dirt are mitigated in *Wigan Pier*, at least, by an appeal for more and better housing.

Another prominent representative figure that emerges in the book is that of the coal miner. The miner's working day, washing habits, rates of pay and risks of industrial accident or disease are all covered in *Wigan Pier*. Special mention is made of the work done in the pits and how it is 'the absolutely necessary

⁷⁹ Orwell states that, while 'the squalor of these people's houses is sometimes their own fault ... a woman is only a poor drudge muddling among an infinity of jobs' and can hardly be expected to keep up 'standards of cleanliness and tidiness' ([1937] 1962: 52-3).

counterpart of our world above' (29). Although it is only one of many industries in and around the cities Orwell covers – passing reference is made to the iron works in Sheffield and the pottery towns (96) – coal mining takes on a representative role for manual labour in general (31).

The attention paid to the miner in the text, and to the figure of the miner, is the subject of Clarke's (2008) reading of *Wigan Pier* (see also Breton 2005: 157-162). Through admiration of the miners' 'noble bodies', hard work and sense of community, Orwell constructs an image of them as the archetypal exploited proletarian, who endures great hardship down the pits but also promises the potential for a political alternative (Clarke 2008: 427). Orwell, as Eagleton (2003) has noted, shared with Raymond Williams a kind of English radical moralism which rejected the ruptural revolutionary vision and held to the idea that '[t]he socialist future is not just a nebulous utopian ideal, but is in some sense immanent in the present, and would not be valid if it were not.'

He admired the English working classes' 'wonderful talent for organization' exemplified by the NUWM, trade unions and working-men's clubs, but emphasized their lack of 'capacity for leadership' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 75). Of the first of these he noted:

By far the best work for the unemployed is being done by the N.U.W.M. ... This is a revolutionary organization intended to hold the unemployed together, stop them blacklegging during strikes, and give them legal advice against the Means Test. It is a movement that has been built out of nothing by the pennies and efforts of the unemployed themselves ... I greatly admire the men, ragged and underfed like the others, who keep the organization going.

(Orwell [1937] 1962: 75-76)

A much greater object of Orwell's attention though is the figure of the coalminer. Part of the effect of how Orwell adopts the miners as representative proletarians also serves to eclipse other forms of labour both in the labour market and in the home, and endows work with intrinsic value. Clarke (2008) and earlier Campbell (1984: 222) have pointed to how the gendered division of labour is largely overlooked in *Wigan Pier*, in favour of a heavily masculinized glorification of work and a certain idealization of the "perfect symmetry" of the working-class home when the Father is in work.⁸⁰ This glorification of work resurfaces in Part Two in passages on the dangers of 'mechanical progress' and fears of men going soft or losing all purpose if they are liberated from work and effort by machinery (Orwell [1937] 1962: 172-3, 176), a worry that was similarly put forward to justify the work camps mentioned above.⁸¹ These passages also indicate what Breton has identified as a Victorian 'Gospel of Work' that Orwell shares with figures such as Thomas Carlyle and Joseph Conrad, which combines an idealistic, pre-capitalist moral imperative to work with a pragmatic stance on modern working conditions that might call for fairer wages or better regulation, but that accepts the confines of argument set by a liberal market economy (Breton 2005: 6).

As McKibbin points out, in areas dominated by "staple" industries 'the culture of work and the workplace was peculiarly intense' and loss of work did indeed

⁸⁰ Orwell acknowledges the continuing patriarchal dominance within the working-class home, and the fear that men would lose their manhood if made to do household chores (Orwell [1937] 1962: 73). Not touched upon though is the role of women in the economy or the work of social reproduction. His is an eternally androcentric world; in lamenting the physical degeneracy of the working class, he pines for the 'monstrous men with chests like barrels' of a pre-World War I era (88).

⁸¹ Some years earlier, Keynes, in his 'Economic Prospects of Our Grandchildren' from 1930, the short piece in which he foretells a vastly reduced working week, echoed a similar sentiment to Orwell here. Keynes betrayed what Fleming interprets as a ruling class fear of a work-free world for the 'ordinary person ... [who] no longer has roots in the soil or in custom or in the beloved conventions of a traditional society' (Keynes in Fleming 2015: 20).

have a devastating impact on communities (McKibbin 1998: 151-2). But in emphasizing the psychological effects of unemployment – ‘that frightful feeling of impotence and despair ... far worse than any hardship’ (Orwell [1937] 1962: 77) – Orwell separates them out from the economic effects and maintains the Gospel of Work as salvation (Breton 2005: 165). Ignored, too, is how life out of work ‘had its own structure and routines which were for many as rigid as anything they knew in work’ (McKibbin 1998: 152). Orwell remarks on the everyday occurrence of women and men ‘scrambling for coal’ on the slag heaps at the head of coal pits for hours at a time (Orwell [1937] 1962: 91-3). Unlike other authors of the interwar period, however, he does not write about the routine and bureaucracy of the labour exchange, tramping around for job vacancies or, for women, the wait at the pawnshop. These everyday scenes are covered in detail in Walter Greenwood’s novel, *Love on the Dole* ([1933] 1993), and routine is built into the structure of Walter Brierley’s ([1935] 2011) *Means-Test Man*, which narrates a day per chapter in a week of unemployed life. These examples reveal the gap between the experiences of unemployment by an observing social explorer and by one who witnesses and narrates first-hand.

Class Prejudice and the Unemployed

Despite Orwell’s sensational portraits of working-class homes that betray his disgust with their smell and cleanliness, it can be argued that there is a subversive nature to his writings, especially in regard to his portrayal of unemployment and the class prejudices that surround it. Orwell’s epistemology is a thoroughgoing empiricism, which uses the ethnographic mission as a means to learn about another community and expose the hypocrisy of his own class prejudices. Observation without participation is a poor substitute for experience – at one point

speaking about his rejection of imperialism he states '[i]n order to hate imperialism you have got to be a part of it' (Orwell [1937] 1962: 126) – and the experience of living amongst the working class is an effective way of challenging oneself.⁸²

This approach similarly characterizes his *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Orwell [1933] 1979)⁸³, which describes his time disguised as a tramp, walking the streets and staying in casual wards alongside the homeless of London. On this count he deems himself successful in becoming temporarily one of the destitute, not least because he finds that there is no typical tramp whose role he must adopt, a story that he briefly re-narrates in *Wigan Pier* (Orwell [1937] 1962: 132-5). Yet, as opposed to the destitute, with the 'normal working class ... there is no short cut into their midst' (136). Orwell's efforts subsequently expose, to a greater degree, the foreign nature of the exploration. As mentioned above, he does not explore several common sites of unemployed routine and bureaucracy, whereas in *Down and Out* he visits the casual ward ('the spike'), the Salvation Army shelter and details all the available accommodation for the homeless in London (Orwell [1933] 1979: 128, 138, 184-6).

In its efforts at social explorer self-reflection, Rae (1999: 72) has gone so far as to label *Wigan Pier* 'an exercise in "modernist anthropology", a genre that ironizes the reactions of the fieldworker in order to foreground the difficulty of attaining an objective and genuinely sympathetic understanding of alien cultures.' Indeed, there are plenty of instances in Part Two of the book in which Orwell lampoons with irony the middle-class socialist who is never really willing, unlike himself, to

⁸² As Eagleton (2003) notes, working-class socialists are largely written out of *Wigan Pier*, to preserve the dichotomy that '[t]heory is middle-class, experience working-class.'

⁸³ Hereafter '*Down and Out*'.

confront the facts of their own class prejudices or their learnt disgust for working-class people (see especially Orwell [1937] 1962: 137-145). We might see this in line with the above section as an assault on socialism from above, from the vantage of one himself who comes “from above”.

The desire to confront class prejudices openly was also characteristic of ventures such as the Mass-Observation project of the late 1930s. Mass-Observation was an organization dedicated to documenting the everyday life of British working-class people and promised an ‘anthropology of ourselves’, in one survey seeking information from panellists ‘on the nexus of social attitudes and behaviour which make up the “class” complex’ (quotation from Mass-Observation directive, June 1939, cited in Hinton 2008: 207). This impulse for exposing prejudice shows us the need for counter-narratives (and the existence of those already available) that, while perhaps more effectively produced through working-class literature, remain a necessity for middle-class authors too (Fox 1994: 19).

In *Wigan Pier* these prejudices are frequently used productively, as weapons against middle-class ignorance. After a passage in which Orwell reveals his own shock at how official statistics understated the true level of unemployment, his surprise at the apparent shame associated with being unemployed, and the myth of generous dole payments, he quips that ‘even the middle classes – yes, even the bridge clubs in the country towns – are beginning to realize that there is such a thing as unemployment’ (Orwell [1937] 1962: 70-77). Later, he rails against the debates surrounding the Means Test, which displayed ‘a disgusting public wrangle about the minimum weekly sum on which a human being could keep alive’ (84). This is followed with the claim that it is perfectly understandable that unemployed people desire certain luxuries, such as sugary tea and white bread (86). The same

trope of unemployed “luxuries” that was integral to Hannington’s attack on the stigma of the “capitalist press”, above, remains significant to a defence of working-class consumption and felt inequalities today (see McKenzie 2015: 106-109).

Notable also is the manner in which Orwell punctures the paternalistic attitude towards the unemployed worker. In discussing what should be done for the unemployed, he reserves suspicion for the ‘occupational centres’ that provide them with occasional basic courses in carpentry and other crafts (74). Other socialists criticize them, he mentions, as ‘simply a device to keep the unemployed quiet and give them the illusion that something is being done for them.’ Furthermore, ‘there is a nasty Y.M.C.A. atmosphere about these places ... The unemployed men who frequent them are mostly of the cap-touching type – the type who tells you oilily that he is “Temperance” and votes Conservative’ (74). Ultimately, though, he is ‘torn both ways’ over the centres, seeing the worth of having the unemployed ‘waste his time even with such rubbish as sea-grass work [rather] than that for years upon end he should do absolutely *nothing*’ (74). It is a pragmatic stance that shuns any kind of structural analysis that threatens to question the organization of work under capitalism itself. Ultimately, Orwell expresses a support for the unemployed that is ambiguous, representing work simultaneously as a moral imperative and inherent good, while exposing the prejudices surrounding the existence of unemployment.

Conclusion

I want to conclude this chapter by making connections with more recent trends, in light of the move in the next chapter to contemporary perspectives on the Social Question.

The impetus for exploring class prejudice and the myths surrounding the welfare state remains today. In an age of permanent austerity and acute scrutiny of public finances the welfare state has come under renewed attack for supporting the supposedly profligate lives of those on benefits. Golding and Middleton once charted the long history of images of welfare and poverty in the media, remarking on the way in which the effect of mass media was to select and amplify specific messages (1982: 236-8). Since the recent financial crisis, images of welfare have been emphasized through the medium of reality television shows with titles such as *Benefits Street* and *We Pay All Your Benefits*. These programmes juxtapose “hard-working taxpayers” against those on benefits and investigate the private lives of the latter under the guise of exploring the welfare system in an open and honest manner. Despite being of a radically different era, the focus of social exploration in the medium of television explores similar spaces and themes to that of the earlier twentieth century – the home and its cleanliness, diet, the attitude of the long-term unemployed and the generosity of benefits.

Orwell reminds us of another era in which the exploration of class prejudices and representations of the poor and unemployed exploit a selective reading that on closer inspection reveals a representational gap between fiction and reality. It also forces us to think about how counter narratives can be framed that might relieve the stigma of poverty and unemployment today. A set of counter-literatures has emerged from critical social policy to denounce the types of TV shows mentioned above as “poverty porn”, stigma presented as entertainment (Skeggs 2005; Mooney 2011; Jensen 2014). Other counter-narratives aim to work methodically through how welfare “really works” as a means to challenge stigma. Hills (2015), for example, uses two imaginary families, one working class, one

middle class, and charts their household finances to expose the myths that there is a majority in society working hard and striving only to fund a workless minority of “shirkers”.

Economists who appropriated images and concepts from reflections of the demoralization of the long-term unemployed connect our intermittent history of neoclassical economic thought to a new era in which labour and the unemployed themselves are increasingly made to bear the burden of unemployment. Demoralization has its reflection in discourses of inactivity in the neoliberal era, which promote the idea that unemployed people must be “mobilized” and compelled to take a job whatever kind of job it is, or ‘even if the work is not ideal’ as Layard puts it (2004: 2). This forms part of the ideology of social integration through work in the British workfare regime that we will be exploring in the next chapter.

Finally, the NUWM reminds us of the role of working-class collective organization and activity in the history of the Social Question. In its own instance, the NUWM pushed “excessive” demands for rights for the unemployed beyond liberal government’s acceptability, and was betrayed by parliamentary Labour representation in doing so. Liberal thinkers such as Keynes were treading similar ground in the push for state intervention to boost employment, but this was held back by the intellectual, political and administrative impediments of the interwar era. Important too, was the NUWM’s construction of the unemployed claimant as a subject of rights through their everyday representative and legal work.

Today, if we look for them, we can see similar groups working to defend a liberal framework of rights and entitlements for the unemployed. *Boycott Workfare*

and *Disabled People Against Cuts* work to organize unemployed people and the sick and disabled, who are increasingly being compelled into work, through informing them of their rights to welfare and appealing to the law at various levels (Boycott Workfare 2015a). Yet they also push beyond this framework to demand that benefit sanctions, the successor to disqualification, and work test conditionality for acceptance of benefits are abolished (Boycott Workfare 2015b). The history of social welfare movements (see Annetts et al. 2009) reminds us that knowing the poor and unemployed from a perspective that exposes their own struggles, political and everyday, reveals to us starkly the often illiberal nature of welfare and relief. I finish with a quotation from Perry illustrating this in the context of the 1930s:

Their means of support – the system of unemployed provision – had developed into an alien bureaucratic machine with its form-filling, home visits, queuing, austere offices, language of bureaucratic euphemism and basic authoritarianism. With the genuinely seeking work clause, the anomaly regulations and the introduction of the Means Test, this regime became more miserly and punitive in response to the spectre of abuse and desire to make government economies.

(Perry 2000: 80)

Chapter Five

The Twenty-First Century Social Question: Workfare, Community and Character

Introduction

This chapter explores the last set of perspectives on poverty and unemployment, looking at the era of workfare in the UK. Where previously we have investigated unemployment as a problem of *liberal* government, here we look at it as a problem of *neoliberal* government. The intention is not to bring the long history of these perspectives simply up to date and draw together all the direct parallels we can make between the liberal and neoliberal eras. Rather, I wish to explore the idea of historical resonances between different eras in which the Social Question has been posed. The previous chapters have been selective historical interventions into how the social has been understood and represented in economics, social investigation, social work, social statistics and social literature as well as social movements such as the NUWM. Here we consider what the social looks like in the twenty-first century in regard to perspectives on poverty and unemployment, concentrating on “workfare”.

In the last five years or so it has become increasingly common for academics, journalists and other commentators to draw attention to parallels between the contemporary government of poverty and unemployment and earlier forms, often from the nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. Whiteside has noted how the triumph of neoliberal, flexible employment practices has generated a boom in casual and part-time work ‘reminiscent of the Victorian age’ (Whiteside 2015: 168). Furthermore, she notes, today’s heightened forms of surveillance and

close (moral) judgement of the unemployed, as well as the support of the casually employed through tax credits, mirrors the way in which casual labour supported by unemployment assistance and understandings of deservingness survived into the interwar period, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Inequalities of wealth and income have become a focus of attention as they continue to widen after the financial crisis, fuelling a post-crisis, crisis perception of socio-economic divides not witnessed in decades (Dorling 2014; Hills et al. 2013; Piketty 2014; Atkinson 2015). In understanding these divides, even the methods of mapping them spatially have been appropriated from the nineteenth century. In 2012, the BBC aired a television series produced together with the Open University called 'The Secret History of Our Streets' (Open University 2012). It told the story of six streets across London over a 120-year period, using Charles Booth's maps as both the point of departure and the standard against which to judge change. The series was striking for how it revealed enduring inequalities in London: '[t]oday wealth and poverty still exist cheek by jowl', one of the series' academic consultants commented (Blakely cited in Open University 2012).

Several episodes of the show, particularly those focused on the Caledonian Road in north London and Portland Road in Notting Hill, captured the effects of London's hyperinflationary property bubble. In the latter, residents of the social housing at one end of the street spoke of an invisible and impregnable barrier cutting across the street that divided them from the very visible wealth expressed in the multi-million pound properties just metres away. It was a stark reminder of how inequality of ownership – the major determinant of the political economy of the 1% vs. the 99% – has manifested itself with powerful effects in Britain (see Gamble 2015).

In relation to the welfare state and other social services, others have seen an inheritance of the pauper management practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the outsourcing of public service contracts for employment services, prisons, care homes, and so on to private companies (Seabrook 2013a, 2013b; Clement 2013: 124-125; Harris 2012a). Private providers profiteering from systems of assistance that seek to deter the sick, poor and unemployed from assistance or set them to menial work is read as a direct parallel to the sparse and localized pre-welfare state relief arrangements. Front pages of newspapers scream out with headlines like 'TORIES: BACK TO THE WORKHOUSE' (Daily Mirror, 30th September 2013) in reference to new workfare schemes contracted out to the private sector under the Coalition Government.

Sometimes politicians themselves have drawn parallels to the nineteenth century. In his first speech as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 2010, given to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), George Osborne talked of how embracing the market and cutting down the size of government would go hand-in-hand with the Coalition's 'Big Society' agenda. In reference to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, David Laws, and the Conservatives' Liberal Democrat coalition partners he said:

Just as we have looked to the future and reached back to our One Nation tradition, so they have looked to the future by reaching back to the inspiration of Gladstonian Liberalism.

(Osborne 2010)

Where Margaret Thatcher once claimed that there is “no such thing as society”, the Big Society agenda seeks to make society ‘bigger and stronger than ever before’ (Cabinet Office 2010). Indeed, at first glance, what we discover in the workfare era is a surprising proliferation of the social: social capital, the social economy, the Big Society, social investment, social impact bonds, and so on (see Dowling and Harvie 2014).

In this chapter, I want to explore how perspectives on the Social Question have played out in the workfare era in the UK, and particularly in the wake of the financial crisis. Some have questioned whether what we are witnessing is a ‘rediscovery of the social’ or simply a ‘rhetorical fig-leaf for neo-liberalism’ (Corbett & Walker 2013: 451; Sage 2012). Perhaps instead of this binary opposition we should be interested in how “the social” re-emerges in the neoliberal era, not just as a veil over free-market practices, but as a set of institutions, discourses, practices and techniques that regulate, reproduce and conduct particular subjects in various ways, sometimes crude, sometimes subtle.

We concentrate on how work has become the measure of society, and how the compulsion to work has become totalizing in its effects, drawing in the “non-employed” as well as the unemployed (Walters 1994). This compulsion has been deepened by the ever-harsher system of conditionality and sanctioning attached to the receipt of benefits, and by the development of what I call a “workfare industry” in the marketization of employment services. These policies have reinforced the effects of labour market discipline by attempting to make unemployment thoroughly less eligible than work and enacting a policy of discipline and deterrence in the sanctions regime. As well as this, recent policies have not only served to regulate the supply of precarious and flexible jobs (Berry 2014; Wiggan

2015), but also generated a market in the unemployed themselves for private providers through attaching value to employability and work placement services (Grover 2009).

We also focus on how labour market discipline has been complemented by different forms of pastoral power in workfare, which, at first sight, appear to contradict the disciplinary apparatus of workfare. This contradiction is read as the apparent opposition between an “ethic of care” expressed in personalized services for the unemployed and the disciplinary context of the workfare system. Pastoral power plays a role in workfare through the development of this increasingly individualized, personalized focus on the unemployed individual. It is present in the way that employment service providers talk about the unemployed, as well as in a host of employability, training, counselling and work placement activities that focus their attention on the development of an active welfare subject (Dean 1995; Wright 2015). These interventions, it is claimed, place an increasingly heavy individual psychological burden on the unemployed, as they become the targets of interventions that seek to change their behaviour and affect their attitude towards work.

The chapter focuses on this pastoral power in part through exploring the return of character in the twenty-first century Social Question. Under the Coalition, discourses of character have returned to explain a host of social problems, including unemployment, social immobility and inequality. The growing prominence of character education and the intensification and widening of behaviour change policies targeting unemployed people are taken as two examples of how character forms an element of social control in the twenty-first century (see Harrison & Hemingway 2014; Dwyer 2004; Rodger 2012).

What appears to have emerged under New Labour, and developed even more under the Coalition, is the resurgence of a re-moralized social landscape alongside a punitive and disciplinarian administration of unemployment. Unemployment is represented as a problem of individual responsibility and its solution given as social (re)integration through paid work or unpaid work masquerading as volunteering. The chapter demonstrates how different forms of social control – from discipline and deterrence to pastoral power – operate under workfare and how character continues to be a salient issue in the twenty-first century.

The chapter begins by tracing a brief history of workfare in the UK and how it has been understood theoretically. Concentration falls on developments after 2007, when then adviser to the Labour Party David Freud published his report on welfare-to-work recommending the mass contracting out of employment services to the private sector (Freud 2007).⁸⁴ The argument is advanced that the Marxist regulation school approach is suited to analysing what I call the development of a workfare industry. This is the deepening of a workfare regime through the growth of an increasingly marketized provision of employment and employability services through government contracting-out. I propose that the workfare industry has grown within a disciplinary workfare regime that commodifies, and even re-commodifies unemployed people.

However, there is a contradiction between the disciplinary logic of workfare, underpinned by increasing conditionality and sanctions, and a pastoral logic that professes to care for “hard-to-help” and excluded groups among the

⁸⁴ Freud is now a Conservative Party peer and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

unemployed. Part Two of the chapter explores these apparently contradictory logics. Here it is argued that the pastoral logic is best understood using a Foucauldian approach that focuses on the different discourses, techniques and practices that constitute the unemployed subject.

Part Three explores the role that character has come to play within this pastoral logic of workfare, as well as more broadly in discourses of social mobility under the Coalition (2010-2015) and Conservative Governments (2015-) through character education. This part also considers how the Social Question in the workfare era has been characterized by ideas of social exclusion under New Labour and a broken society under the Coalition that draw on older concepts of underclass thinking. These ideas have legitimated the illiberal interventions of behaviour change techniques, giving succour to the idea of social control today.

Part One: The Development of a Workfare Industry: A Market in the Unemployed

Workfare in the UK: An Historical Overview

In this chapter we look at how unemployment came to be represented as a problem of "activation" to which workfare policies are the answer, and the terrain of the social on which a workfare regime has evolved more recently. Because the focus will be on the post-2007 period, it is worth briefly charting the evolution of workfare to this point.

If we search for the early origins of workfare in the UK, and interpret the lineage of ideas associated with it, we might begin with the 'creeping compulsion'

of the Conservatives' 'Restart', 'Employment Training' and youth training schemes in the 1980s (Peck 2001: 264-267). This has been discussed in the literature on workfare as a transition from counter-cyclical, demand-side training policies (with elements of tripartite organization) designed to provide temporary employment opportunities, to supply-side, 'work-oriented', 'employability' schemes for the young and long-term unemployed incorporating stricter conditionality (Standing 1990; King 1995: 131-133, 150-151; Robertson 1986; Finn 1987).

From a Marxist, regulation school approach, it was understood as part of a shift to a new "accumulation regime" in which, as mentioned in the theoretical discussion in the Introduction, flexible labour was coupled and co-evolved with workfare policies (Jessop 1993, 2002; Theodore & Peck 2000b; Grover & Stewart 1999). This was reflected, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, in the developments in economics of theories of unemployment that pointed to solutions in supply-side interventions that activated the unemployed through employability and flexible employment practices. These theories were also propounded at the international level by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and translated into a policy agenda for governments to implement (see OECD 1994, 1996) that emphasized the need to maintain a globally competitive workforce (see Triantafillou 2011; Lewis 2009).

A second "phase of workfarism" is considered to have begun in the early to mid-1990s as Conservative and Labour politicians discussed the need to "modernize" the welfare system and considered the merits of a US-style active labour market philosophy (Peck 2001: 274-278; Powell 2008).⁸⁵ Rhetoric about

⁸⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the term 'workfare' was in use as far back as 1969 by US President Richard Nixon: 'what America needs now is not more welfare but more 'workfare'' (Nixon in OED 2015). Peck (2001: 84) points out that its more widespread

unemployed people and benefit claimants at this time illustrated an imported discourse from America that railed against the evils of “dependency” and called for a more conditional system of benefit provision (Deacon 2000; Fraser & Gordon 1994; Smiley 2001). In October 1996 the existing unemployment benefits regime was replaced with the Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), designed to tackle the apparent “unemployment trap”, set by the allure of benefits, through stricter eligibility and more means-testing. Most significantly, though, it also enforced a strong requirement for “jobseekers” to provide evidence that they were *actively* seeking work (Petrongolo 2008; Peck 2001: 282). This was preceded by reforms to disability benefits in 1995, which also reduced eligibility and reconfigured the new Incapacity Benefit towards getting people into any work they could perform (Hyde 2000).⁸⁶

Soon after its election to office in 1997, New Labour introduced the first large-scale set of workfare programmes with its various “New Deal” schemes for young people, lone parents, the long-term unemployed and disabled people. To take the most prominent of the programmes, the New Deal for Young People (NDYP), this consisted of requiring unemployed people between eighteen and twenty-five who were still claiming benefits after six months to take one of four options: a subsidized job placement; a volunteering placement; a placement on the Environmental Task Force; or education and training placements.⁸⁷ The New Deal

use in America began in the early 1980s during the Reagan administration and that it became a ‘keyword’ in the 1990s, when it started to gain international appeal.

⁸⁶ The new ‘Incapacity Benefit’ introduced in 1995 altered the qualifying ‘work test’ for disability benefit from one that would consider non-medical factors such as prior skills and experience to an ‘all work test’ ‘concerned exclusively with the ‘functional capacity’ to perform work tasks’ (Hyde 2000: 329).

⁸⁷ It is indicative of the trend in UK workfare policies that there have been recent pilot schemes that require young unemployed people who have not been in at least six months of paid employment since leaving full-time education to take up mandatory unpaid work experience placements for thirteen weeks from ‘Day One’ of claiming (DWP 2014a).

also introduced a focus on (mandatory) personalized and individual counselling and careers advice for jobseekers to identify what was needed to get them back to work. This made unemployed people's attitude and motivations towards work the object of policy (Theodore & Peck 2000a; Walters 2000: 122). Administrative and departmental reform in 2001-2002, when the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was created, and the Employment Service and Benefits Agency were brought together in one place – the Jobcentre Plus (JCP) – would facilitate more efficiently the conditional attachment of social security to finding work and working on one's employability (Wiggan 2007).

Under the New Deal a new objective for policy was fashioned in the problem of “non-employment”. It signalled efforts at an “active society” in which ‘[i]ntegration (or reintegration) into paid work is the proper path not just for the unemployed, but for a range of identities previously constituted and provided for as the ‘non-employed’ – mothers, students, people with disabilities, the partners of the unemployed’ (Walters 2000: 129). Work becomes the measure of society, and “worklessness” among an inactive population is taken as illustrative of their being “outside society”. This glorification of work was echoed in the move to discourses of “social exclusion”, which drew at different times on “moral underclass” conceptions of the socially excluded and their delinquent behaviour and “social integrationist” ideas about integration through paid work (Levitas 2005: Chapter 1).

In a sense, work as the measure of society is an idea that has run through much of the thesis. However, there are important distinctions to be made when discussing the content of this idea in the neoliberal era. Attempts to construct “normal employment” and the genuinely unemployed worker in the early-

twentieth century relied on ideas concerning regularity of work, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four. They also relied on a gendered division of labour, where the male-breadwinner earned a family wage for the household (Whiteside & Gillespie 1991; Levine-Clark 2015). In the workfare era, the whole household is increasingly drawn into the incentivization to work (Walters 1994).

This is reflected in the rise of rhetoric targeted at “workless” households (MacDonald, Shildrick & Furlong 2013) as well as the targeting of the non-employed mentioned above. Part of the result is that care-givers are expected to increasingly bear the double-burden of socially reproductive labour and wage labour, an expectation that is exemplified in the way that welfare conditionality has driven lone parents to work when their children are at a younger age (Whitworth & Griggs 2013). This has been compounded in the case of single mothers since the financial crisis, as the government has increasingly marginalized and criminalized them through an ideological focus on family breakdown and shifted the costs of the crisis onto the unwaged realm of the household (Tepe-Belfrage 2015; Dowling & Harvie 2014).

Theories of Workfare

In relation to how the social has been refigured within the workfare era, two dominant strands of the critical literature include, as discussed in the Introduction, the Marxist regulation approach and the Foucauldian governmentality approach. The former concentrates on the institutions that regulate the reproduction of the labour force and the connections between this constellation of institutions and the regime of accumulation that it serves (see Boyer 2002). The latter focuses on the way that unemployment is problematized,

concentrating on the discourses, political rationalities and techniques that govern it and reproduce the unemployed subject (Dean 1995; Walters 2000). This chapter draws on both these theoretical strands, employing the regulation approach more in this first part of the chapter and the Foucauldian approach more in the second.

Within the regulation approach, the neoliberal era is born from the crises of Fordism in the 1970s. It comes to be defined by a “workfarist” regime of regulation that is profoundly connected to the restructuring of labour markets towards a pattern of flexible accumulation and contingent or precarious work, as well as political logics of labour market policy dedicated to socializing potential workers into flexible labour markets (Peck 2001: 58-60; Jessop 2002; Standing 2011).

These structural connections reveal themselves in several forms and remind us that, just as unemployment at the end of the nineteenth century was perceived as a problem of casual employment, so must we understand unemployment through its relationship, real and perceived, to employment today. In this regard, it represents an interesting twist that where unemployment was initially conceived, and “discovered”, as a *problem* of casual labour markets and irregular work, as discussed in Chapter Three, today flexible labour has become, in general, part of the *solution* to the post-financial crisis unemployment problem (Blanchard, Jaumotte & Louangani 2013), and in particular part of the UK’s ‘growth model’ (Berry 2014: 593).

Workfare did not create flexible labour markets, but it forcibly facilitates the transfer of all but those considered too extremely sick or disabled to work into any work available. Often this work is low-paid and precarious, and claimants are

held in a perpetual “job ready” state close to this end of the labour market (Theodore & Peck 2000b: 134-135). It sustains low-paid work and puts further downward pressure on wages, a view (tentatively) shared even by those who have advised the DWP on workfare. In explaining the stagnation of real wages in the UK since 2003, Paul Gregg and his co-authors note that:

... it may, at least in part in the longer term, be a consequence of the weakening of labour market institutions such as the coverage of trade unions and nationwide organisational pay scales. More recently, it may also reflect the impact of active welfare policies that have made the unemployed closer substitutes for those in work and tax credits which partially maintain incomes in the face of lower wages. Both of these fit into the idea that the presence of more elastic wage curves in recent times have [sic] come about as a result of greater labour market flexibility.

(Gregg et al. 2014: 429)

This had already been understood in the policy recommendations for ALMPs briefly covered in the last chapter in the section on hysteresis. Activation and workfare were expected to bring about ‘wage moderation by strengthening the ability of “outsiders”, particularly the long-term unemployed and first-time job-seekers, to compete more effectively for jobs’ (OECD 1994: 36). I want to argue that this regulatory function of workfare, which imposes low wages and labour market discipline, and shifts the burden of unemployment onto labour, has been given a further boost by the development of what I call a workfare industry.

The Development of a Workfare Industry

The contracting out of employment services has been an important development in the government of unemployment over the last eight years or so. There is a tendency, justified in many ways, to see the Coalition Government's workfare policies as a continuation of those of New Labour (such as its Flexible New Deal of 2009), with the difference that the delivery of employment services is now overwhelmingly through the private sector (Berry 2014: 593).

Here, though, we take seriously the idea that the privatization of these services has inaugurated significant changes in the government of unemployment. In this regard we will explore the following three ideas: (I.) that the contracting out of employment services on a "payment-by-results" basis has generated a market in unemployed people; (II.) that contracting out is in fact less a case of creating a "market" (or "quasi-market") in services than the development of what I call a "workfare industry"; and (III.) that the workfare industry espouses an "ethic of care" towards segments of the unemployed population that appears to contradict the punitive and disciplinary regime that is its regulatory context. Arguments (I.) and (II.) are considered in this Part of the chapter. Argument (III.) is explored in greater depth in the next Part, on "Discipline and Care in Workfare".

I. A Market in the Unemployed

In 2007 David Freud published an independent report for the DWP on the UK's welfare-to-work system entitled *Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity*. Among his recommendations were: the mass contracting out of employment services to private and voluntary sector providers so that

individualized support could be better delivered for 'hard to help' 'customers'; increased conditionality for the receipt of benefits, especially targeted at the 'economically inactive' parts of the population such as lone parents and those on incapacity benefit; and the rolling together of multiple benefits into a single benefit, now being introduced as 'Universal Credit' (Freud 2007: 9-10).

These recommendations for the contracting out of employment services to private providers were based on an ideological commitment to market innovation:

... while there is no conclusive evidence that the private sector outperforms the public sector on current programmes, there are clear potential gains from contesting services, bringing in innovation with a different skill set, and from the potential to engage with groups who are often beyond the reach of the welfare state.

(Freud 2007: 6)

The decision for increased contracting out thus displayed a fetishization of private-sector values and an ever-closer relationship between public welfare services and private business (Farnsworth & Holden 2006). Despite its experimental nature, it appeared a given that this would be a permanent change to employment services. Freud assured that it would be 'an annual multi-billion market ... [that] would attract commitment from a wide range of private service providers and voluntary groups' (Freud 2007: 8). 'Value for money' would be assured by a competition for contracts and 'outcome-based' payments to providers for successful job placement and employment retention for their 'clients' (Freud 2007: 60-61).

Since the Coalition came to power in 2010, Freud's 2007 recommendations have been heeded in full. The Government rolled out its own flagship welfare-to-work scheme, the Work Programme, in 2011. This initiated a series of contracts between the DWP and companies, charities and social enterprises to deliver employability and training services to the unemployed, among other services such as job placement. Eighteen "prime providers" – including multinational companies like G4S, Serco, Seetec, Maximus, A4e and Rehab – secured five-year contracts for the Work Programme in different regions of the UK (DWP 2011). The list of organizations to which the provision of services may be sub-contracted from these "primes" stood at 727 in the summer of 2012 (Lane et al 2013: 21).

Critical social policy scholars have contested the position that contracted-out employment services deliver better results than public provision (Grover 2007; Davies 2008; Wright 2008). Among the more radical criticisms, though, was that privatizing services would create a *market in the unemployed* themselves, whereby they would be transformed into commodities to be traded between private employment service providers and firms seeking (unpaid) labour, delivering profits to both (Grover 2009: 500). '[I]nherent in the market model' of workfare are phenomena such as 'parking' and 'creaming' (Bredgaard & Larsen 2008: 348). Claimants who are considered more "job ready" are "creamed off" and receive more attention from providers seeking to secure outcome-based payments; those who are considered problematic are "parked" and recycled through programmes (Grover 2009: 495; Handler 2003: 237; Theodore & Peck 2000b: 121).

The process recreates through 'moral typification', divides between "deserving" and "undeserving" claimants, where 'clients with problems become

problems' (Handler 2003: 234-235). In this context, the rhetoric that unemployed people's motivations or attitudes towards work are their main barrier to employment masks the inequalities of class and renders the idea of involuntary unemployment mute.

The way the funding model works for the Work Programme is that providers receive an 'attachment fee' for taking on clients from the JCP, and then subsequent payments for 'hard outcomes': for placing someone in a job and for that person retaining the job (Lane et al 2013: 31). A 'differential pricing model' applies to different categories of people that providers take on, so that higher payments are made for those with more 'significant barriers to work' such as those who have been on illness or disability benefit for longer, or who have drug addiction problems (House of Commons 2013: 29). The result of the marketized, "payment-by-results" or outcome-based model is that providers have relied heavily on attachment fees (for merely taking on clients) and engaged heavily in creaming and parking (Rees et al. 2014). A total of 1.2 million attachment fee payments were made in the first 26 months of the Work Programme for JSA claimants in comparison to 240,000 outcome payments, which are paid on evidence of a claimant sustaining a job for 3-6 months (Greer et al 2014: 16-17). The separation of the deserving and undeserving is thus submitted to the logic of profitability.

Drawing on ideas from comparative institutionalist scholars of the welfare state, the marketization of employment services and the tightened conditionality and eligibility for benefits has been interpreted as a process of deepening labour market discipline, which has undone the "decommodifying" effects of previous welfare reform (Greer 2015). Marxist regulation theorists have emphasized that

employment services, whether public or private, are part of the regulatory apparatus that disciplines non-employed labour by aiming ‘to ensure that [it] is rendered financially and socially less eligible’ (Grover 2009: 499-500; see also Offe 1984; Grover & Stewart 1999; Grover 2003; Theodore & Peck 2000b).

Under marketized employment services the proximity of unemployed people to particular jobs in, for example, the retail industry, demonstrates the increasing entanglement of the precarious end of the labour market and the workfare industry’s management of the labour supply. In 2013, an internal advertisement at a DIY retail store for the Work Experience scheme asked ‘Would 750 hours with no payroll costs benefit YOUR store?’ (Boycott Workfare 2013a). Another Work Experience advertisement from the UK’s largest provider of private sector employment, Tesco, announced a position for night-shift work that paid a ‘wage’ of ‘JSA plus expenses’ (Grover & Piggott 2013: 556). These snapshots into how workfare schemes service the profitability of private companies betray the mundane organization of precarious, unpaid work that is undertaken by job centres, the workfare industry and companies themselves on an everyday basis.

II. The Workfare Industry

The second argument to consider is the nature of this “market” in employment services and its relationship to the state. As we have seen, the way that poverty and unemployment have been governed in the past has been significantly shaped by different perspectives on the relationship between the state and social actors such as charity and philanthropic organizations. Debates about the role of private and voluntary action were central to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Social Question, to the balance of local charitable relief

and works vis-à-vis national schemes, and they remain a focus for those attempting to understand the Big Society today (Harris 2011). Here I want to concentrate on the workfare industry and what it tells us about the relationship between the state and market actors in the provision of social goods and services for unemployed people today.

Since the 1980s, advocates of marketization have identified the 'quasi-market' as a viable strategy for the provision of social goods and services, whereby the state remains the funder of services but independent for-profit and non-profit providers compete for contracts to deliver them (Le Grand 1991, 1997: 151). Historically, *public* employment services have remained a remarkably resilient feature despite governments otherwise hostile to state action and social spending in the 1920s, 1930s, 1980s and early 1990s (Price 2000: 309). Since the late 1990s, though, the development of workfare policies has gone hand-in-hand with an increasing 'localization' of the problems of poverty and unemployment, to which national bureaucratic structures are said to respond poorly. This was part of the rationale behind the competitive tendering of employment services under New Labour's Employment Zones to profit and non-profit actors and the general promotion of the "social economy" of third sector, social enterprises which were tasked with boosting employment and employability (Amin et al. 2002; Walters 2000: 114-115,126-127).

This ostensible localization of economic policy remained in various guises under the Coalition Government, not least with the attempts to pursue the Big Society agenda, but also a range of other policy strategies that cast the "freeing up" of local and regional private enterprise from central "control" and the "rebalancing" of the economy as a mark of success (Pugalis & Bentley 2013: 668-

669). The Government's White Paper of 2011, *Open Public Services*, juxtaposed the 'old, centralized approach to public delivery' with a post-bureaucratic age of decentralized non-state providers offering diversity of consumer choice and increased accountability for taxpayers in the form of 'value for money' (Cabinet Office 2011: 7,9).

Yet the marketization of employment services since 2011, ostensibly aimed at engaging all manner of independent providers to reach harder-to-help unemployed people at the local level, has been defined by continuing central government control – 'centralised localism' (Lindsay & McQuaid 2008: 360) – and the monopolization of contracts by large, multinational firms. Comparing different national workfare regimes, Greer and Symon (2014: 11) find that large-scale marketization is more easily embarked on under more powerful centralized states, like the UK, and results in a more "illiberal" style of workfarism, where the "commercial viability" of the schemes for big providers is paramount and labour market discipline more coercive (see also Trickey 2000).

Under the Coalition Government, what has developed is a "workfare industry". As per the quasi-market formula, the "market" is monopsonistic – there is only one purchaser of services, the Department for Work and Pensions. Provision is dominated by the multinational firms mentioned above (G4S etc.) – it is estimated that they manage 75% of the volume of work on the Work Programme, either themselves or through sub-contracting – and fifteen of the eighteen prime providers are for-profit companies (Greer & Symon 2014: 19). The industry favours for-profit providers at all levels; within the different tiers of sub-contracted providers, smaller providers bear the risk of failure and there is a high rate of turnover through contract termination, especially for non-profit providers

(House of Commons 2014a; Greer et al 2014). The industry has also become self-defining as such, through representative bodies like the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), which hosts annual conferences and lobbies on behalf of its members, and the Institute of Employability Professionals (IEP), which is focused on professional standards in employability (ERSA 2015; IEP 2015).

Judged on its stated aims to get people into work, initial results from the Work Programme were not promising. Figures from the first year showed that just 3.6% of people referred got a lasting job, less than what was expected if there had been no programme at all (BBC News 2013b). The figures improved for the second year, but it still showed very poor results for “harder to help” groups such as the sick and disabled (Easton 2013). More interesting than the arguments as to whether or not contracting out has achieved its aims of more people in work for less public spending is the justification from advocates for why contracting out “works”. Evaluations of contracting out from a think tank close to government, the Institute for Government, have judged its success in terms of ‘innovation’, ‘quality’ and ‘efficiency’ (Gash et al. 2012: 21). Competition in employment services is seen, as it is in Freud’s (2007) report, as an ‘inherent’ good (Gash & Roos 2012: 16; Gash et al. 2012: 30). Rather than prioritizing what serves unemployed people’s *needs*, and especially those who are vulnerable (on which see Dean 2003), evaluation of contracting out is concerned with reified notions of competition. One report outlining recommendations on when to contract out even draws these ideas of competitive efficiency directly from the neoliberal economist, Ronald Coase (see Gash & Panchamia 2013).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ As Davies notes (2014: 48-50), part of Coase’s contribution was to provide a framework for assessing market and non-market institutions side-by-side on the basis of aggregate utility/efficiency. This legitimates any kind of ‘competitive’ activity so long as it is ‘efficiency maximizing’, and through its recognition of the efficiency of hierarchical organization, even provides justification for monopoly

How is this a reflection of the role of the state in the provision of social goods and services in the neoliberal era? Government now spends around £187 billion on goods and services with third parties each year, about half of which is spent on services that are contracted out. Four firms – Atos, G4S, Capita and Serco – made £4 billion in 2012-13 from various government contracts, including with the DWP (House of Commons 2014a: 3). A major government review in 2008 which billed this as a “Public Services Industry”, second in size internationally at six per cent of UK GDP only to the US, recommended further industry expansion (Julius 2008). In terms of what this signifies for the relationship between state and market, Crouch (2011: 71) has noted how, in the grip of neoliberal ideas, governments have increasingly moved their activities into the private sector in a process viewed as ‘adapting government to the market’ when, in actuality, it has ‘adapted it to the corporation’. The effect is what Moran and Williams (2015) dub ‘herbivorous capitalism’: ‘businesses operate in sheltered franchises grazing contentedly on the public purse and on the purses of private households’.

We saw in Chapters One to Three that in late-nineteenth century liberalism the Social Question was increasingly framed in terms of the limits of the *laissez faire* state, and how there was an emergent state interventionist impulse in the late-Victorian period for dealing with poverty and unemployment - but often, of course, in illiberal ways. An analysis of the government of unemployment in the neoliberal, workfare era reminds us that it does not simply represent a case of the “rollback of the state” or a deregulation of the market. As Peck notes:

power. ‘Coase’s economics can be used to evaluate whether industries, rules and contracts are organized to maximize utilitarian output ... [and] provide the neoliberal state with the technical instruments with which to judge the rationality of sovereign institutions’ (Davies 2014: 55).

If there is an enduring logic to neoliberalization, it does not follow the path of rolling market liberalization and competitive convergence; it is one of repeated, prosaic, and often botched efforts to *fix* markets, to build quasi-markets, and to repair market failures. Neoliberalization, in this sense, is not the antithesis of regulation, it is a self-contradictory form of regulation-in-denial.

(Peck 2010: xiii)

Part Two: Discipline and Care in Workfare

In this second part of the chapter, I want to draw to light a major contradiction at the heart of the way that workfare is presented and the workfare industry presents itself today. Essentially, this is the incongruous relationship between the “ethic of care” espoused by those managing and providing workfare and the punitive and disciplinary apparatus within which workfare operates. In Part Three of this chapter, we will explore the idea of this ethic of care through looking more closely at how it is increasingly pursued within the return of character today. Here we concentrate on the basic contradiction at the discursive level, judging some of the language in which workfare is framed against its basic policies, such as sanctions.

It is notable that, in some way, each figure we have looked at in the thesis has portrayed an ethic of care. Consider how the condition of the poor led Jevons and Marshall to study economics, or Booth to investigate the level of poverty in London; or indeed Helen Bosanquet to develop a professional form of philanthropic social work. Social control literature has similarly engaged with

what I have here called an ethic of care through questioning, for example, the relationship between “humanitarianism” and control in the historiography of psychiatry and lunacy reform (Scull 1983).

In Foucault’s work, he describes a form of “pastoral power” that emerges in Western practices of governance through the Christian Church that is expressly exercised for the care and the benefit of the people (Foucault 1982, 2007). Pastoral power, Foucault argues, is characterized by a focus on ‘individual salvation’. It is also ‘not merely a form of power which commands; it must also be prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock ... It is a form of power which does not look after just the whole community but each individual in particular’ (Foucault 1982: 783). This form of pastoral power increasingly established itself in apparatuses of the state and other institutions associated with providing welfare and relief. Here I want to emphasize the basic element of pastoral power in workfare that pays close attention to the individual, whereas in the next part of the chapter we will investigate the particular pastoral techniques that workfare adopts in its focus on character and employment.

We have already noted how the motivations for contracting out employment services were to assist the “harder-to-help” unemployed or non-employed people to get back into work. Among the changes to how benefits and back-to-work programmes have increasingly been delivered is an emphasis on personalized help. In 2008, in the midst of growing unemployment and global financial turbulence, Paul Gregg published a report on behalf of the DWP called *Realising Potential: A Vision for Personalised Conditionality* (Gregg 2008). The document was part of efforts to simplify the benefits regime and move towards a single working age benefit, as Freud had recommended, in order to try to reduce

the numbers on 'workless benefits to around 3 million or so over the coming decade' (2008: 5). It also set out to review the system of conditionality for unemployed people, the jobseekers regime, and for lone parents and those with health conditions and disabilities, the Work-Focused Interview (WFI) regime. Gregg's recommendations included:

- segmenting claimants into 'Work-Ready', 'Progression to Work' and 'No Conditionality' groups;
- a clearer, more responsive sanctions regime with tighter rules and harsher sanctions for 'repeat offenders';
- building the evidence base on 'adviser flexibility', where JCP workers have discretion to apply certain forms of conditionality.

(Gregg 2008: 8)

The proposals were a further move towards a refined form of partitioning that has recently been described as 'ubiquitous conditionality': the 'intensified, personalised and extended conditionality' regime that underpins the new single benefit, Universal Credit (Dwyer & Wright 2015: 28). The Work Programme adopted this focus on personalized conditionality as one of its major selling points too. After the Coalition Government came to power, the man charged with welfare reform, Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, promised 'personalised help for those who need it most, sooner rather than later' (Duncan Smith 2010). The Work Programme has used a 'Black Box' approach to the delivery of employment services to claimants, whereby the DWP takes a more "hands off" approach to how contracted providers deal with claimants (DWP 2011: 9; see also Greer et al. 2014). This has opened up services to perpetual innovation, especially

in the area of employability courses that target character and claimant psychology, which we look at in the next part of the chapter.

I am not so concerned to pursue a thorough analysis of personalized conditionality as a policy here. Rather the point is to identify the language in which reforms have been made and in which they are justified. Providers of employment services claim that their interventions maintain essential social goods. They produce employable (and preferably employed) workers – confident, motivated and happy – who will contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. For example, one provider, A4e, advertised the advantages of its “Total Person” approach as follows:

If you are living in deprivation, with multiple problems preventing you from playing a full part in society, what you need is the power, options and advice to solve your own problems. You need a single person who understands you, your family, and the place you grew up; sticks with you for the long term; treats you like a human, not a number; and backs you to build a different future for yourself.

We call this different approach Total Person. Total Person is a lower cost, lower risk, scalable way to solve intractable social problems ... It also creates the sort of society we want to live in: kind, active, able, hopeful, self-reliant; the key capabilities to promote a fairer, more resilient, more socially mobile country.

(A4e 2011: 1)

The focus is both individualizing and totalizing, it is a concentration on how the person can solve their own problems, and how this approach is the key to

wider social problems. The “ethic of care” extends to the unpaid work placements on which claimants are sent, many of which are in charity shops or with organisations like the YMCA and Salvation Army that engage as part of a historic Christian mission or obligation. This has opened up the possibility for anti-workfare groups such as Boycott Workfare to “shame” final providers of workfare out of the various government schemes, because of the contradictions between charitable intentions and the punitive apparatus of workfare (Boycott Workfare 2012). The charitable ethic has also extended to business participation in workfare as part of their “responsibility” to the community, through the engagement of ‘corporate social responsibility’ (Walters 2000: 333). It is evident, for example, in the partnership made between the Prince’s Trust charity and Marks and Spencer in the summer of 2013, where the retailer pledged 1,400 unpaid work placements for young people (Void 2013).

It is striking, then, that this “ethic of care” exists alongside an extremely harsh and punitive system that appears to have taken the “benefit control” model as identified by Price (2000: 3-4) beyond its *modus operandi* as an automatic test of “genuine” unemployment – through rules applied to receipt of unemployment insurance – to the forced reduction of assistance and deterrence from claiming benefits more readily associated with the workhouse. Attempts to resolve this contradiction have involved stretching the meaning of care, with Duncan Smith recently claiming that ‘for too long it has been assumed that compassion is “soft” and the “preserve of the left”’ when, in fact, ‘Conservative compassion is about getting someone back to work, taking the tough choices to move someone clear of the benefits system’ (Duncan Smith in Swinford 2015).

The UK workfare regime has been consistently harsh in its eligibility and conditionality compared with Australia, New Zealand and other countries across Europe. In a study of public employment advisers in the UK in the late 1990s it was discovered that sanctions were used more frequently in the UK than in other countries, that UK advisers believed claimants were breaking the rules more frequently than in other countries and that the main aim of their job was 'to shift the maximum number of clients off benefits' (Considine 2001: 54-58). Since then, conditionality has increased in several ways to achieve this. This is most apparent, and has caused most controversy, in the case of the benefit sanctions regime.

The Coalition Government introduced a new sanctions regime in October 2012. Under this regime, claimants can now be sanctioned for a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of 156 weeks, or three years (DWP 2013a). Around a fifth of those claiming JSA were sanctioned in the period April 2008-March 2012, amounting to 1.4 million people (House of Commons 2014b: 24). Furthermore, in the 11 months between October 2012 and September 2013, 1.93 million sanction decisions were made with 0.82 million 'adverse decisions', where the sanction was applied (DWP 2014b: 4). Sanctions, it seems, have become a blunt tool for shifting masses of people off benefits. One result of this has been a large rise in the use of food banks. Areas of high unemployment, high sanctions rates and that are hardest hit by austerity policies have experienced the greatest increases of food bank use (Butler 2015).

This deterrent model of benefit conditionality within workfare is confirmed by looking at the level of benefits claimed against unemployment and employment rates. Comparisons of the claimant count, the numbers of people claiming JSA, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of

unemployment (looked for work in the past 4 weeks, available to start work in the next 2 weeks) between 1992 and 2004 show that the introduction of JSA effected a huge off-flow of people from the claimant count without a concomitant in-flow into employment (Manning 2009). More recent studies of the Coalition's sanctioning reforms confirm this trend has continued and become exaggerated (Loopstra et al. 2015).⁸⁹ In May 2015 the claimant count stood at around 800,000 people, roughly similar to the average number of people who are sanctioned each year. Between 2009 and 2014, more than half (between 54 and 61%) of families entitled to receive income-based JSA did not take up the benefit (DWP 2015b: 53). It is apparent that the deterrence model is having powerful effects on the way that benefits are, or are not, being claimed.

In comparison to the current three-year sanction period, between 1913 and 1986 the maximum period that a claimant could be disqualified for was six weeks; this was then raised to 13 weeks and again to 26 weeks in 1988 (Price 2000: 269) and remained there until the 2012 reforms. The 1989 Social Security Act required claimants to "actively seek work" or face cuts to their benefits or disqualification for two weeks (King 1995: 172-173). It also withdrew 'the right of unemployed claimants to refuse jobs on the grounds that they were not 'suitable'', broadly interpreted as not paying the rate for the job. Labour MPs accused the government of bringing back the despised 'genuinely seeking work' principle of the 1920s (Price 2000: 269, 270). Under the Coalition, the main reason for claimants being sanctioned has been not 'actively seeking work', even though, as Webster points out, this can actually mean that they are seeking work, but just have not

⁸⁹ Loopstra et al. (2015: 2) found that between 2005 and 2014 each 100 'adverse' (applied) sanctions was associated with 23.8 fewer people on unemployment benefit. This rose to 42.4 fewer on benefit per 100 sanctions after the Coalition's reforms in 2011. Only about 20% of those exiting benefits after a sanction reported finding work.

done exactly what they were told in the Jobcentre or on a workfare scheme (Webster 2015: point 4).

Webster (2015: point 39) considers the current sanctions regime a 'secret penal system' that runs in parallel to the legal system: DWP officials are able to impose greater financial penalties on claimants than those available to Magistrates' and Sherriff's Courts; decisions are made on the claimant's guilt behind closed doors; and claimants only have recourse to an independent Tribunal to challenge the sanction months after it is applied, once they have overcome several other bureaucratic hurdles. This comparison is in loose accord with scholars who identify a more intimate relationship between social security and penalty (Wacquant 2009; Garland 1981, 1985, 2001).

We should be concerned with the consequences of sanctions in terms of the hardship they create and the way they drive people off benefits. But we also need to acknowledge the normalizing effect that they have in producing "docile" subjects (Foucault 1977); the threat of a sanction is enough to produce compliance and even willingness to participate in workfare schemes that do not have sanctions attached to them as an immediate threat (Boycott Workfare 2013b). We can question the very nature of the ethic of care expressed by workfare providers and claims for personalized conditionality when the threat of sanctions becomes a constant and systemic presence.

The disjuncture between the ethic of care espoused by employment service providers and workfare policy language and the increasing discipline present in conditionality relates to the argument made throughout the thesis concerning the illiberal liberal nature of certain rhetoric and practices. Dean (2002: 38-39) has

argued that governing liberally is understood as quite compatible with overruling particular freedoms if it is 'to enforce the common obligations of citizenship.' He highlights workfare as a particular instance in which 'the enforcement of work, no matter how routine and mundane, and irrespective of one's other responsibilities, e.g. caring for and rearing children' has become overriding (2002: 39). It is indicative of the ethic of care in workfare that within its overtures to kindness and hope it plants what have become *obligations* to be active and self-reliant.

Work First and Human Capital

An enduring tension or contradiction presents itself, then, at the heart of workfare in the UK, between how workfare is represented in caring terms and how it often operates through creating a less eligible status for claimants in a punitive and rather impersonal manner through conditionality and sanctioning. This contradiction was picked up on by Walters in his conclusions concerning workfare under New Labour:

The government's welfare-to-work programme presupposes that its subject is a rational economic actor who will respond to market incentives. Yet we saw that in many ways the New Deal imagines a different territory, a space of community, of ethical relations and mutual responsibilities ... Clearly, then, there is no one-to-one relationship between policies and political rationalities. We should not assume that a communitarian logic is somehow displacing the more market-orientated neo-liberal logic. Instead, they seem to coexist and intertwine around the same programmes.

(Walters 2000: 142)

What has been described as the tension between discipline and care might also, ostensibly, align with different conceptions of workfare. International comparisons of active labour market policies often make a distinction between different styles or models of workfare, distinguishing between “work first” and “human capital” models:

Work-first approaches prioritise labour market attachment on the premise that any job is better than none. Human capital approaches prioritise the development of the social attitudes and marketable skills that will equip people to find and retain suitable jobs.

(Dean, H. 2003: 442)

Discipline then, is more apparent in the work-first model, which pushes claimants towards work, conceiving them as rational economic agents who should respond to a position of less eligibility as a claimant by looking for and moving into work. An ethic of care, at least discursively, might align with human capital approaches. In a sense we have a recreation of the split between economic and social understandings of unemployment, which, as has been argued throughout the thesis, remain deeply intertwined.

In this part of the chapter, we have explored in more depth how discipline has operated on the “work first”, disciplinary side of workfare. It functions as a regulatory control in the relationship between workfare and flexible labour markets. We have also highlighted how a pastoral form of power has emerged in tandem to this disciplinary logic. In the next part of the chapter, we will look further into the way that the ethic of care has been embedded in new political rationalities since the financial crisis, including new behavioural change

techniques and the return of character. This will make it apparent that the work first and human capital approaches, the liberal and the illiberal, and the rationalities of care and discipline, are more deeply entangled than ever before.

Part Three: Community, Behaviour Change and Character

In this part of the chapter, we investigate how the Social Question has been conceptualized in neoliberal Britain. It is in one sense a step back to look at “the social” with a wider lens, but we remain focused with one eye on how unemployment in particular has been understood. As with the previous chapter, this will entail a brief outline of “the social” in more recent historical context and we begin with discourses of “social exclusion” under New Labour, moving on to Broken Society and the Big Society under the Coalition Government. This entails understanding how a communitarian ideology came to govern the social, and how this was reflected in a reworking of the unemployed subject as responsible, both in the sense that they were to “blame” for their situation, and in the sense that potential for change was to come from them through activation by an enabling state (Rose 2000).

In more recent years, the financial crisis and economic recession have thrust unemployment back into the spotlight. Amid the largest fall in economic output since the 1930s, the unemployment rate in the “Great Recession” rose from just under five per cent to just over eight per cent in 2011 (Gregg et al 2014: 411). The Coalition Government sought to redefine the nature of the financial crisis, branding it as a crisis of debt for which the previous Labour Government’s reckless social spending was responsible (Hay 2013). This provided their justifications for

heavy fiscal austerity and what David Cameron has since described as ‘building a leaner, more efficient state ... to do more with less. Not just now, but permanently’ (Cameron cited in Morris 2013). He has since branded this the ‘smarter state’, arguing that it is a ‘moral imperative’ to ‘streamline’ the functions of government in the same way that businesses do in their pursuit of efficiency (Cameron 2015a).⁹⁰ The Coalition initiated what was to be the first of several rounds of deep spending cuts in an emergency budget in June 2010, including £11 billion of cuts to the welfare budget, followed by another £7 billion in the Spending Review in October of the same year, part of a total of £81 billion in cuts to public spending.

Rolling austerity has not only seen reductions in benefit levels but it has also been part of a radical restructuring of the labour market. Part of the rationale of the cuts was to drastically reduce public sector employment. It is estimated that, in the eight years from 2010-11, 1.1 million public sector jobs will have been lost, and already the state is employing a smaller proportion of the workforce than at any time in the last forty years (Elliott 2014). This is one element of a recovery through ‘regressive redistribution’ in which low-pay job creation, frozen wages and a huge rise in precarious employment have run alongside policies that have shored up the growth of asset prices, favouring the already wealthy (Green & Lavery 2015: 1; see also Whittaker & Hurrell 2013). The unemployment rate has since recovered, but five million workers – or one in five – are in low-paid jobs (Corlett & Whittaker 2014).

⁹⁰ Cameron’s idea of the ‘smarter state’ betrays the aforementioned fetishization of the private sector in plain terms: ‘It’s not unlike business. Businesses are constantly adapting and changing, using new technology or new methods of delivery, to improve their products and reduce their costs. I’m not suggesting we should run government exactly like a business. I just mean that if we use their insights, we can help develop a smarter state’ (Cameron 2015a).

In seeking to legitimize deep welfare cuts, the Conservative Party and its accompanying think tanks, such as the Centre for Social Justice, have pursued a discourse of how Britain has become “broken” by over-generous benefits, the breakdown of the traditional family model and poor parenting. This discourse appeals to traditional conservative issues of family and crime and links social and moral decay to ‘welfare dependency’ localized in ‘welfare ghettos’ (Hancock & Mooney 2013: 46; see also Slater 2014) but draws on earlier conceptions under New Labour of “social exclusion”. In place of the Broken Society the Coalition have proposed the idea of the “Big Society”, whereby civic engagement and individual action fills the spaces of social and welfare provision from which the state has retreated. We will explore how the Big Society displays particular forms of social control through a focus on the return of character and the growth of behaviour change techniques.

Community, Social Exclusion and Broken Britain

Communitarian logics were integral to the imagining of the welfare subject under New Labour, a subject who was to be a “self-governing individual” within a re-moralized communal order based on a relationship between rights and responsibilities, a “something for something” society (Finlayson 2003: 162-166, Chapter Five; Rose 2000, 2004: Chapter Five; Clarke 2005). For some, community was understood as the new ‘territory of government’, heralding the ‘death of the social’ through the rise of post-national, heterogeneous community spaces (Rose 1996b: 327).

Third Way politics claimed to chart a new course between the Old Labour Left and the Conservative New Right (Giddens 1998). In forming a new language

for social problems, as already mentioned, New Labour used the concept of “social exclusion” to identify and propose solutions for marginalized populations, instead of the language of poverty and equality (Lister 1998). According to Levitas (2005: 7), social exclusion was mobilized in three different ways, each ultimately pointing towards inclusion through paid work: a redistributionist discourse, which emphasizes poverty; a social integrationist discourse, which focuses on paid work; and a moral underclass discourse, which centres on the moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded. Public discourse shifted between these so that one might be disguised behind another, but social integrationist and moral underclass discourses glorified paid work and treated unpaid work such as childcare as residual (Levitas 2005: 27-28).

The replacement of poverty with social exclusion and the rise of communitarian discourses provided parallels with earlier conceptions of poverty and unemployment from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Following Foucault’s concept of different rationalities of government, Rose (2000: 1399) saw in the celebration of responsibility and community a ‘new politics of behaviour’, which he called ‘ethopolitics’, that governed through fostering self-responsibility and the development of obligations to others. He argued that it represented a fundamental move away from the concept of national social citizenship and that it drew on earlier ideas of exclusion that we explored in Chapter Three:

The unequal distribution of material resources, which had been a target of Left politics since the end of the 19th century, gradually blurs as an object of investigation and political action. In its place, a sector of problematic persons comes into view – a sector that the social liberalism of the early decades

of the 20th century also classified as the residuum, the unemployables, and the social problem group. The excluded are characterized as failures, lacking personal skills and competencies. In the Third Way, these are to be addressed through practices of control targeted at the excluded themselves – principally those that seek to foster or coerce the development of the personal capacities thought to enable access to the workplace through the labour contract.

(Rose 2000: 1406)

Others also acknowledge that New Labour re-animated earlier underclass concepts, such as the idea of intergenerational transmission of social problems and an emphasis on behavioural factors, especially as greater prominence was given after 2004 to “anti-social behavior” and “problem families” (Welshman 2013: 196-199).

The responsabilization of the individual has taken a number of forms over the past decade. The increasing withdrawal of welfare support has been accompanied by a newly configured “active saver-investor” subject who was expected to provide for themselves responsibly through the management of their assets, principally housing, but also through the development of “financial literacy” (Watson 2008a, 2009; Finalyson 2009, 2011; Clarke 2015). As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the development of ‘asset-based welfare’ had particular redistributory consequences following the financial crisis, whereby the Labour Government responded to “middle-class moral panic” by shoring up already accumulated housing market wealth (Watson 2009b).

Social exclusion discourses served to pathologize the poor and individualize the problems of poverty and inequality. This extended to the way that it was

imagined and mapped spatially. Exclusion was and is understood as a local and personal problem, which points to local, personalized solutions. Much like Booth's poverty maps, the poor and outcast often become visible as criminal or delinquent. Unlike in the nineteenth century, though, the excluded attach to any number of problems conceived as *external* to the social. The poor in Booth's maps were 'constructed as a deviant *part of* the social whole articulated within a bounded abstract territorial space – a space of actual or potential inclusion', the excluded no longer form part of a social whole but exist outside of it (Cameron, A. 2006: 400). Furthermore, the included are not mapped in the same way; they are only defined negatively as the "not excluded" and insofar as they do not share in the personal defects of the excluded. Peter Mandelson said of social exclusion that, '[t]his is about more than poverty and unemployment. It is about being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life' (Mandelson cited in Fairclough 2000: 52). Social exclusion was thus a means to define particular 'geographies of exception' (Cameron, A. 2006: 402-403), an enduring element in forms of social control discussed throughout the thesis.

Under the Coalition Government, the idea of a "Broken Britain" has given continuity to many of the themes of social exclusion. The Centre for Social Justice think-tank, founded in 2004 by Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions since 2010, has been at the forefront of pushing the idea of a Broken Britain. Poverty for the Centre is explained by reference to so-called 'pathways to poverty': worklessness, drug and alcohol addiction, welfare dependency, family breakdown and educational failure (Social Justice Policy Group 2006: 15). They have argued that if these 'drivers of poverty' are not tackled, then an 'ever-growing underclass will be created' and that such an 'increasingly dysfunctional society ... is one that breeds criminality' (Social Justice Policy Group 2006: 13, 15). The

connections between personal vices and social problems has reinvigorated an old focus on the intemperate and criminal poor.

The idea of “worklessness” has been particularly important for the Broken Britain agenda, with paid work put forwards as the only sure route out of poverty. The mantra that ‘work is the best form of welfare’ has been advanced aggressively despite the growth of in-work poverty – in 2013 most people classed as being in poverty lived in a household where someone works (Patrick 2014: 64). It has also been joined by a discourse of work being good for your wellbeing. David Cameron made improved wellbeing one of the objectives of his Government in 2010, requesting the Office for National Statistics (ONS) introduce a wellbeing measure (Cameron 2010b). Reports such as Dame Carol Black’s (2008) review of the health of the working-age population and Waddell and Burton’s (2006) evidence review on work and wellbeing have suggested that in general work is good for you and good for your health (see also Layard 2004). Within this discourse there is rarely discussion of the quality and type of work that is taken up, and the evidence from UK workfare is, as mentioned above, that the quality of jobs found through work programmes is poor in terms of security and pay (Berry 2014). We can see an enduring biopolitical focus connecting (un)employment and the health of the population, however, that was concerned with ideas of fitness and efficiency at the turn of the nineteenth century, but connects work, wellbeing and productivity in the twenty-first (Davies 2015).

The Broken Britain discourse locates the problem of unemployment squarely with the unemployed themselves, as well as an underclass culture of bad parenting, criminality and an intergenerational lack of work ethic (Welshman 2013: 215-216; MacDonald, Shildrick & Furlong 2013; Tepe-Belfrage 2015). ‘The

underlying analysis', Wiggan writes, 'is of Britain suffering from poor and anti-social choices made by individuals, supposedly facilitated by excessive and poorly targeted social expenditure, with social security blamed for fostering fractured social relationships, dysfunctional communities, and the transmission of poverty and unemployment across the generations' (Wiggan 2012: 387). This analysis has been given a boost by high-profile policies such as the Troubled Families programme, which targets a small number of families for intensive intervention because of the large number of social problems they are said to cause (Crossley 2015; Welshman 2013). The work of the Centre for Social Justice has also reached new prominence in efforts to scrap existing legal targets for reducing child poverty in favour of its more behavioural analysis (Wintour 2015).

Yet, the Broken Britain discourse has also given rise to an attempt at a more positive vision in the form of the Big Society. The Big Society is supposed to re-invigorate the bonds of community and neighbourly spirit and encourage people to volunteer and local communities to take over local services (Cameron 2010a; Cabinet Office 2010). I am not concerned to explore the ideological roots and philosophy of the Big Society here. Others have given thorough critiques of how it remains thoroughly neoliberal in outlook, seeking to cut down public services by setting them up as ineffective bureaucratic juggernauts and gloss over structural inequalities for a focus on 'idealized versions of 'communities'' that 'lack any empirical substance' (Corbett & Walker 2013: 467). Instead I want to focus on one of the core themes of the thesis, as it has been re-animated under the Big Society: character.

The Return of Character

In his history of modern forms of discipline, and of the “disciplines”, Foucault talks about the modern “soul” as a terrain on which a particular form of power is developed and on which new types of knowledge are built, thus extending and reinforcing the effects of this power. ‘On this reality-reference,’ he says, ‘various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc.’ (Foucault 1977: 29-30).

In nineteenth-century Britain, one of these domains, which took on several different kinds of meaning, was character. We explored the role of character in Jevons’ and Marshall’s works in Chapter Two, noting how it explained for them the incidence of pauperism but also, certainly for Marshall, promised the hope of social progress in the form of education in character and the boosting of vigour. In Chapter Three, we noted how it remained important as a classification or partitioning tool for Bosanquet’s COS mission as well as in Booth’s social investigation and Llewellyn Smith’s definition of and solutions for unemployment.

It is interesting to note then, that character has recently made a return in discussions of the twenty-first century Social Question. It has emerged across several different policy spheres, most notably in education, but also in discussions of welfare-to-work and employability as well as poverty and social mobility. Character is once again being identified with social problems such as inequality, poverty, unemployment and crime.

The return, or we might even say the rediscovery of character has taken place within, and is explicitly linked to, perceptions of a national moral and social

crisis. Nowhere was this clearer than in the aftermath of the “riots” that took place across the country in the summer of 2011, most prominently in London. The police shooting of a young, black man in Tottenham, North London, sparked mass protest, which quickly turned to violence in a number of communities across the capital and in other cities across the country for five days, involving an estimated 15,000 people (RCVP 2012: 3).

In the aftermath, David Cameron (2015b) insisted the riots were not about race, government cuts or poverty: ‘No, this was about behaviour ... people with a twisted moral code... people with a complete absence of self-restraint.’ It was indicative of a ‘slow-motion moral collapse’, a ‘broken society’ characterized by: ‘Irresponsibility. Selfishness ... Children without fathers. Schools without discipline. Reward without effort. Crime without punishment. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control.’ His government, he said, would respond with reasserting the centrality of family, good parenting, ‘respect for community’ and restoring responsibility in the welfare system through tougher conditionality, because ‘[w]ork is at the heart of a responsible society’ (Cameron 2015b).

The leaders of the three main political parties – Cameron, Clegg and Miliband – established a Riots Communities and Victims Panel to assess the reasons behind the riots and consider what could be done ‘to build greater social and economic resilience in communities’ (RCVP 2012: 3). One of their main recommendations, under the heading of ‘personal resilience’, was for parents and schools to focus on ‘building character’ (RCVP 2012: 121, 122). The report noted that members of the Panel had met people from disadvantaged backgrounds who had ‘made a choice not to get involved in the riots’ and that ‘[i]n asking what it was

that made young people make the right choice in the heat of the moment, the Panel heard of the importance of character'. They explained, furthermore, that '[a] number of attributes together form character, including self-discipline, application, the ability to defer gratification and resilience in recovering from setbacks. Young people who develop character will be best placed to make the most of their lives' (RCVP 2012: 7). The Panel also stressed the employability benefits of character, citing Work Programme providers who had told them that 'interpersonal skills' or 'soft skills' were essential for getting a job (RCVP 2012: 50).

Character education has gained traction in both centre-left and centre-right think-tanks, as well as in academia and government. Demos, a think-tank close to New Labour, has produced a number of reports within its Character Inquiry project (Lexmond & Reeves 2009; Lexmond & Grist 2011; Birdwell, Scott & Reynolds 2015). At the launch of the Inquiry, Frank Field, a Labour MP who was responsible for welfare reform in 1997-8 and was given the advisory role of "poverty czar" by Cameron in 2010, said the following of character:

The major reason why Britain is rougher and more uncivilised than it was in the early post-war period has been the collapse of the politics of character. These politics dominated the debate from the mid-Victorian period up until the middle of the last century.

The politics of character were hugely successful. England was transformed from a rough, uncouth and often cruel nation, into the modern age where citizens treated other people as they wished to be treated themselves.

(Field 2010)

Field's approach to character, which focuses on parenting and a form of Anglican communitarianism, shares a longing with cross-party think-tank ResPublica (ResPublica N.d.) and its director's "Red Toryism", for a bygone era of civic and mutual institutions (Blond 2010: 15). Many of the current proponents of character, though, advocate a neo-Aristotelian approach that focuses on the development of a set of "capabilities" or "virtues" as a means of developing particular habits in good citizens/potential employees (Lexmond & Reeves 2009: 12). The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, an academic centre based in the University of Birmingham, defines character as 'a set of personal traits or dispositions that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct', and character education as 'an umbrella term for all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues' (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues 2013: 2).

The Department for Education adopted the Jubilee Centre's definition of character (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues 2014) and set up a £3.5 million character education grant fund, inviting schools, colleges and other organizations to submit proposals for projects that promote 'character traits, attributes and behaviours' (DfE 2015). These traits included: 'perseverance, resilience and grit; confidence and optimism; motivation, drive and ambition; neighbourliness and community spirit; tolerance and respect'. Character has in this way become a terrain onto which an ever larger set of dispositions can be cast, a problem responded to by some its advocates, such as the Jubilee Centre, by setting out more precise definitions and "types" of character, as well as efforts at measuring character through "moral dilemma" tests (Arthur et al. 2015: 9-11).

At the Jubilee Centre, they divide character education into a focus on different sets of virtues: 'moral; intellectual; civic; and performance. Moral and civic virtues are essential to a good communal life; intellectual virtues are dispositions pertaining to inquiry, understanding, applying knowledge and respect for evidence; and performance virtues provide the strength of will to achieve goals, whatever they are' (Arthur et al. 2015: 9). Character education is thus taken as a holistic practice, focusing on various habits, forms of behaviour and moral dispositions. However, even the Jubilee Centre are forced to admit that the overwhelming focus on character in policy and popular academic circles has been on so-called "performance virtues" such as resilience and self-confidence (Arthur et al. 2015: 9-10).

Indeed, if we look at much of the policy literature on character, it is these attributes that are stressed. And not only are they stressed, but also they are linked to particular social outcomes. Increasingly, character is seeking to rival the socio-economic determinants of class in understandings of inequality. This is presented in the language of opportunity and social mobility, rather than inequality. As one member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility puts it in the foreword to the group's *Character and Resilience Manifesto*:

There is a growing body of research linking social mobility to social and emotional skills, which range from empathy and the ability to make and maintain relationships to application, mental toughness, delayed gratification and self-control. These research findings all point to the same conclusion: character counts.

(Tyler in Paterson, Tyler & Lexmond 2014: 4)

Among politicians, think tanks and academics, character is increasingly considered a reference for social problems of all varieties. For politicians, certainly, it forms part of a vocabulary of moral crisis that points to individual responsibility for societal salvation. Character education also directly links socio-economic life chances with personal capabilities and parenting styles in a way that echoes some of the Victorian and Edwardian approaches to character we have explored in earlier chapters. Grit, perseverance and delayed gratification are the modern versions of self-reliance and forethought espoused by figures such as Jevons and Bosanquet.

Critical social policy and sociology scholars have argued that the ethic of care or pastoral logic expressed under the Big Society veils a more authoritarian focus on the obligations of the individual (Sage 2012: 375; Lister 2011; Corbett & Walker 2013) and even constitutes a strategy of “ideological displacement” that seeks to mask the material displacement of the costs of financial crisis onto the unwaged realms of social reproduction in the household and community (Dowling & Harvie 2014: 872). I would argue that character education is linking character and employability in dynamic ways, seeking to conduct a range of ethical dispositions alongside “performance” attributes, in a way that ultimately individualizes social problems and detracts from the structural inequalities that affect social mobility and employment outcomes.

I want to bring our attention back to unemployment, though, because character has made different inroads in workfare and employability. Here I argue that a focus on character is defining new pastoral techniques in workfare and legitimizing new behavioural interventions.

Character and Workfare, Changing Behaviour

We have discussed several different rationales behind different historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment and how they animated a focus on the character of the poor and unemployed in different ways. In Chapters One and Two, we noted how character explained motivation towards work in neoclassical theories of labour supply and how it was shot through with assumptions about class and race. In Chapter Three, we saw how the perception of imperial decline and fears concerning the physical and moral efficiency of the workforce was associated with urban degradation first mapped and measured by Charles Booth. In Chapter Four, we saw how long-term unemployment was linked to understandings of demoralization that focused on the psychology of the unemployed.

In the latest era of workfare, since 2007, there has been an intense focus on the character of the unemployed and how it relates to their employability and their motivation towards work. This has been supported by a constant surveillance of unemployed people's activity. Benefit conditionality requires unemployed people to perform and demonstrate work search, training and work preparation activities, with the recent "claimant commitment" – the contract of agreement between the claimant and the Jobcentre – asking claimants to undertake up to thirty five hours per week of such activities (DWP 2013b). The pastoral logic in workfare includes interventions that target claimants' attitudes, personality and positivity, linking these directly to their chances of getting work, and to the systems of discipline discussed in the first part of the chapter. It also draws in new forms of expertise and knowledge that seek to know the unemployed in order to govern their conduct in particular ways.

Employability courses in workfare have long targeted unemployed people's attitudes and dispositions, and considered them as barriers to work or risks of welfare dependency. Dean (1995) explored this phenomenon in the Australian social security system in the 1990s. He noted how the government of unemployment was being undertaken by a host of new experts in employment exchanges – “case managers” – who operated in a pastoral role, assisting the unemployed with their work search activity, their employability and connecting them to training and work programmes, voluntary work and even counselling and self-help groups (Dean 1995: 574-5). ‘[T]hrough these practices’, he argued, ‘the individual no longer claims a benefit but becomes a client of various agencies, seeking and obeying the directions of pastoral agents, and receiving an allowance conditional on establishing a particular relation to the self’ (Dean 1995: 576). This was the encouragement of the “active self”.

This “active self” has been the subject of much scholarly and policy-making attention in the UK (see Wright 2015). The dominant discourse of active welfare continuously contrasts itself against an image of dependency it associates with passive state hand-outs and presents the benefit claimant as essentially morally and socially deficient (Wright 2015: 2-3).

Discourses of dependency often present the idea of the rationally self-interested claimant as a subject who takes advantage of a lenient, over-generous welfare system that undermines the work ethic, permitting unemployment as a viable choice. Under the Coalition, however, new welfare activation techniques have been developed that constitute the individuals as essentially irrational in the welfare decisions that they take, as a subject who is unable to see what is best for

themselves (Jones, Pykett & Whitehead 2013, 2014; Davies 2012). An array of behaviour change techniques have been developed to tackle these irrationalities. Here we look briefly at two different sets of techniques: “libertarian paternalism”, or “nudge” policies, and positive psychology.

The advocates of “libertarian paternalism” argue that expert ‘choice architects’ can deliberately manipulate people’s environments in a way that preserves individual freedom by employing a series of minor behavioural prompts for target individuals, “nudges”, that effect major changes in outcomes at a greater scale (Thaler & Sunstein 2008: 3). It uses a range of behavioural economics insights about how people are influenced by various incentives, norms, cues and contexts to focus on ‘changing behaviour without changing minds’ (Dolan et al. 2010: 8, 14). This nudge philosophy was the basis of a new unit in the Cabinet Office (which has since been part-privatized), the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), which advised the government on various changes to the functioning of the benefits system so as to effect certain kinds of behaviour change.

BIT has since worked on the ‘claimant commitment’, seeking to make jobseekers more forward-thinking in how they approach their search for work by getting them to describe everything that they will do in the next two weeks, verbally and in writing (House of Commons 2014b: 15). BIT also delivered a mandatory psychometric testing programme to claimants, which assessed their ‘character strengths’ and sought to work on their positive dispositions (Cromby & Willis 2013: 4). It has advocated the use of techniques such as ‘growth mind-sets’ in order to boost ‘character skills’ and get claimants to think differently about their possibilities for attaining employment (Work & Pensions Committee 2015: 7). The principal adviser on labour market issues at BIT has talked about the importance

of 'perseverance', and techniques that encourage 'people to be more adaptable and essentially to work harder when confronted with challenges.' Those on Incapacity Benefit who are 'less psychologically resilient' and struggle with change, he noted, can be encouraged 'to act as if they have these character traits, whether or not they actually do' (Work & Pensions Committee 2015: 8).

In targeting claimants' positive attitudes BIT is joining a host of other positive psychology interventions in workfare designed to work on behaviour (Stenner & Taylor 2008). Friedli and Stearn note that psychological interventions in workfare – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, the general targeting of positive affect – are forming a kind of 'psycho-compulsion' that links conditionality with these interventions making them mandatory if claimants want to avoid sanctions (Friedli & Stearn 2015: 42).⁹¹ They argue that:

... the use of psychology in the delivery of workfare functions to erase the experience and effects of social and economic inequalities, to construct a psychological ideal that links unemployment to psychological deficit, and so to authorise the extension of state – and state-contracted – surveillance to psychological characteristics.

(Friedli & Stearn 2015: 40)

In many instances positive psychology appropriates a crude discourse of entrepreneurialism in attempts to boost employability. Claimants have described how in courses designed to encourage the self-cultivation of soft skills they have

⁹¹ It should be noted that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy was being discussed as a tool to improve employability as far back as 1997. McManus (1997) describes a study that attempted to test its efficacy at placing claimants in employment. The issue with such tests is that no adequate control exists for economic demand in the labour market.

been surrounded by wall-to-wall motivational quotations warning against negative thinking, and instructed to consider themselves as a brand that needs to be aggressively sold to potential employers (Köksal 2012). In an interview with a JSA claimant in a private employment services provider, discussing the claimant's employment adviser, John Harris elicits another example of the individualizing effect of these interventions:

Harris: Did she talk about your barriers to employment?

Claimant: What do you mean?

Harris: What was getting in the way of you getting a job.

Claimant: Yeah, she did ask, yeah.

Harris: And what, what did you say? What was getting in the way?

Claimant: I didn't really know at first ... 'cos ... I think it was more me. The way I was feeling. Y'know. That's what it's all about ... the person.

(Harris 2012b)

The encouragement of this kind of intensive self-management increasingly demands the ability for potential employees to adapt to the new patterns of employment, and posits employability as a skill in its own right (Moore 2012: 227). The consequence for those going through workfare is that they are being forced to learn an enthusiastic compliance for a world of precarious, low-paying jobs. As has been noted by those surveying their use, 'there is a danger that behaviour change policies – and the 'psy' techniques that underpin them – will become a heavily

targeted burden for marginalised individuals and groups within society ... [that they] will be but one other way of reinforcing the unequal subjectivities that characterize neoliberal societies' (Jones, Pykett & Whitehead 2013: 175).

In this part of the chapter, we have explored how character has returned in perspectives on poverty and unemployment in the twenty-first century. Character has returned to explain why some people are unable to do as well as others in life, why they are not able to get work, why they remain relatively poor. Character education policies appear to exalt similar attributes to those from earlier periods explored in the thesis. Many of the so-called performance virtues that are touted as elements of character resonate with the arguments from Jevons and Bosanquet concerning the lack of self-reliance and forethought of the residuum.

Psychological interventions in workfare increasingly target claimants in controlling ways, tying the work that they must do to improve their own motivations and attitudes to the harsh conditionality present in the benefits system. The ethic of care expressed in the desire for an increasingly personalized system of conditionality is thus deeply entangled with the disciplinary apparatus that seeks to enforce labour market discipline.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the Social Question in the twenty-first century, and how it draws on certain themes that have been present in other eras of the Social Question surveyed in the thesis. I have sought to not merely draw parallels between liberal and neoliberal perspectives on poverty and

unemployment but to look at how functions of social control, and discourses of character, have developed in a particular way during the workfare era.

The chapter has demonstrated, though, how some contemporary perspectives on poverty and unemployment have deep historical antecedents. The focus on the unemployed as dependent figures, who must change their own behaviour and attitude in order to secure employment, has obvious parallels with descriptions of the unemployed in other eras. The focus on character and its association with social mobility provides an even more obvious direct parallel to understandings of character and work motivation from the late-nineteenth century.

However, the workfare era operates with its own peculiar forms of social control. It is evident that workfare is acting as part of a regulatory regime to render unemployment as a less eligible status, to contain and control benefits as part of capping costs and maintaining labour market discipline. The development of a workfare industry and the way that it closely feeds the growth of precarious labour has intensified this regime, but has also acted to deepen the commodification of labour through creating a market in the unemployed. That an increasing number of the non-employed must negotiate systems of punitive conditionality opens an ever larger number of those not in paid employment to exceptional and illiberal treatment.

The chapter also noted that there is a pastoral logic that operates within workfare, focused on individuals, their character and their behaviour. It demonstrated that there are some similarities between how character is being conceptualized today and how it was understood in previous eras of the Social

Question that we have looked at. Attention remained on character in individualizing terms, as the ability to defer gratification and the capacity for self-reliance and self-discipline. But character has become something that is acted upon much more intensely in the neoliberal era. The unemployed are open to behaviour change interventions that target their psychology in various ways and through new forms of “knowing” them such as behavioural economics that seek to guide their “irrational” negative attitudes towards the world of work.

Finally, the chapter made it clear that the pastoral and disciplinary or deterrent logics of social control are closely entangled under workfare today. In Chapter Three, we explored how the COS embodied a form of pastoral power that concentrated charity on the “respectable” individual and their household, that was also tied into a wider system of abandonment to the Poor Law, based on judgements of deservingness and character. Today’s claimants must adopt a set of “character skills”, attitudes and positive motivations towards work, or they risk a sanction and abandonment to the local food bank.

Conclusion

This first section of the Conclusion draws together the main arguments and findings of the thesis and relates the contribution of different chapters to those findings. In the following section, there is a discussion of the historical approach taken in the thesis and consideration of some methodological implications as well as acknowledgement that there is more work which could be done in the future. The final section explores future avenues for research and hopes for how historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment might open new analytical and political possibilities.

Main Arguments and Findings

The thesis is founded upon the argument that gaining an understanding of historical perspectives on poverty and unemployment in liberal Britain helps us to understand better how they are constituted today, in neoliberal Britain. It aimed to explore the historical antecedents to the way that poor and unemployed people are talked about and treated more contemporarily. Through a series of interventions with figures and groups from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, it set out to show how poor and unemployed people came to be “known” and governed in different ways that stigmatize them and that shift the responsibility of poverty and unemployment onto their shoulders. It achieved this through tracing the “illiberal liberal” discourses and practices that constitute different forms of social control in the liberal and neoliberal eras, using elements of Marxist and Foucauldian theory as well as history of economic thought literature.

The historical perspectives surveyed demonstrated that moralized judgements of behaviour, race, character and class significantly affect how poverty and unemployment are thought about, even as social and economic understandings of these problems advance and become more “rational” or “scientific”, and even as they acknowledge structural economic conditions as causes of poverty and unemployment. This captured the essence of the Social Question and of liberal government. The Social Question drove anxieties about the need to mitigate the social ills of industrial capitalism, including with state intervention; the liberal perspectives surveyed, though, were always concerned to act on, conduct and explain social problems through individual character and other moralized judgements.

In particular, the thesis has shown how character, class and race were used as explanations by various figures in order to explain the lack of work motivation of the poor and unemployed, the voluntary or involuntary nature of their circumstances and subsequently their deserving or undeserving status when it came to assistance. It demonstrated the continuity of stigmatizing and individualizing discourses targeted at the poor and unemployed, from the “residuum” of the late-nineteenth century to the “unemployable” and “habitual loafer” at the turn of the century, and from the “demoralized” long-term unemployed in the interwar period to the “shirker” and “scrounger” of today.

The diverse set of historical perspectives allowed the thesis to make an original contribution to the literature through establishing the role of these discourses across different political, governmental and theoretical realms. It followed how poverty and unemployment have been viewed in ways that burden and stigmatize individuals within economic thought, social investigation, social

work and social statistics. It also established how representation of the unemployed has historically been a contested ground politically and figuratively through looking at the political representation of the unemployed and literary representations in the social explorer genre. These representations of and perspectives on poverty and unemployment were the basis for an exploration of the neoliberal, workfare era in the twenty-first century. What follows below is a thematic overview of the thesis that connects these main arguments and findings to various different chapters.

Across the thesis there was an emphasis on the often-entangled relationship between economic and social conceptions of the Social Question and poverty and unemployment. This allowed for an original argument to be constructed, not just across different historical periods, but also across different realms of thought and action. This was set up by Chapter One through studying how the standard narrative of neoclassical economics emptying out normative and social concern must be challenged through looking at how it engaged with the Social Question, including through a productive relationship with socialism. At the same time, this chapter demonstrated how the development of understandings concerning the labour supply and marginal productivity theory drove economic theory towards concepts of “voluntary unemployment”, suggesting that wages had to adjust downward to their market price in order to solve the problem.

The chapter made a connection with later neoclassical economists who developed marginal productivity theory further. These developments were shown to have had particular political consequences in the 1930s when Keynes came to argue for state intervention to tackle involuntary unemployment against the understandings of those like Cannan, who held to the neoclassical theory of

distribution. The thesis was thus able to build connections between the early development of abstract theories of labour supply and distribution that led to later, even more unrealistic understandings of voluntary unemployment and calls against state intervention that maintained that the burden of unemployment was labour's to bear.

The thesis also demonstrated how abstract economic theory could travel into other realms of thought to validate particular social and moral understandings of the poor and unemployed. A connection was made between Jevons' theory of labour supply, with its race-, class- and character-based assumptions, and Bosanquet's understanding of the "industrial residuum" (Dendy 1893). This demonstrated how economic theories could validate and legitimize practices of social control through the partitioning of the deserving and undeserving. The "scientific" basis on which Bosanquet sought to classify and exclude certain parts of the population had already been revealed (in Chapter One) as riven with racist and moralized assumptions concerning the work ethic of different kinds of people.

In later periods, between the wars, representations of the long-term, demoralized unemployed were discovered to have affected later twentieth century economic theories. In Chapter Four the thesis made new connections between economic and social conceptions by demonstrating how economists of that period read the 1930s in a "black mirror" (Samman 2012) to validate theories about the long-term demoralized unemployed needing to be "activated". These were original, historical connections. They exposed the significance of particular assumptions and representations of the unemployed that located unemployment within physical and mental deterioration, in accordance with the then current economic theories of "hysteresis". By doing this, the thesis linked the historical and

contemporary periods being analysed and served to expose the enduring – but flawed – assumptions of the poor and unemployed that underpin activation and workfare.

The analysis of “illiberal liberal” discourses and practices throughout the thesis revealed how social control has operated through various forms of power under liberalism and neoliberalism. This control included the more disciplinary forms of power that sought to deter and exclude the poor and unemployed from relief, from the insurance system or from the labour market altogether. In Chapter Three it was demonstrated how Booth’s mapping of the social and moral geography of London spurred suggestions for removing Class B to labour colonies on the grounds that they were “unemployable” and a social waste. In the same chapter, the thesis looked at how Llewellyn Smith sought to give the insurance system a certain automaticity in excluding the habitual casual on the grounds of character. This kind of exclusion was reflected in Chapter Five in the extremely punitive nature of the recent sanctions regime, and the harsh and “ubiquitous conditionality” (Dwyer & Wright 2014) attached to benefits that have enacted a strategy of deterrence against “welfare dependency”. The thesis thus connected strategies and techniques of exclusion to different historical perspectives and various stigmatized understandings of the unemployed.

Throughout the thesis, it was shown that understandings of unemployment, and attempts to regulate it, must be considered in relation to how employment is conceived and regulated. This was inspired by the Marxist emphasis on the co-evolution of labour market and welfare regulatory regimes and how that conditions the distribution of waged-work and eligibility for assistance (Peck 2001; Jessop 2002; Boyer 2002). The thesis built on this understanding by

showing how different historical perspectives of the “genuinely”, “deserving” and “involuntary” unemployed affected this relationship.

The “discovery” of unemployment was investigated in Chapter Three. The thesis determined the centrality of casual labour or underemployment, at the turn of the nineteenth century, for perspectives on unemployment. It was shown how the original understanding of “genuine” unemployment (when Llewellyn Smith was defining it and developing the insurance system) was constructed around an ideal of the regular worker as opposed to that of the figure of the “habitual loafer”. This assumption concerning the work motivation of different segments of the population was related to those expounded by the other social reformers, Booth and Bosanquet, as well as Jevons and Marshall.

In the workfare era, the Marxist approach was used to show how the development of a “workfare industry” has served to intensify the commodification of the unemployed and to reinforce labour market discipline through the deterrent principle of less eligibility and a punitive sanctions regime. The chapter showed how the workfare industry fed the market for precarious labour and subjected the partitioning of the unemployed to considerations of profitability.

There was a running theme throughout the thesis: the tension between social rights and social control. This was picked up in Chapter Four with contestation over the “right to work”. It was demonstrated how “right to work” proposals differed from the stigmatizing terms on which the 1905 Unemployed Workmen Act operated, despite their similarities, and how radical groups pushed the liberal discourse of rights to what government agencies considered to be excessive lengths. The thesis showed how this tension could emanate also from the

investigation of poverty and unemployment. In Chapter Three, it was acknowledged that Booth's mapping of poverty gave a certain basis for demands to be placed on the state, because of how it exposed the extent of the problem of metropolitan poverty. The same chapter looked at how professional experts (including at the Board of Trade under Llewellyn Smith) sought to contain the political consequences of statistical investigation. It looked also at how, in defining eligibility of insurance as a right for which workers either did, or did not qualify, the idea of a juridical subject who could claim benefits on the basis of clear entitlements was opened up.

Exploring the representation of the poor and unemployed was an important part of the thesis' contribution. Each historical period surveyed operated with different, stereotypical figures around whom stigmatizing discourses circulated – the pauper, the “unemployable”, the “scrounger” and so on. Chapter Four, though, argued that representation was a politically contested process. It explored that process through the political representation of the unemployed from the 1880s through to the interwar period and how there was often a “representational gap” between the demands of the unemployed “from below” and the groups that represented them “from above”. The study of the NUWM established how the radical demands of the unemployed and their insistence on the “right to work or full maintenance” challenged accepted ideas of intervention. They asserted the existence of involuntary unemployment and the need to eliminate it in ways that would ameliorate the position of labour.

Representation was explored in the “social explorer” genre too, and how its themes of the “jungle” and travelling “as the Poor” found their way into Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Orwell's portrayals of working-class homes as dirty and

smelly suggested an ambiguous sympathy for the poor and unemployed. Yet his ironic jabs at middle-class opinion offered reflection on class prejudice as a means of challenging stigma. We were reminded of the importance of social explorers for how poverty and unemployment come to be known more popularly, and the dangers of slipping into invidious stereotyping.

The thesis used the Foucauldian approach to establish how particular forms of pastoral power attempted to govern the conduct and behaviour of the poor and unemployed. These forms encouraged good character and habits, thrift and forethought and, under workfare, increasingly worked on different facets of individual psychology and “irrationality”. This approach allowed for an exploration of how social control works in ways that are productive of different subjectivities and dispositions. In Chapter Two we saw how Jevons recommended more civilized leisure activities and inter-class mingling in order to elevate working-class people from the depravity of their usual exploits and Marshall advocated a kind of manly vigour. The analysis of Bosanquet and the COS in Chapter Three demonstrated how the household became a more intensified site of pastoral power in the late-nineteenth century, establishing case-work as an important technique for judging the deserving and undeserving. Likewise, Alfred Marshall’s emphasis on the responsibility of parents, and in particular mothers, for fostering human capital and social and moral development, was explored in Chapter Two.

We saw across different chapters how character was connected to understandings of work motivation and labour supply within different perspectives on poverty and unemployment. This focus on individual character and the relationship to work defined both social and economic conceptions of unemployment, centring on the voluntary nature of its status. Character could

explain: the incidence of pauperism; the existence and behaviour of the “residuum” or the “unemployable” and how to deal with them; the need to secure the national insurance system against the “habitual casual”; and the dangers of a “demoralized” mass of the long-term unemployed becoming estranged from the labour market, and so becoming socially and psychologically impaired.

These explanations derived from, and were in turn supported by forms of social control that partitioned and classified the population in various ways, or segregated and excluded them. However, the shaping of character worked also in productive ways through interventions designed to socialize behaviour, habits and dispositions. This was the case with the inculcation of the “thrifty subject” in the insurance system, the “respectable” household encouraged by the COS and the “active welfare subject” developed by those working in Jobcentres and the workfare industry. Investigating how these subjectivities were worked on at different times in different ways and how they related to more exclusionary practices allowed the thesis to historicize and deconstruct forms of social control.

Emphasizing the latest forms of pastoral power and labour market discipline in the workfare era was important in this regard. In Chapter Five the thesis showed how poverty and unemployment continue to be understood in moralized terms, and how character education increasingly links moral dispositions and “performance” virtues to social mobility and employment opportunities. The chapter indicated also that parenting continues to be a pretext for imposing blame for poverty and the lack of development of character. However, behaviour change interventions in workfare are imposing ever-greater psychological burdens on claimants through efforts to govern attitude, motivations, positivity and “irrational” mindsets. These interventions are linked to

an extremely punitive sanctions regime. The thesis emphasized the importance of remaining alert to the fact that there is still close entanglement of pastoral power and deterrent logics.

Although the historical interventions that were made were intentionally selective, the thesis showed that wider historical context is important for understanding the motivations of those seeking to understand and deal with poverty and unemployment at any given time. This context was considered in several instances in terms of wider perceptions of crisis. A sense of crisis, it was argued, motivates the Social Question in general and we need to understand how it animates particular understandings of poverty and unemployment. In Chapter One, we saw how English neoclassical economists engaged with the crisis of *laissez faire* and the need for social intervention, but remained wedded to notions of character, self-reliance and even earlier discourses of “manners” at the same time.

In Chapter Three it was shown how the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was animated by a crisis first of social relations between labour and capital, and subsequently of national efficiency and imperial decline. In the latter case, this crisis perception legitimated widely but loosely held evolutionary explanations concerning the fitness of the working population. Chapter Four showed how, in the interwar period, a crisis of long-term unemployment and demoralization of the unemployed motivated the surveillance of unemployed people’s psychology. This perception was subsequently linked to economic theories of persistent unemployment, or “hysteresis”, and “activation” policies later in the twentieth century. Finally, in the workfare era, the thesis demonstrated that, under the Coalition, the idea of a Broken Society was based on a perceived crisis of parenting, of anti-social, excluded populations and of moral dispositions

and behaviour. Below the Conclusion mounts a further defence of the historical approach and considers some methodological and theoretical implications of the thesis.

The Importance of an Historical Approach

The thesis has committed to an historical approach to poverty and unemployment as a means to better understand and deconstruct particular perspectives of the poor and unemployed and what they are subjected to today. In the Preface to her social and political history of unemployment in Britain, *Bad Times*, Noel Whiteside declares that '[u]nemployment as a social problem is best understood within an historical framework' (Whiteside 1991: xii). While I thoroughly agree, as stated above, I have not attempted to perform a narrative history of poverty and unemployment across the historical period covered. I argue, instead, that multiple benefits are at least as clearly derived from the way in which I have chosen to engage with a series of historical perspectives from various figures and groups.

Through selective interventions I have been able to showcase perspectives that will not have been written about collectively in this way before. The figures and groups looked at are normally the preserve of separate disciplines: sociology, social policy and social work for Booth, Bosanquet and Llewellyn Smith; economics and the history of economic thought for Jevons and Marshall; labour history or social history for the NUWM; and English literature for Orwell. Looking at these perspectives together, as I have done, therefore allows analysis to cross disciplinary boundaries in new and inventive ways. For example, considering the contested representation of the unemployed in literature in Chapter Four made it

possible to draw parallels with how they have been represented through other media and in other realms.

Some figures, such as Llewellyn Smith, undoubtedly merit more attention than they have been given in the past for the way in which they contributed to the definition and government of unemployment. Others, the thesis has shown, deserve to be read afresh in different ways. Jevons and Marshall are usually read in terms of their contribution to economic thought, but not as much, certainly within the economics discipline, in terms of the way that they perceived social issues and how that related to their economics. Exploring the way that economic models are built upon understandings of “economic man” throughout history allows for new critiques of accepted assumptions concerning the “scientific” principles of economics (Morgan 2006). Chapters One and Two confirmed that early neoclassical economics is ripe for this kind of intervention, but that intervention will be worthwhile only if we pay attention to the way that social problems were conceived alongside, and affected the development of, the economics discipline.

Going a step further and looking at how the assumptions behind economic theories and how they travel into the political or policy sphere is a complicated task. The thesis pursued this task through connecting perspectives on demoralization with “hysteresis” and subsequently “activation” in Chapter Four. In Chapter One it connected the neoclassical theory of distribution and marginal productivity theory to arguments concerning the need to reduce wage rates made in the early 1930s. What the thesis did not set out to pursue was a thorough historiography of economic understandings of unemployment. There thus remains scope to explore further these lineages of economic thought and how they connect

to policy. This is particular the case considering that the scope here was limited to the Anglophone neoclassical tradition.

As Davies has noted, ‘techniques of economic rationalization rarely colonize or invade the political, public and sovereign realms, as the metaphor of ‘economic imperialism’ would have it, without some justification of their own ... Instead, they adapt to the particular rhetorical, normative and pragmatic purposes of the actors who use them’ (Davies 2014: 26-27). There is no doubt that proponents of the behavioural economics approach of “nudging” have sought to adapt to the governmental rationalities and pragmatic commitments of workfare. Chapter Five makes that clear. There is certainly greater scope to explore critically the interrelationship of the history of economic ideas and the emerging literature on wellbeing and work (see Davies 2015; Fleming 2015) and link this to developments in workfare. It is no coincidence that one of the main proponents of wellbeing and “happiness economics”, Richard Layard, is also the person who developed theories of the labour market that pointed to “activation” policies and is now advocating therapeutic interventions in Jobcentres (van Stolk et al. 2014).

In terms of other methodological implications of the historical approach I have used here, it may seem remarkable that I have, in a sense, written a history of welfare without mentioning “welfare” very much. There is perhaps a tendency to consider the welfare state as stigma-free. Jones and Novak (1999: 139) argued that, for a lucky generation of people, the post-war welfare state ‘appears as a relatively brief interlude in the otherwise dismal role of state policy in its dealings with the poor.’ Yet the continuity of underclass discourses across this era, including “problem families”, suggests that stigmatizing discourses and practices never truly abated (Welshman 2013; Macnicol 1987).

I was less interested in telling the story of the erosion of the welfare state, and social rights in the transition from Keynesianism to neoliberalism, than in exploring the ways in which such an idea of social rights emerged in the first place in tension with various practices of social control. The literature from the Marxist regulation school that covers workfare is weak on perspectives and practices from the pre-welfare state era. The thesis sought to fill this void. I am making an obvious political statement in exploring historical antecedents of punitive practices today: that, even though we no longer live in the era of the workhouse and labour colonies, certain logics that underpin the punishment of the poor and unemployed within workfare are analogous to nineteenth century principles, such as the idea of “less eligibility”.

I was also interested in exploring the original construction of unemployment and its relationship to casual labour from the vantage of an era defined by precarious labour (Standing 2011). The comparisons between casual labour today, and in the historical periods covered, showed that there remains more scope to explore the relationship between regulation of the labour market and of relief and welfare practices then and now (see Whiteside 2014). This is especially the case as, under the emerging system of Universal Credit, those *in work* will now be open to sanctioning if they are not working enough hours (Dwyer & Wright 2014).

There are methodological implications from the theoretical framework that has been adopted here. To return to the theoretical discussion from the Introduction, there is certainly more room for considering the compatibility between Marxist and Foucauldian approaches to “the social” as suggested by

Jessop (2007). The relationship between the two approaches was most fully developed in Chapter Five, where Marxist regulation school approaches were used to explain the deepening commodification of the unemployed through the workfare industry and Foucauldian approaches to explain the intensification of pastoral power in new behaviour change techniques.

It remains the case that Marxist approaches pay attention to and explain much better than Foucauldian the structures of the labour market and their historical evolution. Marxist approaches are thus to be preferred for explaining why labour must continuously be adapted to the requirements of capitalist economy. There is no reason, though, not to use Foucauldian perspectives to understand the multiple institutions, discourses, forms of knowledge and techniques that go into “knowing” and governing the “active welfare subject”. Chapter Five argued that forms of pastoral power that seek to conduct claimants’ attitudes towards work facilitate the structural relationship of workfare to labour market discipline and precarious and low-paid work.

Future avenues of research

New perspectives, born of experiences and analysis of new forms of coercion and social control, will very likely open up new opportunities for fresh reading of old literatures, especially those explicitly discussing social control (Higgins 1980; Cohen & Scull 1983; Cohen 1985; Davidson 1985; Dean, H. 1991; Jones 1983; Garland 1985) and how it relates to new literature on workfare from Foucauldian and Marxist perspectives (Cromby & Willis 2013; Wiggan 2015; Grover 2012), and new perspectives on behaviour change and social control (Harrison & Sanders 2014).

One of the biggest motivators for using an historical approach to explore the antecedents of stigma today has been a concern for the dignity of the people whose working lives and social conditions lie at the core of the thesis. The conditionality attached to receiving benefits of various kinds today means that the welfare system reaches deep into people's lives, influencing them in profound ways. When I embarked on researching the history of welfare and relief my interests were in part political. Shortly after I began, I became a supporting, and occasionally active, member of Boycott Workfare, the campaign group discussed in Chapter Four. Like the NUWM was, it is in great part formed of those who have experienced unemployment and workfare programmes themselves. And like the NUWM, it has provided vital information for claimants on their rights and how to negotiate the systems of conditionality and punishment they face.

I have learnt much more about the experience of workfare from Boycott Workfare colleagues than I ever could have done without joining the group. Consideration of claimants' experiences of workfare is slowly being acknowledged as an academic concern (Wright 2015; Friedli & Stearn 2015).

My hope is that the research I have undertaken in the thesis will open up room for narratives to counter the daily shaming of claimants in public life.

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