

Article

"Bosanquet and British Political Thought"

William Sweet

Laval théologique et philosophique, vol. 55, n° 1, 1999, p. 99-114.

Pour citer cet article, utiliser l'information suivante :

URI: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/401218ar>

DOI: 10.7202/401218ar

Note : les règles d'écriture des références bibliographiques peuvent varier selon les différents domaines du savoir.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter à l'URI <https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. Érudit offre des services d'édition numérique de documents scientifiques depuis 1998.

Pour communiquer avec les responsables d'Érudit : info@erudit.org

BOSANQUET AND BRITISH POLITICAL THOUGHT*

William Sweet

Department of Philosophy
St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia

RÉSUMÉ : La place de l'idéalisme britannique dans l'histoire de la pensée politique a fait l'objet de beaucoup de débats. D'aucuns ont soutenu qu'il constituait « un changement complet » par rapport à la tradition libérale de Mill et Bentham. Nous réexaminons ici quelques traits de la philosophie politique de Bosanquet, tentant de montrer que son caractère prétendument conservateur et « illibéral » est loin d'être évident. Il n'empêche — même si l'on trouve bon nombre de valeurs libérales clés dans la pensée de Bosanquet — qu'à plusieurs égards importants il rompt avec la tradition libérale antérieure en Grande-Bretagne. Ce qui nous permet de tirer quelques conclusions touchant la place de l'idéalisme dans l'histoire du libéralisme britannique au dix-neuvième siècle.

ABSTRACT : The place of British idealism in the history of political thought has been the subject of much debate. Some have maintained that it represented "a complete change" from the liberal tradition of Mill and Bentham. We reexamine here some features of Bosanquet's political philosophy, arguing that evidence for its alleged "conservative" or "illiberal" character is far from conclusive. Still, while there are a number of key liberal values to be found in Bosanquet's thought, in several important respects he breaks with the earlier liberal tradition in Britain. This will allow us to draw some conclusions about the place of idealism in the history of 19th century British liberalism.

The place of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century idealists in the history of British political thought has been the subject of much disagreement. Some have seen them as taking positions that are incompatible, if not entirely incommensurable, with the classical liberalism of Locke, Bentham and Mill. Others, such as L.T. Hobhouse¹ and, more recently, John Morrow² have argued that there is a significant shift in political philosophy from the earlier (e.g., T.H. Green) to the later (e.g., Bernard Bosanquet and D.G. Ritchie) idealists and that it is only this "second genera-

* Previous versions of this paper have been presented at the conference on "Idealism in the Twentieth Century" sponsored by the British Society for the History of Philosophy (University of Hertfordshire, England, September, 1994), and at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, (Université du Québec à Montréal, June, 1995). I am grateful to the participants for their critical comments.

1. See Leonard T. HOBHOUSE, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1918.
2. See John MORROW, "Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy : A Reassessment," *History of Political Thought*, 5 (1984), p. 91-108, at 93 and 109, and "Ancestors, Legacies and Traditions : British Idealism in the History of Political Thought," *History of Political Thought*, 6 (1985), p. 491-515, at 513-514.

tion" that is fundamentally "illiberal". And there are yet others, such as A.D. Lindsay and Frederick Harris, who have maintained a quite contrary view — that "the social philosophy of British Neo-idealism exhibits a fundamental continuity with British liberal thought from the time of Locke."³

I wish to return to this question by focusing on some aspects of what is, arguably, the most developed account of later idealist political thought — namely, that found in the work of Bosanquet. After briefly considering the main arguments for the three interpretations noted above, I suggest that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that Bosanquet's views "signified a clear break with liberal political theory."⁴ Nevertheless, I also suggest that, in several important respects, Bosanquet moves beyond the liberalism of such figures as Bentham and Mill.

I

According to one of the first extensive studies of the movement, Rudolf Metz's *Die philosophischen Strömungen der Gegenwart in Großbritannien*,⁵ British idealism was not merely an alternative to the preceding utilitarian and empiricist traditions, but represented "a complete change."⁶ It was, Metz writes, "a complete recoil from the old ways, a turning of the philosophic rudder in an entirely new direction"⁷ from that of "John Stuart Mill, in whom all the currents of philosophical thought then really alive met."⁸

This thesis was taken up, developed, and applied to idealist political thought by Klaus Dockhorn, in his 1937 study, *Die Staatsphilosophie des englischen Idealismus, ihre Lehre und Wirkung*.⁹ Dockhorn argues here that there had long been a fundamental distinction between German and English theories of the state. Germanic political thought, he claims, had focused on "the realization of the moral worth of the state, the grandeur of the political, [and] the spiritual-organic way of being of the community" whereas English political theorists had traditionally concentrated on "living together as 'society,' as [a kind of] 'limited company,' as an aggregate and as

-
3. Frederick Philip HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory. Its Continuity with the British Tradition*, New York, King's Crown Press, 1944 (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University), p. 1. See also A.D. LINDSAY, "T.H. Green and the Idealists," in *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age*, F.J.C. Hearnshaw, ed., London, Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1933, p. 150-164 [reprinted as an Introduction to the 4th, 5th and 6th editions of Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*].
 4. J. MORROW, "Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy: A Reassessment," p. 107.
 5. Rudolf METZ, *Die philosophischen Strömungen der Gegenwart in Großbritannien*, Leipzig, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1935 (translated as *A Hundred Years of British Philosophy*, tr. J.W. Harvey, T.E. Jessop and Henry Sturt; J.H. Muirhead, ed., London, Allen and Unwin, 1938).
 6. See *ibid.*, p. 237.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 244-245.
 9. Klaus DOCKHORN, *Die Staatsphilosophie des englischen Idealismus, ihre Lehre und Wirkung*, Köln/Bochum-Langendreer, Heinrich Poppinghaus o. H.-G., 1937. Bosanquet is discussed on p. 61-116.

the association of interests of bare individuals.”¹⁰ With the introduction of idealism into England, however, the earlier “individualistic tradition [was confronted with] a new organic theory that exalts the supremacy of the national state.”¹¹ Thus, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, “unheroic-bourgeois, liberal-individualist, unconnected-secular, humanitarian-moral, ‘civilizing’-positivistic, Enlightenment-abstract” thought¹² was replaced by a “*Gemeinschaftsmetaphysik*, that enables the individual to lose himself in a mystical union with the superior unity of the state.”¹³ On this view, then, British idealism — its political thought in particular — is an aberration in the history of Anglo-Saxon philosophy, and (so a number of commentators have since argued) it is understandable why its influence seems to have lasted only as long as its major exponents were alive.¹⁴

Although the Metz-Dockhorn interpretation reflects a still-influential reading of the place of idealism in the history of British political thought,¹⁵ there is a second, more modest, view. L.T. Hobhouse, J.A. Hobson and John Morrow,¹⁶ among others, have claimed that there was a shift from T.H. Green’s idealism to the later formulations by F.H. Bradley,¹⁷ D.G. Ritchie¹⁸ and, particularly, Bosanquet. It was only after Green, they argue, that British idealism explicitly adopted both the ontology and the political philosophy underlying the “Germanic” theory of the state. As the later idealists became more “Hegelian,” however, they “retreated” from the liberal tradition.¹⁹

-
10. Dockhorn opposes “die Erkenntnis der sittlichen Würde des Staates, der Erhabenheit des Politischen, der geistig-organischen Wesenart der Gemeinschaft” of German “Staatslehre” with the English “Zusammenleben als ‘society,’ als ‘limited company,’ als Aggregat und Interessenverband bloßer Individuen zu begreifen” (*ibid.*, p. VII).
 11. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 3.
 12. “Bürgerlich-unheroisch, individualistisch-liberal, bindingslos-säkularisch, moralistisch-humanitär, zivilisatorisch-positivistisch, aufklärerisch-abstrakt” (K. DOCKHORN, *Die Staatsphilosophie des englischen Idealismus, ihre Lehre und Wirkung*, p. VII).
 13. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 3.
 14. Bosanquet died in 1923, F.H. Bradley in 1924 and J.M.E. McTaggart in 1925. By the time that A.J. Ayer’s *Language, Truth and Logic* was published, in 1936, idealism as a philosophical school in England was in sharp decline (See R. METZ, *Die philosophischen Strömungen der Gegenwart in Großbritannien*, p. 258).
 15. This view, long accepted in the Anglo-Saxon world, can also be seen in Bertrand Russell’s comments on idealism in his “Philosophy in the Twentieth Century” (in *Sceptical Essays*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1962, p. 39). Similarly, J.L. Hemingway argues that idealism represents “a significant break in the liberal tradition, particularly in its introduction of German idealist elements into Anglo-Saxon liberalism” (See his *The Emergence of an Ethical Liberalism. A Study in Idealist Liberalism from Thomas Hill Green to the Present*, Ph.D. thesis in political science, University of Iowa, 1979).
 16. See the texts cited in notes 1 and 2, above, as well as J.A. HOBSON, *The Crisis of Liberalism. New Issues of Democracy*, London, 1909.
 17. Peter Nicholson has argued that Bradley was not conservative — or, at least, not as conservative as usually held. See Peter P. NICHOLSON, “Bradley as a Political Philosopher,” in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, Anthony Manser and Guy Stock, ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 117-130; and his *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists. Selected Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
 18. See, for example, Ritchie’s *Natural Rights. A Criticism of Some Political and Ethical Conceptions*, London, Sonnenschein, 1895; and *The Principles of State Interference. Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill and T.H. Green*, London, 1891.
 19. J. MORROW, “Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy: A Reassessment,” p. 93.

This second reading of the later idealism focuses on Bosanquet's work and, specifically, on his accounts of the limits of state authority and the value of the individual. In his classic critique of idealist political thought, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, Hobhouse describes Bosanquet as the "most modern and most faithful exponent"²⁰ of a Hegelian social philosophy wherein the state becomes "an end in itself."²¹ Bosanquet, Hobhouse maintained, follows Hegel in a defence of a "god-state"²² which is above all criticism and, in such an environment, the individual human being ceases to have importance.²³ (Morrow finds an illustration of this in what he sees as Bosanquet's openness to eugenics as a solution to the "problem" of "hereditary paupers"²⁴.) Furthermore, this view asserts, such consequences are not accidental; Bosanquet's political philosophy here is entirely consistent with the principles underlying his logic and his metaphysics.

Both of the preceding accounts, then, hold that later idealist political thought — particularly, that of Bosanquet — is inconsistent with, if not antithetical to, British liberalism. For evidence of this, critics often cite Bosanquet's remarks on the nature of the state, the individual and the general will. For example, attention has frequently been drawn to Bosanquet's claims that the state is an "organism,"²⁵ that its power is "absolute" (PTS 192; see PTS XIII) and that there is little with which the state should not concern itself (PTS XII). Again, Bosanquet repeatedly insists that the human individual is not an ultimate principle of value²⁶ and that the state can "force" individuals "to be free" (PTS 119). Finally, Bosanquet asserts that all organized social life must be based on a common good and on a general will that represents rationality *par excellence*, and that the state may do "with the moral approval of all what the explicit theory of scarcely one will morally justify"²⁷. These remarks seem to be in clear conflict with the classical liberal accent on the inherent worth of the individual, the emphasis on diversity, pluralism and the right of individuals to determine and to

20. L.T. HOBHOUSE, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, p. 18. I have argued against this view in "Was Bosanquet a Hegelian?," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 31 (1995), p. 39-60.

21. L.T. HOBHOUSE, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, p. 73.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Similarly, Herbert Marcuse alleges that Bosanquet's theory makes "the individual a victim of the hypostatized state universal, so characteristic of the later Fascist ideology" (*Reason and Revelation. Hegel and the rise of Social Theory*, 2nd ed., Boston, Beacon Press, 1960, p. 393). See also Hugh Joseph TALLON, *The Concept of Self in British and American Idealism*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1939, p. 134; and J. MORROW, "Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy: A Reassessment," p. 43.

24. J. MORROW, "Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy: A Reassessment," p. 103; J. MORROW, "Ancestors, Legacies and Traditions: British Idealism in the History of Political Thought," p. 511-512.

25. *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, 1st ed., 1899; 4th ed., London, 1923, p. 23. All future references to this will be abbreviated as PTS and included in the text.

26. See *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, London, Macmillan, 1912, p. 310; and "Do Finite Individuals possess a substantive or an adjectival mode of being?," in *Life and Finite Individuality* (H. Wildon Carr, ed.), *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 1, p. 75-102; 179-194, esp. p. 86-87.

27. See "The Function of the State in Promoting the Unity of Mankind," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n.s. XVII (1916-1917), p. 28-57 (reprinted in *Social and International Ideals*, London, 1917, p. 270-301), p. 274, citing F.H. BRADLEY, *Ethical Studies*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1927, p. 184. All future references to this will be abbreviated as FS and included in the text.

pursue their private conceptions of the good, and the necessity of imposing limits on state action.

On these two accounts, then, if he was not explicitly statist and "absolutist,"²⁸ Bosanquet was, at the very least, "conservative."²⁹ Given its opposition to individualism, its accent on the authority of the state and its alleged tendency to find the ideal in the real, his work appears to defend, if not glorify, the status quo.³⁰ Thus, Bosanquet has been described as "the 'ideal' expression of the Tory *noblesse oblige* of the Disraeli-Joseph Chamberlain-Unionist tradition"³¹ and, according to Bertrand Russell, "[r]eligion and conservatism look mainly to this school for defense against heresy and revolution."³² If the preceding arguments are correct, Bosanquet's political thought clearly lies outside the late nineteenth century British liberal tradition.

II

Nevertheless, these interpretations are by no means universally accepted. It has been claimed, not only that nineteenth and early twentieth-century British idealism reflects a lengthy tradition of idealist thought in the Anglo-Saxon world³³ but that its political philosophy is in continuity with earlier liberalism. According to A.D. Lindsay, "so far as their political and social theories are concerned, the idealists 'are all of them, for all their Platonism and Hegelianism, in the succession of the utilitarians,'"³⁴ and, more recently, Gerald Gaus has argued that "J.S. Mill, Green, Bosanquet, L.T. Hobhouse, John Dewey and John Rawls share fundamental assumptions and constitute a single, coherent tradition of liberal thinking."³⁵

-
28. Andrew VINCENT, Raymond PLANT, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship. The Life and Thought of the British Idealists*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, p. 121.
29. See L.T. HOBHOUSE, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, p. 24; J.A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, p. 197, cited in F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 109, n. 104; J.H. RANDALL, Jr. "Idealistic Social Philosophy and Bernard Bosanquet," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXVI (1966), p. 473-502 (reprinted in *The Career of Philosophy*, 3 vols., vol. 3, New York, Columbia University Press, 1977, p. 97-130); and F.C. COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 8, pt. 1, Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1966, p. 260. Copleston writes that "Idealist political theory is unduly conservative" and leads to "disastrous moral conformism."
30. See G.D.H. COLE, "Loyalties," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n.s. XXVI (1925-1926), p. 151-170, at p. 164; and Harold LASKI, *Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1917, p. 23.
31. J.H. RANDALL, Jr. "Idealistic Social Philosophy and Bernard Bosanquet," p. 115.
32. B. RUSSELL, "Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," in *Sceptical Essays*, p. 39.
33. See J.H. MUIRHEAD, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy. Studies in the History of Idealism in England*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1931; and Frank M. TURNER, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981.
34. A.D. LINDSAY, "T.H. Green and the Idealists," p. 151 (cited in F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 2-3).
35. As summarized by Peter P. NICHOLSON, "A Moral View of Politics: T.H. Green and the British Idealists," *Political Studies*, XXXV (1987), p. 122; see Gerald GAUS, *The Modern Liberal Theory of Man*, Canberra, Croom Helm, 1983. While he says that Bosanquet is a liberal, it is interesting that Gaus does not explicitly define what he means by "liberal". Instead, he appears to use the six authors of his study to establish a "consensus" about what form liberalism might take and what "prescriptions" liberalism would support (see *ibid.*, p. 3-9).

There is much to be said in favour of this latter reading. Bosanquet was an active Liberal³⁶: he worked in elections on behalf of the Liberal Party³⁷, was pro-Boer during the South African War³⁸ and supported Irish home rule³⁹ and the extension of the right to vote. After resigning his position at University College, Oxford, in 1881, he moved to London, where he was a principal figure in the Charity Organization Society and became involved in educating social workers.⁴⁰ He lobbied for making university-level studies accessible to a wide audience, and organized courses of popular lectures through the London Ethical Society and the London School of Ethics and Social Philosophy.⁴¹ Moreover, Bosanquet defends a number of liberal⁴² principles in his work — he emphasizes the importance of human liberty, claims that the nature and form of government are limited by individual interests, and argues for the recognition of the value of the individual.

Specifically, Bosanquet advances a political philosophy in which the “end” of the state is liberty and personal development — “the perfection of human personality” (PTS 189). State action is described as the “hindrance of hindrances” (PTS 182ff.), and it is to be employed only to protect or ensure individual moral activity.⁴³ Moreover, for Bosanquet, the only legitimate form of government is “self government”⁴⁴

-
36. See also F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 37-38 and 110, n. 136. According to his wife, Helen, Bosanquet “was always an advanced Liberal with a strong sympathy for Labour aspirations” (*Bernard Bosanquet. A Short Account of his Life*, London, Macmillan, 1924, p. 97).
37. See A.M. MCBRIAR, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles. The Bosanquets versus the Webbs. A Study in British Social Policy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 8.
38. See J.H. MUIRHEAD, ed., *Bernard Bosanquet and his Friends. Letters Illustrating the Sources and Development of his Philosophical Opinions*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1935.
39. See *ibid.*, p. 309 and 311; and H. BOSANQUET, *Bernard Bosanquet. A Short Account of his Life*, p. 99-102.
40. See A. VINCENT, R. PLANT, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, chapter 6; and Ellen JACOBS, *Bernard Bosanquet. Social and Political Thought*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (City University of New York, 1986), chapter 5.
41. See A. VINCENT, R. PLANT, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, p. 95-126; A.M. MCBRIAR, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles*, p. 6-7; and E. JACOBS, *Bernard Bosanquet. Social and Political Thought*, chapters 6 and 8.
42. See Joseph RAZ’s definition of “liberalism” as the view that political authorities “are bound by principles requiring the promotion and protection of freedom” (see *The Morality of Freedom*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 21). For some important recent discussions of the term, see William GALSTON, *Liberal Purposes. Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991, and Jeremy WALDRON, “Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 37 (1987), p. 128.
43. In fact, it is for reasons such as this that Bosanquet was accused by Hobhouse and Hobson of being too “individualistic” (see Stefan COLLINI, “Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State. Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England: 1880-1918,” *Past and Present*, 72 (1976), p. 87, 95 and 109).
44. Admittedly, the notion of “self government” here is quite different from that employed by earlier liberals, such as Bentham or Mill. It seems that, wherever one finds a system of institutions which function in order to attain a public and common good, Bosanquet would allow that one has an example of genuine and legitimate self government — even if, paradoxically, that government turns out not to be democratic. Thus, for Bosanquet, it is possible to have “self government” where the form of government is neither popularly elected nor representative — and even where the state is directed by a single individual. (Here, one might think of Hegel’s view of a single head of state — a “monarch” — who establishes, promulgates and enforces law. See *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, [tr. T.M. Knox, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1945], secs. 279ff. and 286.) Nevertheless, as I note below, Bosanquet would insist that, in the western world at least, self-government should be democratic.

which, he says, is based on the will of the individual, *via* the mechanism of the “rational” or “real will”⁴⁵. And, for peoples that have reached a level of civilization comparable to his own, he would insist that government have the form of a representative, parliamentary democracy (e.g., PTS XXX ; LVIII ; 51 ; 66). One also finds in Bosanquet a defence of individual rights that have legal weight and that serve as a measure to evaluate the moral character of states (PTS 189 ; FS 277).⁴⁶ Finally, he argues that the activity of the state is subject to change as a result of “criticism” from within (PTS 111, 140)⁴⁷ and, in the event that a particular government does not respond to such criticism, he says that one may even have a duty to rebel against it (FS 281 ; see PTS 199).

Bosanquet also underscores the importance of the individual. Although he takes pains to remind his readers of the social dimension of the human person, Bosanquet denies that individuals can be reduced to their functions or that they become “one with the community” (PTS 51), and says that the individual is unique — though “not as an atom, but as a case of a law” (PTS 292). In fact, some of Bosanquet’s remarks suggest a value for the individual based on the will, *à la* Kant.⁴⁸ He says that “[t]he will or character which is the atmosphere of values and shares their quality is itself a value... [and has] a value of its own”⁴⁹ and that “we have an undeniable human value of a distinct and universal type, in which there cannot be a human creature who is not a partaker in some mode or degree.”⁵⁰

Bosanquet’s recognition of the worth of the individual is also reflected in his claim that “[t]he aim of politics is to find and realise the individual” (PTS LVI). Admittedly, in *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, he seems to hold that the value of a human person is influenced by the extent to which that person fulfils the requirements of his or her position or function in society.⁵¹ But this does not mean that

45. Bosanquet’s argument for the identification of the general will and the individual’s real will cannot be given here. I discuss this controversial notion in “Bernard Bosanquet and the Development of Rousseau’s Idea of the General Will,” *Man and Nature – L’Homme et la Nature*, X (1991), p. 179-197. See also P. NICHOLSON, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists. Selected Studies*, p. 198-230.

46. For an extended argument on this point, see my “Individual Rights, Communitarianism, and British Idealism,” in *The Bill of Rights. Bicentennial Reflections*, Y. Hudson and C. Peden, ed., Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, p. 261-277.

47. As Nicholson notes, “Bosanquet’s position, far from being one of ‘bedrock conservatism’ [this is Hobhouse’s objection. See L.T. HOBHOUSE, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, p. 24], is one of permanent reform” (Peter P. NICHOLSON, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists. Selected Studies*, p. 221). For an opposing view, see Stefan COLLINI, “Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State. Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England : 1880-1918,” p. 110.

48. There are other apparent Kantian influences in Bosanquet’s work, such as the emphasis on the value of motive in moral action and on the development of moral character — the “good will” — as the end of moral life.

49. See *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, London, Sonnenschein, 1918, p. 132.

50. *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 77.

51. BOSANQUET states that one cannot separate individuals from their roles in society : “man really does not exist as man without *some* station and duties” (“The Kingdom of God on Earth,” in *Essays and Addresses*, London, 1889, p. 116, reprinted in *Science and Philosophy and Other Essays by the Late Bernard Bosanquet*, J.H. Muirhead and R.C. Bosanquet, ed., London, 1927). And it would seem that there is little to persons apart from the functions they have and the positions they fill. (See Bosanquet’s reference to an individual who loses all her “positions” and functions [*ibid.*, p. 118].)

the individual is just an instrument necessary to carry out certain social tasks. Bosanquet emphasizes that the individual self cannot be used as a means. Again, it is true that Bosanquet says it is the “realization of human personality as a whole,” and not the human individual, that is the basis or principle of value. Nevertheless, by insisting that one cannot have an adequate account of the nature and value of individuals, separate from the social world in which they exist, it does not follow their value is incidental or secondary.⁵² For Bosanquet, neither the individual nor the state is fundamental; an individual is neither merely a means, nor of instrumental value, to anything else; he writes that “[t]o make the totality the means to the differentiation or *vice versa* is like making a drama the means to the characters, or the characters the means to the drama” (PTS 168).

This third view of later idealist political thought acknowledges that Bosanquet’s philosophy must be distinguished from the more “atomistic” views of Bentham, Mill and Spencer. Harris maintains that the idealists, Bosanquet among them, “were reinterpreting an indigenous empirical theory and bringing to a more complete development the British concept of individuality”⁵³, which he calls “socialized individuality.”⁵⁴ Moreover, this view claims that, in arguing that the principle of value is to be found in the “realization of human personality as a whole” — which, Bosanquet would note, is consistent with the value of the individual — the later idealists are seeking to avoid the kinds of problems that arise in theories that insist that individuals have an absolute value (e.g., how to resolve those cases where the desires — and the putative rights — of individuals may conflict)⁵⁵. Harris concludes that, despite these differences, “idealist liberalism [including that of Bosanquet] was a continuation of what was essential and lasting in the earlier liberalism.”⁵⁶

On this third reading, then, there is no inconsistency between Bosanquet’s idealism and nineteenth century liberal political thought. Not only does one find a general defence of liberal democratic institutions, such as representative government, but a similarity in basic principles and in aim.⁵⁷

52. See my “F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet on the Nature and Value of the Individual,” paper read at the XIXth World Congress of Philosophy [Moscow, Russia], August 1993, and “‘Absolute Idealism’ and Finite Individuality,” *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, XXIV, 4 (October 1997).

53. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 2. This characteristic is also emphasized by Gerald Gaus.

54. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 101.

55. Stefan COLLINI, “Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State. Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England: 1880-1918,” p. 110-111.

56. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 5. One example of this might be found in Mill’s reference to the “Greek ideal of self-development” and the comparable notion of “self-realization” promoted by the idealists. (For Mill’s view, see *On Liberty*, Elizabeth Rapaport, ed., Indianapolis, IN, Hackett Publ. Co, 1978, p. 59.)

57. For further support of these claims, see my “Liberalism, Bosanquet and the Theory of the State,” in *Liberalism, Oppression and Empowerment*, Y. Hudson and C. Peden, ed., Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 3-34; and “Law and Liberty in J.S. Mill and Bernard Bosanquet,” in *The Social Power of Ideas*, Y. Hudson and C. Peden, ed., Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, p. 361-385.

III

It may be objected, however, that there are a number of features of Bosanquet's social and political philosophy that are incompatible with liberalism. As noted above, Bosanquet has been charged with being open to "eugenics" as a means of dealing with "hereditary pauperism". And, further, his defense of the Majority report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law (1909)⁵⁸, and his resistance to state intervention in matters of social welfare, have led to the charge that his political thought is fundamentally "conservative." It has also been noted that Bosanquet describes society as "organic" and that the basis of social life is a "common good," so that individual interests and individual conceptions of the good must be ultimately unimportant. But this, a critic will note, is inconsistent with liberalism, and it is a view that has had notoriously illiberal consequences.

Such evidence is, nevertheless, not conclusive. To begin with, Bosanquet argued that the poor, as a class, are no more susceptible to vice than the rich (PTS 270), and he did not think that there was any evidence to suggest that poverty or criminality could be linked to heredity — though even if it were, the solution was not obviously "extinction," but segregation.⁵⁹ Although Bosanquet provides no argument against forced sterilization of the "congenitally feeble-minded," the proposal of "eugenic selection" was widely accepted in England at that time and was considered to be on a par with the control of disease. Bosanquet, however, explicitly rejected the view that "social improvement can come about only by selection."⁶⁰ And while the Majority report of the Poor Law Commission, with which Bosanquet largely agreed, did endorse the idea of "a penal system for the intractable residuum of paupers," this was also the opinion of the (predominantly Fabian socialist) authors of the minority report.⁶¹

Second, while it is true that Bosanquet questioned whether the state ought to guarantee full employment or provide housing for all (PTS 178), he nevertheless favoured wage and educational reform (PTS 178). He argues, for example, that publicly-financed education is necessary for the moral and intellectual development of the young — and points out that this policy has been effective (PTS 63). While there are differences between Bosanquet and earlier liberals, such as Mill, it seems that what separates them on several issues is not their endorsement of liberal ideals, but matters of strategy. There is a remarkable similarity between Mill's three restrictions on state action in *On Liberty*⁶² and Bosanquet's enumeration of the three cir-

58. See, for example, "Charity Organisation and the Majority Report," *International Journal of Ethics*, XX (1909-1910), p. 395-408.

59. See *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 186.

60. BRADLEY suggests this in his "Some Remarks on Punishment," in *Collected Essays*, Oxford, p. 149-164 (reprinted from *International Journal of Ethics*, 4 [April 1894]). BOSANQUET discusses Bradley's views in his *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 182. See also BOSANQUET's essay "Selection by Maintenance of a Social Standard," in *Social and International Ideals*, p. 136-160.

61. A. VINCENT, R. PLANT, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, p. 121.

62. J.S. MILL, *On Liberty*, p. 107-109.

cumstances under which state intervention in an individual's life is morally allowable (PTS 179-180), and Bosanquet sometimes criticizes Mill for proposing measures that seem inconsistent with Mill's own emphasis on the development of individual character.

Finally, it is not at all evident that a theory which insists on the centrality of a common good is incompatible with liberalism.⁶³ Bosanquet argues that the common good is each individual's good and, while it may not be what an individual wants at some particular moment, it does not follow that it conflicts with his or her interests.⁶⁴ Moreover, Bosanquet insists, this notion of a common good (which reflects the end of all human activity, the perfection of human personality) is the basis for his justification of the legitimacy of democratic institutions and for his defence of freedom. If one looks at history, the notion of a common good, by itself, no more leads to political totalitarianism than a positivistic theory of law does, and Bosanquet would undoubtedly deny that ethical pluralism or broad individual "licence" is necessary for either democracy or liberalism. And, furthermore, it has been argued by some contemporary liberals (such as William Galston and Steven DeLue) that the existence of a common good is compatible with liberalism and does not exclude the possibility of a sphere where individuals can pursue their private interests.⁶⁵

From what has been said, it is obvious that there are a number of key liberal principles present in Bosanquet's political thought. His ideal is that of a society where "free individuals, freely discussing and investigating, may freely develop their interests and their capacities."⁶⁶ And even though his concept of individuality is broader than that which one finds in earlier liberals, his commitment to democratic institutions and to the development of the human person is in line with their own. This is something which Bosanquet himself seems to recognize. In a letter of January 1907 to Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, he writes that there was a "remarkable thread of continuity between the Philos.[ophic] Radicals and the later development of the social spirit."⁶⁷ That Bosanquet would think that there was such a continuity is not, of course, surprising, given his view of the progressive nature of society and social change.

63. See, for example, the work of Jacques MARITAIN — especially, "La Personne et le Bien commun," *Revue thomiste*, XLVI, 2 (mai-août 1946), p. 237-278 ; *Man and the State*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951 ; and *Les Droits de l'homme et la loi naturelle*, New York, Éditions de la maison française, 1942.

64. It is true that pluralism or the freedom to determine one's own good is characteristic of many democratic traditions, but it does not seem that absolute liberty here is essential to liberalism ; Mill, one will recall, restricts liberty to individuals and cultures that are "mature" (See *On Liberty*, p. 9-10). Nor does a claim to entirely determine one's good seem justifiable unless the "atomic" individual is an ultimate principle of value.

65. See Steven M. DELUE, *Political Obligation in a Liberal State*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1989 ; and W. GALSTON, *Liberal Purposes*.

66. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. III ; cf. p. 103.

67. J.H. MUIRHEAD, ed., *Bernard Bosanquet and his Friends*, p. 114.

IV

Nevertheless, Bosanquet does break with the liberal tradition in a number of respects. Specifically, he rejects its analyses of liberty and the law and the description of the "individual" that, he would argue, these reflect.

Consider, to begin with, Bosanquet's discussion of the nature of liberty and the role of the state and law. According to the earlier, individualist tradition of liberalism, liberty is "the absence of [...] external impediments of motion," and one is free when "in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, [he] is not hindered to do what he has a will to do."⁶⁸ Corresponding to this account of liberty, these writers viewed law "negatively". By its very nature, law is a restriction of liberty and, as Mill says, "[a]ll restraint, *qua* restraint, is an evil."⁶⁹ Thus, these authors were concerned to ensure a "region of human liberty"⁷⁰ outside of the control of the law, where individuals can "pursue their own good in their own way."⁷¹

Bosanquet rejects this account in its entirety. He disagrees not only with a description of liberty as fundamentally "negative liberty," but with both the justification that he believes underlies it (e.g., the intrinsic value of the individual self) and its extent. At the very least, then, it is misleading to suggest (as Harris does) that the idealists were "inclined to accept Mill's theory of liberty."⁷² For Bosanquet, "liberty" means more than "absence of restraint". It means "becoming the best that we have it in us to be" (PTS 119) or what was referred to above as "self-realization."⁷³ This "end" is objective ; it is not a matter for each individual to determine. Still, Bosanquet also recognizes that "self-realization" is not attainable unless human beings participate actively in their own development. It is only through uncoerced moral activity that "the good" — the development of human personality — is possible.

Furthermore, Bosanquet insists that "law and order" is "the condition and guarantee" of liberty (PTS 119), and argues that there is no liberty where there is an absence of law. In fact, he says that, as the "restrictions" imposed by law increase, so does freedom (PTS 181-182)⁷⁴. It is, for example, through the law (and, where necessary, the exercise of force) that the state hinders or punishes those who impede other individuals in the exercise of their liberty. Again, certain compulsory enactments (such as those requiring and providing for the education of children) are the means to "an enlarged liberty"⁷⁵. Moreover, through the legal institution of punishment, the

68. Thomas HOBBS, *Leviathan*, Michael Oakeshott, ed., New York, Collier Books, 1962, ch. 21, p. 159.

69. J.S. MILL, *On Liberty*, p. 94. Similarly, according to Bentham, "[t]he evil of [...] restraint [is] [...] the pain which it gives a man not to be able to do the act." See his *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, ed., London, Athlone Press, 1970, p. 163 ; cf. PTS 53.

70. J.S. MILL, *On Liberty*, p. 11.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

72. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 102.

73. *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 148.

74. See "Liberty and Legislation," in *The Civilization of Christendom and other studies*, London, Sonnenschein, 1889, p. 358-383, especially p. 366-367.

75. "Liberty and Legislation," p. 369 ; see also p. 376.

state “brings us to our senses [...] [and] makes us conscious of our errors and the moral decision to improve our behaviour” (PTS 208). It is, in other words, by means of the state and the law that “we find at once discipline and expansion, the transfiguration of partial impulses, and something to do and to care for, such as the nature of a human self demands” (PTS 140). Indeed, following Kant, Bosanquet notes that the “free mind” cannot exist “[e]xcept by expressing itself in relation to an ordered life.”⁷⁶ But this is not to say that the state may do as it wishes, and Bosanquet insists that the law can properly be invoked only once certain conditions have been met (PTS 179-180).⁷⁷

Bosanquet also breaks with earlier liberalism so far as he rejects the individualism that, he argues, is presupposed in the theories of such liberals as Spencer, Bentham and Mill.

On this individualist view, there is no “self” or “individual” other than the biological individual, and individuals are the basic units of the social sphere.⁷⁸ Consistent with this, and “[a]t the core of this mode of political thought was a fundamental postulate about the nature of value, viz., that all value inheres ultimately in the satisfactions and realizations of human personality.”⁷⁹ For example, it is on the basis of pleasures and pains, which can exist only in individuals, that Mill was able to construct a calculus of value.⁸⁰ Moreover, according to this account, an individual is “the final judge” of his or her “own concerns.”⁸¹ In short, much of the liberalism of Bosanquet’s predecessors is marked by an ontological and a moral individualism, where “the individual human being is conceived as the source of values and as himself the supreme value.”⁸²

76. PTS 236. Bosanquet cites Kant that, in living in civil society, man “has totally abandoned his wild lawless freedom in order to find his entire freedom again undiminished in a lawful dependence, that is, in a condition of right or law ; [undiminished], because this dependence springs from his own legislative will” (PTS 226). See Immanuel KANT, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre* (1797) Benzion Kellermann, ed., (*Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 2. Teil, 1. Abschnitt), in Kant’s *Werke*, Bd. 7, Ernst Cassirer, ed., Berlin, 1916, S 47, p. 122.

77. These criteria are : first, an important development in individual character must be being frustrated in some way ; second, the benefits of such a development must be greater than the disadvantages involved in the restrictions to be imposed on the person ; and, finally, it must be better that the action to be commanded by the law be done from any motive whatsoever than that it not take place (PTS 179-180). When the law is used to hinder the liberty — that is, the self-realization — of an individual, it is incompatible with itself.

78. As Mill remarks, “[h]uman beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and which may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual men” (*System of Logic*, Bk. VI, ch. 7, sec. 1, in *Collected Works*, vol. VIII, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1969-1986, p. 879). One finds the same view in Bentham, where he remarks that “the community is a fictitious body” ; it is but “a sum of the interests of the several members who compose it” (*An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. 1, 3.4, p. 12).

79. George SABINE, *A History of Political Theory*, 4th ed., Hinsdale, IL, The Dryden Press, 1973, p. 608.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 640.

81. J.S. MILL, *On Liberty*, p. 74.

82. See Graeme Duncan and John Gray, “The Left Against Mill,” in *New Essays on John Stuart Mill and Utilitarianism*, ed., Wesley E. Cooper, Kai Nielsen and Steven C. Patten, Guelph : Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1979 (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume V), p. 203-230, p. 215.

Again, Bosanquet notes, for there to be the “region of liberty” insisted upon by his predecessors — a precinct in which individuals are free and autonomous — there must be some principle of “demarcation” that allows one to separate “the individual” from “others,” and to distinguish the sphere of individual liberty from the sphere of social obligation. He argues, however, that any such boundary is simply “arbitrary,” for “every act of mine affects both myself and others ; it is a matter of mood and momentary urgency which aspect may be pronounced characteristic and essential” (PTS 60). More importantly, he believes that such a principle exhibits too narrow an understanding of the nature of persons. It implies a view of the individual as “a sort of inner self” (PTS 178), independent of “the varied play of relations and obligations in society” (PTS 74), and ignores the centrality of the social dimension of human personality. Furthermore, the demands of such a “principle of demarcation” seem to conflict with important liberal ideals. Sometimes “the maintenance of external conditions of good life” (PTS 64) lies within the power of the law but, because this could violate the putative boundary between “self” and “other,” the individualist view would forbid it.⁸³ On the other hand, Bosanquet believes that it would certainly be wrong to suggest that, simply because our moral obligations touch on the legitimate interests of others, they can or ought to be enforced by law (PTS 63 ; xxxv). But some individualist views seem to allow just this. In short, Bosanquet argues that the concept of “self” employed in these authors is inadequate and inconsistent with several of the aims of liberalism — including the development of the individual.

Finally, Bosanquet objected to the liberalism of his predecessors because he saw it as implying a theory of political obligation and of self-government that he considered deficient. Like Bentham and Mill, he embraced democratic and representative government, but noted that laws based simply on the majority decision still involve the coercion of “others” over “the one” (see PTS 71-72). Because its accounts of law, liberty and the individual lead to problems in understanding the nature of human autonomy, and because it ignores the possibility of a “real” or “general” will having authority over an individual’s “actual will,” Bosanquet believes that, in the end, authors such as Spencer, Bentham and Mill can turn only to force as the basis of the state.⁸⁴

83. As an example of this, see Bosanquet’s criticism of Mill concerning publicly-financed education, noted above. Mill’s objection to this policy, one will recall, is not merely that this “establishes a despotism over the mind” by public authorities (*On Liberty*, p. 105) and leads to conformity, but also that it works against “the importance of individuality of character” (*ibid.*, p. 104). Bosanquet’s response to this is that Mill’s fear of public intervention is unwarranted, and that his alternative proposal for “universal State-enacted examination” (PTS 63 ; see L 103-107) is more likely to produce bland conformism and a hierarchical society, inattentive to individual differences. It might appear that there is little fundamental disagreement between Mill and Bosanquet on this point — that it is just an empirical question of which policy will best lead to the development of individual character. But what is really at stake here is something more far-reaching — that is, each’s view of the role of the state. Bosanquet is concerned with what the state can do to positively contribute to moral and intellectual development. Mill’s view seems to be that such a view of state action goes too far ; the state can intervene only when a parent harms or risks harming (e.g., through negligence in assuring the education of) his or her children. Bosanquet would surely say, however, the issue should not be whether someone might be harmed, but whether the state can help.

84. Again, for a more complete argument here, see my “Law and Liberty in J.S. Mill and Bernard Bosanquet,” *supra*, n. 57.

In rejecting these elements of earlier liberalism, Bosanquet believed that he was still faithful to many of its principles and goals. In fact, he maintained that these goals required a recognition of the social nature of the individual and a defense of a “positive” understanding of liberty and the law. A.D. Lindsay acknowledges this when he says that the idealists “were convinced [...] that no further progress could be made in an understanding of politics till a new philosophic basis was found for liberalism.”⁸⁵ This meant abandoning a focus on duties and rights — on “claims and counter claims”⁸⁶ — and turning, instead, to an ideal of “service and counter-service.”⁸⁷ Thus, Bosanquet described himself as a “moral socialist” (i.e., one who held that “the good of the social whole was to be identified with the moral essence of the individual”⁸⁸), and said that, if this doctrine were made the basis of an “economic socialism,” it would be “heaven.”⁸⁹ He was also in favour of worker ownership⁹⁰ and, Muirhead says, “was prepared [...] for any amount of collectivism.”⁹¹ Not surprisingly, later in life, Bosanquet found his sympathies at times rather close to the Labour Party.⁹²

V

It is clear, then, that Bosanquet is not an individualist, that he sees no fundamental antagonism between liberty and law, that he emphasizes the importance of a common good, instead of the pursuit of merely private or personal goods, and that he maintains that state action and the law play essential roles in the development of the individual. Bosanquet is certainly not a “classical” liberal.

85. A.D. LINDSAY, “T.H. Green and the Idealists,” p. 151.

86. See *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, London, Macmillan, 1913, lecture V, especially p. 132-133.

87. W.D. LAMONT, *The Principles of Moral Judgement*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946, p. 166. Bosanquet largely adopts the view of ethics, described by F.H. Bradley in Lecture V of *Ethical Studies*, that focuses on the fulfilment of the duties of one’s station or position. See “The Kingdom of God on Earth,” p. 116ff. See also my discussion of this in “F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet,” in *Philosophy after F.H. Bradley*, James Bradley, ed., Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 31-56.

88. A.M. MCBRIAR, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles*, p. 112.

89. See “The Antithesis between Individualism and Socialism Philosophically Considered,” in BOSANQUET, *The Civilization of Christendom and Other Studies*, London, Sonnenschein, 1893, p. 304-357; and A.M. MCBRIAR, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles*, p. 113. Bosanquet distinguished “moral socialism” from “economic socialism” which he saw as “deeply individualistic [...] i.e., akin to a mechanical arrangement for satisfying individual desires, although it may amalgamate with other ideas.” (See his review of *The English Poor*, by Thomas MacKay, in *Charity Organisation Review*, V (December 1889), p. 460-466, at p. 463, cited in E. JACOBS, *Bernard Bosanquet. Social and Political Thought*, p. 122-123.)

90. See BOSANQUET’s lecture “Ownership and Management,” in *Social and International Ideals*, p. 211-229. See also A. VINCENT, R. PLANT, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, p. 121.

91. See J.H. MUIRHEAD, ed., *Bernard Bosanquet and his Friends*, p. 48.

92. Note Bosanquet’s comment to R.F.A. Hoerlé in 1919 that “I should like a labour government with one or two good liberals in it” (cited in J.H. MUIRHEAD, ed., *Bernard Bosanquet and his Friends*, p. 218-219). Adam Ulam allows that Bosanquet’s “theory as a whole” is not inconsistent with socialism (*The Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 60), and W.D. Lamont suggests that “[t]he theory of communism [...] is based on [...] the [same] ideal of service and counter-service” (W.D. LAMONT, *The Principles of Moral Judgement*, p. 167).

Still, given his view of the nature and limits of the state, and of the importance of the individual, it is also inappropriate and unjust to describe Bosanquet's thought as "illiberal." While it may be true that, on such issues as the role and limits of the state, Bosanquet and earlier liberals (such as Bentham and Mill) disagree, the practical differences between them are minimal. He shares many of the aims and concerns of "liberals" before him, he champions a number of liberal institutions and, as there is no necessary connexion between liberalism and individualism,⁹³ there seems no sufficient reason to hold that he stands outside the current of nineteenth century British liberalism. While the arrival of "German" thought in England may have provided idealists, like Bosanquet, with new approaches and arguments, there is not enough evidence to establish that there was "a complete break"⁹⁴ or "a complete recoil" from the tradition of Anglo-Saxon philosophy.⁹⁵ Commentators such as Dockhorn and Metz — as well as Hobson, Hobhouse and Morrow — obviously go too far in their insistence that Bosanquet's work is incompatible with British liberal political thought. In fact, Bosanquet may well be seen as pointing to a "liberalism" that puts the lie to some of the notions often associated with it.

It is true that Bosanquet embraced an "organic" conception of society with a common good and held that there were "collective interests" which were more important than the particular desires of "finite individuals." But there is no evidence to support the claim that Bosanquet's theory defended the absolute power of the nation state. Moreover, his claim that one cannot adequately understand the nature of individuals apart from their "station" and duties within the state neither entails nor proposes that individuals "lose themselves" in it.

Nevertheless, despite the continuity in history and in aim, given the influence on his political theory by his own non-individualist metaphysic⁹⁶, Bosanquet does not

93. For a recent recognition of this, see S.M. DELUE (e.g., *Political Obligation in a Liberal State*, p. x-xi). DeLue speaks of two competing kinds of liberalism: individualist and "communalist."

94. F.P. HARRIS, *The Neo-Idealist Political Theory*, p. 59.

95. Metz argues that British idealism "was neither directly nor indirectly connected with" the "idealistic systems and motives" of earlier centuries, and that "it could not have sprung directly from a native tradition" (R. METZ, *Die philosophischen Strömungen der Gegenwart in Großbritannien*, p. 238). But for all its admitted indebtedness to Kant and Hegel, it does not follow that there is a break with the older tradition. Such allegedly "Germanic" influences as the organicist view of the state and the analysis of the individual as a social and political being owe at least as much to Plato and Aristotle as to Hegel and Kant, and Metz touches only lightly on the fact that the need for, and the development of, Kantian and Hegelian ideas were quite clearly a product of the distinctive situation in philosophy in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Metz does not, moreover, address the argument of J.H. Muirhead, that the "German" influences on idealism have been exaggerated and that many have failed to recognize the lengthy tradition of "Platonic" philosophy in England (see J.H. MUIRHEAD, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*, p. 14-15).

96. Hence, I would reject the view that British idealist social philosophy can be separated entirely from its metaphysics — though the question then becomes how far the relation between the two extends. According to Bertil Pfannenstill, the relation is essential. He writes that "[i]f, as Bosanquet does, a philosopher calls his political theory philosophical, metaphysical, or speculative, the natural result will be that the political theory, severed from its theoretical philosophical relations, will appear to be, so to say, floating in the air" (*Bernard Bosanquet's Philosophy of the State*, Lund, 1936, p. 116). A.J.M. Milne, however, argues that the political philosophy can, at least, be separated from a theory of the Absolute (see *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism*, London, 1962, p. 196). Stefan Collini simply notes that there is "sufficient overlap in [the idealists'] social theories and their metaphysical foundations to justify considering the structure of

merely repeat the liberalism of the nineteenth century, but provides a genuine advance on it. On his view, many of the underpinnings of the earlier liberalism need to be not just modified, but rethought.⁹⁷ Yet, for all this, in light of his account of the individual, liberty and the state, one must recognize Bosanquet's place in the liberal tradition of British political thought.

their philosophy, and the nature of its conceptual legacy, as a whole" ("Sociology and Idealism in Britain : 1880-1920," *Archives européennes de sociologie*, 19 (1978), p. 3-50, at p. 10-11).

97. Thus, according to Ernest Barker, "[n]ot a modification of the old Benthamite premises, but a new philosophy was needed ; and that philosophy was provided by the idealist school" (See Ernest BARKER, *Political Thought in England : 1848-1914*, London, 1915, p. 10-11).