

politics, and not a philosophy of monarchical, clerical or oligarchical government, is the question of what is proposed in respect of what we are to think of ourselves as human beings, who can share a mode of being which manifestly comprehends the inhuman as well as the human, both in the actual relations we have with one another and in what we think reflectively about ourselves.

Mr Thomas' account of the radical tradition of liberal democracy is grounded in what he has to say first and foremost concerning the principle of respect for persons. He identifies persons primarily with acts of choice which give actual expressions for "wants and preferences, wishes, tastes, beliefs and so forth", which define our personal interests. Respect for persons requires, Thomas maintains, acceptance, valuation and expectation of such choices in others and a disposition not to interfere with them and indeed to assist in their fulfilment.

What this quite fails to make clear is the way in which Kant conceived human beings philosophically. He did so in terms of a twofold mode of being, a pure mind related to a purely material body: that is, in terms of two systematic abstractions from the actuality of our experience of one another as living organisms, capable through our transactions with one another of developing, or *failing to develop*, active, expressive and reflective powers. Democratic purpose in political life requires that we and the governments we elect think in such human terms and not in terms of the systematic abstraction of the mainstream philosophical tradition in the modern age, represented by Kant, who would allow nothing ethical to human affections. 'Citizens' one moment, the 'workforce' the next.

(to be concluded)

Radicalism and the Risorgimento

Book Review
by Terry Cowley

Denis Mack Smith: *Mazzini*
(Yale University Press, 1994)

After Garibaldi, Mazzini is one of my favourite radicals of the 19th century in Europe; and this book confirms his importance as a revolutionary and political figure. Denis Mack Smith's thorough, clear, well researched biography provides us with a scholarly work that will retain an importance for many years to come. This work is essential not only for the historian, but for the general political engagé.

Some of the intriguing facts about our hero include his love of black cigars; that he lived in Fulham; read the works of Goethe, Byron, Shelley, and practically everybody else most avidly. He also just loved books.

This biography examines in some depth his relationships with Garibaldi and Cavour. In the history of Italy where corruptions and cynicism have been bywords in politics, it is

refreshing always to discover and rediscover a man like Mazzini, with such integrity, honesty, and a mind that was able to think far beyond expediency. He also had a great capacity for friendship, and counted among his English friends such personages as the Carlyles, John Morley, Dickens, Swinburne and Gladstone. In this study Cavour's general pseudo-Machiavellism becomes shabby as does his spite and envy. Also the spite and nastiness of so-called Moderates and Liberals who after reunification branded Mazzini as a terrorist, and banned him from living in Italy till only a few months before his death.

The irony was that Mazzini was - in the true sense - a moderate, a Liberal reformer, a social conciliator and a progressive thinker - with honesty, unlike many of his political contemporaries who were moderate in name, but conservative in deed, untrusting, and afraid of the Italian people. Garibaldi's shabby treatment of Mazzini is appalling and almost paranoiac in its obsessiveness, and certainly dents the halo of the secular saint of the Risorgimento. An excellent book - buy it, read it, digest it and see how many of its truths and observations apply to the political rag-bag known as the Liberal Democrats.

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Reformulating Liberalism

Book Review
by Stewart Rayment

L.T.Hobhouse (edited by James Meadowcroft):
Liberalism and Other Writings
(Cambridge, 1994)

Collini, following De Ruggiero (reprint please) calls Hobhouse's *Liberalism* "timeless", "a classic", "the best twentieth century statement of Liberal ideas" and "one of the constitutive works of the canon". Quite so. Thus we are indebted to Cambridge University Press for making this work available again. Yet De Ruggiero was writing in 1927 of a book penned in 1911, and Collini in 1979. Does Hobhouse's *Liberalism* really hold for the end of the Twentieth Century, still more the Twenty First?

It is not sufficient for a magazine like *Liberator* which would see itself in the intellectual tradition of Hobhouse to answer "Yes". Most of Hobhouse's other writing, with the possible exception of *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (a handy one for laying into those Marxists), is largely forgotten. However the claims made for Liberalism at the start of this review stand. First, following John Stuart Mill, Hobhouse wrote in an everyday language; his thoughts are accessible to all.

Second, and this is a factor in his books generally, Hobhouse wrote from a philosophical standpoint. His journalism, much of the writing of his colleagues, J.A.Hobson, the Hammonds, down to Keynes, Beveridge, Grimond and Michael

Meadowcroft, is all good Liberal stuff but is the product of its time. It is inevitable that a political thinker, especially one who sees their mission as the betterment of humanity and working in an empirical discipline such as liberalism will refer to real events and people. Against what must have been a temptation to rage about The People's Budget and the Parliament Act, Hobhouse in the main refers to broad events. Where these prevail, particularly in the last chapter, or to expand on the contribution of a seminal figure such as Gladstone, for example, Meadowcroft has provided footnotes. Thus, the late Twentieth Century reader is not lost in a minutiae of incidents that have lost their deeper significance.

There are anachronisms in Hobhouse's style and thinking. Although opposed to Social Darwinism, the extent to which it pervaded the thinking of the earlier part of this century shows. He follows Cobden in opposition to Empire and would have been delighted by much of the turn of events in that sphere. That few post-colonial states are pillars of Liberalism would hardly have surprised him, proof of the folly of the imperial adventure. However, out of the context of its time, it would be easy to mistake Hobhouse's writing on this subject as patronising. With his time and recalling his contribution to the Women's Movement it should be remembered that he speaks of species 'man' rather than gender.

So the work is still readable, but why should it be read? There aren't many such studies of liberalism since, less so still available. Bobbio writes from an academic Marxist position (Euro communist?), Manning and others of that ilk are academic and not directed at the common man. Hobhouse weans us with a historical base that, in terms of British

experience is at once recognisable and overlaps with the national myth. From there he takes us into the more purely philosophical antecedents of liberalism, as tested in action, and from this draws us to liberalism as a resolution of the conflict between the individual and society. Hobhouse thus establishes a basis for the collective resolution of problems through government. To 'the theory of natural rights of the individual' is added 'a theory of the mutual harmony of individual and social needs'.

Much of Hobhouse's agenda for the collective resolution of problems has come to pass. Misformed in socialist hands and savaged by the neo-liberalism of Margaret Thatcher, Hobhouse's argument retains its validity. There was an element of elitism in Hobhouse's liberalism; he was attracted to the idea of Liberal minds and Labour muscle as a way forward for society. Echoes of this debate are still with us. Hobhouse lived long enough to be disappointed by the first fruits, and would have been profoundly disappointed with what Labour actually achieved, I suspect. What Hobhouse really sought, I suspect, was the union of the best minds in altruistic thought with the needful masses. He saw clearly the short-comings of Marxism (before the Marxist state became a reality) and also what he termed 'official socialism'. It is the shallow 'official socialism' that prevails in the Labour Party, dogs even their best reforms. Labour more than any other is responsible for the polarisation of British politics into rigid party lines, and, I'm sorry Mr. Ashdown, will do it again, it is an aspect of their (as most other) socialism.

What would Hobhouse see as the future of Liberalism today? I think he would still seek the realisation of liberty through harmony. If much of the material advance he advocated has been achieved, its spiritual basis is as much lacking. Hobhouse remains as strong a starting point as any for the attempt to put those matters right.

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Research in Progress

This is a new column designed to assist the progress of research projects currently being undertaken, at graduate, postgraduate or similar level. If you think you can help any of the individuals listed below with their thesis - or if you know anyone who can - please get in touch with them to pass on details of sources, contacts, or any other helpful information.

The Young Liberals 1970-79: their philosophy and political strategy. MA thesis. Ruth Fox, 9 Chapel Terrace, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3JA.

The grass roots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945-64; the role of local activists in the late 1950s revival of the Liberal Party. Ph.D thesis. Mark Egan, University College, Oxford OX1 4BH.

The Liberal Party in Southampton 1890-1945 (particularly 1890-1918). Sources needed for Ph.D thesis on the development of labour politics in Southampton. Graham Heaney, 132 Hayling Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth, PO3 6ED.

If you know of any other research project in progress for inclusion in this column, please send details to Duncan Brack at the address on the front page.

Membership Services

The History Group is pleased to make the following listings available to its members.

Mediawatch: a bibliography of major articles on the Liberal Democrats appearing in the broadsheet papers and major magazines and academic journals (all those listed in the British Humanities Index, published by Bowker-Saur). Starting in 1988, this now extends to September 1994.

Thesiswatch: all higher degree theses listed in the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research under the titles 'Liberal Party' or 'liberalism' (none yet under SDP or Liberal Democrats!)

Any History Group member is entitled to receive a copy of either of these free of charge; send an A4 SSAE to Duncan Brack at the address on the front page.