

BOOK REVIEW

On Liberalism_ by Leonard Hobhouse. *A book Review*

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Abstract

Leonard Hobhouse was a British sociologist, journalist and philosopher who occupies a prominent place in the history of the Liberal Democrats and for the conception of the model of the welfare state. He was the founder of theoretical sociology but also educated with the conservative ideas of his father which led him to a unique perspective where conservative ideologies were mixed with liberal ones. In the book Liberalism he tries to bring us his view on the differences between the welfare state and the non-intervening state. But what are these elements that send us to the creation of this ideology.

Key words: Liberalism, political theory, Albanian political reality

1. Introduction

Leonard Hobhouse was a British sociologist, journalist and philosopher who occupies a prominent place in the history of the Liberal Democrats and for the conception of the model of the welfare state. He was the founder of theoretical sociology but also educated with the conservative ideas of his father which led him to a distinct perspective where conservative ideologies were mixed with liberal ones. Born in London in 1964, where he had already begun to treat the worker with the most political presence (giving you the right to vote) Hobhouse grew up with a liberal current to demand even more the functioning of the natural rights

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that everyone possessed. At the time, English politics was undergoing a clear division between the old and the new liberalism and this was the right moment to give the final blow to the old system.

2. His political doctrine

The liberalism that we will address today is a book that came precisely because of the need during this transition for some social-liberal ideas aimed at the reconstruction of the state. The main political thought that accompanies us when reading liberalism is the balance between collective and social responsibilities and individual freedoms. For Hobhouse, politics is not about the individual against the state, but about the individual who works through the state and uses it as a means of social organization. It aimed to preserve individualism in a socialist-oriented economy. In his view, the state should be a large organization, whose well-being should be much more important than that of the individual, but the well-being of the state itself should come because of individual well-being. In the book *Liberalism* he tries to bring us his view on the differences between the welfare state and the non-intervening state. But what are these elements that send us to the creation of this ideology.

3. Individual and the state / Connection between Locke and Marx

To cite Hobhouse: “ Firstly, before we try to understand the new, which establishes our main purpose we should look back at the past to analyse and see where we did wrong so we can get the experience which is an essence for the creation of the new “. To concretize this, referring to Hobhouse, we take the example of ancient city-states of Greece and Rome. The way how those city-states were organised used to bring freedom to the population because the basis of functioning was the alliance between equal people who act without asking an owner. Citizens governed themselves. This system ended up the old clan organization and relied on the right of citizens. Self-governance was subjected to law and supported willingly from every free citizen was vital for the city-state. To bring those valid ways in construction of the actuality of the time, Hobhouse starts to give his ideas of how it should be realized.

First target was civil freedom and with this freedom he intended that everyone to be treated equally according to law. Hobhouse relies to Locke philosophy about the separation of political power between an executive, legislature and judiciary and as Locke says : “ The freedom of the people in the government conditions should have a unchanged rule to live, common for all members of society and to be decided by legislature power who is built inside society “. This means that it

must be a common point which will include all people and be applicable from all. I emphasize, a common point, at least one (it makes the more distinct element of Hobhouse doctrine). There must be a universal limitation because without it some people might have a lot of liberties and others suffer in her absence. In this way the law will be same for all, applicable even from sovereigns. This also means a deprivation of class privileges to pass thus from caste system to meritocracy.

This system as a base has liberty and equality between every strata of society. Firstly, people should be equal so then they can gain their freedoms. Because if two people from different strata have the same freedoms but they are not treated at the same way then Hobhouse says that: “freedom without equality is just a beautiful word which will not feed you” or said differently Equity principle. All should be equal and have opportunity of owning a private property as a way of not having an owner who holds your freedom hostage but to be you the owner of yourself.

To support more this idea, we take the example from the time when the law against the grain law existed, and the worker was separated totally from the land because now the building of the machine industry has started. To make that, a lot of land workers remain unemployed. This situation brings to our mind the thoughts of Carl Marx whom for the same situation expresses that now that the worker works with machines the person who owns the machine will own also the worker because it will come as a hierarchical manner. What Marx say strengthens even more the thought that every person should have their one private property. And when I say person I include here men, women, Black people, whites, Muslims and Christians. It has come the time when women must come out from their husband's authority and to be consider in the same level with men.

Of course, there used to be jobs who cannot be done from a woman, and it needs to be done from a man but this should not restrict women rights. Black people to have the same rights and as for kids he brings a special attention. Hobhouse says that every child has their own right to be grown in a peaceful family without physical, mental, or moral abuse. In the case when a widow mother grows a child the state should provide their livelihood by rewarding the mothers with a payment for civic service because the children have the right to be grown with their mothers close. They should have the right of free education and the children should not be abused by working but they should grow in the right way so tomorrow they will be the worthy members of society.

4. Realizing the Hobhouse Doctrine / Connecting with Rawls and Mill

This way of functioning of the state seems, at first sight, difficult and unachievable and this is for an amazingly simple reason “Why should people who possess more power, rights, and freedom equate themselves with others who are not in

it same conditions? “. Here we would like to include Rawl’s ideas that we have discussed in the reference to the book “Justice as Impartiality” which supports Hobhouse’s liberalism. Rawls says that if we allow an individual for a certain position based on meritocracy, not only that individual has won the opportunity to gain experience in the classes of society but the whole society has won because of the contribution it will make him.

So, the idea is that we are not trying to go back in development and lower the upper strata of society down but to allow other strata to have a class increase. For this to happen there must be a starting point and in the book Liberalism as a starting point Hobhouse recalled the idea of James Mill. According to this idea, the best way to reconcile personal interest with the general is through moral education. If taught in childhood that the good of others relates to your good, the human says he would be able to take care of the happiness of others as well as himself. In this way through moral education liberalism would be opened the way to realization.

5. The contextualization of liberalism in today’s reality

To bring liberalism in today’s realities, we can take the example of how our country acted during that time when covid nineteen first appeared and after that when the vaccine appeared. Initially we had to lock ourselves home and our right of freedom was violated. We didn’t have a choice, we couldn’t choose for ourselves, we couldn’t choose if we would like to go out and get infected or not. Neither was vaccination our choice. This right of ours was violated by our government and according to liberalism this action was right because Hobhouse says: “According to 1793’s statement, the boundaries of human’s right must be determined by the common good or by the law.” So, now when the violation of general freedom is discussed, the individual freedom is limited. These were liberal ideas, but the implementation was not fully such. The government used the army, and this was a violation of Hobhouse’s liberalism ideas. He never took in consideration using force or coercion like an option.

This was the reason there was a dysfunction during the pandemic. Moral education wasn’t used like a solution, instead of that force was used and liberalism fell. Moral education was not even used in the present opposition conflict. People consider the given order and norms insufficient and seek to establish a new rule and without considering the corpus of existing rules and as anything without basis, without a starting point as support, it is also destined to fall short in absence of this common point that would serve as the first and safe step in resolving the conflict. Without that it lacks the creation of a logical thought to create a strong reasoning that would keep them standing. And when there is nothing that keeps u standing

the only solution is to lay on the ground. Related to this we bring back the main idea of Hobhouse, who says that the law and rules are set and unchangeable, those must be respected from everyone and no one cannot fight against those . Today we are facing responsibilities which should not fall on us as a society, these should have been resolved in the past, but what has been done it's done, the political situation today, currently, remains heated and conflicting.

6. Conclusions

The politics in Albania are taking on colours we had not encountered before. The lack of an active opposition in the Albanian political life and above all the disagreements within the opposition are bringing new developments in the Albanian political actuality. Today it is becoming even more difficult to be an authentic individual, to have your beliefs, and to judge based on your personal interests and benefits, in Albania where authenticity is fading, and the individual is turning into an ardent, non-authentic militant.

Also, we would like to bring back on the spotlight the definition that Hobhouse has for the payment of civil service in the case of the widow mother by not qualifying that as a law for the poor or charity, to preserve the dignity of the individual. This is in fact not only for the widow mothers but for any social group that has a limitation and has it impossible to secure money by work. All in all to end this and pass the word to the panel, we are asking this question: Do you think that the dignity of the individual is preserved today with the social assistance provided by the government?