WILEY

Review

Author(s): Carveth Read

Review by: Carveth Read

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 37 (Mar., 1900), pp. 83-85

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2956939>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 02:58 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, Royal Economic Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Economic Journal*

English Political Philosophy from Hobbes to Maine. By
Professor WILLIAM GRAHAM. (London : Edward Arnold.
1899.)

THE object of this work is, first, to give an account of the doctrines of the most important English writers on Political Philosophy, Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Bentham, Mill, and Maine ; secondly, to criticise their methods and conclusions ; and, thirdly, to arrive by this means at principles that may be useful to all who take an interest in politics.

Professor Graham does justice to Hobbes' genius and originality, gives a good account of his theory of sovereignty, and shows how influential his doctrines have been upon subsequent political speculation. As to the original contract, however, he observes : " It may seem strange that not only Hobbes, but Hooker and Grotius before Hobbes, all held it," and many after him (p. 16). But the seeming strangeness disappears if we trace the history of this theory a little beyond Hooker. Professor Graham believes in the historical method : why not apply it to the theory of the original contract ? It had causes ; and one of them perhaps was this : that the transition " from status to contract " had been so nearly accomplished at the end of the sixteenth century, that to establish government itself on a contract seemed to be the most natural way of thinking, to need less proof than any other theory, and, therefore, to offer the most plausible foundation for an argument.

The chief weakness in the account of Hobbes, is the defence of him against the charge of being " the apologist of despotism." A better defence may be made by drawing attention to the limitations involved in the original contract ; namely, that since it is entered into with a view to self-preservation, whoever stands in danger of death at the hands of the sovereign is out of the contract and may resist, and any number in this position may band together in self-defence (*Leviathan*, c. 21). This is too often overlooked.

The account of Locke might have been improved by an introductory section on Filmer. The reader of the *Treatises on Civil Government* must often wonder why so much space is given to the refutation of the *Patriarcha*, so much patience devoted to the destruction of so poor a theory. By explaining this matter Professor Graham would have shed a light upon the general state of political reasoning in that age, without understanding which, it is impossible for a reader to appreciate the true eminence of Hobbes and Locke.

From Locke Professor Graham passes at once to Burke ; and here I cannot help asking for an intermediate chapter on Bolingbroke. The continuity of history and the intelligibility of Burke's earlier writings alike require it. But the discussion of Burke is almost confined to the *Reflections* and later writings. Still, this is the best portion of Professor Graham's book. He is more in sympathy with

Burke and Maine than with the other philosophers. In Bentham and Mill, indeed, there must be something very uncongenial to him.

Not much is to be found in this volume that directly interests economists, except perhaps the occasional attacks on socialism. However, to prove Mill's want of originality he says :

"In political economy he got his principles from Ricardo and Malthus—principles doubtful as in the case of the law of population, or irrelevant to existing circumstances as in the law of diminishing returns from land, or ceasing to be generally true as in the assumption of universal competition."

But if these principles are doubtful or irrelevant, the case of socialism is stronger than I have been accustomed to think it. Professor Graham, however, relies upon the historical method and still more on the theory of Natural Law, as grounds for refuting socialists. "If there is nothing but considerations of utility to determine justice," he says, "it will be impossible to find any precise rules" (p. 379). Again, "the doctrine of natural rights alone can defend us from arbitrary despotism whether of one or many" (p. 407).

Now no doctrine can defend us unless others can be induced to believe it. For rhetorical purposes the question is whether "natural law" or "utility" is the more plausible term; and that depends upon the people to be persuaded. Prior to the development of a comprehensive and definite imagination, abstract terms like "law," "duty," "right" seem to be more easily grasped and to carry a greater motive force than concrete collective terms such as "happiness." But in seeking a scientific basis for jurisprudence and government, we are not concerned with plausibility. Professor Graham thinks that "if jurisprudence must make choice between the two for its ethical basis," natural law, appealing to our sense of justice, is better than utility (p. 382); although "general utility is a chief part of natural law" (p. 383). Moreover, where utility and justice coincide, "justice should take the lead; where they do not, it should give way to considerations of utility" (p. xxv).

Socialists may be excused for not trusting themselves in an edifice whose true basis may have to give way and be patched with inferior materials. But how needless to oppose natural law to utility. Mr. Spencer (often referred to by Professor Graham) in his *Ethics* (§ 274), says that—beginning with the crude notion of justice, as retaliation, the true idea of equal freedom is generated "by experience of the evils that accompany the false idea": that is to say, by experience of disutility. To say, again, that the coherence of society depends upon observing natural rights, is to say that their non-observance involves the maximum disutility. And Hutcheson, who is cited by Professor Graham as a believer in natural rights, and who more than any one else deserves to be called the founder of Utilitarianism, says: "A right is such a faculty of doing, demanding or possessing anything as, if

universally allowed in certain circumstances, would on the whole tend to the general good."

CARVETH READ

Local Government and State Aid. By SYDNEY J. CHAPMAN, M.A.
(London : Sonnenschein. 1899.)

MR. CHAPMAN has, in this essay, fully grasped and fairly stated the dimensions of his subject. He does not try to discuss local taxation apart from the services which cause local taxation, and he does not try to discuss the relationship of local taxation to imperial taxation apart from the relationship of local services to imperial services. It is true that he limits his investigation of these subjects to the barest facts and to the most obvious examples; but it is important, above all things, that whatever the causes of his essay being limited in extent, they have not weighed against the true method of investigation. We note this fact thus prominently, because of the almost universal practice of inquirers into local taxation, neglecting the elementary principle of studying it, namely, as an essential part of local government, and instead of this, studying it as a branch of economics standing apart by itself.

With much of Mr. Chapman's essay we are in cordial agreement, if we do not always agree with his particular mode of expressing all the propositions he lays down. Occasionally, for instance, he borrows a term from other sciences with most disastrous and tantalising results, as when he is performing the very necessary duty of definition of terms he explains that the expression "'district governments' will be applied when it is desired to summon attention to the primitive political cell." Nothing could be more unfortunate than the three last words of this sentence. They belong, of course, to the science of anthropology, and do not in any way explain Mr. Chapman's meaning, and we draw attention to them only to emphasise what appears to be a growing danger in the indiscriminate use of terms and phrases which, having become more or less popular by their use in one science, are loosely used for the purposes of another and wholly different science. It need hardly be said that there are no "primitive political cells" connected with local government and State aid.

After a short introductory chapter, Mr. Chapman discusses the distribution of work between local and central governments, and he puts the case clearly and strongly, rightly concluding, we think, that "the future of representative government—and in this is involved the future of civilisation—is wrapped up in the future of local self government." Probably, too, Mr. Chapman is right in his conclusions that the control of the county over the district is curtailed by the friction which control induces, but we are hardly disposed to agree that his excellent definition of what local services should consist of is assisted by his suggestion that uniform administration must necessarily be the