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Between Freedom and Equality:
L. T. Hobhouse and the Idea of Social-Liberal Concept of Education

Pomiędzy wolnością a równością.
Rekonstrukcja koncepcji edukacji w myśli L. T. Hobhouse′a

Abstract: The idea of education has evolved through debates on the different visions of the goals to be served by the education of citizens. One of the objectives of education concerns the individual's role as a member of society, wherein individual and collective values are juxtaposed; this objective is linked to the centuries-old debate between liberal and conservative views on how society should be. In this paper, the attempt is to reconstruct the socio-philosophical thought of Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, one of the main representatives of the New Liberals among British intellectuals at the turn of the 20th century. His thinking can be considered an alternative approach to the relationship between the individual and the state. Although the question of education does not appear to be the main focus of the philosopher's writings, it seems, however, that the framework of the concept of education can be set by drawing on his anthropological, axiological and normative theory. The specific value of Hobhouse's thought should be seen not only in the context of the crisis of contemporary liberal thought but also as an attempt to discuss the education founded on philosophy, rather than ideology. The thinker uniquely combines freedom, the central idea of liberalism, with the idea of equality. In this new perspective of society, the individual, while pursuing the concept of good for self, does not lose sight of the other members of society.

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Abstrakt: Historia idei edukacji jest zapisem sporu między różnymi wizjami celów, jakim ma służyć wychowanie obywateli. Jedna z jego osi dotyczy roli jednostki jako członka społeczeństwa, w którym często przeciwstawiane są wartości jednostki i wspólnoty. Zazwyczaj wiąże się to z wielowiekowym sporem między liberalnym a konserwatywnym spojrzeniem na społeczeństwo. W artykule podjęto próbę rekonstrukcji myśli społeczno-filozoficznej Leonarda Trelawny'ego Hobhouse'a, jednego z głównych przedstawicieli Nowych Liberałów – brytyjskich intelektualistów działających na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Myśl filozofa można postrzegać jako alternatywne podejście do relacji między jednostką a państwem. Chociaż w pismach Brytyjczyka kwestia edukacji nie pojawia się jako główny przedmiot zainteresowania, wydaje się jednak, że na podstawie jego myśli antropologicznej, aksjologicznej i normatywnej można wyznaczyć ogólne ramy koncepcji edukacji. Szczególną wartość myśli Hobhouse'a należy postrzegać nie tylko w kontekście kryzysu współczesnej myśli liberalnej, ale także jako próbę mówienia o edukacji opartej na filozofii, a nie na ideologii. Myśliciel bowiem w unikalny sposób łączy wolność, główną ideę liberalizmu, z ideą równości. W tym nowym spojrzeniu na społeczeństwo jednostka, realizując własną koncepcję dobra, nie traci z oczu innych członków społeczeństwa.

1. Introduction

Although education itself is often understood as 'the distinct human practice of adults guiding the development of children and preparing them for adult life with others' (Wrońska, 2012, p. 45), its meaning depends mainly on the general philosophical assumptions that have linked this concept to a general worldview and the human being (ibidem, p. 45). Education can, therefore, be viewed in at least two ways: in a narrow sense (*sensu stricto*) and a broad one (*sensu largo*). The first treats it as an educational practice, a set of methods and recommendations for shaping children for the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The second, on the other hand, points to a set of assumptions about the world and the human being, as John Stuart Mill (1867) averred: 'Whatever helps to shape the human being; to make the individual what he is, or hinder him from being what he is not – is part of his education' (p. 4). In this paper, when talking about education, the reference is to its broader understanding.

This paper seeks to achieve two objectives. First, it highlights the philosophical assumptions underlying Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse's social liberalism. Second, it outlines a theoretical framework for a conception of education that is based on the above assumptions; in other words, it posits that Hobhouse's thought can be taken as a theoretical foundation for a social-liberal conception of education.

Hobhouse did not create a compact conception of education. In his writings, issues of education do not occupy the principal position; moreover, he speaks of education rarely and in broad terms at that. Nowhere in his works does he guide us on how to deal with pupils. It might, therefore, seem that education did not interest him. This is true but only partially. Education preoccupied him above all in a broader systemic dimension: he praised the Cobden reforms imposing a duty on parents to educate their children (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 81), spoke with conviction about the value of education in the context of society (ibidem, p. 203) and pointed to education as a tool to reduce social inequalities (ibidem, p. 81). At the same time, in his works we can find traces of the philosophy of Locke (the idea of self-restraint) (Locke, 1778, p. 45) or John Stuart Mill (Mill, 1859/2012, p. 165) (the idea of self-development) (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 81), which indicate an interest in human, the concept of his nature and his place in the world, in particular in relation to others. It seems that despite the lack of an explicitly articulated conception of education, a new conception of social liberal education can be created, based on his writings and ideas.

Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse (1864–1929) was born in St. Ive as the youngest of the seven children of Reverend Reginald Hobhouse, Archdeacon of Bodmin and Caroline Trelawny. He studied at Oxford, where he received an MA degree from Corpus Christi College in 1887. Although his father was a staunch conservative, he became a liberal atheist. From an early age, he was interested in the writings of John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and Giuseppe Mazzini. His philosophical interests in the ideas of freedom and equality soon expanded to include political and sociological issues, and he turned his attention to social issues, as evidenced by his active role as the secretary of the Free Trade Union in the late 1980s – his first book, *The Labour Movement* was an expression of these thoughts. His next book, *The Theory of Knowledge*, published in 1896, was purely philosophical. A year later, he moved to Manchester and became a journalist for *The Manchester Guardian*, where he also covered social and political issues. While working at the newspaper, however, he did not abandon his scientific

interests, authoring another work, *Mind in Evolution* (1901). Throughout his scientific career, he was politically active, opposing the Boer War and fighting for workers' rights, pension reform and left-wing liberalism (Hobson & Morris, 1931/2019, pp. 33–41). In 1907, he was appointed the first Professor of Sociology at the University of London, and in 1911, he published his most cited work *Liberalism*, which found favour not only among conservatives (Grimes, 1964, p. 1) but also among contemporary scholars. Charles Wright Mills described it as 'the best twentieth-century statement of liberal ideals' (ibidem, p. 1), and Guido de Ruggiero, in *Storia del Liberalismo Europeo*, refers to it as 'La formulazione migliore del nuovo liberalismo inglese del secolo XX è data, a nostro avviso, dall' Hobhouse. Noi vi ritroviamo, rammodernato, l' insegnamento del Mili e del Green' (De Ruggiero, 1925/1945 p. 164).[1]

2. What is social liberalism?

The term social liberalism can be analysed on two levels. The first refers to the political sphere, the turn to the social, which occurred at the turn of the 20th century and originated from the observation that 'groups and communities were formative social units' (Freeden, 2013, p. 87). Its effect was a decisive increase in social legislation, whose successive introduction from 1906 onwards was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I (Hay, 1975, pp. 11–12). The second, on the other hand, encompasses the intellectual activity of British Liberals who, at the turn of the century, argued for an increased indirect role for society and a direct role for the state in the pursuit of social goods (Freeden, 2013, p. 87). The term New Liberals was a collective term for thinkers and social reformers who were 'practically oriented towards current social ills, to which they applied their mental energies and general principles' (Freeden, 1978, pp. 2–3) and recognised that the changes Britain underwent in the 18th century did not produce positive results alone. The activities and attitudes of the New Liberals, as Michael Freeden notes, 'represented a clear social and cultural reaction to the gross evils of the Industrial Revolution' (ibidem, p. 194). Unlike many contem-

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[1] 'The best formulation of the new English liberalism of the 20th century is given, in our opinion, by Hobhouse. We find in it, modernised, the teaching of Mill and Green.' Translated by the author.

porary groups, they did not consider themselves power ideologues, politicians or leaders. Rather, they were a group of like-minded individuals who gathered around common ideas (ibidem, pp. 3–4). The group included John Atkinson Hobson, David George Ritchie, Robert Burdon Haldene, Charles Trevelyan, Herbert Samuel and Hobhouse. The latter is regarded as the most intellectually sophisticated (ibidem, p. 1) of the new liberals, and his philosophical conception will form the basis of the outline of the social-liberal conception of education proposed in this paper.

3. Historical context

A key element to understanding the essence of Hobhouse's social liberalism is to see that it is a movement that turned against the negative effects of the Industrial Revolution. However, it does not work against development and progress itself but targets those elements that lead to inequality and injustice. In his introduction to *The History of Social Development* (Muller-Lyer, 1920/2020) Hobhouse writes: 'The potentiality of good and evil in civilization has been multiplied many times over by the growth of human power' (p. 6). This formulation seems to capture the attitude towards the changes that have taken place due to the Industrial Revolution. Thanks to development, the scope of power increased, and humans became independent of the nature around them and, to some extent, of distress. The consequence was greater opportunities for evil: exploitation, the rise of the urban poor, the lack of equal rights and growing social inequality.

The Industrial Revolution is a term popularised by Arnold Toynbee and it is used today to describe the economic changes that began in the 18th century in Britain (Pollard, 1912/2007, p. 71). The transition from an agricultural to an industrial society that occurred then caused a transformation of the entire social structure of England. Technological discoveries meant that while on the one hand, the economy became more efficient – able to produce more, transport more quickly and sell more profitably, on the other hand, individual manufacturers suffered from the massification (ibidem, p. 73). With the emergence of large industrial manufacturers, there was internal migration and the formation of populations around artificial means of production. This in turn led to demographic changes. In the fifty years since 1801, the population

of Britain had risen by almost half and in 1851 numbered almost seventeen million (Morgan, 1988, pp. 470–477). The lives of the residents of the big cities had deteriorated – in the second half of the 19th century, the average life expectancy in a non-industrialised area was 10 years higher than in an industrialised area. The cities were polluted, overcrowded and had terrible sanitary conditions (Daunton, 2007, p. 356). The victims of this change were mainly the poorest, representatives of the newly formed working class with little opportunity to influence political forces, as they were disenfranchised (Smith, 2004, pp. 156–170).[2]

The changes in Britain only extended to the economy, demographics, relative democratisation or social stratification, but also concerned views on state interventionism. As these changes became widespread, the scale of difficulties increased, and obstacles emerged to the extent that individual industrialists or magnates could not cope with. Only the state had the right tools to solve these problems. The New Liberals were aware of these challenges as men of letters (Freeden, 1978, pp. 1–5)[3] described and witnessed inequality and social injustice – hence their focus on tackling them. The reformist mindset is based on the one hand on everyday observations and, on the other, on Hobhouse's philosophical thought.

4. Social liberalism – a general idea

For Hobhouse, the starting point is the observation that from inception, man is influenced by two types of biological and cultural factors that define his initial place in the world: 'each child is born not only with its own inherited faculties and impulses which correspond to animal instinct but into a society with rules of life inherited in a different sense, handed on by tradition' (Hobhouse, 1904,

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[2] These began to be gradually introduced with the electoral reforms of 1831 (The Great Reform Act), 1867 (The Second Reform Act), 1884 (The Third Reform Act). At the same time, with the reform of the 84th year, only seventy percent of men had the right to vote. Women gained the opportunity to vote only in 1918 (cf. Smith, 2004, pp. 156–170).

[3] The New Liberals, as they were referred to, tended to come from middle-class and freelance backgrounds, and their lack of clear class roots allowed them to create objectified social theories for all three classes. As writers and journalists, they were direct participants in the events they wrote about.

pp. 105–106). From the beginning of his or her life, the individual is a synthesis of what is individual in him or her and the elements that result from the social dimension of his or her existence – the external world. The human being appears in a world that is by nature already socialised by rules of one kind or another, prevailing in a given community. It is necessarily a collective world, and it is, therefore, not surprising that non-social freedom is, for Hobhouse, impossible.

Although the philosopher speaks of man as an amalgamation of nature and culture, similar observations were made, for example, by Mill: 'Yet desires and impulses are as much a part of a perfect human being, as beliefs and restraints: and strong impulses are only perilous when not properly balanced' (Mill, 1859/2012, p. 134). Hobhouse's perspective is therefore not unique. His conception is characterised by a positivist attitude typical of the period; hence, much of the texts are devoted to psychological or biological issues (Freeden, 1978).

Man, for Hobhouse, on the other hand, is a complex being, not only because of inherited impulses and beliefs acquired from the community but also because he is incapable of fully achieving internal coherence:

> the man of smug respectability, conscious of rectitude, is below the level of his consciousness a very different being. All the suppressed disharmonies of his nature are there operative, maintaining a smouldering disaffection that breaks out sometimes into flashes of disturbing emotion of which the origin is obscure to the sufferer himself, sometimes into physical disease (Hobhouse, 1921, pp. 150–151).

The impulses to which a person sometimes succumbs are not fully controllable. They are beyond the individual's power. And the only situation in which they could be under control would be if they were functioning in complete harmony. This takes the dual form of 'harmony of the mind with itself and harmony of the mind with the world' (Hobhouse, 1921, p. 80). This is not possible, however, because, as he writes, 'such adjustment is, therefore, not entirely within the power of the individual' (ibidem, p. 151). For the author of *Liberalism*, a world of complete actualised true harmony is only a postulated social ideal, 'which it is perhaps beyond the power of man to realize, but which serves to indicate the line of advance' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 136). Never-

theless, this idea is for Hobhouse a desirable ultimate goal, even if it remains unattainable. However, interestingly, even if man by nature is influenced by various disharmonies, according to the philosopher, there is a way to partially alleviate the conflicts that hinder man. A method that allows the individual to partially restore inner harmony by 'bringing hidden inconsistencies to light' is helpful. Interestingly, he refers to psychoanalysis (Hobhouse, 1921, p. 151).[4]

This inconsistency at the level of the unconscious – as we would call it nowadays – does not fully determine the life of the individual, but is a certain property that belongs to humans as a species, just as it is a property that in their nature, 'Men are neither so intelligent nor so selfish' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 74). Human beings, in Hobhouse's conception, are thus a set of properties, the result of events and traits; they are subject to the laws of evolution and characterised by a kind of moderate rationality: 'it is fallacious to attribute to every agent a full understanding of all the logical implications of all that he does. It is equally fallacious to maintain that he understands nothing on the ground that he does not understand everything' (Hobhouse, 1921, p. 31). It can also be said that people even characterise themselves as irrational at times when they make decisions not in their interests and 'lend enthusiastic support to courses of public policy from which, as individuals, they have nothing to gain' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, pp. 74–75). In other words, the individual in Hobhouse's thought is distinguished from other living beings in that: he 'is capable on the one hand of interests extending far beyond any questions of survival, on the other of impulses violating on the largest scale the conditions of a healthy life' (ibidem, p. 41).

It is also worth emphasising that the philosopher saw value in diversity, since 'many of man's most important functions depend not on his resemblance to others, but on his individuality' (ibidem, p. 42), which is 'an element of well-being,' and communal life. 'The common life is fuller and richer for the

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[4]   It can be assumed that Hobhouse had at least heard of psychoanalysis and Freud, since Wilfred Trotter, the English surgeon and sociologist who met Freud several times and, as Philip Kuhn suggests in *Psychoanalysis in Britain*, 1893–1913, familiarised one of the first British psychotherapists with psychoanalysis, himself wrote in 1908 for the *Sociological Review*, of which Hobhouse was then editor. What is more, in *The Rational Good*, Hobhouse refers to melancholy and psychoanalysis to discover that it lies much deeper at the root of problems of the individual. This is all the more remarkable because, until the 20th century, melancholy itself was often seen through the prism of abnormal beliefs. At the same time, Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* was published in England in 1918.

multiplicity of types that it includes, and that go to enlarge the area of collective experience' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 112). Hobhouse's positive appraisal of diversity can be derived from his theory of mind, in which he develops the concept of a general mind that undergoes development with the accumulation of knowledge and knowledge of the surrounding reality. He states that the more developed a society is, the more diversity it is characterised by. Among the least developed societies, there is a tyranny of custom; the extent of individual diversity is small and the idea of the common good narrow. In more highly developed societies, the demands on the common good are much greater, but the establishment of social order affords a greater range of individuality. He also concludes that 'civilisation is distinguished from barbarism, not more by the order which it establishes than by the many-sided development which it allows' (Hobhouse, 1904, p. 111).

The philosopher's vision of the nature of man, realistic by modern standards, is linked to the potential of each individual for self-realisation (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 111), for finding an outlet for feelings, thoughts, emotions and actions, because the human personality 'is not built from without but grows from within, and the task of the external order is not to create it but to provide it with the most suitable conditions for its development' (ibidem, p. 148). For Hobhouse, therefore, human freedom will be judged by the degree to which each individual is able to grow spontaneously, undisturbed by anyone in the realisation of his or her abilities. The freedom of which Hobhouse writes is accompanied by equality that places a new demand on the individual to adapt to a new situation in which:

> All living together involves a certain rubbing off of edges, a compromise – a lowering, so to say, of individual demands, and yet human happiness and human progress depend upon many-sided expansion, working out in the free and unimpeded activity of healthful vigour the varied capacities, the divergent lines of thought, the myriad aims and interests in which men seek to realise themselves (Hobhouse, 1904, p. 126).

Co-existence with others in society leads, according to the thinker, to 'unavoidably a clash of interests, and not necessarily of mere material and selfish interests alone' (ibidem, p. 126). Hobhouse draws attention to two interdependent elements. First, progress depends on the flourishing of diversity

that is borne out of the realisation of individuals who inspire, learn and develop each other. Through the accumulation of knowledge, there is the development of science and our understanding of the world:

> The mathematician of the present day can, I suppose, solve problems which were beyond the reach of Newton. That is not because he is a greater man than Newton, but because he is using Newton's work, and that of many others who have come between (Hobhouse, 1924, p. 113).

Secondly, the clash of interests, driven by the pressures of personality, requires the individual to exercise self-control, which is based on assumption that, since in society no one counts for more than one (Mill, 1861/2009, p. 112), there is no other way to realise freedom than the general pursuit of self-restraint. For, the individual is endowed with social freedom, a freedom which, through mediation in a community of citizens equal before the law, must voluntarily impose self-restraint in the name of his or her own right to self-realisation, recognising that it is in his or her own interest to take such action.

Education for Hobhouse is one of the functions of state activity and part of a broader relationship of mutual obligation between the state and the individual. The aim of the state is to provide conditions in which the development of its citizens is possible when everyone is able to develop his or her abilities as per the purpose he or she has established for himself or herself. The state is to take care of the conditions for the development of the individual. The duty of the individual, on the other hand, is 'to be industriously working for himself and for his family' and, as he emphasises, 'not to exploit the labour of his young children, but to submit to the public requirements for their education, health, cleanliness and general well-being' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 164). It is worth emphasising that the 'caring' role of the state in Hobhouse's conception does not exempt the individual from the obligation to work and earn a living for himself and his family. Contrary to the concerns of laissez-faire advocates, supporting individuals and providing them with decent working conditions did not exempt citizens from active work.

For the philosopher, the duty of parents towards their children is linked to domestic liberty. Within the social structure, the philosopher assigns a special place to the family, describing it as the most common 'miniature community' in the state, possessing an 'independent life force.' The freedom movement, within

the family, includes the equalisation of the status of husband and wife, a purely contractual approach to marriage[5] and the definition of parents' duties towards their children: 'in securing the physical, mental, and moral care of the children, partly by imposing definite responsibilities on the parents and punishing them for neglect, partly by elaborating a public system of education and of hygiene' (ibidem, p. 39). The family and the education of children, in contrast to the earlier patriarchal social concepts, according to which it was the father who exercised authority over the family and made all decisions for them, change their status in the concept of social liberalism. The role of the father is assumed by the state, upholding the equality and freedom of each family member. It not only equates the rights of husband and wife but also obliges the state to uphold the right of the child. The state performs the function of 'super-parent,'[6] which ensures that the rights of the child are recognised in society: 'this is the basis of the rights of the child, of his protection against parental neglect, of the equality of opportunity which he may claim as a future citizen, of his training to fill his place as a grown-up person in the social system' (ibidem, p. 40). For Hobhouse, children are not only 'a condition of social well-being,' caring for them is also one of society's duties to its own members. Individuals take 'collective responsibility' (ibidem, p. 151) for children, and these rights are upheld by the state, which assumes the role of a supervising institution for parents. It is worth noting here that the state, in the concept of social liberalism, although it upholds the law and ensures the equality of all citizens, does not play a purely paternalistic role. Its function is not to educate citizens in what it deems best for them, but to create the conditions in which they can

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[5] 'The movement of liberation consists (1) in rendering the wife a fully responsible individual, capable of holding property, suing and being sued, conducting business on her own account and enjoying full personal protection against her husband; (2) in establishing marriage as far as the law is concerned on a purely contractual basis and leaving the sacramental aspect of marriage to the ordinances of the religion professed by the parties' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 11).

[6] The change in thinking about society and education was made possible, *inter alia*, by the emergence of social science. This is also pointed out by John Dewey, who, in his 1935 lectures, called for government to be the vehicle for public education as a remedy to authoritarian ideologies. At the same time, as Gottfried shows, the call to change public education and to base it on science and democratic values goes back to the origins of liberal collectivist thinking, formulated by Hobhouse in 1911, which envisages the state as a 'super-parent' (Gottfried, 2001, pp. 55–51).

'flourish' – realise themselves. Its function is to provide the right circumstances in which citizens can flourish. We see the supportive or nurturing function of the state in Hobhouse not only in the postulate of the 'right to work' or the 'right to living wage,'[7] but also in the endeavour to ensure that every child has equal opportunities in life, hence parental supervision or free education.

The right to one's own conception of the good life can also be seen in the philosopher when he speaks about moral education. For, moral perfection cannot be achieved by imposing a set of rules on educators or citizens:

> to the common question whether it is possible to make men good by Act of Parliament, the reply is that it is not possible to compel morality because morality is the act or character of a free agent, but that it is possible to create the conditions under which morality can develop, and among these not the least important is freedom from compulsion by others (ibidem, p. 148).

5. Educational context

The Industrial Revolution brought to Britain not only economic change but also a shift in its way of thinking about education. The hitherto largely private laissez-faire education system proved inefficient in the emerging modern English society (Green, 1990, p. 208). The social problems that arose with the new working classes thus became not only the subject of public discussion: whether and to whom education was needed, what form it should take, who should pay for it, but also who should undertake it. The problem of literacy was disputed, and often literacy was presented as a threat to the whole of society and its economic productivity: 'literacy would render the poor unfit for the performance of menial labouring tasks' (Sanderson, 1983/1991, p. 20) or 'would make the working classes receptive to radical and subversive literature' (ibidem). Changes in attitude did not occur until the late 1930s, when education began to be seen as a tool to reduce crime and thereby increase state savings.[8] From

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[7]   As Hobhouse puts it: The 'right to work' and the right to a 'living wage' are just as valid as the rights of person or property (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 159).

[8]   As Sanderson suggested, 'In particular education was seen as a means of reducing crime and expenditure on punishment. With the prison system costing £2 million a year in 1847 and the Poor Law £7 million in 1832, any expenditure on education which would keep a child

the 1930s to the 1970s, public policies were focused on finding solutions to problems created by industrialisation.

Besides the economic dimension, the growth of literacy was also ideologically and class-motivated. On the one hand, it was about incorporating the often non-religious members of the working class into the Church and expanding their sphere of influence (ibidem, p. 19). On the other hand, it stemmed from the fear of the upper-class losing power (Green, 1990, p. 211). As Richard Johanson stressed, 'the early Victorian obsession with the education of the poor is best understood as a concern about authority, about power, about the assertion (or the reassertion) of control' (Johanson, 1970 as cited in Sanderson, 1983/1991, p. 11). At the same time, the absence of a revolutionary break with the old social order made it impossible to challenge the conservative gentry culture and consequently create a new educational system (Green, 1990, p. 217).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, liberal education was still the educational ideal, and its main aim was to develop the moral, social and intellectual qualities of students (Sanderson, 1975/2017, p. 2). It was, however, an elitist education, which, in its conception, was intended only for those who, by birth, were not required to earn or had secured positions.[9] During that age, the ideal of liberal education changed, with socio-moral qualities being replaced by intellectual qualities (ibidem). Education focused on rationality, analysis and schooling of memory (ibidem). However, it remained within a classically understood liberal education, which prepared for careers in the church or state positions, but did not include science, technical sciences or business.

An alternative to liberal education in the 19th century was the ideas of political radicals or voices emanating from Scottish universities. Belonging to the radicals, Jeremy Bentham and Robert Owen were influenced by the French interpretation of John Locke's idea of tabula rasa. As Sanderson (1983/1991) writes:

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out of prison and workhouse as an adult came to be seen as a social investment' (Sanderson, 1983/1991, p. 20).

[9] It is worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of students came from the upper social classes: gentry, clergy or with military backgrounds (at Oxford they made up almost 90% of the students). Studies also disqualified non-conformists, as one of the requirements was to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles. An additional factor that hindered easy access was the cost of studying, which was around £300 per year, the equivalent of around £30,000 today (Sanderson, 1991, p. 47).

There was a belief that, as individuals could have their characters formed for them by education, so society itself could be improved and even perfected by a well-designed education system shaping its citizens. The idea of progress turned, with some thinkers like Condorcet, into the idea of perfectibility. Education was thus seen as the key to social engineering and the philosophical ideas of Locke, received and heightened by the French, were re-transmitted back into England (pp. 56–57).

Whether for Bentham, James Mill or Malthus, education had an important social function – reducing negative social effects, such as criminal connection (ibidem, p. 57). However, it was vocational education that would fit into the idea of managing society and its progress. Admittedly, Hobhouse seems to have thought about education similarly. Education should, according to him, be 'rendered free, secular, and compulsory, would open the best careers for the best talents in every class, while bodily raising all classes, including the lowest, in the scale of culture' (Hobhouse, 1904, p. 73). This is a definite departure from the 19th century ideal of liberal education, but it also does not quite fit in with Bentham's purely utilitarian social calculation.

We can surmise that Hobhouse would reject the idea of a 19th century elitist liberal education or even a mass liberal education that would have no contact with real-world problems, as he writes 'in point of fact the net result of the years spent upon Latin and Greek seems to be to alienate the mind from the study of literature and to cultivate a taste for anything rather than the Classics' (ibidem, p. 74).

In thinking about education Hobhouse follows in the intellectual footsteps of the radicals. Education for him is to be, above all, egalitarian. This is a general education, accessible to all social classes, provided by the state and outside the influence of the church or the upper classes. This would provide individuals with the opportunity for unfettered development, contributing to the goal of private and public ethics 'the development of human faculty in orderly co-operation' (ibidem, p. 75). It also seems that both mass and university education would not, in his conception, be liberal education, at least in the sense of the 19th century idea of education (Sanderson, 1975/2017, p. 8).[10]

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[10] It is also interesting, as Sanderson notes, the conflict within liberal education in the 19th century between English and Scottish universities. The former proposed a specialist liberal

6. The concept of social-liberal education

If we consider education as a process of enlightening the future citizens of a community, we can pose the question as to the purpose of this process; in other words, what kind of citizens would a community or a state wish to have, if they were guided in their actions by the concept of social liberalism? The answer to this question will indicate the general framework of the postulated concept of education.

Based on what has been established so far, we can consider that the primary goal of educational processes within the framework of social liberalism would be to develop attitudes among future citizens that would realise Hobhouse's vision of an ideal society, in which equality and freedom would provide opportunities for the development of all its members. It seems that we can base such a concept on the six basic elements found in social liberalism: self-development, cooperation, diversity, critical thinking, control and activity.

The starting point is to say that a community based on social liberalism is convinced that 'the heart of Liberalism is the understanding that progress is not a matter of mechanical contrivance, but of the liberation of living spiritual energy' (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 137). The key to harmonious human progress, for Hobhouse, is the conviction that a good society can be built only on the 'self-directing force of personality' (ibidem, p. 66), a personality that cannot be aroused in any other way than by providing conditions for the unfettered harmonious development of all its members. The goal of the state is therefore to provide these conditions, the goal of individuals is the harmonious realisation of freedom, through the development of their talents. Therefore, the first element of the concept of education within social liberalism is the idea of self-development.

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education model focused on Classics and mathematics. Scottish universities, on the other hand, promoted a general education with a wider range of subjects but less specialisation 'comprising variously English, classics, mathematics, natural philosophy (physics), logic, moral philosophy and some branch of natural science' (Sanderson, 1975/2016, pp. 1–9).

6.1. Self-development

Development is a fundamental postulate of social liberalism in the context of the concept of education, for, as the philosopher writes, 'the foundation of freedom is the idea of growth' (ibidem, p. 122). Hobhouse, however, goes beyond the general framework of negative freedom seeking to 'remove obstacles' (ibidem, p. 19). It is an active demand for positive freedom, a freedom that demands: 'an opening of channels for the flow of free spontaneous vital activity' (ibidem, p. 47), a freedom that is 'the basis of the rights of the child, of his protection against parental neglect, of the equality of opportunity' (ibidem, p. 40). The state, according to Hobhouse, is to work actively to remove those constraints that impede equal access to development for all. The aim of education, then, would be to show that the nature of man is complex and diverse, that there are layers of life activity hidden in everyone and that the best one can do is to harness them and continuously develop oneself.

6.2. Cooperation/solidarity

While the demand for self-development can be linked to the sphere of human freedom, the demand for cooperation and solidarity is linked to the idea of equality. This fits into the broader concept of social liberalism, in which it can be repeated after English that 'liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid result' (ibidem, p. 48). Therefore, in the concept of education, the idea of cooperation and solidarity between individuals would be as important as the idea of growth. As Hobhouse states, 'freedom is only one side of social life. Mutual aid is not less important than mutual forbearance, the theory of collective action no less fundamental than the theory of personal freedom' (ibidem, p. 124). In such a projected conception of education, it would seem that the philosopher would place a primary emphasis on co-operation between educators. Hobhouse would argue that social progress is possible only as an expression of mutual cooperation, of co-operation and not of competition and rivalry, that 'the ideal society is conceived as a whole which lives and flourishes by the harmonious growth of its parts, each of which is developing on its own lines and in accordance with its own nature tends on the whole to further the development of others' (ibidem, p. 136).

6.3. Diversity/tolerance

Directly linked to the concept of co-operation and self-development is the concept of diversity. For Hobhouse, life 'is richer for the multiplicity of types that it includes, and that go to enlarge the area of collective experience' (ibidem, p. 112). When confronted with the diversity of the world, human beings enrich their own experience, expand their horizons and learn to accept differences. For Hobhouse, education should be free and secular. With society guaranteeing private freedom of religion: 'expression is free, and worship is free as far as it is the expression of personal devotion.' A citizen may profess any belief as long as it would not infringe on the freedom of others: 'so far as they infringe the freedom, or, more generally, the rights of others, the practices inculcated by a religion cannot enjoy unqualified freedom' (ibidem, p. 31). Therefore, the concept of education would have to encourage future citizens to express their diversity on the one hand and to accept others' on the other.

6.4. Critical thinking – acceptance of making mistakes

Acceptance of diversity is not equated by Hobhouse with the tolerance of opinions considered false: 'the Liberal does not meet opinions which he conceives to be false with toleration, as though they did not matter. He meets them with justice, and exacts for them a fair hearing as though they mattered just as much as his own' (ibidem, p. 116). For the philosopher, education would be directed towards training a critical sense towards the opinions encountered. The future citizen does not reject *a priori* the opinions he or she has heard, but approaches them with a critical attitude, ready to discard his or her own beliefs at any time if the newly adopted ones prove more convincing. This attitude also entails a similar attitude towards errors. For Hobhouse (as for Mill[11]), the pursuit of truth presupposes that making a mistake can also lead to enriching us. The error we encounter or make, if it is analysed is, either:

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[11]   Mill presents a similar view in the second chapter of his work *On Liberty*. He argues, 'though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied' (Mill, 1859/2012, p. 150).

its implications and consequences become clear, some elements of truth will appear within it. They will separate themselves out; they will go to enrich the stock of human ideas; they will add something to the truth which he himself mistakenly took as final; they will serve to explain the root of the error; for error itself is generally a truth misconceived, and it is only when it is explained that it is finally and satisfactorily confuted. Or, in the alternative, no element of truth will appear. In that case the more fully the error is understood, the more patiently it is followed up in all the windings of its implications and conse-quences, the more thoroughly will it refute itself (Hobhouse, 1911/1945, p. 117).

For Hobhouse, the concept of education *vis-à-vis* the search for truth presupposes the possibility of erring; people are fallible and the path they follow repeatedly leads to mistakes. Educating the educated would therefore emphasise the readiness of reason to critically analyse content, along with the positive nature of our errors (an error one commits also says something about the world, for it either better explains the source of the error itself or adds something to the truth).

6.5. Control

As indicated earlier, coercion is for Hobhouse the natural complement to the idea of freedom. Only freedom that is in some way constrained permits the possibility of equality. A community is a collection of equal individuals, each of whom has the same right to realise their freedom to flourish and develop their abilities. Freedom is always a social freedom, i.e. one guaranteed by the community, on the one hand, and limited by the presence of other members of the community, on the other. In the concept of education, this component cannot be missing either. And the educational process should aim to develop the skill of self-control as an element of the 'harmonizing power which makes us capable of directing our own lives' (ibidem, p. 128). The skill of self-control is, in Hobhouse's view, of great value because, unlike the use of external coercion, for the latter 'is doing less than nothing for the character of the man himself. It is merely crushing him' (ibidem, p. 127). Teaching self-control, on the other hand, will 'foster the development of will, of personality, of self-control' (ibidem, p. 128).

6.6. Activity

The final element of the general concept of education according to Hobhouse would be to emphasise the value of active citizenship. In any society that lives in peace with others, we can find many good elements, claims Hobhouse (ibidem, p. 185), but adds later: 'the full fruit of social progress is only to be reaped by a society in which the generality of men and women are not only passive recipients but practical contributors' (ibidem, p. 72). The concept of social liberalism emphasises the crucial role of the community in the realisation of freedom. The common good, generated by all members of a community, is all the more perfect, the more involved the members of that community are. Therefore, in the concept of education, active citizenship would be a value to which the education of future citizens would be subject.

7. The contemporary context

If we assume that the difference in the sphere of education between modern 'modern' liberals and modern 'classical' liberals lies in the understanding of education as an egalitarian process, i.e. as the levelling of opportunities in access to education regardless of the child's background or as intellectual capital in which the child's guardians invest according to their preferences, then Hobhouse's conception of education would definitely belong to the 'modern' party (Wrońska, 2012, p. 51). According to Hobhouse, the role of the state is not only to provide free education to all children but also to supervise parents to ensure that they fulfil their educational and hygienic responsibilities to their children. The state would become a super-parent. The role of the state would also be to direct citizens to educate themselves in those abilities and qualities that would foster not only their own development but also their cooperation with others.

It is also worth noting that the concept of social-liberal education thus outlined can be a remedy for contemporary struggles with ideologies, populism or the rise of right-wing movements in political scenes across Europe. Indeed, the concept of social-liberal education focuses not only on liberal individualism but also on the idea of cooperation and solidarity, not to mention the promotion of community action.

8. Is social-liberal education a liberal education?

I would like to pose an important question in the context of the concept of so-cial-liberal education I have outlined – what would be the relationship between the proposed concept of education and the concept of liberal education? In other words, is social-liberal education not a certain variant of liberal educa-tion? Without reaching a conclusion, I would like to consider an argument that could demonstrate the resemblance between the two concepts.

It is related to the tradition of liberal education itself, which is 'full of vari-ety, discontinuity, and innovation' (Farnham & Yarmolinsky, 1996, p. 11). The question of the purpose of education or the scope of curricula or the canon of cultural texts has been posed from the very beginning[12] and is ongoing today.[13] However, not only is the tradition itself interpreted in many ways but the idea of freedom, associated with liberal education, is also understood in different ways (Nussbaum, 1997/2003, p. 310).[14] This makes the liberal education tra-dition conceptually highly capacious. It can include representatives of both conservative and liberal currents. It seems as well that the social-liberal concept of education should also find its place in the liberal education tradition.

As a possible counterargument, one might wonder whether such an ide-ologically capacious concept of liberal education does not become too fuzzy in terms of content, making it difficult to define what liberal education is.

The conception of social-liberal education I have proposed does not allow, at this point, to provide a resolution, to this doubt. However, it seems an interesting starting point for further discussion.

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[12]   As an example, see the dispute between Plato and Isocrates, in which the former argued that education is an end in itself, while the orator considered it rather as a tool that contributes to the goal (Zakaria, 2016, p. 30).

[13]   Discussions are taking place not only on canons, but also on what role education is supposed to play in modern societies and what dangers it is supposed to protect us from (Nuss-baum, 1997/2003, pp. 18–21).

[14]   In ancient Rome, education was for citizens (free as opposed to slaves and artisans) rather than young people becoming free (Nussbaum, 1997/2003, p. 310).

9. Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how, based on the philosophical assumptions of Hobhouse's social liberalism, the outline of a concept of social-liberal education can be sketched. This concept would be based on five main characteristics: self-development, cooperation/solidarity, diversity/tolerance, critical thinking/acceptance of error and control/self-control. I have also tried to show that social liberalism was, in its essence, directed against the social inequalities that arose from the transformations of the industrial revolution. This also seems to be a challenge for contemporary liberalism. At the same time, Hobhouse's concept of social liberalism can provide a convenient starting point for considering solutions to contemporary problems. I have also pointed out the necessity of examining the extent to which the concept of social-liberal education does not overlap from the side of the main ideas with the concept of liberal education. Besides, although Hobhouse's philosophical concept seems extremely interesting, three elements can be considered questionable. Firstly, the idea of organicism advocated by Hobhouse allows the biological metaphor to be interpreted in an anti-liberal spirit: the community as an organism that becomes more important for its well-being than the individual component parts can pose a threat to individuals. Secondly, the attempt to combine the ideas of freedom and equality may not be feasible. It would be necessary to consider to what extent the two values are reconcilable based on Hobhouse's metaphysical assumptions or whether, as Isaiah Berlin argues, there are values that require the choice of one or the other (Berlin, 1947/2013, p. 8). The third doubt[15] concerns the rift between Hobhouse's ethic of social harmony and capitalism, in which it seems irreconcilable to maintain a classical liberal ethic that supports the actions of capitalism and a social ethic that ensures inter-class harmony.

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[15] This argument is fully developed by John W. Seamen (Seaman, 1978).

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