L. T. Hobhouse’s Liberalism, of 1911 was a pretty good restatement of Classical Liberalism at the beginning of the 20th century. This text is interesting as, unlike some of the more commonly cited formulation [J.S. Mill for instance], Hobhouse directly addresses the proposals of Marxism.

GREAT changes are not caused by ideas alone; but they are not effected without ideas. The passions of men must be aroused if the frost of custom is to be broken or the chains of authority burst; but passion of itself is blind and its world is chaotic. To be effective men must act together, and to act together they must have a common understanding and a common object. When it comes to be a question of any far-reaching change, they must not merely conceive their own immediate end with clearness. They must convert others, they must communicate sympathy and win over the unconvinced. Upon the whole, they must show that their object is possible, that it is compatible with existing institutions, or at any rate with some workable form of social life. They are, in fact, driven on by the requirements of their position to the elaboration of ideas, and in the end to some sort of social philosophy; and the philosophies that have driving force behind them are those which arise after this fashion out of the practical demands of human feeling. Once formed, it reacts upon the minds of its adherents, and gives direction and unity to their efforts. It becomes, in its turn, a real historic force, and the degree of its coherence and adequacy is matter, not merely of academic interest, but of practical moment.

The modern State accordingly starts from the basis of an authoritarian order, and the protest against that order, a protest religious, political, economic, social, and ethical, is the historic beginning of Liberalism. Thus Liberalism appears at first as a criticism, sometimes even as a destructive and revolutionary criticism. Its negative aspect is for centuries foremost. Its business seems to be not so much to build up as to pull down, to remove obstacles which block human progress...Is Liberalism at bottom a constructive or only a destructive force? Is it of permanent significance? Does it express some vital truth of social life as such, or is it a temporary phenomenon called forth by the special circumstances of Western Europe? I would call attention only to the main points at which Liberalism assailed the old order, and to the fundamental ideas directing its advance:

Civil Liberty: Both logically and historically the first point of attack is arbitrary government, and the first liberty to be secured is the right to be dealt with in
accordance with law. A man who has no legal rights against another, but stands entirely at his disposal, to be treated according to his caprice, is a slave to that other. He is "rightless," devoid of rights....If there is one law for the Government and another for its subjects, one for noble and another for commoner, one for rich and another for poor, the law does not guarantee liberty for all. Liberty in this respect implies equality. Hence the demand of Liberalism for such a procedure as will ensure the impartial application of law. Hence the demand for the independence of the Judiciary to secure equality as between the Government and its subjects. Hence the demand for cheap procedure and accessible courts.

Fiscal Liberty: Closely connected with juristic liberty, and more widely felt in everyday life, is the question of fiscal liberty. The liberty of the subject in fiscal matters means the restraint of the Executive, thus, responsible government, and that is why we have more often heard the cry, "No taxation without representation."

Personal Liberty: A man is not free when he is controlled by other men, but only when he is controlled by principles and rules which all society must obey. At the basis lies liberty of thought—but liberty of thought is of very little avail without liberty to exchange thoughts—-since thought is mainly a social product; and so with liberty of thought goes liberty of speech and liberty of writing, printing, and peaceable discussion. But personal liberty may infringe upon the personal liberty of others, and the possibilities of conflict are not less in relation to the connected right of liberty in religion. That this liberty is absolute cannot be contended, for no modern state would tolerate a form of religious worship which should include cannibalism, human sacrifice, or the burning of witches. I take religious liberty to include the liberties of thought and expression, and to add to these the right of worship in any form which does not inflict injury on others or involve a breach of public order. This limitation appears to carry with it a certain decency and restraint in expression which avoids unnecessary insult to the feelings of others....It is open to a man to preach the principles of Torquemada or the religion of Mahomet. It is not open to men to practice such of their precepts as would violate the rights of others or cause a breach of the peace. Expression is free, and worship is free as far as it is the expression of personal devotion.

Social Liberty: Liberalism has had to deal with those restraints on the individual which flow from the hierarchic organization of society, and reserve certain offices, certain forms of occupation, and perhaps the right or at least the opportunity of education generally, to people of a certain rank or class. In its more extreme form this is a caste system. Freedom to choose and follow an occupation, if it is to become fully effective, means equality with others in the opportunities for following such occupation....It is clearly a matter of Liberal principle that membership of an organization should not depend on any hereditary qualification, nor be set about with any artificial difficulty of entry designed for purposes of exclusiveness. It has only to be added here that restrictions of sex are in every respect parallel.
Economic Liberty: Apart from monopolies, industry was shackled in the earlier part of the modern period by restrictive legislation in various forms, by navigation laws, and by tariffs. Here, again, the Liberal movement is at once an attack on an obstruction and on an inequality. It is otherwise with organized restrictions upon industry. The conditions produced by the new factory system shocked the public conscience; and as early as 1802 we find the first of a long series of laws, out of which has grown an industrial code that year by year follows the life of the operative, in his relations with his employer, into more minute detail....The emancipation of trade unions, however, was in the main a liberating movement, because combination was necessary to place the workman on something approaching terms of equality with the employer.

Domestic Liberty: Of all associations within the State, the miniature community of the Family is the most universal and of the strongest independent vitality. 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; (3) 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. I would, however, strongly maintain that the general conception of the State as Over-parent is quite as truly Liberal as Socialistic. It 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.

Local, Racial and National Liberty: A great part of the liberating movement is occupied with the struggle of entire nations against alien rule....Many of these struggles present the problem of liberty in its simplest form. But at the back of national movements very difficult questions do arise. What is a nation as distinct from a state? What sort of unity does it constitute, and what are its rights? If Ireland is a nation, is Ulster one? And if Ulster is a British and Protestant nation, what of the Catholic half of Ulster? There is no doubt that the general tendency of Liberalism is to favor autonomy, but these lines of autonomy must rest on history and practical statesmanship. Similar questions arise about race, which many people wrongly confuse with nationality.

International Liberty: If non-interference is the best thing for the barbarian many Liberals have thought it to be the supreme wisdom in international affairs generally. It is of the essence of Liberalism to oppose the use of force, the basis of all tyranny. It is one of its practical necessities to withstand the tyranny of militarism, which eats into free institutions and absorbs the public resources which might go to the advancement of civilization. In proportion as the world becomes free, the use of force becomes meaningless.
We have now passed the main phases of the Liberal movement in very summary review, and we have noted, first, that it is co-extensive with life. It is concerned with the individual, the family, the State. It touches industry, law, religion, ethics. It would not be difficult, if space allowed, to illustrate its influence in literature and art, to describe the war with convention, insincerity, and patronage, and the struggle for free self-expression, for reality, for the artist's soul. Liberalism is an all-penetrating element of the life-structure of the modern world. Secondly, it is an effective historical force. We have recognized Liberalism in every department as a movement of liberation, a clearance of obstructions, an opening of channels for the flow of spontaneous vital activity.

We have seen that the theory of laissez-faire assumed that the State would hold the ring. That is to say, it would suppress force and fraud, keep property safe, and aid men in enforcing contracts. But why, it might be asked, on these conditions, just these and no others? Why should the State ensure protection of person and property? Why should the State intervene to do for a man that which his ancestor did for himself? Would not a really consistent individualism abolish this machinery? May we not say that any intentional injury to another may be legitimately punished by a public authority, and may we not say that to impose twelve hours' daily labor on a child was to inflict a greater injury than the theft of a purse for which a century ago a man might be hanged? On what principle, then, is the line drawn, so as to specify certain injuries which the State may prohibit and to mark off others which it must leave untouched? True consent is free consent, and full freedom of consent implies equality on the part of both parties to the bargain. Just as government first secured the elements of freedom for all when it prevented the physically stronger man from slaying, beating, despoiling his neighbors, so it secures a larger measure of freedom for all by every restriction which it imposes with a view to preventing one man from making use of any of his advantages to the disadvantage of others.

Individualism, as ordinarily understood, not only takes the policeman and the law court for granted. It also takes the rights of property for granted. The State it is admitted, can take a part of a man's property by taxation. For the State is a necessity, and men must pay a price for security, but in all taxation the State on this view is taking something from a man which is "his," and in so doing is justified only by necessity. It has no "right" to deprive the individual of anything that is his in order to promote objects of its own which are not necessary to the common order. To do so is to infringe individual rights and make a man contribute by force to objects which he may view with indifference or even with dislike.

Liberalism conceives the ideal society as a whole which lives and flourishes by the harmonious growth of its parts, each of which in developing on its own lines and in accordance with its own nature tends on the whole to further the development of others. There are many possibilities, and the course that will in the end make for social harmony is only one among them, while the possibilities
of disharmony and conflict are many. The progress of society like that of the individual depends, then, ultimately on choice. The heart of Liberalism is the understanding that progress is not a matter of mechanical contrivance, but of the liberation of living spiritual energy. Good mechanism is that which provides the channels wherein such energy can flow unimpeded.

We have seen that social liberty rests on restraint. A man can be free to direct his own life only insofar as others are prevented from molesting and interfering with him. The common good includes the good of every member of the community, and the injury which a man inflicts upon himself is matter of common concern, even apart from any ulterior effect upon others. We may not only restrain one man from obstructing another—and the extent to which we do this is the measure of the freedom that we maintain—but we may also restrain him from obstructing the general will; and this we have to do whenever uniformity is necessary to the end which the general will has in view. The majority of employers in a trade we may suppose would be willing to adopt certain precautions for the health or safety of their workers, to lower hours or to raise the rate of wages. They are unable to do so, however, as long as a minority, perhaps as long as a single employer, stands out. He would beat them in competition if they were voluntarily to undertake expenses from which he is free. In this case, the will of a minority, possibly the will of one man, thwarts that of the remainder.

We said above that it was the function of the State to secure the conditions upon which mind and character may develop themselves. Similarly we may say now that the function of the State is to secure conditions upon which its citizens are able to win by their own efforts all that is necessary to a full civic efficiency. It is not for the State to feed, house, or clothe them. It is for the State to take care that the economic conditions are such that the normal man who is not defective in mind or body or will can by useful labor feed, house, and clothe himself and his family. The "right to work" and the right to a "living wage" are just as valid as the rights of person or property. That is to say, they are integral conditions of a good social order. The opportunities of work and the remuneration for work are determined by a complex mass of social forces which no individual, certainly no individual workman, can shape. They can be controlled, if at all, by the organized action of the community, and therefore, by a just apportionment of responsibility, it is for the community to deal with them. But this, it will be said, is not Liberalism but Socialism. Pursuing the economic rights of the individual we have been led to contemplate a Socialistic organization of industry. But a word like Socialism has many meanings, and it is possible that there should be a Liberal Socialism, as opposed to mechanical or Marxist Socialism. The latter supposes a class war, resting on a clear-cut distinction of classes which does not exist. But modern society exhibits a more and more complex interweaving of interests. Marxist Socialism conceives a logically developed system of the control of the economy by government. But the construction of Utopias is not a sound method of social science. Beginning with a contempt for ideals of liberty based on a
confusion between liberty and competition, it proceeds to a measure of contempt for average humanity in general.

The central point of Liberal Socialism is the equation of social service and reward, that every function of social value requires such remuneration as serves to stimulate and maintain its effective performance; that every one who performs such a function has the right, in the strict ethical sense of that term, to such remuneration and no more; that the residue of existing wealth should be at the disposal of the community for social purposes.

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