

Hobbes, Rousseau, and Evolutionism: The Issue of Social Control

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The social realism-psychological nominalism debate refers fundamentally to the whole-part relation, specifically, the societal whole vs. the individual part, a polarity that has been addressed in several areas of social theory, such as in social psychology (e.g., Cooley, Mead), social organicism of the Spencerian or Parsonian variety, political philosophy and its focus on the state vs. the citizen, and so forth. In all of these cases, the main concern hinges on the dualism of individual determination vs. collective force. In this essay I shall explore the realism-nominalism debate by contrasting the nineteenth-century social evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner and the earlier political formulations of Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, respectively, with direct focus on the issue of social control.

Hobbes and Rousseau represent polar opposites in the realism-nominalism continuum. Hobbes considered the human being to be a brutish, undisciplined, egoistic creature, who needed to be controlled by force so as to be able to live in society in an orderly and peaceful fashion. Rousseau believed in human perfectibility, rejected absolutist authority, and saw the sociopolitical process as being directly derived from individual deliberation and cooperative effort, via the social contract. The first theorist paved the way for, and gave legitimation to, collectivist and absolutist tendencies in political organization, while the second became a critically important ideological mainstay

of modern liberal democracy. I shall begin by focusing on a cluster of issues pertinent to the problem of social control that are discussed in both Hobbes and Rousseau, as well as in Spencer and Sumner. I hope that examining these issues separately will make the points of convergence and divergence clearer.

The Nature of Human Beings

Hobbes saw the life of individuals in the state of nature, that is, before the civil or social state, as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (1946: 82). They acted out of instinct, stopped at nothing to satisfy their desires, and lived in a state of perpetual war with one another. Rousseau, by contrast, saw individuals as rational creatures, capable of living together in society and making decisions that promoted their collective well-being and progress.

In the social-evolutionist viewpoint organic processes are "given a moral cachet" (Peel, in Spencer, 1972: xxiv), thus the individual is judged morally in terms of his or her natural ability to adapt to the continuous evolutionary transformations of the social milieu. As Spencer points out, all evil stems from "the non-adaption of constitution to conditions" (1972: 11), meaning that as a society passes from the "predatory" to the civil state, those who have not been able to transcend their former predatory characteristics will be ill-fitted to live productively (and virtuously) in a more advanced societal stage. Sumner interprets the human condition in the state of nature in a manner somewhat different from Hobbes's. He thinks that we are not necessarily warlike in our natural state but actually dread war and are essentially peaceful. The competition for the means of subsistence, to be sure, is a source of conflict,

often very violent conflict. Nevertheless, Sumner distinguishes between the kinds of interaction that occur among members of a particular group (the *in-group*) and those that occur among different groups (the *in-group* vs. alien groups or *out-groups*). It is in the latter case that warlike relations are said to prevail (1934: 142). If this is so, that is to say, if people in a given group are naturally predisposed to cooperate peacefully toward the accomplishment of their goals, then they will tend to adapt to the exigencies of their natural environment (as pointed out in Spencer, 1972: 10-13). Since human imperfection springs from non-adaptation to ever-changing conditions, as mentioned above, this means that imperfection tends to disappear and that we are naturally oriented toward self-improvement, that is, towards higher levels of evolutionary "fitness." This aspect of evolutionism is congruent with its broader position on social change: it incorporates a strain of nineteenth-century optimism and a nominalistic belief in the human capacity to effect social change by becoming progressively fitter to deal with evolutionary demands. This point is further elucidated later.

Liberty and Responsibility

Both Hobbes and Rousseau differentiate between natural and civil liberty and claim that the individual loses the former as he or she enters the civil state. Civil law, explains Hobbes (1946: 189), takes away the right that natural liberty gave everyone "to secure himself by his own strength, and to invade a suspected neighbor, by way of prevention." Given Hobbes's conception of human nature, already discussed, it is fair to conclude that the freedom gained by human beings in the civil state represents freedom from their basic turpitude. However, this also

means a sacrifice of individuality. In the state of nature one is masterless and free, that is, "not hindered to do what he has a will to" (1946: 137). Accordingly, one lives in constant war with his or her peers and one's life is beset with insecurities. By yielding one's natural liberty to the commonwealth (state), one grants the latter "absolute liberty," i.e., power, over oneself and all others. Because imperfection inheres in the human nature, there is no other way individuals can enjoy protection and security than by giving up their individuality and making the state the absolute ruler. By contrast, Rousseau's interpretation of how natural liberty is transformed into civil liberty is nominalistic, in that individuals become freer on entering the social contract. Collectively, they become masters of themselves, for the laws that control them are self-imposed and "obedience to self-imposed law is liberty" (1945: 20). Individuals share in the social power by giving power over themselves to one another, while gaining an equal amount of power over everyone else. The transfer of power is to a collective entity which, theoretically, reflects the wishes of each individual. It is not a transfer of power to the state, as in Hobbes, who, as we have seen, conceives of the state as an entity existing outside and above the collective will.

In the perspective of social evolutionism, as well as in Hobbes and Rousseau, the individual is portrayed as brutish and ignorant in the state of nature and not really free. Rousseau states that the civil state snatches us from our former brutality (1954:19). Similarly, Sumner speaks of "primitive man" as being shackled by savage passions, ignorance, and superstition, and of his progressive emancipation from these conditions by the civilizing process (1934:291-309). Spencer maintains that everyone must have the liberty of action to exercise all of his or her faculties and thus be happy; additionally, to the extent that

we retain our predatory instincts in the social state, we remain ill-fitted for social life and progress. In a similar vein Sumner affirms that the civilizing process provides liberty under law (contractual or civil liberty), which is "the prime condition of happy life in human society" (1934:319). Moreover, by ridding ourselves of the evils of barbarism, we gain ever-increasing knowledge of, and control over, the natural environment and develop powers of "intelligent reflection and rational choice." The civilized person has, in fact, "immeasurably extended the range of his activities and the possibilities of his choice" (1934:297). Therein lies the basis of human freedom—in greatly developed mental ability that leads to intelligent adjustment to, and handling of, continuously changing conditions. Spencer and Sumner make it clear that freedom is relative to one's ability to survive. Since the march of social evolution is inexorable and only those who have overcome their former predatory characteristics will be able to adapt successfully to social evolution and survive, while all others must necessarily perish, it may be said that freedom is the prerogative of the fittest social segments only. Sumner expresses this idea in no uncertain terms when he says that "liberty is a product of civilization, but it is only for the rich" (1934:304), inasmuch as the acquisition of great wealth in civilized society "gives an emancipation from the ills of earthly life which is enormous" (1934:303). According to him, the captains-of-industry are the fittest (hence, the freest) units of society.

It may be true that greater personal and collective freedom may be attained under civil law, and that the latter allows us to exercise the "highest self-determination" (Sumner, 1934:319), but the fact remains that, in the evolutionist context, the laws of civil society are contained in, and ultimately determined by, the laws of nature. The

human being is, therefore, free civilly to the extent that he or she has conquered the impositions of nature. Sumner recapitulates this by saying that "what liberty properly means for the individual is intelligent acceptance of the conditions of earthly life, conformity to them, and manful effort to make a life of success under them" (1934:323). We can see here how evolutionism does not treat self-determination in terms of individuals pursuing capricious courses of action, or engaging in campaigns to revamp the social order on the basis of moral convictions, but in terms of the liberty, whether at the individual or collective level, to use all of one's faculties to secure an existence. At the fundamental level, this has to do with the proper fulfillment of one's social assignments and responsibilities, and acceptance of overall social conditions as something issuing directly from the operation of the laws of nature. This insures that the social organism is maintained in a harmonious relationship with the natural environment.

Human Rights and Equality

Hobbes regards all individuals as basically equal in the state of nature, with respect to their physical and mental powers. The weakest person is theoretically able to overcome the strongest, if not by direct confrontation, by artful deceit if necessary. One's mental powers, Hobbes reasons, must be fairly evenly distributed, "for there is not ordinarily a greater sign of equal of anything, than that every man is contented with his share" (1946:80). We are all equal therefore in general ability, and we are also equal in our basic constitution, that is, in our potential for aggression to one another, for assaulting one another for reasons of security or economic gain. In short, we are equal in our natural passions, which is to say, we are equally bad.

Rousseau, too, strongly advocates universal equality. He does not treat equality, however, in terms of equal power and wealth for everyone, but in the sense that these elements must be enjoyed according to rank and the law, so that no one will become so powerful in the possession of either power or wealth as to infringe on the rights of others to these things, or to cause others to become vulnerable to subordination in relation to their deprivation of these things. To clarify this point further, no one must have so much power as to be able to subjugate another or be so wealthy as to be able to buy another. Conversely, no one should be so destitute of power as to be forced into submission to others or so destitute of wealth as to be forced to sell himself or herself. A balanced distribution of these elements is, therefore, indispensable to social stability (1954:55-6). Rousseau's fundamental principle of universal equality determines that no one is born with a potential for adaptation to conditions of inequality, that is, with innate mechanisms that fit him or her naturally to inequality. The slave is a slave, that is, he or she conforms to this status, because others before him or her were slaves against nature, but failed to throw off the yoke of bondage. As a result, the institution matured and solidified. Those that were born into it were victims of adventitious circumstances (1954:4).

Harsh contrasts of power and wealth are not incongruous with the evolutionist viewpoint. Rather, these are inevitable and welcome signs of ever-advancing stages of civilization, insofar as social progress is measured by the level of differentiation of the body politic, and of the differential human ability to cope with the challenges posed by social evolution. In the life of the wealthy it is demonstrated that rightful, industrious living has been properly rewarded. Poverty, on the other hand, as

symptomatic of the irreversible forward course of social evolution, is the unavoidable consequence of the deficiency of some segments of humanity, those which the evolutionary process leaves behind because they are unable to keep up. To abolish inequality by external means, that is, through statist intervention, is therefore to revert to a barbarian state (what Spencer referred to as the predatory or militant state of social development). All that can be done with regard to this situation is to make the most of whatever positive aspects social change brings, and to minimize the negative ones.

Consonant with this receptivity to social inequality is the relativism that marks the evolutionist treatment of human rights. Rights, as Sumner points out, are "a product of civilization" (1934:362), that is, they are derived from specific social arrangements that are both temporally and spatially bound. (This calls to mind the concept of rights put forward by the great social conservatives of the late eighteenth century, Burke, de Maistre, and de Bonald.) More specifically, although each person must have a chance to use his or her potential in the struggle for existence and the competition of life, regardless of accidental circumstances, such as birth, rank, and so on, this does not mean that one's chances of success are going to be the same as everyone else's. The outcome has been predetermined by nature, a process that is not to be interfered with in any degree by institutional means. The assignment of rights and privileges is thus contingent upon the specific configuration of each social milieu (Sumner, 1934:104). Thus, for instance, the conditions surrounding the division of labor in a given society will determine what rights and duties will be assigned to whom. Evolutionist writers deplore the fact that equality of rights is often taken to mean that all of us should be equal to all others in what our

efforts may bring and, worse yet, that this erroneous concept can be enforced by decree. The state must not interfere in "the operation of the natural forces" (Sumner, 1934:423). Its sole function is to see "that each citizen gains neither more nor less of benefit than his activities normally bring" (Spencer, 1972:203).

The Social Contract

Because human beings in the state of nature live in a climate of constant violence, insecurity, and fear of death, Hobbes reasons, these very factors compel them to seek peace in association and also in submission to authoritarian government. He contends that this process is voluntary (1946:38), but it is clear that it is the only viable alternative, if individuals are to be restrained in their savage passions, and to live socially in peace. The imposition of control over the collectivity by an all-powerful State thus becomes the *conditio sine qua non* of social existence. Social control is established by force, divorced from individual reality, a fundamentally realist conception. Rousseau, on the other hand, concedes that human beings have conflicts of interests when they unite socially, but that it is the overlapping of common interests that forms the basis of the social bond (1954: 28). The social contract, furthermore, does not refer to an agreement between an individual and the state, nor between the collectivity and the state—since the latter is an expression of the general will—but an agreement among the members of a collectivity with the purpose of improving their general security and welfare. In the coalition of individuals, each one grants the same amount of power over himself to every one of his or her associates, while gaining at the same time identical power over every one else. Thus, a balance of power and the basis

of social control are established. It is a purely voluntary process, out of which is born the collective mind, a process that also exemplifies Rousseau's staunchly nominalistic conception of sociopolitical life.

Evolutionism treats the social contract as being economically-based. This may be seen as a realist (and economicist) conception of the social contract. As Sumner explains it (1934:141), in the state of nature individuals are in perennial competition over the sources of subsistence. Joint cooperation among them increases the sum of what might be gained individually, an approach that is better suited to meeting the requirements of natural existence. Spencer, likewise, conceives of the human association as the product of an economic and political collaborative effort (1972:185). Individuals go from a condition of perfect independence in the natural state to one of mutual dependence in the social state, via the division of labor. The evolutionist explanation indicates that material or environmental pressures become far too intense for any individual to succeed on his or her own, and also that the human association represents a critical requirement for the survival of the species under constantly changing conditions of existence.

The Law and Social Control

These two elements are invariably bound together, although in one case social control may be achieved by means of external force, as in an authoritarian political context, whereas in the other control is self-imposed, arising from a consensus of the members of the collectivity. It is clear from the foregoing discussion of Hobbes's conception of human nature that social control to him was unequivocally

connected with the first case, that is, with control stemming from absolutist authority. In Rousseau's thought, by contrast, it flowed from the voluntary association of individuals, from the *contrat social*. Both Hobbes and Rousseau see the individual abandoning natural liberty (i.e., exercising the ability to appropriate all that is needed to satisfy natural desire) and becoming subject to civil law when he or she enters the civil state. His or her subjection is "to the Commonwealth only" (Hobbes, 1946:173), that is, to constituted authority, whether a monarch or an assembly. In actuality, however, the character of this subjection varies in accordance with the source of constituted authority. The latter may be inherited or assumed by force (as with monarchs), in which case legal control operates independently of the collective will; or it may be derived from the prior deliberation of all members of the society, as with democratic regimes, in which case it operates through public consent.

In the Hobbesian model, by contrast, social control is separated from individual reality. Individuals are rendered by nature "apt to invade, and destroy one another," and when they unite in the social totality their violent passions cannot be held in check except by coercive authority. Furthermore, this legal apparatus of control cannot begin to function until individuals have agreed upon the legislator (1946:83). As Hobbes puts it, "[M]en have no pleasure but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all" (1946:81). This power becomes the state, the Great Leviathan, "the artificial man made for the protection and salvation of the natural man, to whom it is superior in grandeur and power" (1946: lxiv). As such, the state exercises control independently of the collectivity, for the two are separate entities. Hobbes may argue, and indeed he

does (1946:137), that when people act in a certain way in a society for fear of the law, they are actually exercising their freedom, much in the same way that a person throws his or her possessions into the sea for fear the ship may sink. There hardly seems to exist an element of real choice or freedom here.

Rousseau's conception of social control is best expressed in the social contract. Because this contract represents the collective will, the state here may also be said to form a "collective person" (1954:30). But, while in Hobbes the power of the state is, and must be, separate from individual and/or collective deliberations, in Rousseau it is directly contingent on these deliberations, so that social control by the state becomes related to the collective will. As Rousseau puts it, "only the general will can direct the energies of the State in a manner appropriate to the end for which it was founded, i.e. the common good" (1954: 24).

Social control, therefore, can be differentiated in Hobbes's and Rousseau's thought, respectively, with reference to the problem of responsibility and, ultimately, to the larger issue of human nature. Hobbes feels that the social contract does not necessarily guarantee that individuals will abide by their covenant, for theirs is a corrupt nature; therefore, a coercive power, external to the human association, becomes necessary. "For he that performeth first," he insists, "has no assurance the other will perform after" (1946: 19). Rousseau, by contrast, is the unrelenting optimist, arguing that in the transition from the natural to the civil state, human beings leave behind their former instinctual orientation and replace it with a sense of justice, which then becomes the "controlling factor" (1954:19). Rationality and justice, therefore, emerge from the general will to become the dominant regulatory factor in social life behind the constitution and

maintenance of government. Government, in turn, is a reflection of, and a source of benefit to, the collective will.

Evolutionist principles concerning the State, social control, and other related issues are compatible with the formulations of both Hobbes and Rousseau on these issues. Yet, evolutionism does not align itself entirely with either perspective and, by extension, cannot be strictly classified as a realist or nominalist orientation. Additionally, natural determinism plays such a pivotal role in evolutionist theory as to make difficult not only neat categorizations of it but also direct parallelisms with other theoretical frameworks. Nonetheless, some considerations regarding the dual character of evolutionist theory in reference to the nominalism-realism continuum may be offered.

Spencer is clearly the social holist in his elaborate use of the organic analogy (1969) and in his belief that individuals function socially in much the same pattern of mutual dependence as do units of a biological organism. He affirms that "the life and development of a society is independent of and far more prolonged than, the life and development of any of its component units" (1972:57). The simplicity-to-complexity pattern is also thrown into relief, as seen, for example, in his description of the division of labor as a symbol of increasing societal differentiation and of advancing stages of evolutionary growth. Yet Spencer does not fully endorse the Comtian-Durkheimian organicist model. He even points out that his comparisons between the social and biological organisms serve primarily illustrative purposes (1969:150). Of greater importance still, he never accepted the notion that individuals exist for the benefit of the whole; instead, society exists for the benefit of its members, a position which is also consistent with the evolutionist stance on social change.

This theoretical inconsistency regarding the organic analogy is due to the fact that Spencer rejected the notion of a "social sensorium" (1969:21), that is, a social consciousness existing apart from the individual units of society, in the mold of Durkheim's *conscience collective*.

For him, what held society together was individual action, not consciousness. The interactions of individuals, manifested through language, constituted the thread linking these societal units and giving form to social life. A theoretical corollary of this nominalist position is that social change originates in the individual unit, a carry-over from Darwinian theory. This is also in keeping with the claim that there is no "social sensorium." Spencer defends this position in a political vein, saying that "the enactments of representative governments ultimately depend on the national will. . . . [T]hey must conform to it" (1972:55).

There is an additional element of paradox to be examined. Evolutionist theory sounds less deterministic than Hobbes's position in that, unlike the latter, it does not suggest that individuals are perennially in need of subjection to coercive authority. Working from this nominalistic premise, evolutionism upholds the human ability to circumvent coercive control by means of the ever-increasing participation of individuals in the civilizing process, a process which in turn affords them the exercise of greater self-determination. Reliance on statist control, warns Spencer, undermines the operation of internal control. In his words, "abundance of the sentiments upholding external rule, involves the lack of sentiments producing internal rule." Social progress, he continues, can be possible only in a context in which society "begins to cohere from its internal organization and needs not be kept together by unyielding external restraints" (1972:23). Such is the dynamics underlying the emergence of self-

determination. However, this self-determination, as will be recalled, is not of the kind envisaged by Rousseau in his theory of the social contract, but spells instead self-discipline and conformity to the demands of natural law. Such a stance on the part of individuals to the conditions of "associated life" (to use Spencer's term) dispenses with the need for institutional controls, because the more powerful, irresistible influence of natural law on human beings in the collectivity prepares them to adjust quasi-genetically to (and thus comply with) the rules of "rightful living." In the concrete context of society, this means simply a natural accommodation to the fierce competition for scarce resources, to the inequality upon which this process rests, and to the resulting disparities of social standing among people in society. This accommodation spurs the development of a natural ability to make the most of existing conditions. "It is as a consequence of the pressures stemming from the continuing development of society that individuals develop the attitudes—self-denial, discipline, industry, and accommodation to the ever-increasing heterogeneity and inequality of collective existence—that make this collective existence possible." To this Spencer adds, "Hence the need . . . for an active defence of that which exists, carried on by men convinced of its entire worth; so that those who attack may not destroy the good along with the bad" (1895:399).

In this regard, Sumner thinks it foolish of individuals to believe that they can ever radically alter existing circumstances. He is especially skeptical of revolutionaries and social reformists, and stresses a fact that, again, takes us back to social realism: "The peace, order, security, and freedom from care of modern civilized life are not the product of human resolutions; they are due at last to economic forces" (1934:316). Economics, more specifically, the ratio of population to land, becomes the

ultimate controlling factor of social behavior in the evolutionist cosmos. The more intensified the development of social life becomes, the greater the demographic density, the scarcer the availability of goods, and the fiercer the competition for these goods (Sumner, 1934:94), a causal chain that results in harsher constraints for social existence, with concomitant conformity on the part of the population to these natural requirements. Consequently, greater social control for all, but principally for some, is the result. Spencer likewise insists that "an immensity of mischief may be done in the way of disturbing and distorting and repressing [existing social and institutional arrangements], by policies carried out in pursuance of erroneous conceptions" (1895:401).

Another important aspect of social control is that, generally speaking, it tends to be associated with the organicist emphasis on social order and equilibrium. The evolutionist position, however, is centrally concerned with change, not order. It eschews static conceptions of social life, emphasizing instead that it constitutes a continuous process of differentiation and complexity, in which the earlier stages are characterized by simplicity and homogeneity, and the latter ones by complexity and diversity. At the same time, because this process has been pre-determined by natural law, the evolutionist treatment of social change is not incompatible with social control, even if this change starts in the individual unit. In the final analysis, this concerns "controlled" change, effected within the boundaries set by nature. The "unfit" elements of society will have to do with less—less of the physical comforts, less stability and security—on account of the insufficiency of their natural endowment for enabling them to secure these things and, oftentimes, even the bare minimum for adequate survival. The struggle for existence

thus becomes for them a more arduous undertaking, one that frequently overwhelms them and causes them to suffer in greater measure than the rest of the population and, in the worst cases, to perish. Their social development as a group will advance, but within preset limits, whereas that of the "fitter" elements of society will be at the forefront of all the progress made in the various spheres of social life. Their superior natural endowment enables them to function as the architects of social change and to appropriate the material and nonmaterial improvements thereof. They will, moreover, pass these privileges on to their progeny, who will likewise be richly endowed with all the appropriate energy, industry, and talent ("fitness"), thus continuing to augment their social progress and, consequently, their personal well-being.

The superior endowment of the socially fit and the inferior endowment of the socially unfit are equally necessary, argues Spencer. In the achievements of its most talented ranks, humankind will inevitably find the path to perfectibility, while at the same time, human imperfection will be weeded out through the elimination of the less talented. Until human perfection is finally and everywhere realized, human society will go on with its structure of inequality, its fit and less fit segments living side by side, in equilibrium. Social life will thus run its natural course, with everyone adjusting as best as possible to the imbalances and asymmetries that nature has generated. Under these circumstances, the fit and unfit elements of society remain perpetually subordinate to the immutable laws of nature, which regulate the body social. The unfit cannot hope to alter their status drastically, to advance beyond a certain point, in which regard it may be asserted that the future has been pre-established by natural law. The latter, according to Sumner, is "inevitably fixed" (1911:187).

A final aspect of this issue should be discussed, namely, that which pertains to ethics and morality. Hobbes upholds the validity of civil law on the grounds that it is a necessary and logical device to insure the survival of the laws and moral virtues of nature, in other words, to insure morality. Furthermore, civil and natural law "contain each other" (1946: 174). Thus, these two types of law lend each other ethical legitimacy and justification. Evolutionism equates the social life of the individual with his or her biological existence (see, e.g., Sumner, 1911: 173), and similarly maintains that the normative component of social life is not only derived from, but also morally justified by, natural law. In his study of folkways and mores, Sumner adopts a relativistic position when he asserts that all the different societal arrangements are ultimately justified by their systems of mores. Hence, there is no universal social model, no timeless verities, no law of absolutes other than natural law, as operative, for instance, in the setting of the course of social evolution (Collins and Makowski, 1978: 87). This becomes, indeed, the ultimate benchmark for assessing the morality of human behavior. Spencer corroborates this idea by stating that all evil results from the human inability to deal successfully with, and adapt to, evolutionary change (1972:8).

Spencer's particular treatment of social control may best be seen in his social typology, where he discusses the nature of cooperation. Human societies are classified in accordance with their "militant" or "industrial" characteristics (1972: ch.16). This conceptual scheme will be briefly discussed so as to unveil further parallels with the question of realism vs. nominalism.

In the militant stage of social evolution, individuals are forced into cooperation. In the industrial stage, they join forces voluntarily, for the benefit of the collectivity. Their

behavior and efforts are thus oriented and controlled collectively, and reflect the rules of the majority that are required for the maintenance of order and stability. This appears to echo Rousseau's notion of the social contract and similarly evokes images of individual determination—a nominalist view. The crucial distinction to be made here, however, is that in Rousseau's explanation the idea of individual consciousness prevails throughout. This consciousness is ultimately vindicated in the exercise of the general will, because the latter must necessarily reflect the former. Such is not the case with Spencer's "voluntarism" in the industrial stage. Individuals are led to perform cooperatively for their social welfare because they have no other option, and the direction and/or product of their labors may or may not be consistent with their aspirations. Human desire often runs contrary to the natural course of social evolution, and when it does it is invariably thwarted. It is clear, then, that to speak of voluntarism in the Spencerian context can only be done in a very narrow sense. Spencer's treatment of human freedom (that is, of freely chosen action), as indicated earlier, is articulated in terms of the right of every one to exercise his or her faculties to the fullest, and in the measure of endowment bestowed upon him or her by Divine Providence. Furthermore, this must be carried out in a manner entirely untrammelled by institutional regulations and/or constraints of any kind. Individuals are to act "naturally" as they pursue security and happiness, and in this way actualize their freedom, as dictated by their "internal nature," not by external controls. In this specific sense, one may look at this as a "voluntarism" of sorts. The problem is that, as we have seen, the evolutionist viewpoint assumes the pre-determination, by nature, of the potential of individuals for social achievement. This means the unequal allotment of

talents and capabilities to the various segments of humanity, inevitably producing social inequality. Clearly, this assumption neutralizes the operation of human agency, and therefore, of free will and voluntarism.

The division of labor is presented as a mechanism that facilitates the adaptation of individuals to the requirements of associated life. This is because, within this division of labor the individual units of the social system perform *pre-established* roles, thus presumably making possible the adaptation of the social whole to ever-changing environmental conditions. This conception appears to be analogous to Durkheim's realism, in that individuals passively submit to social forces that are greater than they. However, another distinction is in order at this point. Evolutionism (of the Spencerian or Sumnerian variety) does not conceive of a self-determining individual mind, any more than it conceives of individuals working passively to sustain the equilibrium of a metaphysical "social mind." The realism that characterizes evolutionist theory is of a *materialist* type (as opposed to the *idealist* realism of Durkheim): natural control over individuals concerns a situation in which there are only so many environmental resources available to accommodate a growing population. It is in this context that the voluntaristic quality of cooperation in Spencer's theoretical scheme must be viewed. It is not a voluntaristic process, as conventionally defined, since individuals must strive to adapt, individually and collectively, to the requirements of natural law, or else perish under pressure. Cooperation emerges, therefore, as the crucial requirement of human social existence.

Conclusions

This essay has sought to address, through a contrast of the philosophical positions of Hobbes, Rousseau, and evolutionism, the nominalism/realism problematic with reference to the issue of social control, which is a critical requirement of social organization.

The following briefly recapitulates the main points of the discussion:

I. In Hobbes, human beings are depicted as having an inherently brutish and antisocial nature, which must be restrained by external force, so that collective life can remain a viable proposition. In Rousseau, individuals are inherently capable of self-government, that is, of rationally and peacefully organizing and regulating themselves in the collectivity. Evolutionism does not formulate generalizing, all-inclusive conceptions of humankind; that is, the nature of human nature is treated in terms of a differential development of human dispositions and capabilities, whereby the ability to self-govern is limited to the segments of humanity that have advanced the farthest in the evolutionary progress. While the human species progresses inevitably as a whole, some human populations have lower ability to meet evolutionary demands and therefore lag behind the "fitter" populations. It may be said that the three perspectives considered here lean more towards a "realist" conception of the society-individual relationship. In Hobbes, individuals are clearly expected to remain subject to external authority. The state represents the whole standing over the parts. In Rousseau, individual wills, while being the formative material of the general will, must remain submerged under, and are manifested through, the

latter. Again, a case of the whole prevailing over the parts, even if the whole here, and the source of control, are abstract (i.e., external control over individuals emanates from a general will, an abstract thing) and not concrete, as in Hobbes.

Classifying the evolutionist position in relation to nominalism vs. realism is more complicated. Fundamentally, evolutionists like Spencer and Sumner express a fervent belief in individual freedom and self-determination. This may be deceiving, however, because underlying this belief is the assumption that all individuals must conform to collective arrangements, in as much as the latter express a power that cannot be pushed aside—the laws of nature. A natural determinism thus constrains everyone. It is a force outside individuals, but it is also a force that may be adapted to with greater or lesser effectiveness, depending on the particular human collectivity involved. In this sense of advocating social conformity, evolutionism also aligns itself on the side of realism in the nominalism/realism polarity.

II. For Hobbes, the natural liberty of individuals must be surrendered to the state, an external source of control. Only in this way can individuals act responsibly in the context of collective or “associated” life (because they are forced to do so). For Rousseau the natural liberty of individuals is lost in the social contract, but their social freedom, that is, the freedom gained in the experience of collective living, which is understood as the guarantee of peace and protection for everyone, not only fills the lacuna left by the passage from the natural to the social state, but greatly enhances the condition of personal freedom, since each person participated in (and was, in this way the creator of) the social contract. In evolutionism it is assumed that

everyone is endowed with freedom—freedom to participate in the struggle for a successful existence in the collectivity—but the ability to exercise this freedom does not come to everyone in equal measure. To exercise it, furthermore, is simply to meet the demands of competition in the natural environment, involving everyone. That is, freedom is understood as “fitness” to adjust successfully to the requirements of survival. The task of classifying these three theoretical positions regarding the nominalism/realism duality is, again, not easily accomplished. Insofar as Hobbes and Rousseau stress social integration, this suggests a realist strain in their theorizing. Evolutionism immediately suggests a nominalist treatment of the problem, notwithstanding the fact that the human differentiation imposed by natural law greatly circumscribes individual agency regarding social standing and the person’s autonomy vis-à-vis outside regulatory forces.

III. The same considerations apply to the question of human rights and equality. For Hobbes, the protection of the rights of individuals and the establishment of social equality flow from the firm rule applied by the Leviathan over all of the members of the group. Thus, these things result from the operation of external constraints over individual life. Evolutionism presupposes, as we have seen, a differentiating process of humanity, engendered by natural law, which forces us to qualify these aspects of rights and social equality—which is to say, to present them in a particular light. Rights are what is defined by each society as what members of the different social strata are entitled to. It follows, accordingly, that some segments of the population will be entitled to more or less than other segments, and hence they cannot be equal in all respects.

This, social inequality is assumed as a natural condition. The rights, liberties, and autonomy of individuals are therefore circumstances that are entirely relative to the prevailing social arrangements, which are in turn seen to hinge directly on the operation of natural law. This shows the particular nature of the nominalism espoused by social evolutionism with respect to the individual-society relationship. It is nominalism with a twist, inasmuch as, in the final analysis, the expectation is that social rights and social equality (and social arrangements in general) will be a function of the varying amounts of fitness that the different social segments are endowed with. This being the case, the expectation is that everyone must conform to things as they are, for to do otherwise would be unnatural and, hence, morally wrong.

IV. In light of the preceding, the social contract, understood as the imposition of sufficient power on the part of the monarch to override the desires and impulses for power of everyone else, is, for Hobbes, the indispensable requirement of collective life. This parallels Rousseau's concept, except that in Hobbes, the social contract is *forced* on individuals, so as to neutralize "the war of all against all," and to make peaceful collective existence possible; whereas in Rousseau, this is reached voluntarily by individuals, motivated by the pressures and constraints of the natural environment, and with the understanding that by surrendering their formal natural freedom to a consensually elected leader, greater freedom and security may be had by all. For evolutionism, social organization emerges *spontaneously* from natural law. It is something greater than and hence outside human control. The social, political, and economic inequality that typically characterize human arrangements express this larger,

multifaceted process, to which everyone must seek to adjust because of its origin and legitimation in natural law. Since natural law stands for the conditions and requirements of the physical environment, regarding what impinges on the collective survival of individuals, it may be said that evolutionism treats the context of origin of the social contract as an economic one. Ultimately, the conception of a social contract in all three perspectives overrides considerations of individual autonomy.

V. Finally, concerning the aspect of law and its application as social control, in Hobbes it is exercised from outside the individual. In Rousseau, social control is exercised institutionally as well (that is, outside the individual), and no one can escape its systematic impact, but it has two sides: each person is, to be sure, constrained by the determinations arising from the general will; however, this is, at the same time, self-imposed control in the degree that the members of the group have joined together voluntarily to form the social contract, and to submit to a law of which they are, *de facto*, the collective creators. In the evolutionist scheme, social control is conceived in neither a strictly Hobbesian nor Rousseauan mold. Still, it is something towards which individuals are to remain perennially subordinate, because it derives its force and legitimation from nature, the power of which is simply ineluctable. The submission of all individuals to existing arrangements of power inequality, understood as the manifestation of natural impositions and limitations, is thus regarded as a precondition of orderly and progressive associated living.

On the basis of these considerations, it may be said that Hobbesian, Rousseauan, and evolutionist views on social life underscore, first of all, the importance of social control in the maintenance of social life. Also, despite their

different approaches to this issue, these theoretical perspectives treat social control in a way that tends to stress the greater influence of the social whole over the individual parts. This aligns them more properly on the side of realism in the nominalism/realism debate, although we must keep in mind the cautionary remarks made earlier, namely, that nominalism and realism are only conceptual types and therefore should not be treated in dichotomous terms, as is the common practice. The assessment of philosophical perspectives regarding whether they are nominalist or realist presupposes that they will stress societal (systemic) autonomy exclusively, over the individual, or individual autonomy exclusively, over society. Such a strategy is clearly untenable, when we consider the social realism in Rousseau's claim that individuals must remain subject to majority determinations, vis-à-vis the nominalism in his emphasis that majority law is created by the individual members of the community, acting in concert, or when we consider the nominalism of Spencerian or Sumnerian social evolutionism against the backdrop of an organicist determinism that effectively rules out individual agency in relation to social arrangements by functionalizing social or intergroup relations. This functionalization of intergroup relations is achieved by conceiving of the social community organically and prioritizing its functional integration and equilibrium, a practice that underscores the predominance of the whole over the parts, while, substantively, providing legitimation to social inequality.

In closing, it seems inappropriate to consider the nominalism-realism scheme in the more conventional terms of a strict polarization of individual agency vs. systemic determinism, given that philosophical perspectives do not typically fall neatly into one or the other category. At the

same time, the emphasis granted to the element of social control, which seems to pervade the schools of thought examined, attests to their concern with social integration, which is a realist concern. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Hobbesian model of political authoritarianism is also normally quite receptive to a social organicism of the Spencerian or Sumnerian variety, since the argument of organicist integration serves well for legitimizing tendencies of political repression. And, even in democratic sociopolitical contexts, which are said to embody and express the Rousseauan ideals, the appeal to the evolutionist model of natural differentiation of the human community is not uncommon as a theoretical justification for ascriptively-based social inequality.

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