

The transforming of population thesis for the working classes: Alfred Marshall's theory of education and social development

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A. Marshall had a strong concern with the living conditions of the working classes. He theorized the possibility of a new era of civilization, characterized by a widespread 'moral' and 'mental' refinement. There is no doubt that his ideas were based on the arguments of J.S. Mill. However new light should be spotted on the reports and materials which influenced Marshall's mind. This paper sharpen into the report which written by J.M. Ludlow (1821-1911) and Lloyd Jones (1811-1866), published in 1867 that argued a marked material, moral, intellectual, and political progress of the working classes. Marshall valued their *Progress of the working class: 1832-1867* very highly¹, and this is the one of series of reports which he referred.

1. Introduction

A. Marshall was tried to help refine the condition of working classes² at that point. There is important question that should be made clear. Marshall shares many of ideals and views with predecessors, especially Mill, but have a different theory of wages and education strategy. This question requires some evidences of the progress made by the society and the working classes from the 1830s. The possibilities of the working classes in Britain depended on the late-industrial revolution, and the Factory Acts introduced around of the mid-19th century.

Mill is condemnation of some characteristic aspects of the social life of his time, like "trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading each other's heels", as "disagreeable

¹ Marshall's examination of Ludlow for the "Labour commission" in 1893 (Marshall, 1996, pp. 129-132) testifies of this high consideration. Mary Paley Marshall reported that some members of a Working men's College, in the course of a visit at Balliol Croft, had been impressed by the fact that "he was enthusiastic about Ludlow, and evidently valued his work highly" (Paley Marshall, 1947, p. 44).

² "The problem which guided Marshall's work throughout the whole of his life raising the standards of life of the working class until they had reached those of "gentlemen" (Groenewegen, 1994, p. 278).

symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress”³ can be interpreted as the problem that must be settled. The struggle for riches and an increased material production per se, were indefensible on ethical grounds and were a “false ideal of society”⁴.

J.M. Ludlow (1821-1911) and Lloyd Jones (1811-1866) wrote a book in 1867 that argued a progress of the working classes after the Reform Bill of 1832. The feature of Ludlow and Jones’s report is the social gain from the overall advancement of the working classes. It was included important contents which explaining us the condition of working classes in detail. This is the report which Mill didn’t have but Marshall, and also the reason that he placed a special emphasis on the spread of “skills” but “population”. It is clear that a fundamental ingredient for “skills” was education⁵, where the last pages of his paper are devoted.

Marshall’s logical scheme, he adopted which followed closely in the footsteps of Malthus and Mill. The continuing rapid increase in population was a “great hindrance”⁶ for working classes. However, after a few years from the 1873 paper⁷, Marshall changed his mind about population thesis. The post-1846 free trade, emigration to, and the economic progress of America and colonial lands, changed the situation that shaped the opinions of the young scholar. He replaced the old theory of wages based on population with a theory based on the “productivity” of labour.

2. Reference of Marshall’s work -The working condition from the 1830s to 1867s-

After the Reform Bill of 1832, J.M. Ludlow and Lloyd Jones wrote a book with full of testimonies, detailed descriptions and statistics which argued a marked material, moral, intellectual, and political progress of the working classes. They compared an early period of the industrial revolution with later period, which from 1832.

On the one hand, it was characterized by “large fortunes (...) made by numbers of men”⁸, and also by the worst educational, moral and physical aspects of the new factory

³ Mill, 1929, p. 748

⁴ *ibid*, p. 752

⁵ A new system of children and adult education had approved by congress in the 1870 Education Act.

⁶ Marshall, 1925, p. 116-117

⁷ Marshall, A. (1925) [1873]. The Future of the Working Classes. In A.C. Pigou (Ed.), Memorials of Alfred Marshall. Reprints of Economics Classics, New York, Kelley: 101-118.

⁸ Ludlow and Jones, 1867, p. 9

system, the legal obstacles to worker associations⁹, the destruction of many old artisan's trades, low and fluctuating wages, uncertainty of work, bitter contrasts between workers and employers.

On the other hand, it was characterized by a social regulation of the factory system, the development of Trade Societies, steadily increasing wages, steadier labour market conditions, and a strengthening in character, intelligence and social consciousness of the working classes.

2.1. Characteristics of Ludlow and Jones's report¹⁰

It showed the social, national gain from the working classes. They argued not only each worker, benefit from the shortening in working hours, sanitary and education, but also voluntary associations for social security, labour bargaining, and co-operation in retail trade and production.

Around 1832, the public opinion of employers changed very much. The employers opposed the claims of labour on the argument that high wages would diminish domestic production in favour of foreign competition and also lead capital to migrate out of Britain, workers would spend wages in inappropriate way and disturb public order. Since all these did not actually happen, public opinion slowly changed and became aware of the common benefits of the new regime.

They gradually noticed that the most important aspect is education. Apart from general education in public and private schools, Ludlow and Jones presented evidence of the progress made in a variety of less formal institutions and associations designed for workers of various age brackets.

2.2. The public opinion on factory labour and its possibilities

Take a focus on the first major point. Around 1832, they argued a transformation of working classes. There had been a "great awakening"¹¹ "amongst the thoughtful and intelligent portions of our working people in the manufacturing districts of Great

⁹ The so called "Combination laws" of 1796 and 1799, which made any voluntary worker association legally impossible, had been repealed in 1824 and replaced by the Combination Act of 1825, which allowed Trade Societies, but still restricted their activity.

¹⁰ Even though it concerns mainly the English workmen of the manufacturing districts, there are also a series of testimonies and data on miners, sailors, artisans, while little is said on agricultural workers "a class (...) amounting to less than half of the industrial class, and which diminishes as the latter increases" (Ludlow and Jones, 1867, p. 4).

¹¹ Ludlow and Jones, 1867, p. 87

Britain”¹². The shaping of this new opinion on the possibilities of factory labour has been mostly determined by Trade Societies. It also meant that the public opinion more sympathetic to employees very much.

At the first, employers was taking care about competition with foreign powers, how to hold the capital inside Great Britain, but workers’ payment. They thought higher wage will spend in improper way and a shorten period of time assigned for work, lead children to run in idleness around, and women to be deprived of their income¹³, according to the wage fund. All believed that any wage rise should be transformed direct into an increase in marriages and fertility rate. Since all this didn’t happen, public opinion gradually changed and became aware of the common benefits of the new regime.

2.3. Education and social development

The second major point is education. Ludlow and Jones present much evidence of the progress made in a variety of less formal institutions and associations. Specifically designed for workers education. The shortening of daily working time opened many possibilities: the old Sunday schools proved of far more value to the adult than they originally were to the children, the Evening Class was becoming an even “more effective means of adult education”¹⁴, the Union of Mechanics’ Institutes “have born excellent fruit, springing up almost of necessity wherever the spirit of association is strongly manifested”¹⁵, as well as the Working Men’s Colleges, Clubs and institutes¹⁶.

The spreading among the working classes of reading rooms, newspapers and literature made the working man “a man of fuller information, better judgement, and wider sympathies than the workman of thirty years back, who had to content himself with gossip and rumour”¹⁷. This intellectual advancement made a series of rational forms of activities well received by some working people. The activities, which were, in the judgement of the Authors, often baneful and degrading, like betting, were being somewhat balanced by more refined ones, until now reserved for the upper and middle classes, like literary and musical entertainment, cricket, rowing, excursions, and industrial exhibitions.

All this booming of workers cultural associations and this new demand for recreation had been fostered by general worker associations and by Trades Societies, in

¹² *ibid*, p. 85

¹³ Ludlow and Jones, 1867, p. 91

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 167-168

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 170

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 174-180

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 187

particular¹⁸.

3. Marshall's arguments and relationship with the 1867 report

Marshall saw the intellectual and moral progress of the working classes that report had described. The improvement of working condition gave chances for labours to make something better than before. The problem was that increase in leisure and in wages would not provide any progress by itself. All depended on how to use it. Otherwise the working classes were never able to get out from the negative chain. A wise use consisted in more education, rational enjoyment, provident habits, and "care and judgement in expenditure"¹⁹. On the other hand, an unwise use consisted in grosser ways of spending time, like the public house or sporting activities, indulgence in unnecessary food and drink²⁰. Trades societies played a critical part in the report and witnessed. Those associations lead working classes to acquire knowledge, in Marshall's ward "skills", for lead them into proper decision.

What was happening that the "skills" were rapidly spreading and increasing? In Marshall's hypothesis, the working classes in the narrower sense tended to disappear and "all labour would be skilled" (Marshall, 1925, p. 112). School education for character, self-respect and social duties had been considered the anchor to any permanent improvement in the life of labours since Malthus's book, and this has been emphasized by both Mill and Marshall. However, he placed a special emphasis on education for industrial-skills:

Knowledge is power and man would have knowledge. Inventions would increase and they would be readily applied. (...) There would be no premium on setting men to tasks that required no skill²¹.

A high standard of education, once attained by the working classes, "would be unfaillingly maintained" and transferred to the following generation, because:

An educated man would not only have a high conception of his duties to his children; he would be deeply sensitive to the social degradation which he and they would incur if he failed in it.²²

¹⁸ We believe that there is no school like that of the Trade Society to teach the working man the value of (individual strength, sobriety, mutual trust and confidence, and distrust of the noisy, the plausible, the violent, the self-seeking); that it has taught and is teaching it to them (Ludlow and Jones, 1867, p. 228).

¹⁹ Marshall, 1920, p. 689

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 689

²¹ Marshall, 1925, p. 112

²² *ibid*, p. 144

4. Concluding remarks

After the 1830s, the personal and social possibilities of the working classes in Britain made a leap forward as described. However the theory of wage for working classes were still bounded under the influence of Malthus's *Essay on Population*. Any wage rise should be transformed direct into an increase in marriages and fertility rate. However, Marshall used new arguments, which had been affected or influenced by some "series of reports"²³. We have argued that Marshall's specific course of research can be understood in the light of the evidence put forward by Ludlow and Jones in their 1867 report. A conclusive proof should of course required some deeper archive research. For point after point, Marshall presented the sketch of a theoretical counterpart to their work.

Marshall's reasoned optimism concerning the future of the working classes derived from his conviction that these two sets of virtues were spreading in the working classes: the various activities referred in Section 2, concerning leisure, work, associations, education, and ways to expend wages, are descriptions of the evidence at the time.

²³ Marshall, 1925, p. 116