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ELIE HALEVY AND PHILOSOPHICAL RADICALISM

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In 1995, the Presses universitaires de France re-published (for the very first time in French) Elie Halévy's classic book *La formation du radicalisme philosophique* (first edition 1901–4). Startlingly, in the afterword of volume 1, Jean-Pierre Dupuy explained that even if this book on Bentham and his school of thought has been considered a classic and one of the first serious historical studies in any language, Halévy had been a "bad interpreter" of utilitarianism.[1]

Such a criticism, made in the context of a postface to what is widely regarded as a classic of scholarship—Talcott Parsons considered Halévy's study to be the "virtually definitive analysis of utilitarianism"[2]—is strange, to say the least. As Alain Caillé noted in 1995, it is an "unaccustomed trait" to write an afterword principally devoted to criticizing the errors of the work it follows upon.[3] Dupuy's criticism is amiss, and reveals a startling anachronism. Dupuy justifies his assertion that Halévy was "a bad interpreter of utilitarianism" by asserting that the publication of Rawls's *Theory of Justice* radically changed our understanding of what utilitarianism was or could be, by revealing its deep-rooted sacrificial logic, one subsequently confirmed and enriched by René Girard's writings

1 Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "Postface," in Elie Halévy, *La formation du radicalisme philosophique*, vol. 1, *La jeunesse de Bentham (1776–1789)* (Paris, 1995). The main themes of this preface were immediately republished in an article by Dupuy, "Elie Halévy mauvais interprète de l'utilitarisme," *La Revue du MAUSS*, 6 (1995) 61–79. Dupuy's article relied on claims first made by Francisco Vergara, "Utilitariasme et hedonisme: Une critique d'Elie Halévy . . . et de quelques autres," *Economie et sociétés*, 29 (1995), 31–60, série PE; and Vergara, "Une critique d'Elie Halévy: Réfutation d'une importante déformation de la philosophie britannique," *Philosophy*, 73 (1998), 97–111. Dupuy and Vergara's analytic claims have been criticized by Philippe Mongin and Nathalie Sigot, "Halévy's Bentham IS Bentham," *Philosophy*, 74 (1999), 271–81.

2 Talcott Parsons, "Utilitarianism: Sociological Thought," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 16 (1968) 229–36.

3 Alain Caillé, "Présentation," *La Revue de MAUSS*, 6 (1995), 4–14.

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(notably *Violence and the Sacred*[4]). Halévy neglected to underscore this sacrificial dimension. Similarly, Dupuy claims that Halévy's account of the significance of Adam Smith's work and of the tradition of economic liberalism in *La formation* has been rendered obsolete by recent academic work on "the Adam Smith problem." In sum, Halévy stands accused of having confounded utilitarianism and economic liberalism and, further, of having given an excessively schematic account of economic liberalism.

If Dupuy's criticism opportunely underscores the progress that has been made in the scholarly historiography on utilitarianism, it rests on a set of questionable assumptions. The most important assumption is that there exists a singular truth that transcends historical context, and that present historical knowledge marks the ultimate stage in the linear acquisition of this truth. Needless to say, this is a highly questionable presupposition, especially when one is according a linear sequence of development to complex historical phenomena. It is especially questionable when the examination in question is of a movement of multiple interrelated ideas over the course of many years in highly variegated settings, where these ideas are conceptually metamorphosing into different forms in accordance with their contact with diverse doctrines. Such was exactly the case with the school of British utilitarianism, which looks radically different, for example, in the works of Bentham, or Mill, or Sidgwick.

Charles Gillespie has judiciously indicated the superiority of Halévy's *La formation* over another work on the same subject published roughly contemporaneously, Leslie Stephen's *The English Utilitarians*.[5] This superiority lay in the ambitious nature of the work's scope, and its success in discerning a conceptual unity in utilitarianism, in spite of the apparent diversity and doctrinal heterogeneity of the movement over the different stages of its development. Gillespie also opportunely recalls how Halévy, a meticulous historian and a rigorous and exacting investigator in Bentham's archives, chose to craft his narrative in a way that also spoke to the particular French context in which he wrote *La formation*.[6] If it goes without saying that history cannot be separated from its historian, it is likewise worth remembering Henri-Iréné Marrou's remark, made as long ago as the pre-postmodern 1950s, that it is methodologically indispensable to take into account the "decisive role that the active intervention of the historian, his thought and personality, play in the elaboration of historical knowledge."[7]

4 René Girard, *La Violence et le Sacré* (Paris, 1972).

5 Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols. (London, 1900).

6 Charles C. Gillespie, "The Work of Elie Halévy: A Critical Appreciation," *Journal of Modern History*, 22 (1950), 232–49.

7 Henri Iréné Marrou, *De la connaissance historique* (Paris, 1975; first published 1954).

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In this essay, I analyze the intentions that were at the basis of the history of utilitarianism that Halévy offered in *La formation du radicalisme philosophique*. During the years prior to 1914, Halévy was concerned with the origins and evolution of ideas responsible for sustaining modern societies, characterized by rational governments pragmatically arbitrating the values of equality and freedom, emancipation and organization. He developed a theory of the evolution of ideas which attempted to act as a counterweight to the growth of the idea of social selection, an idea whose spread was buttressed by various admixtures of Darwin, Spencer, and an intransigent economic liberalism. This mixture, Halévy believed, proffered a form of providentialism no less dangerous for the young and still fragile Third Republic than the beliefs of those Roman Catholics mobilized in opposition to the separation of Church and state. Briefly, the key notions of Halévy's historical narrative can be summarized in two points.

At the formal, rhetorical level, Halévy situates his analysis upon a Platonic base composed of two main elements. First, employing a regressive dialectic, he shows how truth advances by the praxis of a reasonable dialogue between contradictory, but not antagonistic, principles: the dialogue between the artificial and the spontaneous conciliations of interests. His regressive dialectical approach consists of a process of exposing ideas as autonomously distinct entities, having their positive elements separated from their negative ones. Second, Halévy demonstrates a progressive dialectic revealing how this dialogue leads to the gradual *recognition* of ideas that are prerequisites for *actions* for practical, concrete improvements and reforms, and therefore that are at the core of both industrial and democratic progress.

At a more political level, Halévy's narrative of the *shaping*, or the *making*, of philosophical radicalism is involved in the constitution of his demanding and original republicanism. Halévy was a republican, but he was not thrilled by solidarism, the *philosophie officielle* of the Third Republic, formulated in its most popular form by Léon Bourgeois. To his friend Célestin Bouglé, he wrote, "Solidarism only exists in the thinking of a few French professors."[8] Halévy kept a distance from "solidarist" notions of consensus and, instead, sought to base his idea of the Republic upon an exploration of the notions of conciliation and compromise. But where could this heteronomy be learnt in a Republic? Halévy did not deny the importance of the political arena, but he also insisted that fruitful and productive forms of conflict could be found in the arena of economic transactions. He therefore directed his investigation towards the study of the major currents of economic thought and, also, towards history (the project of his *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIXe siècle*). He thus constantly mixed economics

[8] Elie Halévy to Célestin Bouglé (26 June 1900), *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, ed. Henriette Guy-Loë (Paris, 1996), 281.

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and politics, particularly insofar as he studied how and under what circumstances certain economic conflicts could have productive political properties. In sum, he grounded his inquiry of the Republic on heteronomy and conflict, and not mainly on individual (Kantian) autonomy and/or sociological (Durkheimian) consensus.

These two foundations are clearly perceptible in *La formation du radicalisme philosophique*, and they help to clarify certain issues that have confounded some of his critics. Therefore, in the first part of this paper, I shall briefly describe Halévy's intellectual position at the beginning of the twentieth century. I shall then proceed to a rereading of his three main theoretical arguments: (1) the need for logic and ethics in Bentham's utilitarianism, (2) the contradiction between what Halévy defined as the "natural identification of interests" and the "artificial identification of interests," and (3) the rationalist and individualist background of "philosophical radicalism." Analysis of these arguments will then permit a reconsideration of the distinction Halévy made between economic liberalism and utilitarianism. In the conclusion, I shall turn to how Halévy's book was related to his other writings before 1914.

HALEVY'S INTELLECTUAL POSITION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In 1949, in a study devoted to Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, Jacob Viner criticized Elie Halévy's famous distinction in *La formation du radicalisme philosophique* between the natural identification of interests and the artificial identification of interests. Indeed, he considered the book a "great but tendentious work."[9] Three years later Lionel Robbins developed a similar critique. Halévy was wrong, according to Robbins, because this distinction never informed English classical economics:

> Thus, if we dig right down to the foundations, what distinguishes the Classical outlook from the authoritarian systems is not a denial of the necessity for state action on the one side and an affirmation on the other, but rather a different view of what kind of action is desirable. The authoritarian wishes to issue from the center, or at least from organs more or less directly controlled from the center, positive instructions concerning what shall be done all along the line all the time. In contrast to this attitude, the Classical liberal does not say that the center should do nothing. But, believing that the attempt to plan actual quantities from the center is liable to break down and that no such plan can be a substitute for truly decentralized initiative, he proposes, as it were, a division of labor; the State shall prescribe what individuals shall not do, if they are not to get in each other's way, while the

9 Jacob Viner, "Bentham and J. Mill: The Utilitarian Background," *American Economic Review*, 39 (1949), 360–82, 368.

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citizens shall be left free to do anything which is not forbidden. To the one is assigned the task of establishing formal rules, to the other responsibility for the substance of specific action.[10]

Robbins's criticism reminds us that Halévy's book was not only a contribution to the history of the utilitarian movement, but also a political act.[11] And it is significant that Halévy's later critics—one thinks of Hayek, Robbins and Viner—have all been intransigent partisans of economic liberalism. As early as 1896, when he discovered Bentham, Halévy wrote to his friend, Célestin Bouglé, that he wished to demonstrate that Bentham was not an empiricist, but a rationalist. He added, "And it will be a declaration of war on the providential theory of history."[12] And according to Halévy, "orthodox" liberal economists, from Adam Smith to Frédéric Bastiat or Carl Menger, presented a pernicious but influential version of providentialism.

On a strictly political level, Halévy considered himself an "unyielding Republican."[13] In the context of the "two Frances" he was definitively on the side of the "Party of Movement."[14] In 1936, during the discussion of his famous lecture titled "The Era of Tyrannies" at the Société française de philosophie, he made it clear that, at the turn of the twentieth-century, "I was not a socialist. I was a 'liberal' in the sense that I was an anticlerical, a democrat, and a republican—to use a word then pregnant with meaning, I was a '*dreyfusard*'."[15] This did not

[10] Lionel Robbins, *The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy* (London, 1952), 192–3. See also the study of Edward G. West, *Adam Smith and Modern Economics* (Brookfield, VT, 1990). In his 1966 study of Mandeville, Hayek presented the same criticism of Halévy and noted, "the identity of interests was thus neither 'natural' in the sense that is independent of the institutions which had been formed by men's actions, nor 'artificial' in the sense that it was brought about by deliberate arrangement, but the result of spontaneously grown institutions which had developed because they made those societies prosper which tumbled upon them." See Friedrich Hayek, "Dr. Bernard Mandeville," in *The Collected Works of Friedrich Hayek* (London, 1991), 3: 91.

[11] For the various discussions and commentaries on Halévy's book see L. J. Hume's survey, "Revisionism in Bentham Studies," *Bentham Newsletter* (May 1978), 4–20.

[12] Elie Halévy to Célestin Bouglé (19 Oct. 1896), *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 184.

[13] Elie Halévy to Florence Halévy (28 Dec. 1906), *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 382.

[14] On the notion of "two Frances" see the classical thesis of Claude Digeon, *La crise allemande de la pensée française* (Paris, 1956). For the distinction between the "Party of Movement" and the "Party of Order" see François Goguel, *La politique des partis sous la IIIe République* (Paris, 1958).

[15] Elie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies*, trans. R. K. Webb (New York, 1966; first published 1938), 269. Biographical information can be found in Raymond Aron, "Pour le centenaire de Elie Halévy," *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* (1970), 1–31; Myrna Chase, *Elie Halévy: An Intellectual Biography* (New York, 1980); François Furet, "Préface," in *Elie Halévy Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 19–54.

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entail an embrace of strict economic liberalism. Before 1914, Halévy was attentive and sensitive to arguments in favor of socialism, as he considered the latter to be an essential feature of the modern democratic condition.[16] In characteristic fashion, he concluded his famous 1906 article on the distribution of wealth by noting that there was no real "antithesis between liberty and socialism," adding that "universalized liberty is democracy, and that there's only one word for universalized democracy, expanded into the public and economic domain: socialism."[17]

On a philosophical level, Halévy was, with Xavier Léon and Léon Brunschvicg, the soul of the new organ of neo-Kantian rationalism, the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. Created in 1893, its aim was to keep in check the progression of positivism, on the one hand, and the diffusion of spiritualism, on the other.[18] This philosophical orientation was governed by the republican ethic that the young republican philosophers sought to promote. As Vincent Descombes has noted, for the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* circle "Mankind, from its origins onwards, has not ceased to progress towards the agreement of all human beings upon certain reasonable principles, precisely those on which Republican institutions are based."[19] Similarly, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut have written that

> as a critical rationalism, Kantianism allows republican reason to combine the assertion of rational content (particularly the values embodied in the Declaration of the Rights of Man) that is *a priori* understandable, and hence, despite everything, irreducible to history or to an empiricism that easily gives way to skepticism, with, on a practical level, a realism that sustains the project of a politics grounded on reason that does not yield to a dogmatic form of socialist reason.[20]

However, rationalist and republican like many intellectuals of his generation, Halévy was not entirely convinced by the discourse current in his time. To better ground his set of values, Halévy chose a double conversion: from pure philosophy to history and economics, and from Kantianism to Platonism.

In 1896, he became interested in the work of Jeremy Bentham, and in the history of English radicalism, which was to be the subject of his French dissertation. By

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16 See Ludovic Frobert, *Elie Halévy: République et économie (1896–1914)* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2003).

17 Elie Halévy, "Les principes de la distribution des richesses," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 14 (1906), 593, 594.

18 Christophe Prochasson, "Philosopher au XXe siècle: Xavier Léon et l'invention du système R2M (1891–1902)," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1993), 109–40.

19 Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1980), 11.

20 Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Political Philosophy*, vol. 3, *From the Rights of Man to the Republican Idea* (Chicago, 1992), 123. Also see Claude Nicolet, *L'idée républicaine en France (1789–1924)* (Paris, 1982).

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the turn of the century, Halévy had begun slowly to distance himself from pure philosophy and to find growing interest in economic doctrines. This direction, unusual for a young French philosopher, can be explained for the most part by two related elements: on the one hand, by the acuity of his republican political conscience,[21] on the other hand, by his dissatisfaction with the main intellectual trends of his time, especially concerning its economic and social aspects. This observation was starkly articulated in his review of John Hobson's 1901 book *The Social Problem*:

> It is a profound understanding of political economy that allows Mr Hobson to speak about social concerns in rigorous language, and to escape from both the formalism of Kantian doctrine on law and the sometimes abstract, sometimes metaphorical, formalism of contemporary sociology, and finally, instead of refuting or defending the abstract theory on the rights of man, to revise, complete, or in some sense, *fill it in*.[22]

Roughly between the years 1896 and 1906, Halévy explored the main strands of economic thought. He studied the classical economists and the utilitarians, the socialist aspect of the Ricardian heritage, the Marxism of Marx and his epigones, the "marginalism" of Carl Menger and Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, and the economic ideas of the Saint-Simonians.[23] In 1906, he published a very long article, "The Principles of the Distribution of Wealth," in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, a sort of manifesto in which he developed his own economic ideas.[24] In the same year, in a signed entry for "political economy" in André Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, he significantly proposed that political economy is a

> Science having as its goal an understanding of the phenomena and (if the nature of these phenomena allow for it, which is under debate,) the determination of laws concerning the distribution of wealth as well as its production and consumption, in so far as these phenomena are linked to its distribution.[25]

During the 1905–6 academic year, he began to sense that the study of economic and social doctrines was insufficient; instead, he moved to an investigation of

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[21] Notable here is Halévy's involvement in the Dreyfus affair. See his *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 203–40; and Vincent Duclert, *L'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris, 1996).

[22] *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 9 (1901), supplement, 4, original emphasis. All reviews were anonymous. However, in this case (and numerous others) we can assume Halévy was the author, since he took personal responsibility for reviewing the works of English economists.

[23] Halévy, *La formation du radicalism philosophique*; Halévy, *Thomas Hodgskin (1787–1869)* (Paris, 1903); Halévy, "La doctrine économique saint-simonienne," *La Revue du Mois,* (1908), 641–76, 39–75.

[24] Halévy, "Les principes de la distribution des richesses."

[25] *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* (1905), 197–8.

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concrete practices, in particular those in England. Thus in 1906 he published two articles on Methodism, precursors to the first volume of his *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIXe siècle*, which would appear six years later.[26]

Halévy's other crucial change concerns his rejection of Kantianism and his interest in Plato. This return to Plato was not specific to Halévy. For the intellectual circle editorially behind the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Platonic philosophy constituted a conceptual resource which could counter the incapacity of Kantian thought to offer a satisfactory definition of autonomy in a modern republic. In 1925, writing to Léon Brunschvig, Halévy reminded his correspondent of the shared philosophical injunction of their youth: "restore Platonism on the ruins of Kantianism." Significantly, Elie Halévy's first philosophical research focused on Plato's dialectic. Indeed, in 1896 he wrote an important book, *La théorie platonicienne des sciences*, in which he analyzed Plato's maieutics. It is the dynamic character of Platonic dialectics that mattered to Halévy, a dynamic allowing for the clarification of ideas. According to Halévy, for Plato, "movement expresses dialectical reason," and precisely this openness to rational fluidity could constitute a basis for political, moral, and economic action favorable to concrete reforms and progress:[27]

> If Plato always wrote dialogues, even though that form must have seemed cumbersome and bothersome, it is because he was fully aware that he wanted his philosophy to be a dialogic or "dialectic" philosophy ... the object of philosophy is to establish the conditions in which a philosophy through dialogues, a dialectic is possible.[28]

This dialectic, omnipresent in the dialogues, is a "two-faced philosophy, at once critical and constructive, negative and positive." Halévy detailed the two main phases of what he called the *dialectique régressive* and the *dialectique progressive.* The function of the former was to clear away error in order that the second might erect the positive structure of truth. The first regressive phase of the dialectic "has only for its aim and rule to develop according to its internal principle, which is not to entail contradiction."[29] It is fundamentally about a process of clarification and decanting whereby the Good, in order to develop and realize itself ideationally, enters (partly, selectively and punctually) into something other than itself. As Halévy wrote, the Good "fuses with something other than itself" (*devient en autre chose que lui*).

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[26] Elie Halévy, "La naissance du Méthodisme en Angleterre," *La revue de Paris* (1906), 519–39, 841–67; Halévy, *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIXe siècle*, vol. 1, *L'Angleterre en 1815* (Paris, 1912).

[27] Elie Halévy, *La théorie platonicienne des sciences* (Paris, 1896), ii.

[28] Ibid., i–ii.

[29] Ibid., viii.

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The remark "fusing with something other than itself" is important, as it allows one to understand the manner in which, in *La formation*, Halévy wove together the relation between utilitarianism and economic liberalism. In a second phase, that of a "progressive dialectic," an ideational recomposition becomes possible, "a new criterion is applied: the dialectic aims to create a doctrine of life, organizing science and human power. Its rule is no longer the relationship with itself, but the relation with the content of external information: the practical and technical power of man."[30] This dialectical work is the true task of republican philosophy. As Halévy wrote to Bouglé in 1898, "Plato saw that the real task of the philosopher consists in demonstrating that *there are Ideas*."[31] Halévy was intrigued by the practical, political implications of Plato's dialectic: Plato "wanted to have Socratic dialectic serve a positive organization of society."[32]

Halévy's work on philosophical radicalism clearly used this Platonic key to interpret the gestation of the doctrine. He successively applied the two dialectics in *La formation*. First, his analytic method (*dialectique régressive*) was used in the ten principal chapters of the book. In the introduction he noted first that his aim was to study "Utilitarianism as a whole," and that, as a first step, he would consider that "a proposition is set up as a principle precisely because of its logical fecundity; that is, by the number of consequences which follow from it."[33] This development is described through the figure of Bentham from 1776 to 1832. Why? Because, as Halévy underlined, "the special quality of the writers of the utilitarian school, and of Bentham in particular, is that they were not so much great inventors as great arrangers of ideas."[34] Bentham's genius, like Karl Marx's, according to Halévy,[35] was that he had the ability to maintain, for approximately fifty years, a reasonable dialogue between the two ways of identifying interests. The chapters of *La formation* thus analyze the logical development of the doctrine, in the Platonic sense of the *dialectique régressive*.

Second, Halévy made use of his synthetic method (*dialectique progressive*) in the general conclusion. He wrote this conclusion at the very end of his inquiry. During the summer of 1903, he wrote to Célestin Bouglé that he was very dissatisfied with the two first volumes of his book, published hastily in 1901. Therefore he devoted his energy to providing a more satisfying conclusion, in

30 Ibid., x.

31 Elie Halévy to Célestin Bouglé, 15 May (1898) *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 247, original emphasis.

32 Halévy, *La théorie platonicienne des sciences*, xxiii.

33 Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (London, 1949), xv.

34 Ibid., 33.

35 Halévy referred to Marx as a "synthesizer," not a "great creator of ideas." Elie Halévy, *Histoire du socialisme européen* (Paris, 1948), 75.

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which he would attempt "to disentangle the essential features of the system."[36] Halévy's own synthetic interpretation of utilitarianism is thus presented in the forty pages of the conclusion. We propose here a rereading of *La formation* on the basis of this conclusion.

LOGIC AND ETHICS IN BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM

In 1832, when Bentham died, philosophical radicalism was, Halévy wrote, "a closed system of truths logically connected together and a complete philosophy of human nature."[37] Bentham's and James Mill's very last research dealt with the "science of mind:" "There is a science of the mind: this is the first proposition of this philosophy."[38] They finally realized that their political economy and their work on law required a logic and an ethics. James Mill published his *An Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* in 1829. Halévy felt that both Mill's involvement in rationalism and reformism, and his ability to exploit Hartley's heritage, explained his intellectual superiority in this field: "The part played by James Mill in the history of the new psychology is analogous, at all points, to the part played by Ricardo in the history of the new political economy."[39] James Mill had connected the "greatest happiness principle" with the "association principle" and, finally, proposed a logic and an ethics grounded in egoism.

Halévy underlined that this utilitarian egoism was not an instinct, nor was it a surrender of human will and reason. Bentham and Mill developed a creative conception of the mind, according to which egoism was a choice, the result of a reasonable judgement. Halévy noted that the morality

> of Bentham and James Mill is a morality of prudence in the first place, and after that, of benevolence and charity within the limits of prudence. Morality, as they define it, is the art of being happy.
>
> Thus was egoism installed at the very basis of morality. The whole effort of the associationist psychology was to prove that egoism is the primitive motive of which all the affections of the soul are the successive complications. In return, the whole effort of the utilitarian moralist was to subordinate the sentimental impulses, whether egoistical or disinterested, to a reflective egoism.[40]

In conclusion, Halévy wrote,

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36 Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 491–2.
37 Ibid., 496.
38 Ibid., 486.
39 Ibid., 434.
40 Ibid., 476–7.

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it is the moral code of a new era which Bentham and James Mill are promulgating. It is no longer the religious or aristocratic, ascetic or chivalrous morality which makes current antipathies and sympathies the sentimental rule of its practical judgments, which exalts the rare and showy virtues, and recommends to the masses, in the interest of a governing class, humility or sacrifice. It is a plebeian or rather a bourgeois morality, devised for working artisans and shrewd tradesmen, teaching subjects to take up the defense of their interests; it is a reasoning, calculating and prosaic morality. The morality of the utilitarians is their economic psychology put into the imperative.[41]

NATURAL IDENTIFICATION OF INTERESTS VERSUS ARTIFICIAL IDENTIFICATION OF INTERESTS

Halévy's evaluation of the utilitarians' logic and ethics was linked to his own research in psychology. During the 1890s, in numerous works on the principle of association, he had defended a creative interpretation of the mind, and had defended the reality of both will and reason. Gabriel Seailles, one of the referees of Halévy's Latin thesis, termed his position an "uncompromising intellectualism."[42]

Halévy suggests that, at the beginning of their research, the utilitarians were not interested in problems of this kind. Their theoretical activity was dominated by their concern for political and economic reform. And here, Bentham and his followers considered two apparently contradictory solutions. On the one hand, if individual interests were not spontaneously in harmony, the pleasure of some actions must be at least equalized by pain; thus "legislation is the science of intimidation; the general utility is its *raison d'être*, and punishment is the sanction of the obligations which it imposes."[43] Inspired by Helvetius and Beccaria, the principle of the artificial identification of interests considered the legislator "the great dispenser of pleasures and pains in society." On the other hand, both the division of labor and the multiplication of market exchanges revealed situations where the natural identity of interests could be observed. Halévy summarized this situation:

The search for the "laws of nature" was the object which the economists of Bentham's schools assigned to political economy; and by laws of nature they understood not merely the general facts of physical nature combined with the inclinations which are common to

41 Ibid., 477–8.

42 *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 9 (1901), supplement, 12. Halévy's main works in psychology were "Quelques remarques sur l'irréversibilité des phénomènes psychologiques," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 4 (1896), 756–77; "L'explication du sentiment," *Revue de metaphysique et de morale*, 5 (1897), 703–24; "De l'association des idées", *Bibliothèque du congrès de 1900* (Paris, 1900), 219–35; *De concatenatione quae inter affectiones mentis propter similitudinem fieri dicitur*, Latin thesis (Paris, 1901).

43 Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 487.

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all men; they clearly tended to understand by them principles of harmony, laws of justice and goodness, whose existence condemns all the positive laws which have been clumsily made by men. According to Bentham, the philosopher of law, the idea of "liberty" is a generalization without scientific precision: social science is the science of restraints as it is the science of laws. The respect of liberty and the suppression of all restraints are, on the other hand, the first and last word of the wisdom of the economists.[44]

Does this contradiction only reveal a kind of division of labor in the utilitarian doctrine, between law and economics? Halévy did not think so, and here he applied his Platonic reading.

Indeed, the Ricardian economists could not defend their radical liberalism strictly. The history of classical political economy from Smith to Ricardo demonstrated that, confronted with new situations and problems, they gradually included the artificial identification of interests. In addition, there was another idea—the labor principle—that limited their optimism:[45]

Nature may perhaps grant happiness to all impartially; but it grants it, in the terms of the new doctrine, as the price of a struggle. In order to live it is necessary to work: and this is the meaning of the classical law of value, according to which products exchange with one another in proportion to the quantities of labor which they have cost.[46]

Both their recognition of population growth and their analysis of differential rent constrained economists to modify their attachment to the principle of the identification of interests. Concessions were made along two lines. First, they conceded the defense of individual property by the state. Equality is impossible in a situation of natural scarcity; thus, "in the interest of all, the State should protect the property of the rich against the poor."[47] Second, "the political economy of the utilitarians demanded the intervention of the State as a universal educator" because it is only with education that individuals could understand the rules of political economy, and correct and adapt their attitudes.

Symmetrically, as Bentham's philosophy of law evolved, the original authoritarianism of his doctrine became less and less pronounced. Utilitarians realized that "government may be organized in such a way that there is a place in its constitution for the principle of the spontaneous identity of interests."[48] The late political democratic leanings of Bentham are revealing here. Indeed, the democratic system is almost like a market system:

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44 Ibid., 489.

45 See Philippe Mongin, "Le libéralisme, l'utilitariame et l'économie politique classique dans l'interprétation d'Elie Halévy," *Revue du MAUSS*, 10 (1990), 135–69.

46 Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 489–90.

47 Ibid., 490.

48 Ibid.

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> Let us suppose ... that the majority of all the individuals which make up a nation is provided, by means of representative government and of the secret ballot, with the faculty of executing its desire promptly and surely. The majority which thus becomes the sovereign power is the least fallible of masters; for since each individual is the best judge of his interests, it is the majority of individuals which will be able to estimate the interests of the greatest number. It is, at the same time, the most irresistible of masters: for the most numerous are the strongest. Thus applied, the principle of the artificial identification of interests tends to come near to the principle of the natural identity of interests in proportion as the majority becomes more numerous in relation to the minority.[49]

Thus, in Halévy's interpretation, it was the experience of the dialogue between values or principles opposed to each other that led to evolution, to progress. The key point was to prevent the divergence between the two principles from becoming antagonistic, and to reasonably balance the values represented by the principles.[50]

RATIONALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

However, this raised basic questions. What were the reasons for such balance or convergence of principles? Was compromise still possible? Two responses were present in Halévy's thesis. First, modern society was grounded on industry and not war; it continuously experiences both cooperation and conflict. The inscription of the Benthamite movement in the praxis of its time was always underlined by Halévy. Amongst numerous economic references during the early twentieth century, Halévy was especially interested in Marx's materialism, an amended materialism that enabled a theory of progress applicable to modern states and civilization. This amended materialism placed at the heart of sociopolitical progress an economic struggle which was not fatally antagonistic but which, on the contrary, could develop into productive contradictions leading to adjustments

[49] Ibid., 491.

[50] Halévy's dialectic was perfectly described by Aron: "The mechanism of contradiction seems to me to be more or less the following. Fundamental principle: interest. Derivation: the interest of the greatest number. Contradictory hypotheses: the interests of different groups are spontaneously reconciled, through the functioning of the market, by the competition of egoisms. In certain cases, with regard to the rent or even, more generally, with regard to distribution of wealth according to Ricardo, the reconciliation does not occur by itself. Thus an intervention of the law or the state imposes itself. The principle of interest, in accordance with the mode of reconciling interests, thus leads either in the direction of socialism or in the direction of liberalism. But this contradiction is not Hegelian, it does not resolve itself with syntheses but with compromises. Starting with a common trunk, we follow the different branches as they separate themselves, distance themselves from one another, and then come closer to one another. Raymond Aron, "Pour le centenaire de Elie Halévy," 28.

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and then to reforms necessary for the "apprenticeship of the Republic."[51] Second, congruent with his Platonism, Halévy suggested that the continual experience of cooperation and conflict allowed a kind of reminiscence. Through this experience, individuals had the opportunity to recognize certain ideas concerning the moral and political Good. Therefore, to "disentangle the essential features" of philosophical radicalism, it was necessary to complement the "greatest happiness principle" with two fundamental postulates (ideas), "which were practically implied in the whole doctrine, although they were never formally enunciated."[52] The first was the rationalist postulate, which indicated that "pleasure and pain are susceptible of becoming objects of a calculus and a rational and mathematical science of pleasure is possible."[53] The second was the individualist postulate, which implied that "all the individuals who together make up society have an approximately equal capacity for happiness, and are aware that they possess an equal capacity for happiness."

The rationalist postulate

Halévy argued that utilitarian rationalism proceeded directly from the reformism of the utilitarians. This rationalism was expressed in regard both to the individual and to society. Halévy argued that the Benthamites were not "sensationalists." They rejected pleasure and focused on the necessity of moral constraints. Indeed, it was the law of labor that dominated their economic perspectives. For Bentham, ethics "is a laborious art"—"There is something of the Stoic in the utilitarian Radical." This did not mean that Bentham and his followers were empiricists. They accepted Locke's views concerning the function of experience, "but they none the less affirmed the legitimacy and the necessity of the deductive or synthetic method." Epistemological principles, inspired by the example of Newton's law of universal attraction, were at the origin of this view. The simplicity of the laws of human nature fostered an active attitude: "There was, no doubt, a link between the rationalism and the political radicalism of the utilitarians. They remained Conservatives as long as they were still empiricists."[54]

Buttressed by rationalism, did utilitarianism achieve in its "progressive" dialectical moment true understanding, in the Platonic sense of the term—an understanding tending towards a better positive organization of the republican *polis*? To answer this question, it was necessary, according to Halévy, to answer

[51] See Frobert, *Elie Halévy: République et économie*, 34–49; and Frobert, "Elie Halévy's First Lectures on the History of European Socialism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 68 (2007), 329–53.

[52] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 492.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 493–4.

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three questions. Was rationalism scientifically founded? Was rationalism justified? Did rationalism really enjoy a monopoly in utilitarian doctrine? Halévy answered the first question in the negative. There was, he argued, a general defect in utilitarian analysis. Bentham, Mill and Ricardo were perfectly aware that an interpersonal comparison of pleasures and pains was impossible. Thus a rigorous general calculation of pleasures and pains was not possible. "The reason why the utilitarian jurists did not base the right of property directly on need, and the reason why the utilitarian economists did not make value in use the object of their speculation, was that they understood the incommensurable nature of pleasures and pains."[55] For Bentham, it was rather the practical consequences of his doctrine which validated it. "The rationalist postulate of the utilitarian doctrine is, according to Bentham, justified by its consequences, if it is really the foundation of a system of knowledge capable of explaining a great number of social facts and of resulting in the establishment of scientific politics."[56]

The second question also raised a problematic issue. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, several schools had contested the practical value of utilitarianism. The positivists, for example, thought that their method was too deductive and too simple, and thus unable to explain the very complex evolution of institutions. Halévy did not entirely agree with these critics. He suggested that, in the juridical field, Bentham's rationalism never proposed a canonical method to measure the evil of a crime; Bentham's aim was only to present rigorous definitions which could guide the judge. However, Halévy conceded that the positivist critics were more judicious concerning the economic ideas of the Benthamite sect. And, on this front, he agreed that Ricardian economics had been refuted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by the works of Stanley Jevons, Léon Walras and Carl Menger. Nevertheless, Halévy believed that on the *methodological* level, Ricardo was right and that his convictions would be confirmed. "In so far," wrote Halévy, "as political economy becomes a science, it will come nearer to the forms which it was given by its founders, the contemporaries and friends of Bentham."[57]

The third question raised the issue of the apparent contradiction between the two principles of identification of interests. The artificial identification of interest alone seemed to confirm the rationalist principle. But here, again, Halévy applied his dialectical view: reason and rationality did not proceed from a unique principle, or from the domination of one principle by the other. The history of utilitarianism demonstrated that, in its various fields—political, economical, juridical, psychological, and moral—a compromise could always be found.

[55] Ibid., 495.
[56] Ibid., 496.
[57] Ibid., 498.

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"The contradiction was continually breaking out in the current formulae of Benthamism."[58] It was the capacity for dialogue and pluralism that was rational. The case of utilitarian economics also was significant; Halévy precisely and judiciously described the gradual evolution from Smith to Ricardo:

> In so far as the science of economics is not established, and in so far as we are not certain of knowing the true laws according to which wealth is produced and distributed, perhaps the most prudent course is to abandon the economic progress of the nations to the groping of instinct, to the diversity of individual experiences; but in so far as a rational science of political economy is possible, the intervention of government in the production and exchange of wealth appears to be a necessity, and in so far as economic science continues to make regular progress, it seems natural to believe that governmental interventions will make corresponding advances. The principle of the artificial identification of interests will tend ceaselessly to assume a greater importance in relation to the principle of the natural identity of interests; and it is in this way that one of the principles of the utilitarian doctrines serves to refute the other.[59]

The individualist postulate

The "greatest happiness" was Bentham's primary goal. He added, however, the qualification "of the greatest number." Halévy believed that this second part of the utilitarian maxim revealed the utilitarians' individualism. Indeed, for the Benthamites, "it is no longer a question of adding together particular states of pleasure and pain, taking no account of the distinction between the individuals who experience them; what must be added together are the individuated forms of happiness considered as so many irreducible unities."[60] According to Halévy, the utilitarians were hostile to the Leviathan and, significantly, Bentham himself rejected the use of biological metaphors in social sciences; individualism reconciled the utilitarians. Moreover, Halévy thought that this individualism led gradually to equality: "the idea which logically results from the individualistic principle is equalitarianism; and although the Benthamite equalitarianism was extremely moderate, it may be asserted that all the utilitarians had a tendency towards equalitarianism in so far as they were individualists."[61]

Here again, it was necessary to verify if utilitarianism, when buttressed by individualism, tended in the direction of truth. During the nineteenth century, individualism was criticized on methodological and moral grounds; utilitarian egoism was rejected by modern psychology and modern sociology. On the one

[58] Ibid., 499.
[59] Ibid., 499.
[60] Ibid., 500.
[61] Ibid., 501.

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hand, the new psychology of Henri Bergson or William James suggested that "to-day, the true immediate datum ... is the continuous stream of consciousness." On the other hand, the new sociology of Durkheim seemed to propose a more realistic conception of human action: "The new sociological method is distinguishable from the old utilitarian method in that it accepts sympathy or altruism, as an irreducible datum of experience, and considers as elemental not the individual but the social fact as such."[62]

Halévy presented two defenses of utilitarian individualism. First, he thought that Bentham, Ricardo and Mill did not deny the reality of motivations other than egoism in human action; indeed, they considered egoism a choice, and thus they logically conceded the reality of other motivations. "In the utilitarian doctrine the egoism of the individual is at once explicitly affirmed and implicitly denied."[63] Second, Halévy presented a general defense of individualism; he estimated that it was an error to consider individualism "a philosophical eccentricity":

> In the whole of modern Europe it is a fact that individuals have assumed consciousness of their autonomy, and that every one demands the respect of all the others, whom he considers as his fellows, or equals: society appears, and perhaps appears more and more, as issuing from the considered will of the individuals which make it up. The very appearance and success of individualistic doctrines would alone be enough to prove, that, in Western society, individualism is the true philosophy. Individualism is the common characteristic of Roman law and Christian morality. It is individualism which creates the likeness between the philosophies, in other respects so different, of Rousseau, Kant, and Bentham. Even to-day, it is permissible to plead the cause of individualism, whether it be considered as a method of explaining social facts, or as a practical doctrine, capable of determining the direction of the reformer's activity.[64]

Thus individualism needed to be defended both as a method and as a moral and political *mot d'ordre*. On the moral and political level, utilitarian individualism claimed the happiness of each man to be equal. But did they consider that the liberty of each man must be total? Halévy underlined that "to this question, the utilitarian doctrine gives an uncertain answer."[65] He distinguished two versions of utilitarianism. In the first, narrow version, each individual is perfectly rational concerning the means and the ends of his activity. Thus two possibilities arise: first, the combination of individual interests leads to a providential result and, in this case, the state has a very limited right to constrain liberty; second, the combination of individual interests does not lead to social harmony and in this case the state must regulate individual liberty. In the second version of

62 Ibid., 503.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 504.
65 Ibid., 506.

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utilitarianism, it was assumed that individuals were not perfectly rational. In this more comprehensive version, the problem of state intervention was more complex. Indeed, the state had an obligation to educate and to emancipate individuals, and through this intervention, men discovered their liberty. Halévy concluded that

> it should not be said, that men were born free and founded the State to increase their security at the expense of their liberty. It should be said that men wanted to be free, and that, in so far as they wanted to be free, they constituted the State to increase simultaneously their security and their liberty.[66]

UTILITARIANISM AND ECONOMIC LIBERALISM

Exploring the complexities that could be unraveled over time between two different types of interest, the doctrine of utilitariansm allowed one to deepen two important issues upon which modern republics were based: rationalism and individualism. Halévy, therefore, could write, "the Utilitarian philosophers should be blamed not for having been rationalists or individualists, but rather for not having perhaps, drawn all the necessary consequences from their rationalism and their individualism."[67] But, in the course of its growth, and the growing approximation of the ideas of rationalism and individualism, utilitarianism became mixed with doctrines that were fundamentally foreign to it. Here, Halévy once again drew from his work on Platonic dialectics, notably his chapter on the complex participation and separation of ideas, and on the question of the Same and the Other in Plato's work. In the course of this growth of utilitarian doctrine, it became mixed with economic liberalism and, as Halévy noted in this work on Platonic dialectics, The Good fuses with the Other. That said, in their respective natures (natures that reveal themselves over time), utilitarianism and economic liberalism radically differed from one another, principally because utilitarianism contributed to genuine progress (and thus to the formation of modern republican citizens), whereas economic liberalism, driven by error and simplistic rhetoric, was a sort of doctrinal sophistry. This sophistry had its origins in the work of Adam Smith, but experienced a genuine renaissance around the year 1900 when Halévy wrote *La formation.*

For Halévy, Adam Smith's work constituted an important crossroads in the history of ideas. Future philosophical radicals would borrow from Smith certain of his claims. Bentham would discover in Smith the principle of the natural identity of interests that would attenuate and eventually block his penchant for

66 Ibid., 508.

67 Ibid.

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despotism and prepare his conversion (and that of some of his disciples) to representative democracy and universal suffrage. The radicals thus made a new and directed use of the notion of the natural identity of interests, for, as Halévy explained, they transformed "Anglo-Saxon naturalism into rationalism."[68] If the reception of Smith's writings played an important part in the growth of radicalism, then those writings also had a place in the development of a different set of doctrinal beliefs, those of economic liberalism. Halévy explained very clearly in *La formation* that Smith's work was a sort of melting pot for different elements of eighteenth-century philosophy. Smith deepened Hume's skeptical belief that "reason is insignificant as compared with the instincts by which we live."[69] He systematized Bernard de Mandeville's ingenious intuition that there existed a natural identity of interests. Smith's economic doctrine was "the doctrine of Mandeville set out in a form which is no longer paradoxical and literary, but rational and scientific."[70] Finally, Smith adopted the Physiocratic idea of a natural order, one in which the order of things was viewed as a providential order conforming to divine justice, disturbed only by the arbitrary and culpable interventions of man.

Halévy wrote that arguments in favor of free trade were based on fundamental presuppositions at odds with those of utilitarianism. To begin with, the naturalism of economic liberalism presupposed that

> since human society exists and subsists, it must be that the principle which identifies individual interests is more powerful than the principle which severs them; and reason, which criticizes social injustice, has little strength to remedy them, as compared with the instinctive power of nature. Thus economic liberalism can still be considered as being an optimistic doctrine, but it certainly cannot still be considered as optimism based on reason.[71]

Second, such a philosophy accords primacy to a natural inequality of men, in particular the inequality of ranks and fortunes, derived from the differences of ability among individuals as revealed by the workings of the market. Thus, for Smith, the inequality in the distribution of wealth was a natural phenomenon, inseparable from the production of wealth.

At once the endpoint and intersection of prior intellectual traditions, Smith's work also constituted the point of departure for other reflections favorable to economic liberalism. The first expression of this intellectual development can be observed shortly after the French Revolution, at the very end of the eighteenth

68 Ibid., 106.
69 Ibid., 10.
70 Ibid., 90.
71 Ibid., 105.

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century. At this date, wrote Halévy, "the current philosophy was Adam Smith's liberal and anti-governmental naturalism."[72] Many of Smith's followers publically denounced legislation favorable to public assistance. Among them was Edmund Burke. "Burke," wrote Halévy, "may be taken to be chronologically the first to interpret political economy as a pure conservative orthodoxy."[73] In his 1795 and 1796 texts, expanding and radicalizing the principle of natural identity, Burke had condemned the principles of welfare assistance and the adjustment of wage rates. He had condemned the rigidity of regulations and laws, contrasting it with the virtuous spontaneity at work in the self-determination of society through individual initiative. According to him, "interest, habit, and the tacit convention that arise from a thousand obscure circumstances produce a *tact* that regulates without difficulty what laws and magistrates cannot regulate at all."[74] The order that emerges from these spontaneous practices is necessarily hierarchical and inegalitarian; it rewards hardworking and virtuous individuals. "Those who laboured," wrote Halévy commenting upon Burke, "must be recommended patience, labour, sobriety, frugality and religion."[75] For Joseph Townshend, another disciple of Smith, the arguments were similar: nature is parsimonious and only labor allows one to survive. Public assistance troubled the natural selection of men, and thus Halévy revealed how the aphorisms of Townshend "foreshadow not only Malthus, but Darwin and Spencer."[76]

In volumes 3 and 4 of his *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIXe siècle*, Halévy wrote a narrative of the progressive victory of free-trade philosophy in England. While 1842 marked the failure of the Chartist movement, it might have been expected that the radical opposition would become a tenacious adversary of the Conservative Party and of the aristocratic landed interests associated with it. But, in fact, 1846 marked the victory of the program of the Anti-Corn Law League. This victory was not that of the balanced radicalism of Bentham; instead, it marked the triumphant economic liberalism of Richard Cobden, an impoverished, autistic double of philosophical radicalism. The only thing left was a doctrine that "considered society to be the spontaneous product of the will of individuals, outside all constraints of the state. This was the tradition of Hume and Adam Smith ... retained henceforth by Richard Cobden and his group to the exclusion of opposing tendencies."[77] In the closing lines of *La formation*, Halévy made a

[72] Ibid., 225.
[73] Ibid., 230.
[74] Ibid., 230–31 (emphasis in original).
[75] Ibid., 231.
[76] Ibid., 230.
[77] Elie Halévy, *Histoire du peuple Anglais au XIXe siècle*, vol. 3, *De la crise du Reform Bill à l'avènement de Sir Robert Peel Bill (1830–1841)* (Paris, 1923), 316.

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similar observation. In the very last pages of his conclusion, he showed how, after 1830, the success of this doctrine led to its decline by breaking the balance between the two principles of identification of interest. The Chartists exaggerated the application of the artificial identification of interests and prepared the Cobdenist reaction. This exaggeration led to the victory of the "Manchester philosophy," grounded exclusively on the principle of the natural identity of interests. This marked the end of philosophical radicalism:

> Thus, was developed in England, twenty years after Bentham's death, a new and simplified form of the Utilitarian philosophy. Disciples of Adam Smith much more than of Bentham, the Utilitarians did not now include in their doctrine the principle of the artificial identification of interests, that is, the governmental or administrative idea; the idea of free-trade and of the spontaneous identification of interests summed up the social conceptions of these new doctrinaires, who were hostile to any kind of regulation and law: after the "Westminster philosophy," as the doctrine of the parliamentary Radicals and the agitators of Charing Cross had been called, it was the "Manchester philosophy" which triumphed . . . The contradiction existing between the two principles on which Utilitarianism was based was now apparent to all men. Philosophical Radicalism had now spent its strength, in the history of English thought and English legislation.[78]

Finally, Halévy estimated that the triumph of a new revolutionary evolutionism occurred in England around 1860 with publication of such works as Darwin's *Origins of the Species* (1859) and, most especially, Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* (1855), "Progress, Its Law and Cause" (1857), and *Principles of Biology* (1864). With Spencer, naturalism expressed itself within the framework of a new organicism. In 1904, during a discussion held by the Société française de philosophie, Halévy pushed back against Spencer's "fatalistic optimism." He pointed out that it was ultimately logical that through its singular devotion to deriving social organization from a mono-causal basis, the principle of the natural identification of interests would wind up "presenting society as a living being, infinitely too supple and complex to be influenced by the rigidity and simplicity of our legislative machines."[79] The attendant economic liberalism led only to erroneous confusion and not to the intelligence requisite for a better organization of modern republics. It was mistaken both with regard to values and with regard to facts. When Halévy grappled with these issues in his 1903 "Essay on Liberty," he revealed an extreme sensitivity to the dangers associated with a republican conception of freedom too closely associated with a constrained view of citizen virtue. But Halévy was even more conscious of the insufficiencies of negative conceptions of liberty defined as the absence of all constraint. From

78 Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 514.

79 "Compte-rendu de la séance générale du IIème Congrès International de Philosophie," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 12 (1904), 1103–13.

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such an "anarchistic, anti-social conception of freedom," he wrote, "from such a complete and total freedom would emerge all the imaginable inequalities, all of the despotisms of clerical and managerial forces."[80] He made a similar point in his 1906 article on the distribution of wealth. Here he referred to Smith, Frédéric Bastiat, and Carl Menger as theorists who, due to their methodological and moral prejudices, imagined that

> a society wherein the relations between men are those of exchange is considered ... good and worthy of approval because it realizes, as perfectly as possible, the conditions of the possibility of economic science, as they conceived of it. It was immediately considered ... good, because the mechanism of exchange realized spontaneously ... the equilibrium of interest and the realization of justice.[81]

In Halévy's estimation, however, this conception of the market was false. It did not question sufficiently the issue of inequality, and it revealed itself incapable of giving a satisfactory analysis of the economic reality of corporations and their conflicts with the wage-earning class.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have not sought to determine to what extent Halévy provided an accurate assessment of utilitarianism and Adam Smith. Instead, I have focused on a number of the political and philosophical elements of his context that informed his study of the philosophical radicals and their doctrine. Several conclusions can be drawn from this approach.

First, before 1914, and during a period overshadowed in France by the first serious legislative attempts to define the protective regulative contours of the welfare state (retirement legislation, the institutionalization of trade unions, labor safety laws, etc.), Halévy developed an extremely critical analysis of economic liberalism. Raymond Aron and his successors are correct to consider Halévy after 1918, and particularly after the 1936 conference on the era of tyrannies, to have been extremely critical of socialism and its authoritarian penchants. In Halévy's treatment of socialism in his post-World War I history lectures, the sort of dialogue he originally sought to establish between "emancipation" and "organization" was effaced by the underscoring of the totalitarian leanings of socialism (that is, by the complete annihilation of emancipation by organization).[82] Before 1914, however, Halévy wrote a very different history, one

[80] Elie Halévy to Célestin Bouglé (24 Nov. 1902), *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, 329.

[81] Halévy, "Les principes de la distribution des richesses," 548–9.

[82] Raymond Aron, "L'ère des tyrannies d'Elie Halévy," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 46 (1939), 283–307.

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in which the conversation between the natural and artificial identity of interests (if not twins, at least cousins, respectively, of emancipation and organization) was robust until broken by economic liberals, rendering possible the tyranny of priests and economic elites. Around 1900, the principle danger, in Halévy's opinion, lay not so much in the state and its advocates, but in the doctrine of economic liberalism whose sophistry either obstructed or slowed down the development of the Republic, and whose major characteristics—naturalism and inequality—were radically different from those which philosophical radicalism initially had valorized—rationalism and egalitarian individualism.

Secondly, *La formation* was constructed on the basis of a Platonic model of the dialogue. Halévy developed a theory about the origins and development of ideas where selection is far from natural, and where it is based on a rational and controlled adaptation dependent upon a demanding process of communication. The analysis presented in this essay is based on the presence of these elements in the conclusion of *La formation*, where Halévy notably used progressive dialectics. For a fuller demonstration, it would be necessary to examine *La formation* chapter by chapter, to show how Halévy's expository method also took its inspiration from a regressive dialectics. This would demonstrate how contradictions raised by the conflict between the two principles of identification led to dialogues imbued with elements of rationalism and individualism.

Finally, these political and philosophical questions converged with the young Halévy's general concern about the types of conflict at the heart of modern societies. Modern societies, he argued, were at once industrial (in the Saint-Simonian sense) and democratic, and on both of these levels conflict was natural. The idea of consensus and a certain republican unanimity, as that proposed by the Solidarists, repulsed him. He wrote to his friend Bouglé that "doctrinally solidarism does not exist."[83] If Halévy was attentive to political doctrines revealing the plurality of interests and to the constant quest to put these interests in equilibrium, he was also interested in socioeconomic conflicts that were not reducible to the battles of kings and aristocrats of Old Regime Europe. To explore such matters, he looked to economics and to the history of European socialism. From Marx notably, but also from other branches of the socialist tradition, he retained the idea that the most structurally important phenomena shaping economic and political modernity occurred on the transactional level of exchange. From Marx he also borrowed the insight that such phenomena are best examined through the lens of social conflict. But if he kept his distance from the idea of consensus, he did likewise from that of class struggle. He embraced a more nuanced conception of the structural importance of economic conflict

[83] Review of Célestin Bouglé's *Le solidarisme*, in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1907), supplément, 5.

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that allowed him to enrich his own ideal of the modern republic. This very pragmatic perspective was presented by Halévy in all his works before 1914: in his studies of the doctrines of the utilitarians; in his studies of the Marxists and Saint-Simonians; in his important economic manifesto "The Principles of the Distribution of Wealth"; in his several polemics with Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto, and Victor Basch; finally in the early volumes of his history of the English people. Halévy's fascination with the English was closely related to the themes explored in this essay. They were a fascinating people, he wrote, because they were "truly a Hegelian people who possess the art of identifying the contradictions in social and political life."[84]

[84] Elie Halévy, "Grandeur, décadence et persistence du libéralisme en Angleterre," in Elie Halévy *et al.*, *Inventaires: Le crise sociale et les idéologies nationales* (Paris, 1936), 23.

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