

THOMAS HILL GREEN (1836-1882)

T.H. Green was born in Yorkshire in 1836. He was the son of a clergyman in the Church of England. For a period of fourteen years he was educated at home. Green entered Oxford in 1855 and was intimately associated with it until the last day of his life. The regular studies did not appeal to him and more than to Hegel, but he read widely and profitably in many fields. In 1860 he was elected a fellow of Balliol and continued in this capacity right up to 1878. In 1879 he was chosen a Whyte professor of Moral philosophy. Green's teaching at the University of Oxford covered a wide range of subjects including history, ethics, logic, metaphysics, education and history of philosophy. He was a frequent campaign speaker for the liberal party, served as member in several committees and commissions. He was stricken with blood poisoning in 1882 and died comparatively at an early age of 46.

Green was most influential during his lifetime as a teacher and it was not until his death his most important works were published. His most important work 'Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation' was first delivered during his tenure of the chair of Moral Philosophy at Oxford which was published in 1882. Likewise his Prolegomena to Ethics' was published after his death. Other books written by Green were 'Lectures on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract' and 'Lectures on the English Revolution.'

Green was profoundly influenced by classical Greek thought, German Idealism and English liberalism. The ultimate basis of his philosophy is to be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. He learnt from Plato and Aristotle that man is by nature a social and political animal and the state was a partnership in virtue and civic duties. That law is the expression of pure and poison less reason; that righteousness consists for each man with fulfilment of his appointed function in the life and section of the community. All these high ideals of the Greeks played a considerable part in shaping the political reasoning of T.H.Green.

Another and more important influence of the political ideas of T.H. Green was that of German Philosophy. Green drew his inspiration from the writings of Kant and Hegel. In developing their theories both Kant and Hegel had started from Rousseau's doctrine of moral freedom as the distinctive quality of man and both consider the state entirely in relation to this freedom. Rousseau's doctrine of general will also influenced the writings of Green. He discusses the conception of the general will in connection with an effective criticism of the Austinian definition of sovereignty. Green's philosophy was not only a reaction against individualism, Hegelianism and Bentham's but it was also against certain interpretations of 19th century science.

GREEN'S VIEWS ON STATE

T.H. Green was the first man in the nineteenth century to construct a comprehensive philosophy of state. Green does not believe in the social contract theory of the origin of the state. The social contract theory has been rejected on the ground that it makes the state voluntary association. He also rejected the force theory of the origin of the state because it makes the force as the very basis of the state. According to Green, the basis of state is neither consent or contract or force but it is will of the people who compose it.

There is a direct relationship between his metaphysics and politics between which his ethics serves as a necessary interlude. It is this perfect harmony between a speculative thought and the practical problems that has conferred on Green a unique position in the history of English political

thought. According to Green, state is a means to an end and that end was the full moral development of the individuals who compose it. His ethics made him to believe that every man has a worth and dignity which forbids his exploitation for any purpose whatever. The life of the state, he insisted, has no real existence except as the life of the individual composing it. Green wrote in his well-known work Principles of Political Obligation thus: To speak of any progress or improvement or development of a nation or society or mankind except as relative to some greater worth of persons is to use words without meanings' it is in this context he regarded the function of state as being negative. According to Green, the state cannot teach morality to man or can it make man moral since morality consists in the disinterested performance of self-imposed duties. It is to remove obstacles which prevent men from becoming moral.

Green regards state as natural and necessary institution. He regards it as an ethical institution essential to the moral development of man. Its primary purpose was to enforce rights. The authority of the state is either absolute or omnipotent. It is limited both from within and without. It is limited from within because the law of the state can deal only with the externality of an action and intentions. It is limited again by the fact that in exceptional circumstances particularly when the laws of the state are tyrannical and the state fails to promote the common good, the individual has the right of resistance. According to Green, resistance under this circumstance is not merely a right but it becomes a duty. He further recognises that the various permanent groups with society have their own inner system of rights and that the right of the state over them is one of adjustment. As Prof. Ernest Barker has observed, the state adjusts for each group its system of rights internally and it adjusts each system of rights to the state externally.

The authority of the state is limited from without in the sense that it has to show its respect to the existence of international law. Like Kant, Green is a believer in international law and international organizations.

WILL NOT FORCE IS THE BASIS OF THE STATE

Green agrees that the existence of a supreme coercive power is necessary for society and this power is state. According to Green, the essence of state is not the supreme coercive power but the exercise of such coercive power in accordance with law and for maintenance of rights. The sovereign may be a creator of laws but he is also bound by them. The real sustaining power behind the state is general will. The essence of sovereignty and state is not force but that they represent the general will of the community. The true basis of the state, therefore, is the will of the community. Men habitually obey only those institutions which they feel represent general will.

NEGATIVE ROLE OF THE STATE

Green was in favour of granting only negative function to the state. The negative role which Green assigns to the state as the remover of obstacles is nevertheless significant. The state can do everything which will help but it must do nothing which will hinder the free development of moral personality. **The basic function of the state, according to Green, is to remove obstacles to freedom. The three greatest obstacles to freedom were ignorance, drunkenness and poverty.** Classical liberalism, he thinks, went wrong in regarding freedom simply in negative terms. Thus Green laid the foundations for the modern social welfare state which guarantees old age pension, unemployment insurance, health insurance and all the other legislative schemes designed to promote self- security.

Although Green held that will, not force, was the true basis of the state, he was fully conscious that there were states in which force was predominate. For such status he had no liking as they could not fulfill their ideal function. While Green reflected Rousseau's view that the general will

was entirely in abeyance in all existing states, he also rejected Hegel's view that the laws in all existing state were synonymous with the General will. Thus Green, unlike Hegel, tried to safeguard the individual against the absolute power of the state.

FREEDOM

T.H.Green is indebted to Immanuel Kant for his Theory of Freedom. **According to Kant, a 'person who is really free is one who is morally free'**. Kant was a believer in moral freedom and freedom, according to him, consist in the realisation of the free moral will. It is from this moral will TH Green has taken his start. According to Prof. Ernest Barker, Green begins from, always clings to and finally ends in the Kantian doctrine of the free moral will in virtue of which man always wills him as an end. The most valuable thing, therefore, this moral will the realisation of which should be considered as the supreme object of a man's endeavour. When this moral will is realised individual which ceases to be selfish and starts doing those things which aims at promoting the common good. In this connection there is one thing which the state should not do and there is another which it should do.

Firstly, it should not check its self-determination. It means that morality is something which is self-imposed and it is not something which can be imposed from outside. Secondly, it is the duty of the state to remove all hindrances that prove to be destructive in the realization of moral will. Since the aim of the state is to establish ideal conditions for the performance of moral acts, such functions may be rightly termed as moral negative functions. In this connection Green has rightly observed. The state has no business of making its members better but it has those moral negative functions. In this connection Green has rightly observed, 'the state has no business of making its members better, but it has those moral, Negative functions which present them from making themselves better. 'Freedom is, therefore, 'no absence of restraint any more than beauty is the absence of ugliness'.

According to Green, freedom does not mean mere absence of restraints, but the "positive power of doing and enjoying something worth doing and worth enjoying". The true personality of the individual is his will. The will is not only good and moral; it is also free because the moral restraints on it are self-imposed. Such a free moral will seeks its good in the context of social good and enjoys freedom to do the right thing which Green calls 'positive freedom'. Positive freedom represents an approximation between will and reason and morality and law. T.H. Green in his major work wrote the meaning of freedom, **"We do not merely mean freedom from restraint or compulsion. We do not mean merely freedom to do as we like irrespective of what it is that we like. We do not mean a freedom that can be enjoyed by one man or one set of men at the cost of the loss of freedom to others. When we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying and that too something that we do or enjoy in common with other."**

According to Prof. G.H. Sabine, Green's contrast between positive and negative freedom reproduced a line of thought which came to him both from Rousseau and Hegel. In his concept of freedom, Green was influenced by Aristotle's idea of common life. In fact he owed more to Aristotle than he did to Hegel. The Self-realization whose conditions a community ought to secure for its members was in the main Aristotle's realization of Greek citizenship but with its aristocratic implications omitted. Green believes that freedom was possible only in the state. His doctrine of freedom is based on some important aspects. It is a positive freedom to do something worth doing and worth enjoying. Further, his concept of freedom is determinate. In has an individual and social aspect. He tries to reconcile the claims of the individuals with the authoring of the state.

HIS THEORY OF RIGHTS

According to Green, human consciousness postulates liberty; liberty involves rights and rights demand the state. Rights are the outer conditions necessary for a man's inner development of personality. Rights are inherent in individuals, but they can be internet in individuals only as members of a society which gives its recognition, and in virtue of the community of ideal objects which causes that recognition. The rights with which he concerned are not legal rights but ideal rights: they are the rights which society properly organized on the basis of the good will should ideally recognize, if it is true to its basic principles. Such rights are termed as natural rights. They are natural rights not in the sense that they are pre social but they are natural in the sense that they are pre-social but they are natural in the sense that they are inherent and innate in the moral nature of associated mean who are living in some form of society.

The rights of which Green speaks are relative to morality rather than law; and recognition of which he speaks is recognition by a common moral consciousness rather than by a legislature. The rights are relative to morality in the sense that they are the conditions of the attainment of the moral end. And the recognition is given by the moral consciousness, because it knows that they are the necessary conditions of its own satisfaction. Green's concept of rights is quite different from that of John Locke in the sense that rights are concessions granted by the society or state rather than as rights belonging to individuals by virtue of their humanity. The state does not create rights but rights are derived from the state. People have no right to resist the state except in the interest of the state, i.e. to compel the state to make its laws conform to the general will and general welfare. Green is against the utilitarian view of rights as the gift of the state. Green wrote that 'Natural rights are rights which should be enjoyed by a normally rational and moral being in a rationally constituted society'.

T.H. Green gave to idealism a new lease of life. He rejected the mechanistic theory of the state on the ground that it had made the state as an artificial institution and ignored the various factors which had contributed to state building. He rejected the force theory of the origin of the state and was convinced that will not force was the basis of state. Green is an idealist but he can also be hailed as an individualist. He gave the individual a far more effective protection against the undue exercise of the state's power than anything with which utilitarianism could provide him. Green revitalized the principle of liberty and instead of giving it a negative gave it a positive social meaning. To conclude, Green, with his practical knowledge of the problems of the state and his faith in political liberalism, tried to make individualism moral and social and idealism civilized and safe. If he paved the way for speculative thinking in the field of metaphysics, he attempted to liberalize the politics and safeguard the dignity of the self-conscious individual against the restraining character of the state.