

**LEONARD WOOLF AND THE POLITICS OF REASON IN
INTERWAR BRITAIN**

by

Lise Butler

A thesis submitted to the Department of History

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(September, 2010)

Copyright ©Lise Butler, 2010

Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the role of reason in the thought of the left-leaning writer, publisher, editor and journalist Leonard Woolf. Examining Woolf's response to political radicalization and impending international conflict between 1930 and 1940, this discussion contends that Woolf sought to emphasise human thought, reason and individual psychology as a response to interwar anxieties about cultural crisis.

Acknowledgements

Over the course of this project I have incurred a tremendous debt to my supervisor, Dr. Sandra den Otter, whose patient attention to my work, intellectual generosity, and wealth of expertise have provided constant motivation over the past year. Dr. den Otter has given enormously of both her time and her intellect, and her guidance and encouragement have been a source of invaluable inspiration and support as I worked to complete this project.

I would like to thank my other instructors at the Queen's University Department of History, Professor Harold Mah, Professor Tim Smith, and Dr. Andrew Jainchill, for their teaching and their inspiration. I would also like to thank Peter Price, for editing and helpful commentary. Finally, I am indebted to my wonderful parents, Paula Butler and Rick Schwartz, for their patience, insight, editing, and constant support.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents.....	iiv
Dedication.....	v
Chapter One Introduction: Leonard Woolf and the Political Culture of Interwar Britain ...	1
Chapter Two Literature Review.....	8
Chapter Three Reacting to Reaction: Reason, Psychology and the Interwar Left.....	14
<i>The Political Quarterly</i> , the public moralist and the 'revolt against reason'.....	14
Reason and politics from Hobhouse to Freud.....	19
Leonard Woolf, <i>After the Deluge</i> , and the rational individual.....	30
Chapter Four: Frontiers of the Mind: Leonard Woolf, Psychology and the League of Nations.....	45
Leonard Woolf as internationalist.....	45
"World Wide People" or "Island Race"?	50
The problem of the state.....	60
The International Mind and <i>The Twenty Years Crisis</i>	66
Chapter Five Conclusion.....	76
Bibliography.....	80

To my parents

Chapter One

Introduction: Leonard Woolf and the Political Culture of Interwar Britain

Following the end of the First World War, British political culture was characterized by optimism about the possibility of establishing global democratic peace through international cooperation and progressive politics at home in Britain. But this optimism came to an abrupt end by the 1930s, the decade in which the experiment of the League of Nations and Ramsay Macdonald's Labour government were both dramatically revealed as ineffectual, and the rise of fascist governments on the continent provoked alarm that liberal political processes were crumbling in favour of, in liberal economist J.A. Hobson's words, "the revealed nationalism of the brutalitarian state, the facile acquiescence of whole people in the absolute dominion of self appointed masters" and "the amazing credulity of the educated classes under the spell of the crudest propaganda."¹ Leonard Woolf, like many other progressives of this era, would frame the anxieties of his time in terms of a struggle between 'civilization' and 'barbarism.'² As a colonial administrator, a member of both the Bloomsbury group and the Apostles, a critic of empire and an influential commentator on international relations, his work expressed an uneasy sense that civilization – which he defined as a progressive movement towards economic equality, rational politics, and international cooperation – was in decline.

¹ John Atkinson Hobson, "Thoughts on our Present Discontents," in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 9, Issue 1, January 1938.

² Leonard Woolf in *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*, London: Left Review, 1937. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/netzquelle/a-37891.pdf>

Woolf's attempts to theorize and respond to this crisis relied heavily upon a particular conception of reason. Woolf did not presume that human beings were fundamentally rational. Rather, as he would explain in his autobiography and throughout his extensive writing, people were essentially irrational, but their beliefs and desires – or, in his own terms, 'communal psychology' – were political realities. This observation permeated Woolf's writings and political activities, and his interwar work, which addressed the ebb in optimistic post-war visions of international government and progressive politics, was premised upon this basic concern with the transformative potential of human thought.

The following discussion explores Woolf's attempt to place the individual human actor at the center of international and domestic politics and redeem liberal civilization through an emphasis upon individual reason. Woolf's view of the world as starkly dichotomized between civilization and barbarism was frequently expressed in concrete policy suggestions: his internationalism, his politics and his views on the nature of knowledge, reason and truth were by no means segmented departments of his thought: rather, the League of Nations, socialism and civilization formed an inextricable whole in his writing, and can be effectively understood as parts of a unified intellectual project. As this discussion will show, Woolf's commitment to establishing a framework for international cooperation and lasting peace was articulated in the name not of peace or good foreign policy, but civilization itself.

As an influential editor, publisher, writer and commentator who bridged Labour and Liberal as well as artistic, literary and political circles, Woolf provides a unique

vantage point on interwar debates and anxieties. This discussion is not an intellectual biography of the long and multi-faceted life of Leonard Woolf, but rather an investigation of the political culture of the 1930s, which takes Woolf's perspective as an entry point. Although best known as husband to Virginia, Woolf was at the heart of interwar cultural and political networks. He was a publisher and editor of significant importance, editing the *International Review*, the international section of the *Contemporary Review*, the *Nation Athenaeum* and the *Political Quarterly*. He was the literary editor of the *Nation*, and, along with Virginia Woolf, founder of the Hogarth Press, the groundbreaking publishing house which, among many other distinctions, introduced the works of Sigmund Freud and T.S. Eliot to the English speaking world. Through his participation in the realms of journalism and publishing, Woolf characterized the interplay, both intellectual and personal, between an artistic avant-garde which sought to undermine the psychological and moral underpinnings of liberal modernity, and a progressive political sphere which was disturbed by the potentially destructive power of this cultural assault.

My discussion will proceed in two chapters. The first of these will explore the role of reason in interwar political and social thought, and show how Woolf responded to anxieties about mass culture and radical politics through the editorship of the *Political Quarterly* and the publication of three books: *After the Deluge* (1931), *Quack, Quack* (1935) and *Barbarians at the Gate* (1938). This analysis will demonstrate that for Woolf, historical and political change needed to be understood in terms of the rational capacities of the human actor, and that attempts to view the social in economic or systemic terms elided the essentially psychological nature of politics. The second chapter will apply this

concern with individual reason to Woolf's advocacy of international government, and show that a concern with human thought, expressed in an interest in communal and individual psychology, was foundational to Woolf's advocacy of international government and the League of Nations. I will argue that by emphasising the transformative power of psychology, Woolf was able to persuasively articulate a critique of state sovereignty, and treat international government as a project which depended directly upon the attitudes and mental states of political leaders and populations. In both the domestic and international realms, Leonard Woolf responded to the challenges of economic collapse, radical politics, and social transformation by way of an emphasis upon individual reason, and suggested that human agency offered an effective response to cultural crisis.

In addition to Woolf's books, journalism and published correspondence, this project has drawn upon the Leonard Woolf papers at the University of Sussex, as well as archival materials held at the London School of Economics. It has also relied extensively upon a variety of periodical sources from the 1930s, with an emphasis upon interwar periodicals such as the *New Statesman*, the *Nation* and *Athenaeum*, and, most importantly, the *Political Quarterly*. The latter, which Woolf co-edited for twenty-seven years of his life alongside LSE professor of public administration William Robson, featured a diverse range of contributors – ranging from Bertrand Russell to Benito Mussolini – and addressed topics of political, literary and philosophical interest. The thesis uses the *Quarterly* as a source which offers insights into how the left-liberal

intellectual community responded to concerns about democracy and popular politics both at home and abroad.

My investigation is not a hagiographic account that celebrates Woolf's contributions to twentieth century political theory, but will operate from the position, effectively articulated by Stefan Collini and Michael Freeden, that studies of ideology and political thought benefit from incorporating writers and thinkers who might be deemed to be of second order intellect or importance.³ As Freeden argues about liberalism, ideology "should be understood as a *collective* narrative that is formed by conversations, reactions, and ripple-effects within large groups" and it is, as a result, necessary to incorporate 'primary', 'secondary', 'first order' and 'second order' sources into an understanding of any political or intellectual tradition.⁴ Woolf was, by his own admission, not the literary star of his household⁵, and considered his own literary and political career to have been something of a failure. But his position at the center of a left liberal journalistic community provides an ideal resource for an investigation of the political culture, anxieties and frustrated hopes of left-leaning intellectuals in the 1930s.

³ Michael Freeden, *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton, NJ;Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005). Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁴ Freeden, *Liberal Languages*, 11-12.

⁵ In 1938 Bertrand Russell's third wife, the Countess Patricia Russell, wrote to him in outrage that that Woolf, who was raising money for the Jewish National Fund Exhibition and Fair, had asked only her husband to sign a book which she had co-authored. Woolf responded that he had merely sought Bertrand's signature for the benefits his name might bring to 'certain miserable Jews', adding: "I really don't think any better of Bertie because I know that at a bazaar some snob will probably pay more than the published price for his book if it is signed by him... And I may add that I do not think the better of my own wife of the worse of myself because as a matter of fact she was one of the people whose books I was asked to get signed, and I – an extraordinary fact – was not. See L. Woolf to Bertrand Russell, February 15th, 1938; L. Woolf to Countess Russell, February 18th 1938. See Frederic Spotts ed. *Letters of Leonard Woolf* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1989), 332, 333.

There are significant methodological difficulties in using any single periodical to encapsulate the ideological spirit of an age. Aside from editorial manifestos, a periodical cannot be read for ideological coherence; it is a medium, not a message, and the historian should be wary of assigning ideological consistency to a diverse authorial community. But as Jason Harding argues in his study of T.S. Eliot's contemporaneous journal, *The Criterion*, a periodical can help the historian "construct a history of thought around a group of people writing in the same cultural community"⁶ by offering a lens into an intellectual community, revealing an "ongoing cultural conversation, most immediately a dialogue, with a shifting set of interlocking periodical structures and networks."⁷ The *context* in which a periodical is published is self-evidently tied to its *content*, and periodicals "are the sites where [intellectual] interactions can be traced and reconstructed."⁸

This thesis looks to the *Political Quarterly*, under Woolf's editorship, as an invaluable source for understanding the political culture of a group of left-leaning interwar intellectuals, and will be utilized as both a source base and as an example of one response, by intellectuals frustrated with mass culture, to an increasingly demotic political environment. Due to the scope of a Master's thesis, this project has taken a selective approach to Woolf's publications, focusing upon books and articles published between 1930 and 1940 which help to elucidate the related themes of international

⁶ Tom Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: the Revolt Against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 6.

⁷ Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 1.

⁸ *Ibid*, 6.

government and collective psychology in his thought. An extended analysis of Woolf's novels and his views on empire falls outside of the scope of this paper, and I have not engaged with the voluminous scholarship available on Virginia Woolf, Bloomsbury, and interwar literary modernism, which would add much to my analysis. I will not present Woolf's work in an entirely chronological manner, but will instead draw out key themes in his thought and explore how they developed together in the shadow of looming international conflict. In both his domestic and international politics, Leonard Woolf responded to a sense of cultural crisis with an emphasis upon the individual mind, and saw the salvation of civilization as a project grounded in personal attitudes and popular opinion.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Leonard Woolf, it is fair to say, is best known as Virginia Woolf's husband. Examinations of Woolf's life have indisputably taken a backseat to the voluminous mass of Virginia Woolf scholarship⁹, although his own profile has also benefited from the glow of her literary genius. Nonetheless, a small but wide ranging literature has built up around his life. Woolf took his legacy into his own hands before his death with his five volume autobiography¹⁰, which has been referred to as an 'unputdownable' masterpiece of British life-writing¹¹ and even described by Labour politician Denis Healey as the "best general introduction to the history of the early twentieth century yet written."¹² This legacy has been added to by a number of biographies. The first of these, Duncan Wilson's 1978 *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography* provided a comprehensive albeit cursory overview of Woolf's political life, and was followed by Selma Meyerowitz' 1982 *Leonard Woolf*, which sought to build upon the earlier work by further emphasizing Woolf's novels, *The Wise Virgins* and *The Village in the Jungle*, his 1939 play, *Hotel*, and his short stories.

⁹ A extremely small sample of sources addressing the life and work of Virginia Woolf might include Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); Jan Marcus ed. *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury* (Hampshire, U.K. MacMillan, 1987); Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994)

¹⁰ Leonard Woolf, *Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960); *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-1911* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961); *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London: Hogarth Press, 1964); *Downhill all the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 – 1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967); *The Journey not the Arrival Matters: An Autobiography of the Years 1939-1969* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967).

¹¹ Andrew Robinson, Foreword to Christopher Ondaatje, *Woolf in Ceylon: an Imperial journey in the shadow of Leonard Woolf* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005), xiii.

¹² Peter Wilson, "Fabian Paternalism and Radical Dissent: Leonard Woolf's Theory of Economic Imperialism" in David Long and Brian C. Schmidt ed. *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 118.

Adding much to these earlier accounts, Victoria Glendinning's major 2006 biography, *Leonard Woolf: A Life*, provided a comprehensive and thoroughly researched overview of Woolf's personal and political life.¹³ F.M. Leventhal has produced a short account of Woolf as a 'Bloomsbury socialist' while Christopher Ondaatje's *Woolf in Ceylon* has added to this literature with a Sri Lankan travelogue inspired by Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle*.¹⁴ Meanwhile, several books have specifically explored the intellectually fruitful Woolf marriage: George Spater and Ian Parsons 1977 *A Marriage of True Minds* provides a largely biographical account of the Woolfs, as does Peter Alexander's 1992 *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: a Literary Partnership*¹⁵, while Natania Rosenfeld has examined the diverse ways in which the couple can be seen to have navigated social, sexual, ethnic and literary and artistic borders in their marriage in her book *Outsiders Together*.¹⁶ Although most portrayals of the Woolf marriage emphasise its mutually affectionate and intellectually fruitful character, a more cynical and critical subsection of this literature has portrayed Leonard as a patriarchal figure who stymied rather than supported his wife's creative capacities.¹⁷

¹³ Duncan Wilson, *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978); Selma Meyerowitz, *Leonard Woolf* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1982); Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Biography* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2006).

¹⁴ F.M. Leventhal, "Leonard Woolf: the Conscience of a Bloomsbury Socialist" in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler eds. *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 149-170; Christopher Ondaatje, *Woolf in Ceylon: an Imperial Journey in the Shadow of Leonard Woolf* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005), xiii.

¹⁵ Peter Alexander, *Leonard And Virginia Woolf* (London : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1999); George Spater and Ian Parsons, *A Marriage of True Minds: an Intimate Portrait of Leonard and Virginia Woolf* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 1977.

¹⁶ Natania Rosenfeld, *Outsiders Together: Virginia and Leonard Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

¹⁷ See Irene Coates, *Who's Afraid of Leonard Woolf: a case for the sanity of Virginia Woolf* (York : Soho Press, 2000).

Despite this rich variety of biographical treatments, Woolf has received little scholarly attention for his role as a prominent writer, publisher, and key figure within the literary left.¹⁸ He has been the subject of substantially more analysis, however, for his contributions to the nascent field of international relations during its formative interwar years. According to International Relations scholar Peter Wilson, Leonard Woolf's internationalist thought has primarily and erroneously been conceived of as "idealist" or "utopian" as a result of his association with "(a) the interwar period, (b) progressivist writing, and (c) the League of Nations."¹⁹ These terms, influentially deployed by Edward Hallett Carr in his 1939 *The Twenty Year Crisis*, have been attached to Woolf's legacy, despite the fact that he himself was never directly cited in Carr's text.²⁰ Other scholars have described Woolf as a "rationalist", "rationalist-world citizen", "pluralist", "critical liberal internationalist", and an exemplar of the 'international government' perspective²¹ while Hidemi Suganami has characterized Woolf's proposals for international government as representative of a "'peace through law' approach which conflates the laws required for the maintenance of international order with those which might be

¹⁸ Two exceptions include F.M, Leventhal "Leonard Woolf and Kingsley Martin: Creative Tension on the Left" in *Albion*, Vol. 24 Issue 2, 1992 and Marnie Podos "'A Story of Words, Opinions and a few Emotions': Leonard Woolf as Editor, Publisher, and Critic." Thesis (Ph.D.) English Literature, Exeter College, Oxford, 2007.

¹⁹ Peter Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth-Century Idealism* (New York; Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4-5.

²⁰ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939* (Harper and Row: New York, 1964).

²¹ Respectively: Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (eds.) (London, 1991), 129; J. H. Grainger, *Patriotisms: Britain 1900-1939* (London, 1986), 331; George Modelski, *The Principles of World Politics* (New York, 1972), 320; Craig Murphy, *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 25, 268; Clive Archer, *International Organizations* (London, 1983), 12-13, 68-125, all cited in Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf*, 5.

applied in a domestic policy context.²² Woolf has also been explored in the context of the Labour Party's internationalist policies by both Casper Sylvest and Lucian Ashworth, while Peter Wilson himself has offered the most comprehensive analysis of Leonard Woolf's internationalist thought, seeking to rescue him from a realist-idealist schematization.²³ Wilson too readily evaluates Woolf's thought through the lens of contemporary International Relations scholarship, resulting in unflattering comparisons between Woolf, who came to the study of international government as an amateur, and professional IR scholars.²⁴ Although my own study takes the position that Woolf's internationalist writings, critique of Carr, and proposals for international government represent some of his most interesting and relevant interwar work, it maintains that Woolf's internationalism was part of a larger intellectual project. The period in which Woolf articulated a vision of peaceful internationalism was also one in which he was preoccupied by themes of civilization, reason, and political barbarism, and his thought

²² Hidemi Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals* (Cambridge, 1989), 94–113, 180–81, cited in Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf*.

²³ Lucian Ashworth, *International Relations and the Labour Party* (Tauris: 2008) and Casper Sylvest, *Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism, c. 1900-1930*, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2005), pp. 263-83. "Interwar Internationalism, the British Labour Party and the Historiography of International Relations", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 409-32. *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Peter Wilson "Leonard Woolf and International Government," in David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995. ; "Fabian Paternalism and Radical Dissent: Leonard Woolf's Theory of Economic Imperialism"; "Leonard Woolf: still not out of the jungle?" in *The round table: the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 97 (394), pp. 147-160; *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth Century Idealism*.

²⁴ This approach results in Wilson's assertion, for example, that Woolf "did not produce anything of on par" with the major IR voices of the post war period: Peter Wilson, "Leonard Woolf: Still Not Out of the Jungle?", 153. Wilson compares Woolf to K. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), I. Claude, *Swords Into Ploughshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (London: University of London Press, 1965); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1977); R. Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Hurrell, A., *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: University Press, 2007).

must therefore be understood and explored as part of a comprehensive response to increasingly demotic domestic politics, nascent domestic and continental fascism, and the decline of progressive liberalism. This analysis, therefore, aims to treat Woolf historically, grounding his books and articles from the 1930s in scholarship which has grappled with the anxieties and transformations of interwar Britain.

As a result of James Ramsay MacDonald's failure to manage the fiscal crisis of the depression and subsequent decision to dissolve his Labour government and accept the Prime-Ministership of a Tory-dominated National government, the 1930s were characterized by a dearth of effective political alternatives for those of left-leaning or progressive political persuasions. Historians including Duncan Tanner, Jon Lawrence and Nicholas Owen have explored the shift away from gradualism and subsequent radicalization of much of the left arising from MacDonald's 'betrayal', or willingness to lead a Conservative dominated National Government from Labour's defeat in 1931 onwards.²⁵ Simultaneously, although the Liberal Party, in George Dangerfield's classic articulation, experienced a "strange decline"²⁶ after the First World War, liberalism retained a powerful influence upon the political landscape of the 1930s. In recent decades numerous scholars of interwar Britain have highlighted the continuity of liberalism as a political force, emphasising that the political saliency of Liberals, New

²⁵ See, for example, Duncan Tanner, "Political Leadership, intellectual debate and economic policy during the second Labour government, 1929-31," in E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner ed. *The Strange Survival of Liberal England* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007); William Frame, "Sir Stafford Cripps and his Friends': the Socialist League, the National Government and the Reform of the House of Lords 1931-1935," in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 24, pt. 3 (2005), 319; Clement Attlee, *As it Happened* (London: Heinemann, 1954) ; Jon Lawrence, "Labour – the myths it has lived by" in *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 341-366; Nicholas Owen, "MacDonald's parties: the Labour Party and the 'aristocratic embrace'" in *Twentieth Century British History* 18 (2007), 1-53.

²⁶ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961)

Liberalism and Keynesianism far outlived that of the British Liberal Party itself.²⁷ Operating in this ideological context, Woolf's politics allied uneasily with both liberalism and socialism; unwilling to side with the individualistic liberalism which he and most of his progressive peers deemed intellectually and morally bereft, he was equally unwilling to embrace the materialism which had dominated Labour circles since MacDonald's defection. This discussion, in part, will explore Woolf's attempt to navigate an alternative progressivism, anchored to the individual but committed to cooperation. The following chapters will intervene in existing scholarship by exploring both Woolf's internationalist writings and his more polemical treatments of history and politics, with a view to the ways in which a particular conception of reason permeated his attempts to respond to the challenges of the 1930s.

²⁷ For example see D. Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals and the quest for unity, 1884-1939* (Cambridge, University Press, 1992); Clarke, *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making* (Oxford: University Press, 1988); Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); and E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner ed. *The Strange Survival of Liberal England* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007) – see, in particular Duncan Tanner, “Political Leadership, intellectual debate and economic policy during the second Labour government, 1929-31,” Richard Toye, “The Labour Party and Keynes,” and Ewen Green, “The Conservative Party and Keynes.” The economic influence of John Maynard Keynes, in particular, has occupied considerable attention in policy debates about the 1930s, as summed up by Roger Middleton's 1985 complaint that “the history of 1930s fiscal policy debate has been largely a Keynesian history. R.C. Middleton has asserted that the historiography of 'Keynesianism' suffers from an undue emphasis upon the theoretical considerations of Keynes' ideas upon the treasury of the 1930s, and that separate political and administrative concerns informed the treasury's fiscal policy orientation. See R.C. Middleton, *Towards the Managed Economy. Keynes, the treasury and fiscal policy debate of the 1930s* (London/New York: Methuen, 1985), 4. Other sources which address the impact of Keynesianism on the fiscal policy debates of the 1930s include Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-31* (London, 1967). See Stewart, M, *Keynes and After* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), and Donald Winch, *Economics and Policy: A historical study* (Collins Fontana, 1972); Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class*, Oxford: University Press, 1991, 204. See also Ross McKibbin, “The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government”, *Past and Present* 68, 1975, 95-123; Richard Toye, “The Labour Party and Keynes”; Duncan Tanner, “The Second Labour Government, 1929-1931.”

Chapter Three

Reacting to Reaction: Reason, Psychology and the Interwar Left

The Political Quarterly, the public moralist, and the 'revolt against reason'

In a 1935 issue of the *Political Quarterly*, Bertrand Russell published an article entitled "The Revolt Against Reason." Russell offered a reading of the intellectual climate of his age, arguing that the outlook of past centuries might be called 'rational', and that of his own time, 'anti-rational'.²⁸ He defined reason as the use of persuasion instead of force, valid argumentation, and observation and induction rather than intuition. Reason was best deployed, Russell admitted, within communities of a similar outlook led by elite ruling groups - the larger and more diverse a political or social community, the more difficult it would become for rational argument to prevail.²⁹ Philosophies of unreason, according to Russell, were anathema to progress towards universal truth or justice, as "reason, being impersonal, [made] universal co-operation possible."³⁰

In his capacity as editor of the *Political Quarterly*, Leonard Woolf would return to the subject of Russell's anxieties twenty years later. Asking whether progress and reason had been in a state of constant remission over the past forty years, he sought the perspectives of scientists, social scientists, philosophers, and theologians in a special

²⁸ Bertrand Russell, "The Revolt Against Reason" in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 6, Issue 1, January 1935, Pages 1-19.

²⁹ Russell rooted modern anti-rationalism in Humean scepticism and Kantian 'practical reason' but situated its contemporary incarnations in the work of Fichte, Carlyle, Mazzini, and Nietzsche, as well as lesser thinkers Treitschke, Kipling, Houston Chamberlain and Bergson, all of whom, he argued, celebrated will over cognition, power over happiness, force over argument, war over peace, and glory over pleasure.

³⁰ Russell, "The Revolt Against Reason," 19.

1955 issue also entitled *The Revolt Against Reason*.³¹ Although he insisted that no concrete evidence supported the hypothesis of a “cataclysmic failure and revolt against reason” he acknowledged and explored a pessimism which had seemed to characterize his generation’s political experience, highlighting the argument that the years since the Great War had been characterized by “a landslide from Left to Right, from Liberalism to reaction” and a shift away from the “belief in social progress born in the nineteenth century.”³² Rational debate, in this narrative, had been replaced by “emotion, mass-produced by the loudspeaker or the television screen” and a turn, amongst prominent intellectuals such as Evelyn Waugh and T.S. Eliot, to organized religion.³³

In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf would describe the *Political Quarterly*, which he edited for twenty years, as “Left Wing politically, but of irreproachable respectability.”³⁴ This statement reveals something of Woolf’s own political persuasions, and could just as easily have been applied to himself. Leonard Woolf has been alternately described as a liberal, a ‘one-sided individualist’³⁵, and, in his own words, ‘a socialist of a rather peculiar sort.’³⁶ Although he conceived of himself as the latter in the 1930s³⁷, his frequent emphasis upon the individual and the transformative forces of rational thought distanced him from the increasingly materialist socialism of

³¹ *Political Quarterly*, Volume 26, Issue 3, July 1955. Russell’s original essay is not explicitly mentioned in the issue, but the parallel names, dates, and Woolf’s invocation of Russell in his introduction make it very likely that Woolf had published the issue with Russell in mind.

³² Leonard Woolf, “Is there a Revolt Against Reason?” in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 26, Issue 3, July 1955, 109-110.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, 207.

³⁵ G.D.H. Cole review of *After the Deluge*, Dec 4th, 1931.

³⁶ See Spotts ed. *Letters of Leonard Woolf*, 369.

³⁷ Leonard Woolf to Victor Gollancz, June 23rd, 1939.

contemporaries such as John Strachey, A.L. Rowse, Harold Laski, and even G.D.H. Cole. When limited by an enfeebled ideological vocabulary of materialist socialism versus liberal individualism, Woolf's politics appear inconsistent and unsystematic. His alternating communitarian and individualist convictions, however, were inspired by a vision of transformative domestic and international politics in which reason inspired individuals to cooperation. An individualist outlier amongst the socialist intelligentsia which the widely-read historian and commentator Arthur Bryant pithily dismissed as "New Statesman-reading left wing intellectual[s],"³⁸ Woolf espoused sympathy for the Left's emphasis upon economic factors, but retained a firm conviction that history and politics were products of individual consciousness and human judgment. This chapter will explore Leonard Woolf's conviction that human reason was a prerequisite to civilization, and situate his work within debates about the importance and possibility of rational thought which permeated the interwar British left.

The *Political Quarterly* was consciously conceived as a vehicle for rational debate, and in response to a sense that the public sphere lacked a forum in which anxieties about contemporary politics could be intelligently explored. According to co-editor William Robson, who edited the *Quarterly* with Woolf for twenty seven years, the journal was founded as an explicit reaction to the 'moribund' and inert status of the Fabian Society, anxieties about foreign policy, the failure of the post-war governments of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald to adequately address

³⁸ Stefan Collini, *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 115.

issues of inequity, unemployment, the 1926 General Strike and the position of women.³⁹ It also responded to anxieties about the climate of British public opinion, at a moment in which it mattered more than ever.

The prospectus for the *Quarterly* justified the new journal on the basis that there had never been a period in which “so many political and economic experiments have been made”, with hardly any serious attempt to “estimate their significance and value.”⁴⁰ The daily newspapers were “controlled by a handful of millionaires” or specific political parties, while the existing monthly reviews and sixpenny journals did not cover political or social questions in a manner adequate at such a critical historical moment.⁴¹ In a 2006 review of Victoria Glendinning’s comprehensive biography of Leonard Woolf, Bernard Crick, who edited the *Political Quarterly* from 1967 until 1980, borrowed Stefan Collini’s notion of the ‘public moralist’⁴² to characterize the intellectual and editorial philosophy of his forebears Woolf and Robson. He observed that in 1900, there was

³⁹ William A. Robson “The *Political Quarterly* in the 1930s” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 42, Issue 5, December 1971, 10.

⁴⁰ Prospectus for the *Political Quarterly*, cited in Robson, “The *Political Quarterly* in the 1930s”, 14.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 10.

⁴² Collini, *Public Moralists*.

a class of people, still closer to us intellectually than we often realize, but socially light-years away, some of whom were in the universities, some in Parliament, more in the professions, some gentlemen of independent means with intellectual tastes or persuasions, who all read what each other wrote, usually knew one another or knew of each other, and were accustomed, whether in books, articles or letters to *The Times* and the then many alternative platforms for that level of public debate, to give good reasons, whether in print or at the podium, for what they said, not just as now stating opinions with as much appearance of sincerity as appears natural on the box.⁴³

This well educated, ‘liberal-minded’, non specialist and overwhelmingly male elite communicated and self-identified through a handful of journals. Despite constant grumblings of decline from its heyday in the early nineteenth-century era of the *Edinburgh Review*, the general periodical was very much the mouthpiece of the non-specialist and socially unified intellectual community which Stefan Collini has influentially described in *Public Moralists*.⁴⁴ The medium of the periodical allowed journalists and intellectuals, secure in their social integration with governing elites, to speak with a sense of paternalistic obligation and the appearance of reflective disinterestedness, but by the interwar period the periodical risked being “drowned by the democratic flood... of more assertive opinion,”⁴⁵ characterized by the demotic mediums of the popular or ‘yellow’ press and the wireless.⁴⁶

⁴³ Bernard Crick “Leonard Woolf: His Whole Life, Politics and PQ” review of Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Life* in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 77, Issue 4, October-December 2006, 501-506, 505.

⁴⁴ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 55.

⁴⁵ Crick, 505. One of mediums which most threatened the medium of the periodical was the radio. Contributors to the PQ responded very positively to the opportunities provided by the radio and the BBC,

In Collini's study, the moment of 'Public Moralists' ends in 1930 – incidentally the same year that the *Edinburgh Review*, perceived as the historical paragon of the British political periodical, shut its doors.⁴⁷ But Crick suggests that the *Quarterly's* mandate “to discuss social and political questions from a progressive point of view,” and “provide a bridge between the world of thought and the world of action” reflected an attempt to invoke an intellectual model of elevated discussion through elite but non-specialist circles more characteristic of the public moralists of Collini's portrait than the mass cultural models of the 1930s.⁴⁸ The *Political Quarterly* represented one example of an intellectual response to an increasingly demotic political culture, and provides a concrete expression of Woolf's concern with rational politics and the civilizing of public opinion.

Reason and politics from Hobhouse to Freud

Concerns about order, disorder and the radicalization of the public sphere were central features of interwar British politics, and continue to be a major focus for historians concerned with the political culture of the 1930s. For decades, historians have debated the significance of fascism to interwar British politics. Some, like Robert Benewick, have contended that British fascism was an inevitable failure, “alien to the traditions of British political life”⁴⁹ while others, such as Robert Skidelsky, Martin Pugh, Gary Love, Richard Thurlow, and Richard Griffiths have emphasized the home-grown

however, in 1935 issue devoted to the topic and featuring contributions from George Bernard Shaw, William Robson, Leonard Woolf, and other. See the *Political Quarterly* Volume 6, Issue 4, October 1935.

⁴⁶ For a classis discussion of the impact of mass culture on interwar Britain, see LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*.

⁴⁷ See Stephan Collini, “Always Dying,” in *Common Reading*.

⁴⁸ Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, 207; William Robson, “The *Political Quarterly* in the Thirties,” 10.

⁴⁹ R. Benewick, *Fascist Movement in Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 13.

quality and appeal of British fascism as it emerged under Oswald Mosley's leadership.⁵⁰ Jon Lawrence has argued that British cultural identity was defined against the perceived "extremism and excesses of Continental-style political violence" in the 1930s, resulting in a construction of Britain as a 'peaceable kingdom' of reasoned citizens. Lawrence argues that during the interwar period, the public became reconceptualised as an "essentially passive, reflective, and above all individualized entity" as demonstrative political rallies were replaced by a more controlled, directed, and media-driven politics.⁵¹

The conservative response to the British Union of Fascists' 1934 Olympia rally, a crucial moment when Conservative politicians and the conservative press withdrew their support from the Fascist movement and became alarmed by the aggressive tactics deployed by Mosley and his followers, has been a source of tension amongst scholars of fascism.⁵² Countering Martin Pugh's argument that Conservative alarm at the rally reflected electoral concerns, rather than natural antipathy⁵³, Lawrence argues that the Olympia rally engaged with interwar anxieties about extremism and violence in mass politics, and argues that the event should be understood as a site in which a disruptive political model, typical of pre-war political meetings (or 'hustings') met a renewed

⁵⁰ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (Hong Kong: Papermac, 1990); Martin Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2005) 6; Gary Love, "'What's the Big Idea?': Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 2007; 42; 447; See Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985* (Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), Richard Griffiths *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-9*.

⁵¹ Jon Lawrence, "Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence and the Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain", *Journal of Modern History*, Sept. 2003, Vol. 75 Issue 3, 561.

⁵² Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London: Papermac, 1990), Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961)

⁵³ Martin Pugh, "The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate" in *The Historical Journal*, 41, 2 (1998); Jon Lawrence, "Fascist Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Interwar Britain: the Olympia debate revisited" in *Past & Present* 190, (2006).

emphasis upon peaceable political participation. Britishness, Lawrence emphasises, became associated with an ideal of reasoned peaceableness, and the interwar period was a moment when all three parties sought to refashion public politics by emphasising civilized debate within a “sober, rational public.”⁵⁴ Lawrence argues that “Labour leaders, no less than Liberal or Conservative, denounced the evils of ‘mob law’ at elections, and sought to mould a public politics that would be restrained and rational, rather than noisy and impassioned.”⁵⁵ Mass suffrage and popular culture, as a result, prompted elite anxieties about the intellectual and political capacities of individuals, and the early decades of the twentieth century, which were characterised by mass democratization and the emergence of mass media, were a period when the mind and motivations of the political actor were more scrutinized than ever before.

In the 1930s, an increased emphasis upon order and disorder in politics coincided with a burgeoning interest in the sciences of the mind amongst non-specialist intellectuals, and the study of politics was informed by these disciplines. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, many intellectuals and social commentators had been applying psychology, social psychology and psychoanalysis to the study of popular politics. By focusing upon the “world of turbid feeling and conflicting impulses wherein

⁵⁴ Jon Lawrence, “The Transformation of British Publish Politics after the First World War” *Past & Present*, Feb 2006, Vol. 190, Issue 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 203; Pugh reasserted his ‘revisionist’ interpretation of the Olympia controversy in 2005, conceding Lawrence’s thesis that the rally aroused concerns about the potentially violent nature of popular politics, but insisting that the porous boundary between Conservatism and Fascism in the 1920s and 30s not be overlooked. Martin Pugh, “The National Government, The British Union of Fascist and the Olympia Debate” in *Historical Research* 2005, 78 (200), 253-254.

active life moves and has its being”⁵⁶ psychologists and intellectuals questioned the capacity for individual actors to assess their circumstances, make accurate judgements based upon available evidence, and take appropriate action. These capacities were implicit in understandings of citizenship, tethered to the premise of reason itself, and linked to equally pressing concerns about the importance of thought in politics and history.

Distinct but related concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘rationalism’ were deployed by interwar intellectuals, such as Woolf, who were concerned about the new realities of popular politics. Reason and rationalism were, and are, easily confused, and this investigation treats them as distinct but essentially intertwined. In the interwar period, both reason and rationalism were primarily associated with a secular world view, a belief that truth could be accessed through unremitting investigation, and an unwillingness to condone forms of knowledge based upon intuition or uncorroborated perception. Both also suggested a dichotomy between heart and mind, instinct and intellect, with the implication that one could always triumph over the other. In his biography of Victorian man-of-letters (and illustrious father-in-law to Leonard Woolf) Leslie Stephen, Noel Annan argued that nineteenth-century Cambridge was home to a highly influential school of rationalism. Cambridge rationalism was inspired by the thought of Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, who had argued that “the dynamic which changed society was not

⁵⁶ Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, *The Rational Good: A Study in the Logic of Practice* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993), 19.

economic or other kinds of impersonal law, but man's *mind*.”⁵⁷ For Mill, there was no dichotomy between heart and head: intellect, belief, and knowledge were the basis of human progress.⁵⁸

Leonard Woolf accepted that human beings were not “to any great extent influenced by reason,” and were not essentially rational, but he nonetheless believed fervently in ‘reason’ as a guiding principle.⁵⁹ A tension lay at the heart of Woolf’s thought: although he accepted that passion, emotion and base stupidity might well be the prime causes of most human activity, and had no desire to entertain a caricature of a so-called rational political or economic actor, he nonetheless espoused reason as a ideal and insisted that the student of politics engage in humble, rational, scientific social investigation, using reason to analyze or find means of influencing the complicated reality of everyday existence. Although most people were irrational, Woolf believed that the social investigator required reason to understand and explore human behaviour. Woolf’s emphasis upon reason was meant to emphasise not only rational thought, but thought itself – rational thought could only occur within the minds of self-directed human agents, and as I shall discuss, Woolf’s appeal to human reason was also an appeal to constrain social analysis to the level of the individual actor.

In 1921 the influential liberal sociologist L.T. Hobhouse introduced *The Rational Good* by portraying human behaviour as the product of emotion and impulse rather than rational or intellectual faculties. “Reason, intellect, perhaps consciousness itself” were

⁵⁷For a vivid portrait of this intellectual milieu, see Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to his Time* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1951), 143.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 144-148.

⁵⁹ Leonard Woolf, *War for Peace* (New York: Garland Pub, 1972), 241

not driving forces of behaviour and history, but rather epiphenomenal “fl[ies] upon the wheel which in reality revolve[d] on the hub of emotion.”⁶⁰ Hobhouse argued that although psychology was premised upon the notion that thought and behaviour could be reduced to a science, its findings had, paradoxically, emphasised the essentially unscientific nature of decision-making, showing the real causes of human behaviour in “impulse-feeling” and “the forces operating in the twilight of semi-consciousness.” Intellectual explanations were afterthoughts or attempts to explain the vagaries of human behaviour, and intellect, according to Hobhouse, always supported and justified essentially emotional impulses. According to Hobhouse, the French Revolution and Declaration of the Rights of Man had been the products of eighteenth-century class resentment, “English Utilitarian democracy” was a disguise for the supremacy of the middle class, and ‘Liberty’ was a concept deployed in defence of coarse commercial ambition. When ideas and principles were mistakenly treated as causal factors rather than explanatory after-thoughts, Hobhouse declared, it was a “fallacy of intellectualism.”⁶¹

For Hobhouse, individual actors were not necessarily or even likely to be guided by intellectual and rational faculties. But although he categorically denied the *rationality* of human behaviour, he was committed to the possibility of *reason*. Reason, for Hobhouse, was based upon internally coherent systems of corroborated perception, and was defined as “the principle of interconnection persistently applied.” Subjective observation was the only basis upon which judgements about reality could be obtained,

⁶⁰ L.T. Hobhouse, *The Rational Good* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1921), 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 20-23.

but isolated observation was provisional until corroborated or contradicted by other judgements. Reasoned positions emerged through the discovery of systems of internal coherence in which component perceptions tolerated, required and maintained one another. No “clear and indubitable universal axioms” propelled the quest for truth: reason was not based upon any objective barometer beyond subjective experience, but was a process, rather, of ever-deepening understanding built upon individual perceptions.⁶² While individuals, acting independently, rarely operated according to rational calculation, reason, as an abstract project, could emerge from shared perspectives, judgements and experiences. For Hobhouse, the individual was irrational, but reason remained the only path to truth.

Hobhouse’s 1921 insights built upon a broader concern about the rational capacities of individual actors which had been permeating the liberal left for several decades. Although ‘New’ Liberalism assumed a coherent moral framework, a ‘margin of disorder’, taking into account psychology, biology, and philosophy operated within progressive thought.⁶³ While campaigning for a school board position before the war, New Liberal Graham Wallas had become concerned that the public simply could not be depended upon to be “informed, interested and competent” with regards to public affairs. He identified the problems of modern political life as fundamentally psychological, and became an advocate of the practical application of biology and psychology to the study of

⁶² Ibid, 61-64.

⁶³ Gal Gerson, *Margin of Disorder* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

politics.⁶⁴ Wallas' insights would inspire those of William McDougall and Wilhelm Trotter, social psychologists who supported anti-democratic visions of popular political judgment by highlighting the instinctual and irrational nature of individuals. While Wallas was a "liberal critic of the new democracy interested in its reform," McDougall and Trotter "attempted to prove that utilitarian and idealistic expectations of behaviour were bound to be disappointed because they ignored the actual or instinctual nature of man."⁶⁵

Segments of the British cultural elite would adopt inegalitarian positions inspired in part by the thought of French crowd theorist Gustave LeBon, whose hierarchical view of human nature featured an ongoing conflict between the material needs and emotional drives of the 'lower instincts' versus those of the rational, spiritual, and imaginative "higher faculties." LeBon deployed a metaphor of consciousness and unconsciousness – or rationality and irrationality – to describe the political organisation of the social body.⁶⁶ So long as the conscious mind – or educated elite – controlled the multifarious impulses and darker regions of consciousness – the masses – then the body could avoid descending into infamy, hedonism and self-destruction. To give equal weight to conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, was to risk not only order, but sanity itself, and democracy, for LeBon, was threatening not only because it had the potential to

⁶⁴ Martin J. Wiener, *Between Two Worlds: The Political Thought of Graham Wallas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 39-45

⁶⁵ R.N. Soffer, "New Elitism: Social Psychology in Prewar England" *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (May, 1969).

⁶⁶ D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 103-6.

enfranchise those less mentally fit, but because it represented the “domination of unconsciousness over consciousness.”⁶⁷

In the 1930s, BBC director John Reith’s view of human psychology reflected this LeBonian pessimism by eliding subconscious drives with inner barbarism and regression. Justifying paternalistic BBC policies, Reith insisted that it was better to “wipe out as much as we can of the barbarian in case it may get control of us in a weak moment, with results of a disastrous kind.”⁶⁸ In the context of this generalized anxiety concerning the potential of the irrational to overturn the fragile experiment of democracy, the importance of Sigmund Freud as an influential thinker should not be overlooked. Terms and concepts derived from Freudian psychoanalysis – arguably the most notorious and influential science of the mind popularized during the early decades of the twentieth century – became part of the popular lexicon of interwar intellectuals in the 1930s. The simplest fundamental claim of psychoanalysis, that subconscious drives underlay human motivation and guided the intellect, became a popular psychological notion deployed by non-specialist thinkers, who often conflated psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis while applying a crude understanding of the sciences of the mind to the social realm – for example in Hobhouse’s observation that psychology had exposed “the forces operating in

⁶⁷ Wiener, *Between Two Worlds*, 33.

⁶⁸Quoted in LeMahieu, “A Culture for Democracy”, 143-44. For further discussions of the intellectual culture of the BBC, see Jean Seaton, “Foreword: Journeys to Truth: The BBC as a Pragmatic Ethical Engineer at Home and Abroad in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol. 28, No. 4, October 2008, 441; Emma Robertson, “I Get a Real Kick out of Big Ben: BBC Versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas Service, 1932-1948” in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol 28, No. 4 (October 2008), 62. The administration and impact of the BBC was the focus of an entire 1935 issue of the *Political Quarterly*: see George Bernard Shaw, “The Telltale Microphone”; Leonard Woolf, “The Future of Public Broadcasting;” and William Robson, “The BBC as an Institution” in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 6, Issue 4, October 1935. See also Hilda Matheson, “Politics and Broadcasting” in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 5, Issue 2, April 1934.

the twilight of semi-consciousness [and] dark of our unconscious.”⁶⁹ Freud and the language of psychoanalysis permeated the left and were absorbed into political literature, as demonstrated by the Left Book Club’s publication of Osborn Reuben’s *Freud and Marx*.⁷⁰ But the fear that reason might be prey to mysterious and sometime perverse subconscious forces alarmed even practitioners of psychology.

In 1932 the BBC aired a broadcast on ‘Reason and Emotion’ in which the psychologist Cyril Burt and the British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones debated whether a rational and intellectual faculty controlled the machinery of the mind. Jones’ position was that all human beings were fundamentally controlled by their unconscious, and incapable of authentically rational agency. To this claim, Burt sceptically exclaimed

[t]hen we are all of us just mechanical puppets – wooden figures jigging about just as the strings are pulled! Reasoning and will-power count for nothing. Human behaviour is just the inevitable outcome of blind mechanical causes.⁷¹

Although this remark was intended as a declamation against psychoanalytic theory, Jones accepted it as an accurate representation of his views.⁷² The subconscious, in Jones’s formulation, was a powerful force with its own motivations, operating independently of intellect or intent, and undermining the faculty of reason within political actors.

As the first English language publisher of Freud’s opus and the International Psychoanalytic Library, Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press was central to the

⁶⁹ Hobhouse, *The Rational Good*, 20.

⁷⁰ Reuben Osborn, *Freud and Marx* (London: Gollancz, 1937).

⁷¹ ULSC, Burt Papers, D191/11/2, transcript, BBC discussion, ‘Reason and Emotion’, 13 December 1932, pp1-6, 8. Cited in Overy, *A Morbid Age*, 160.

⁷² Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 160.

dissemination and popularization of psychoanalysis. The publication of the Library was a major priority and point of pride for the Woolfs: Richard Kennedy's satirical 1928 sketch of the Press, which was ingloriously located in the basement of its publishers' Richmond residence, reveals the centrality of the Library to their endeavour: amongst the books stored in the basement's larder/book-closet were categories indicating "Essays", "Novels", "Political", "Belles Lettres and Biography", "Russians" and "International Library of Psychoanalysis" – the latter category important enough to merit three rows of shelving, as opposed the meagre *one* allocated to novels.⁷³ Although Woolf was committed to the publication of the International Psychoanalytic Library, he had serious reservations about the imprecise application of either psychology or psychoanalytic theory to politics or international relations. In his view, psychoanalysis could shed light upon the mysteries of an individual's mind, but should not be applied to broader analyses of politics or historical change.⁷⁴ In a 1936 review of psychoanalyst Edward Glover's *The Dangers of Being Human* and LSE professor of social biology Lancelot Hogben's *The Retreat from Reason*, Woolf criticised both books for schematic understandings of the social and for pretences to scientific rigour and objectivity. He observed that despite assertions of objectivity, each specialist understood the same phenomena through the lens of his own discipline. Worse, both overvalued their expertise, and extrapolated from their professional understandings of the biology and mental processes of the individual to

⁷³ Image in Spotts, *The Letters of Leonard Woolf*.

⁷⁴ Woolf had an ambiguous relationship with psychoanalysis, deriving from his experience managing Virginia's mental illness. Sources which address Virginia's illness and treatment in greater detail include: Ward Jouve, Nicole. "Virginia Woolf and psychoanalysis" in Sue Roe and Susan Sellers eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000); Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 182-3.

those associated with the ‘social’ or ‘the national’. Although the psychologist or psychoanalyst could and should prescribe treatments, diets or lifestyles conducive to positive ends for individual patients, he or she was unqualified to assess *what* those ends ought to be. In short, although Woolf allowed that Hogben and Glover could offer insight into the functioning of the individual psyche, they were no more qualified to make broader judgements about “what is psychologically or politically *good*” than “an economist or Conservative duchess” would be.⁷⁵

Woolf’s reaction to Hogben and Glover’s psychoanalytic overreach revealed his hostility not to psychoanalysis or psychology – he regarded analysis as a potentially valuable tool for understanding the mind – but to psychoanalysts’ and psychologists’ attempts to treat nations or even the world like individual patients. The willingness of psychologists and, later, psychoanalysts, to claim authority over not only the intimately personal but also the national or even universal alarmed Woolf: communities, families, and countries were not analysis-ready units, but agglomerations of individual actors, each with their own motivations, desires and complexes. Consciousness, in short, resided only in individual actors, and it was only to individuals that the sciences of the mind could be applied.

Leonard Woolf, After the Deluge, and the rational individual

Woolf described the “line” which his wife Virginia passed in her transition from sanity to madness, as “a kind of mental balance” or “psychological coherence between

⁷⁵Leonard Woolf reviews Edward Glover’s *The Dangers of Being Human* and Lancelot Hogben’s *The Retreat from Reason*, in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 7, Issue 4, October 1936, 596-597 (Italics added).

intellect and emotion.” On the one side was an awareness and acceptance of the outside world” and on the other was a “violent emotional instability and oscillation” which manifested in a “refusal to admit or accept facts.”⁷⁶ This ‘line’, which marked the decisive point at which Virginia’s sanity would begin to fail irretrievably, was equally present in the social and political realms; reason was important not because human beings were rational, but because the mental balance of the social order required a constant reemphasis upon the real and the reasoned.

Like Hobhouse, Woolf accepted that human beings did not behave rationally, and grew irritated at simplistic or nostalgic portraits of Edwardian intellectual life which identified the pre-war period with confident and simplistic ideas about human judgement. He complained in his autobiography that “a good deal of mythological nonsense has been written about the impact of the 1914 war upon left wing intellectuals” and reminded his readers that despite rumours to the contrary, the carnage and cultural disarray of the Great War had not, in fact, caused him and his peers to become “completely disoriented and explode.”⁷⁷ But he also sought to rescue an abstract conception of reason from philosophies which actively celebrated its demise. Woolf became extremely concerned about the ascendance of intuitionism and irrationalism in the 1930s. He fiercely critiqued historians and thinkers who, inspired by the methods of Oswald Spengler, rejected “evidence for impression,” and blamed Fascism upon a desertion of the Enlightenment

⁷⁶ Woolf, *Beginning Again*, 77. Cited in Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), 179.

⁷⁷ Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, 197.

tradition by the great minds of his time.⁷⁸ Woolf was sympathetic to the existential trials of modernity, admitting that “the old beliefs seem to have played men false; the old truths sound hollow; the old ideals have betrayed or been betrayed.”⁷⁹ But he rejected a response which responded these disillusionments in favour of intuition or spiritual decree. In his 1935 *Quack, Quack!*, Woolf echoed Hobhouse by arguing that reason was not an abstract concept, but rather a process of the continual corroboration and verification of judgements within a community.⁸⁰ Rational perception needed to be based upon systems of corroborated inter-subjective perception: should one claim to have seen “a chimaera in the next room” for example, its existence could only be verified by another observer.⁸¹ Woolf acknowledged that human perception was woefully limited, but denied the validity of scepticism as a basis for an epistemological challenge to ‘intellectualism.’ Blaming Spengler, Bergson, Keyserling and Radhakrishnan for celebrating intuition and nurturing Fascism, Woolf articulated a broad hostility to unreason in politics, history and epistemology.

Reviewing *Quack, Quack!* H.N. Brailsford critiqued Woolf’s tendency to overlook systemic class privilege and economic inequality.⁸² As we shall see, socialist intellectuals of the interwar period considered Woolf’s concern with thought, ideas, and the intellectual springs of history to be simplistic, old fashioned, and troublingly individualist in light of mechanical and systemic inequalities. Although receptive to

⁷⁸ Leonard Woolf, *Quack, Quack!* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Freedon, *Liberal Languages*, 45.

⁸¹ Woolf, *Quack, Quack!*, 179.

⁸² H.N. Brailsford reviews *Quack, Quack!* in the *Political Quarterly* Volume 6, Issue 3, July 1935.

technological and materialist understandings of social change, Woolf was convinced that the human mind was the motor of history.⁸³ His 1931 *After the Deluge* explored the “communal psychology” of Western Europe since the French Revolution and attempted to access the patterns of thought, intellectual inheritances and established belief systems which had underpinned European political modernity. *After the Deluge* would be followed by a second and third volume (the latter hubristically titled, at John Maynard Keynes suggestion, *Principia Politica*) which explored “the relation between the social and political beliefs and desires of Europeans in the 19th and 20th centuries and their communal actions on the events of history.”⁸⁴ The series was a rudimentary intellectual and social history which attempted to document – in a sweepingly broad manner – the ways in which the basic principles of liberal modernity had permeated the political consciousness of Europeans.

Woolf’s ambitions with *After the Deluge* and its successive volumes were innovative and consistent with his socialist conscience. Woolf had set out to write an intellectual history of the common man – or, in his words, a “history of the ant heap” of humanity. The series may be the least cited of Woolf’s writings. Leventhal makes no mention of *After the Deluge* in his portrait of Woolf as Bloomsbury socialist, and Peter Wilson’s one reference to the series dismisses it as “largely a failure.”⁸⁵ Duncan Wilson is more generous, faithfully recounting Woolf’s intention to write a large-scale study of communal psychology, but fails to elucidate the intellectual context in which Woolf’s

⁸³ F.M. Leventhal, “Leonard Woolf: Portrait of a Bloomsbury Socialist,” 164.

⁸⁴ Woolf, *Principia Politica*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), Preface, v.

⁸⁵ Leventhal, “Leonard Woolf: Portrait of a Bloomsbury Socialist”; Peter Wilson, *The International theory of Leonard Woolf*, preface viii.

ideas intervened.⁸⁶ *After the Deluge* deserves to be read, however, as a serious and considered attempt to assess the specific desires, aims, and ‘political psychologies’ of the individual human beings whose experiences constituted history.⁸⁷

Woolf’s belief in the intellect and in thought as a motor of historical change was informed by the work of contemporary Gerald Heard, an intellectual polymath whose interests extended to popular science, psychology, Eastern spirituality, psychical research, and history. Like Woolf, Heard was an active proponent of the cooperative movement and member of the psychological community of interwar Britain. Like his friend Aldous Huxley, he migrated to North America in 1937 and became an active figure in post-war Californian counterculture, advocating the enhancement of consciousness by way of both spiritualities and substances. Heard saw human history in terms of an evolutionary model of psychological development, and argued that socio-political change merely reflected the evolution of human consciousness itself. Although Woolf found Heard’s 1929 *The Ascent of Humanity* to be “mentally indigestible”⁸⁸, he called the book an excellent “history of the consciousness of human individuality,” and accepted Heard’s thesis that “[t]he vastest change in man’s evolution has not been his anatomy or his environment or his gear but in himself – in his consciousness itself.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Duncan Wilson, *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1979) 216-219.

⁸⁷ Leonard Woolf, *After the Deluge: A Study of Communal Psychology* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931).

⁸⁸ Remark cited in Alison Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes: Gerald Heard, 1889-1971* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008), 45. Gerald Heard, *The Ascent of Humanity: an essay on the evolution of civilization from group consciousness through individuality to super-consciousness*. (London: Cape, 1929).

⁸⁹ Woolf, *After the Deluge*, 195; The inspiration was reciprocal: in *The Ascent of Humanity* Heard cited Woolf’s review of T.E. Lawrence’s *Revolt in the Desert*, in which Woolf had argued that despite being separated by thirteen centuries Julius Caesar and Marco Polo had had more in common with one another than Polo and Lawrence, the latter pair being separated by the ‘psychological revolution’ of the seventeenth century. The consciousness of individuality which characterized twentieth century subjectivity had not been

For Woolf, the modern mind was an intellectual machine. In *After the Deluge*, he argued that all individuals were subject to a psychological matrix which was formed of “those beliefs, aims, and ideals which are for the most part fluid in popular opinion, crystallize in the programmes of parties and the objects of groups and interests, and finally either reappear or disappear in the acts of governments.”⁹⁰ Although these ideas were often vague and sometimes ill-understood, they were directed by more than base economic or instinctual need. Popular politics was not based upon reasoned positions – the earth, Woolf argued, “will have cooled almost to the conditions of the frigid moon before the communal passions of the human insect cool sufficiently for him to allow reason to control his political actions”⁹¹ – but since the French Revolution and the emergence of the novel, individuals had had a sense of their own existence as self-determining beings, and had incorporated, however crudely, specific ideas and ideologies into their political self-understanding. The London riots of the reign of George III had been “blind, vague, politically unconscious, irrational, uncivilized, and undirected.” But there was nevertheless something “obscurely political” underneath it all.⁹² The crowd’s anger was not a mere product of economic conditions and rioters were not hungry automatons clapping hands on empty stomachs⁹³; rather, the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century crowds had been directed by ideas and a sense that they mattered.

a characteristic of the pre-modern mind, and it was a mistake, Heard argued, to ascribe the same kind of consciousness to pre-modern actors, see Gerald Heard, *The Ascent of Humanity*, 195.

⁹⁰ Woolf, *After the Deluge*, 28.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 54.

⁹² *Ibid*, 86-87.

⁹³ See E.P. Thompson’s famous argument against economic reductionism in the analysis of crowd behaviour in “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century” *Past and Present*, No. 50 (February, 1971), 76-136, 78: “Too many of our growth historians are guilty of a crass economic

After the Deluge and its successive volumes were not the critical success for which Woolf had hoped; in his autobiography he would reflect bitterly that he had devoted three-hundred-thousand words and nearly twenty-three years of their life to a project which was “invisible to a Fellow of All Souls or Magdalen.”⁹⁴ He may have overstated the case: both Harold Laski and a reviewer for the *Fabian News* considered *After the Deluge* to be the most important book of its kind since Graham Wallas’ *Human Nature in Politics*,⁹⁵ and other readers appreciated Woolf’s concern with “people as people, [rather than] figures on a stage or factors in a development.”⁹⁶ Though *After the Deluge* was largely reviewed with sympathy, critics portrayed Woolf’s interest in psychology as part of a distinctly individualist strand of socialist thought. G.D.H. Cole criticised the text for treating the working of the mind as an “independent and self-active process, detached from the movement of material forces and their reactions on social organisation” and argued that Woolf’s inclination towards individualism divorced him from the world of “material fact” by emphasising rationality and thought over structural or economic determinants, while Alfred Zimmern was concerned that Woolf had

reductionism... The weakness which these explanations share is an abbreviated view of economic man. What is perhaps an occasion for surprise is the schizoid intellectual climate, which permits this quantitative historiography to co-exist (in the same places and sometimes in the same minds) with a social anthropology which derives from Durkheim, Weber, or Malinowski. We know all about the delicate tissue of social norms and reciprocities which regulates the life of Trobriand islanders, and the psychic energies involved in the cargo cults of Melanesia; but at some point this infinitely-complex social creature, Melanesian man, becomes (in our histories) the eighteenth-century English collier who claps his hand spasmodically upon his stomach, and responds to elementary economic stimuli.”

⁹⁴ Woolf, *Downhill All the Way*, 205.

⁹⁵ Harold Laski, review of *After the Deluge* in *The New Statesman*, October 17, 1932 and anonymous review of *After the Deluge* in the *Fabian News*, March 1932.

⁹⁶ Barbara Wootton to Woolf, November 13th, 1939.

inadequately explored the interdependence of economics and politics.⁹⁷ Reviewing *After the Deluge* G.E. Catlin identified a stark division between individualist and communitarian concerns amongst socialist thinkers, classing Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and even Plato in the latter category and arguing that Woolf, Harold Laski and Bertrand Russell, as moderates disinclined towards structural analyses and concerned with “the furthest extension of the frontiers of the natural rights of individuals,” belonged in the former.⁹⁸

Although *After the Deluge* and its successive volumes marked an unusual attempt to investigate the “communal psychology” of European populations, Leonard Woolf was not alone in his emphasis upon psychology as a determinant of political behaviour. Evan Durbin, a ‘militant moderate’ and Labour MP whose legacy on the left was abbreviated due to his early death from drowning, was a figure who mixed a liberal socialism with a psychologically inspired anxiety about human reason, and incorporated ideas drawn from social psychology and psychoanalysis in his investigations of contemporary politics.⁹⁹ His 1940 *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* outlined a democratic egalitarianism, but the book’s remarkable introduction drew fluidly upon psychoanalytic theory. Durbin asserted that political behaviours were based upon projection and displacement: desires which had been frustrated in interpersonal relations were projected outwards into the community or state, and political theories of religion, race, and history derived essentially

⁹⁷ G.D.H. Cole reviews *After the Deluge* in *The New Leader*, Dec 4th, 1931; Alfred Zimmern reviews *After the Deluge* in *International Affairs*, March 1932.

⁹⁸ G.E. Catlin reviews *After the Deluge* in the *Yorkshire Post*, Dec 23rd, 1931.

⁹⁹ Jeremy Nuttall, ‘Psychological Socialist’; ‘Militant Moderate’: Evan Durbin and the Politics of Synthesis” in *Labour History Review* 2003, 68(2), 236.

from base drives subsumed into social activity.¹⁰⁰ Highlighting the irrational tendencies which underlay political activity, Durbin asserted that “we are not what we seem to be and think we are;” “men and women do not know what they are doing;” or, put succinctly, “we do not know ourselves.”¹⁰¹

Durbin drew heavily upon the research of the Tavistock Clinic psychologist John Bowlby: Durbin and Bowlby had coauthored *Personal Aggressiveness and War* in 1939, and would organise a conference investigating ‘The Psychological and Sociological Problems of Modern Socialism’ in 1945. Bowlby was concerned with cooperative relationships amongst social groups, and, by analogy, within the larger community of the state. His research suggested that individuals valued their work and co-operated spontaneously when they attached emotional worth to a political leader, but undertook decision making democratically and without interference.¹⁰² This article amounted to a deeper critique of administrative strategies associated with an interwar culture of ‘planning’ – specifically, by highlighting the importance of emotional connection within political activity, this approach signified that attempts to plan, regulate and comprehend society through specialist expertise and bureaucratic administration – frequently associated with Fabian social investigation and the London School of Economics – were inadequate. While individuals and their relations with others might be studied, dissected, and eventually comprehended, the social defied such concrete understanding.

¹⁰⁰ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism: An Essay on Social Policy* (London: Routledge, 1940), 62.

¹⁰¹ Durbin, 70-72.

¹⁰² John Bowlby, “Psychology and Democracy” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 17, Issue, January 1946, 73-74.

Durbin and Bowlby's Labour colleagues met the *Politics of Democratic Socialism* with hostility, and Durbin was criticised for emphasising psychology as an indispensable element of political progress rather than as peripheral to structural or economic power processes. But Leonard Woolf, unlike many of his peers, received Durbin's book with enthusiasm – unlike many reviewers, who saw the 'psychology' component of Durbin's work as incidental to his analysis of democratic capitalism, Woolf applauded and centred primarily upon this aspect of the text. In his review of *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, Woolf approved of Durbin's emphasis upon individual psychology and "the light which the new psychology of Freud and his disciples has thrown upon the way in which the instincts, emotions, or psychological complexes of aggression and cooperation work upon the human mind and affect human action."¹⁰³ For both Durbin and Woolf, the response to the generalized cultural anxiety of the prewar period was a turn inwards, to understand the dynamics which motivated interpersonal interaction, rather than schematic views of the social.

In October of 1938, Left Book Club publisher Victor Gollancz wrote to Woolf requesting a book, the title of which, he suggested, might be *The Defense of Western Civilization*. As a result of developments both at home and on the continent, Gollancz was pessimistic; he foresaw "a future dominated more and more by lying propaganda, mass hysteria, violence, unscrupulousness and hatred" and asked Woolf to write a book which defended "tolerance, the open mind, freedom of thought and discussion." Happy to undertake the project, Woolf cautioned Gollancz that his treatment might engender some

¹⁰³ Leonard Woolf, review of Evan Durbin and John Bowlby's *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 11, Issue 2, April 1940, 268-271.

“acute controversy amongst different sections of the Left”¹⁰⁴ – a warning which proved prescient. Entitled *Barbarians at the Gate*, the book which Woolf ultimately produced for Gollancz was centered on a definition of civilization which emphasised the centrality of individual action, thought, and rationality. A civilized state was “an advanced stage in social development.” But more importantly it “was not an inanimate machine [but] an organised society of individual human beings who determine its structure, the quality of its social relations, its laws, and the objects pursued by its government.” Civilization was constituted, in short, by both “social structure and individual psychology.” Situating the individual at the heart of civilization, Woolf was fiercely critical of approaches to governance which conceived of any nation or human society as an inanimate machine capable of mechanical rearrangement from above.¹⁰⁵ *Barbarians at the Gate* was a defence of individual agency – from a socialist with liberal sentiments – and of the validity of moral and intellectual aspirations both globally and within the British Left.

When *Barbarians at the Gate* was finally published it bore the not inconsiderable distinction of being the first Left Book Club publication to be openly critical of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁶ The anti-Soviet content of the text was a calculated and provocative, and the response to the book from the Left Book Club’s selection committee, consisting of Gollancz, Harold Laski and John Strachey, was correspondingly hostile. While Gollancz was clearly discomfited by the totalitarianism of the Nazi regime, he did not anticipate a critique of the Soviet Union on equivalent grounds; to Gollancz, the values of ‘western

¹⁰⁴ Woolf to Gollancz, October 27th, 1939.

¹⁰⁵ Leonard Woolf, *Barbarians at the Gate* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1939), 41-2.

¹⁰⁶ Duncan Wilson, *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography*. The controversy of the book’s publication is covered here in some detail, 197-8.

civilization' were at work in the Soviet regime. Gollancz was concerned that the publication of *Barbarians at the Gate* "might mean the resignation of something like ten thousand members" of the Left Book Club¹⁰⁷ - angering Woolf, who considered himself "as good a socialist" as any member of the LBC's selection committee (the only people to whom the book ought to might prove offensive, Woolf insisted, were those "whose attitude towards socialism or communism is the same as that of a Tory to the British Empire"¹⁰⁸). Club subscribers received the text accompanied by a letter from Gollancz insisting that the book be read in tandem with the next month's publication, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, in which the 'red' Dean of Canterbury found the Soviet Union to be the most perfectly Christian civilisation that had yet existed.¹⁰⁹ John Strachey also published an extensive critique of the book in which he chided Woolf for misunderstanding Marxist thought and failing to recognise the necessity for a working class dictatorship as a precondition to tolerance, freedom of thought and civilization.¹¹⁰ Reviewers were no kinder; J.B.S. Haldane accused Woolf of substituting quotations for facts, and both he and Pat Sloan thought that the book tarnished the reputation of the Left Book Club.¹¹¹ Sloan's review argued that the real "ideological barbarism" was not totalitarianism but rather "Bloomsbury intellectuals" - a term of abuse representing

¹⁰⁷ Gollancz to Woolf, June 22nd, 1939.

¹⁰⁸ Woolf to Gollancz, June 23rd, 1939.

¹⁰⁹ Gollancz, letter to Left Book Club subscribers, Dec 4th, 1939.

¹¹⁰ John Strachey, review of *Barbarians at the Gate* for Left Book Club newsletter (date unknown).

¹¹¹ J.B.S. Haldane review of *Barbarians at the Gate* in the *Daily Worker* (date unknown), Pat Sloan review of *Barbarians at the Gate* in *Tribune*, Dec 15th. 1939.

bourgeois aestheticism, Apostolic intellectual elitism, and the perceived frivolity of G.E. Moore's pre-Great War Cambridge.¹¹²

The controversy and hostility engendered by the publication of *Barbarians at the Gate* provides a clear portrait of Woolf as an outlier within a Labour Party intelligentsia increasingly committed to mechanical explanations of history and politics and sympathetic to the possibilities offered by the Soviet model and its planned economy. Woolf's emphasis upon individual agency, in this context, smacked of liberal individualism, the gradualist progressivism of the prewar Fabians, and the timid socialism of disgraced Labour leader James Ramsay MacDonald. But Woolf's concern with reason was more than merely an expression of political moderation: rather, it reflected a somewhat inconsistent but nonetheless persistent view that human attitudes and beliefs, despite their existence only in the mind, were the most concrete and powerful forces in the political realm. As we have seen in this chapter, the contested concept of the rational political individual was at the heart of interwar concerns about a 'revolt against reason.' Psychology and psychoanalysis both situated the challenges of popular politics in the inner workings of the human mind, and emphasised the irrational, instinctive and emotional aspects of political judgement. But by emphasising the psychology of the 'common man' and suggesting that ideas played a pivotal role within popular history, Woolf rescued the individual political actor and reemphasized reason in political activity.

¹¹² Pat Sloan, review of *Barbarians at the Gate* in *Tribune*, Dec 15, 1939.

During the 1930s, the psychologist and the political thinker both addressed breakdowns in the moral and mental expressions of human experience. Although the psychologist was concerned with the mental and moral, and the political scientist with the political, international, and social, both responded to confusion, disorientation and crisis with an attempt to systematize and rationalize that which was only partially understood. The application of psychology to politics integrated a 'rationalist' desire to quantify and understand the social and psychological with an acknowledgement that the human individual was not a rational being. In Woolf's mind, truly divisive global boundaries were not racial or even cultural but epistemological: barbarism, for Woolf, referred not to culture or race but rather to modes of understanding which did not acknowledge reason as the basic foundation of knowledge and only route to truth. Woolf divided contemporary philosophical and political thought into categories of civilized rationality, defined by critical intelligence and the application of reason, against barbarism or savagery, characterized by superstition, impression, instinct, emotion, and uncritical dogmatism. 'Reason', for Woolf, was a category with multiple meanings which operated as a sign of order, progressive optimism, and the pursuit of truth. Although he was neither a psychologist nor a political scientist, Leonard Woolf's interventions in politics and internationalism represented a desire for rational politics combined with an acknowledgment that the personal, intellectual and political realm were all prey to the vagaries of irrationality and crisis. In the next chapter, we will see how Woolf articulated this position more publicly and resonantly towards the end of the 1930s in debates about

the guiding principles of interwar internationalism and the new field of international relations.

Chapter Four

Frontiers of the Mind: Leonard Woolf, Psychology, and the League of Nations

Leonard Woolf as internationalist

In addition to writing a large number of books, editing the *Political Quarterly*, and publishing many of the best known English language writers and thinkers of the twentieth century, Woolf also established himself as an influential voice in the nascent field of International Relations during the 1930s. The League of Nations was a manifestation of the belief that a covenant or governing body could regulate the behaviour of fundamentally self-interested states, and that states would value the rational benefits that such an institutional arrangement might provide, such as peace and cooperative economic relationships, over the potential short-term gains associated with non-cooperation. As a result, the success of the League was based on the theoretical and actual capacity for reason exercised by political leaders – and, increasingly, their electorates. Leonard Woolf’s internationalist thought and his advocacy of the League of Nations, therefore, are best understood as elaborations of his views on human reason explored in the previous chapter. As we shall see, Woolf’s internationalism reflected a persistent desire to situate the beliefs and desires of individual political actors at the centre of global power dynamics, and reject the abstractions of state and nation in favour of individual reasoning.

Woolf began his career in internationalism as the main foreign affairs expert in the Fabian Research Bureau, writing the Fabian Society’s first major study of

international questions, *International Government*, in 1916. Experience in the colonial civil service and the support of Beatrice and Sidney Webb led to his authorship of *Empire and Commerce in Africa* on behalf of the Labour Party, a text which advocated self-governance for colonial states and linked Woolf with strands of Edwardian liberal anti-imperialism previously exemplified by J.A. Hobson.¹¹³ Woolf was a founding member of the League of Nations Society and secretary of both the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on International Questions and Committee on Imperial Questions¹¹⁴ and the draft of a convention for 'A Supernational Authority that will Prevent War', which he co-authored with Sidney Webb, was closely mirrored by and potentially the primary basis for the League of Nations covenant. Woolf, more generally, helped to establish the belief that "international government was both a feasible and an efficacious way of promoting common interests and reducing international friction." His work was an important departure from nineteenth-century foreign policy orthodoxy, dominated alternately by Conservative conceptions of international relations in which conflict was inevitable, and progressive or liberal optimism that growing economic and cultural interconnection would naturally result in harmonious international relationships. In contrast to both of these views, Woolf contended that war was neither an inevitable curse nor a progressively disappearing evil, but "a human artefact and therefore potentially controllable."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ See, J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: J. Pott and Company, 1902).

¹¹⁴ Peter Wilson, "Leonard Woolf and International Government", in David Long and Peter Wilson ed. *Thinkers of the Twenty Years Crisis: Inter-war Idealism Reassessed*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Peter Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth Century Idealism*.

In several valuable studies¹¹⁶, International Relations scholar Peter Wilson has evaluated the impact, coherence and ‘utopianism’ of Woolf’s ideas, presenting his subject as essentially concerned with “international relations broadly defined.”¹¹⁷ Wilson acknowledges that international relations, as a discipline, existed only in very embryonic form prior to the end of the Second World War, that Woolf never held nor aspired to an academic post in this or any other field, and that there is no evidence that Woolf “conceived international relations as a distinct field of academic enquiry.”¹¹⁸ This point provides necessary contextualization for the work of figures such as Woolf, John Hobson, Norman Angell, Philip Noel Baker, G. Lowes Dickinson, all of whom were foundational to twentieth-century internationalism as members of organisations such as the Labour Party’s Committee on International Questions, but who did not define themselves solely, and in most cases even primarily, as International Relations theorists. Most prominent internationalists, rather, were ‘public moralists’¹¹⁹ rather than professionally trained specialists in the still emergent field of international relations, who had opportunities to comment upon the shifting global order as the result of their talent, connections, and status as members of the social elite of the world’s pre-eminent imperial power.

Despite acknowledging that Woolf’s internationalist thought developed outside of formal disciplinary constraints and in relation to a plethora of international and domestic political concerns, Wilson treats Woolf through the disciplinary lens of contemporary IR,

¹¹⁶ Peter Wilson, *International Theory of Leonard Woolf*; “Leonard Woolf and International Government,” “Fabian Paternalism and Radical Dissent.”

¹¹⁷ Wilson, “Leonard Woolf and International Government,” 125.

¹¹⁸ Wilson, “Fabian Paternalism and Radical Dissent,” 120.

¹¹⁹ Term taken from Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

and as a result overemphasises the primacy of international questions in his intellectual life. Wilson is dismissive of the role of reason in Woolf's thought, treating the moral tone of his subject's argument as clumsy and propagandist polemic and failing to appreciate the degree to which Woolf's views on international relations were intertwined with and inseparable from his views on history and human nature.¹²⁰ Further attention to the more abstract and moral undertones of Woolf's work allows us to view him as a thinker engaged in a comprehensive defence of individual reason in the international and intellectual realms.

One example of Woolf's prominence amongst the internationalist community is his editorship of the 1933 *The Intelligent Man's Guide to World Peace* – a defence of the League of Nations featuring articles from internationalist voices such as Norman Angell, Harold Laski, Alfred Zimmern and Gilbert Murray. In his introduction to the guide, Woolf portrayed global conflict as the product of manageable and alterable human behaviours, and presented war, like “cannibalism, witch-burning, murder, [and] drunkenness,” as a social phenomenon which could be suppressed and improved through the discovery and correction of the social conditions which caused it. Although *The Intelligent Man's Guide to World Peace* represented a clear defence of the notion that an institutional body like the League could champion the cause of peace, Woolf made clear in his introduction that the effectiveness of any structure, organisations or system designed to prevent war would “always depend upon what goes on inside the heads of those who work it.” Ultimately, he concluded,

¹²⁰ Wilson, “Leonard Woolf and International Government,” 141.

it is human psychology, the beliefs and desires of human beings, which makes international anarchy persist and war inevitable. A world order to prevent war requires a different psychology, a psychology of peace which will make peace inevitable.¹²¹

In this argument, Woolf revealed that his internationalism was based upon a pressing concern with the thoughts and desires of both individual human actors and groups. As I explored in the previous chapter, a concern with the human mind lay at the heart of Woolf's political thought. Although he did not advocate the breakdown of state sovereignty, Woolf perceived conflict between independent nation states as a deeply destructive force with the potential to undermine civilization itself. As I shall demonstrate, this perception led Woolf to view individual reason as a force which could unify a world divided by national borders, and look to the transformative power of psychology for salvation from the decay of nineteenth-century civilization. Applying this concern to interstate relations, Woolf saw the international realm as a space not of abstract power politics, but rather as a site where the constantly evolving attitudes and behaviours of populations met the frequently stagnant apparatuses of state power. In this chapter, I will show that Leonard Woolf's internationalist writing sought to emphasise the 'psychology' of the individual political actor, and in so doing so challenge the supremacy of the state as the basis for a peaceful international order.

This discussion will proceed by first emphasising the role of institutions such as the League of Nations in the development of a cosmopolitan liberal internationalism

¹²¹ Leonard Woolf, introduction to *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War* (London: Gollancz, 1933), 10.

central to interwar articulations of political citizenship. 1930s Britain, I will argue, should not be understood as a moment of rural nostalgia for ‘little England’, but rather as a decade when insular and internationalist tendencies operated simultaneously on the progressive intellectual imagination. Leonard Woolf, I will then show, saw violent conflict and Fascism as the products of a disjointed relationship between a globally interconnected political and economic modernity and the persistence of nationalist regimes within Europe. Woolf, I will demonstrate, believed that establishing a ‘psychology’ of internationalism would provide an antidote to global conflict, and that altering the political consciousness of populations was an effective step in the pursuit of peace. Woolf’s interest in the rational capacities of the human individual – as opposed to the more abstractly conceived power and interests of the nation state – were foundational to his influential critique of E.H. Carr’s *The Twenty Years Crisis*, and the realist school of international relations which it engendered. I will argue that by emphasising psychology, Woolf situated identity – and citizenship – in the minds of political actors, a perspective which undermined the geographical and institutional limitations of the nation state.

“World-Wide People” or “Island Race”?

Emerging out of the ashes of the First World War, the League of Nations was premised jointly upon a concern for culturally particular national identities and the universal application of liberal values. The increased popular awareness of empire in the late nineteenth century and growth of popular internationalism in the interwar period resulted in an expansion of the imagined community in which British citizens understood

themselves as participants: a surge of internationalist sentiment accompanied the establishment of international governing bodies after the First World War, but this movement was simultaneously tempered by a reconsideration of Britain's role as a global actor. Post-war enthusiasm for the League of Nations was inevitably premised upon Britain's status at the helm of the peace process, and the post-war internationalist project suffered from a failure to disentangle British cultural particularity from an idealist dream of progressive liberal civilization.

This discussion acknowledges that any analysis of liberal internationalism must take into account the degree to which liberalism was inseparable from the imperial project. In *Liberalism and Empire*, Uday Mehta's reminds us that liberalism did not emerge from a vacuum, but rather developed alongside and in relation to empire. Exploring the major thinkers of the British liberal tradition, Mehta reminds us that the canonical texts of British liberalism were written in the context of increasing encounters with the new, the different, and the threatening, and reinforces the centrality of Britain's metropolitan self-understanding to its political and intellectual self-construction, arguing that the 'Indian Question,' for example, was "paradigmatically the issue of how a body of ideas that professed a universal reach responded to the encounter with the unfamiliar." Institutions of interwar internationalism were tethered to an imperial legacy, which was evident both in the concrete guidelines of the mandate system and in the universalizing liberalism upon which they were founded.¹²²

¹²² See Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

In recent decades, nineteenth and twentieth-century notions of “Britishness” and “Englishness” have been of significant interest to scholars. ‘British’ identity has been a particularly difficult concept for historians to secure, both as a result of competing identity claims within the British Isles, and because of the impact of global imperial dominance upon domestic constructions of nationhood.¹²³ A central sub-genre within this scholarship has chronicled the Janus-faced nature of Britain’s self-definition, reflecting competing myths of ‘world-wide people’ and ‘island race’ within constructions of British nationhood.¹²⁴ ‘Britishness’, which David Marquand has formulated as “quintessentially global, oceanic, [and] imperial” frequently exists in relation to a notion of ‘Englishness’ associated with a pastoral and often conservative mythology of ‘deep England’ or the rural south.¹²⁵ In his influential *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, Martin Wiener argued that Britain’s movement towards cultural, political and economic modernity was stymied by a pastoral, conservative and nostalgic conception of ‘Englishness’¹²⁶ a thesis which, although refined by several decades of critical scholarship, has been echoed in various historical and literary articulations of interwar identity. The interwar years, according to proponents of the Englishness thesis,

¹²³ For examples of scholarship which examines the role of competing local identities within the ‘uniting’ of the United Kingdom of Britain, see Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer ed. *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1937* (Yale: University Press, 1992). Influential examinations of the impact of imperialism on British identity include Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), and Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose ed. *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006).

¹²⁴ Jon Lawrence, “The Politics of Place and the Politics of Nation” in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2000, pp. 83-94, 93.

¹²⁵ David Marquand, “How United is the Modern United Kingdom?” in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer ed. *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 277-291, 286-87.

¹²⁶ Wiener, Martin J., *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

were the heyday of “the idea of the English national character”¹²⁷ and saw a revival of ‘little Englandism’, a pre-existing strain of anti-imperialist, protectionist and introspective nostalgia for an imagined pre-modern, pre-imperial and pre-metropolitan Britain. This “decline of Britishness” and “reciprocal rise of Englishness” saw John Bull pull in his horns and become “gentle and domesticated, kindly and humorous[, now] England’s man, not the world’s.”¹²⁸

‘Englishness’ was also a trope of interwar political agendas. Intellectuals such as A.L. Rowse, Arthur Bryant, and Francis Brett Young idealized an England of “maypoles and church-ales and dancing on the village green,”¹²⁹ while historians like G.P. Trevelyan and R.G. Collingwood were engaged in promoting the countryside as a pastoral bastion, employing the imagery of the pre-industrial landscape as a reminder of “the transient and shallow nature of most new ideas.” In the context of an unstable European political climate and the ascendancy of totalitarian regimes, liberal-conservative intellectuals of the 1930s associated cosmopolitan attitudes with the left, dangerously abstract politics, and the urban landscape.¹³⁰ As Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin “set about painting a picture of the English national character that might be reassuring to Tories, familiar to Liberals and perhaps even placatory to socialists.” In Baldwin’s vision, the English were

¹²⁷ Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: the History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 143.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 143-5.

¹²⁹ Julia Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 114.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

defined by common sense, a good temper, “ordered freedom,” and the path to progress, all with a simultaneous appeal to rural nostalgia.¹³¹

This introspective turn towards nostalgia has also been noted within interwar literary production. Stefan Collini has contended that for interwar cultural circles the idea of the 'economic' symbolized modernity, imbuing the literary left with an intrinsic preference for a mythology of pre-modern and pre-industrial England.¹³² With the decline of empire in the 1930s, Englishness needed to be reconceptualised; without a universalizing imperial identity, modernist writers turned to a core-focused notion of Englishness engaged with the “repair or reintegration of English culture itself.”¹³³ By examining the works of canonical modernist figures such as T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, Jed Esty has argued that British literary culture experienced an ‘anthropological turn’ during the interwar years. As the “baggy multinational civilization” that had been imperial Britain became fragmented, a “metropolitan ethnography” developed by which English society could examine and understand itself as an indigenous culture.¹³⁴ Literatures which had once reflected the ambitious global nature of Britain’s imperial project gave way to a concern with England and Englishness, as the works of modernist writers and cultural critics increasingly emphasized particularity and cultural contingency over metropolitan normativity. No longer the universal subject of imperial expansion and

¹³¹Mandler, *The English National Character*, 151.

¹³² Stefan Collini “Where did it all go wrong? Cultural Critics and Modernity in pre-industrial England” in E.H.H. Green, D. Tanner ed. *The Strange Survival of Liberal England*, 247-274.

¹³³ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 10.

colonizing knowledge, Britain herself became an object of study worthy of her own anthropologies.

Borrowing from Fredric Jameson, Esty has argued that Britain's experience of empire resulted in a sense of 'lost-totality'. Arguing that the export of industry and manufacture to Britain's foreign territories had resulted in a "lost aesthetic of insular completeness" Esty suggests that literary modernism registered a 'meaning loss' in interwar intellectual identity which corresponded to an uncertainty about Britain's continuing status as an imperial power at the centre of a multinational imperial economy. In response to this sense of alienated wholeness, modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and E.M. Forster sought to represent a 'de-metropolitanized' Britain by "reviving an anthropological concept of national integrity"¹³⁵ and rejected identities associated with cosmopolitan and imperial Britain in favour of those associated with "immemorial Englishness."¹³⁶ Esty's account contains a sustained engagement with Virginia Woolf's work as an example of an 'inward looking' literature increasingly concerned with a nostalgic retrieval of 'Englishness'. But it touches only briefly upon the contributions of her spouse as an internationalist. Leonard Woolf's criticism of empire, along with those of other liberal anti-imperialists such as Hobson and even John Maynard Keynes, are harnessed to Esty's Englishness narrative; in Esty's account, to be anti-imperialist was to be concerned with the retrieval of a pre-imperial English nationhood.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 27-28.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 39.

This account neglects the sharp criticism of nationalist attitudes and policies which characterized the views of Woolf and many other anti-imperialist liberals, and arguably elides the degree to which British identity retained a global orientation and became closely linked with internationalism during this period. In contrast to visions of cultural particularity and nostalgic Englishness, some historians have highlighted cosmopolitan, global, and emphatically modern articulations of British identity which also permeated the liberal left of the 1920s and 30s. Jon Lawrence has emphasised modernity, internationalism and rationality in twentieth-century constructions of Britishness, asserting that despite an actual retrenchment in Britain's official global power "the interwar period probably marked the heyday of popular identification with empire."¹³⁷ Both the League of Nations and the mandates system became central to a globally oriented interwar conception of British identity which emphasised "civic virtue and social solidarity" and Britain's "special genius for democracy."¹³⁸ Some of this enthusiasm could operate as an explicit continuation of imperialist ambitions, emphasising the supremacy of British – or English – institutions while paying lip service to a more pluralistic global order. The *Round Table*, for example, was a journal at the center of a community of imperialist intellectuals who sought to "refashion empire as a projection not of British power but of British culture, a community rather than an empire" and identified Britishness with an expansive model of civilization and liberal institutions

¹³⁷ Jon Lawrence, "The Politics of Place and the Politics of Nation" *Twentieth Century British History*, Jan. 2000, Vol. 11 Issue 1, 93.

¹³⁸ Helen McCarthy, "Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain" in *The Historical Journal*, 50, 4 (2007), 891-912.

which remained essentially British while becoming universally relevant.¹³⁹ But the interwar period was also a moment when British subjects and political thinkers began to conceive of political participation beyond the formal avenues offered by the British state.

A variety of new extra-party avenues for political participation emerged after the First World War, when the Fourth Reform Act and the Liberal Party's new third party status created an environment of considerable political flux. Jose Harris has observed that the 1920s saw a surge in the popularity of voluntary service, defended as "a means of enhancing wider corporate consciousness," which resulted in a marked increase in the number of voluntary and non-state organisations devoted to internationalism and civil association.¹⁴⁰ As Helen McCarthy has shown, these took the form of associations such as the Rotary Club, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the British Legion, and, most pertinent to this discussion, the League of Nations Union (LNU), all of which provided an essential opportunity for political participation while remaining grounded in a commitment to non-sectarian politics. The LNU, led by Gilbert Murray and Lord Robert Cecil, aimed to democratize foreign policy through the cultivation of mass citizenship,¹⁴¹ and internationalists and supporters of the League hoped that political participation would become tied to a transnational rather than merely national political consciousness.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Mandler, *The English National Character*, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Jose Harris, "Political Thought and the Welfare State," *Past & Present*, May 1992, Issue 135, 134-6.

¹⁴¹ The tensions underlying this position were revealed, however, in Alfred Milner's posthumous declaration of loyalty "the English race" and the empire. Liberal internationalism, in this instance, was revealed as a foil for nationalism and latent imperialism. For a further discussion of the Round Table in relation to Britishness, see Mandler, *The English National Character*, 147.

¹⁴² McCarthy, "Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain," 897.

The First World War had deepened a sense of national difference – years of conflict had created a strong interest in the national characteristics of both allies and enemies. But post-war, national difference was protected and celebrated as a source of “human strength and (largely metaphysical) unity” and optimistically considered to be an opportunity for international cooperation.¹⁴³ As Brenda Sluga has explained, “the rise of psychology as a ‘coherent and individuated scientific discourse’” in the 1870s rendered it specifically relevant for explaining the processes of nation formation¹⁴⁴ and post-First World War ideas of national self-determination, commonly associated with Wilsonian idealism, employed theories of communal or national psychology as intellectual foundations. Notions of inherited psychological traits were incorporated into the liberal ideal of nationhood, and by 1914 “the historically specific patois of new psychology had become indispensable for thinking about the nation, nationality, and, increasingly, nationalism.”¹⁴⁵

Following the First World War, psychology was frequently deployed by thinkers and policy-makers seeking to define the national characteristics of the inhabitants of European states. Fascism, in particular, came to be characterized psychologically, as a manifestation of barbaric and vestigial impulses. In a 1933 *Political Quarterly* article Harold D. Lasswell amalgamated psychoanalytic terminology with an idea of collective national psychology, ascribing Nazism to an essentially German “psychological impoverishment of the lower middle class” produced by “emotional insecurities.”

¹⁴³ Mandler, *The English National Character*, 145.

¹⁴⁴ Glenda Sluga, *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics, 1870-1919* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 61

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 79.

Adopting a loosely psychoanalytic tone, Lasswell blamed the lack of ‘national parliamentarism’ and native republican institutions in the German tradition for an entrenched fear of the proletariat, while the scapegoating of Jews and other groups represented a collective projection of blame from the self to an imagined antagonist.¹⁴⁶

The emphasis upon nationhood and national psychologies after the war reflected a shift in foreign policy emphasis from ‘the state’ – an institutional or territorial concept which emphasised the structures of official power – to the nation - defined as a distinct socially and historically constructed entity comprised of individual actors sharing common characteristics. While this shift, as we have seen, was conducive to an emphasis upon cultural particularity, its focus upon the internal, mental and very human constituents of nationhood could also be harnessed by an internationalist movement which sought to challenge the importance of the state in international relations and establish both cultural and institutional apparatuses for global cooperation.

Leonard Woolf used the term ‘psychology’ freely, and to the modern reader, somewhat superfluously.¹⁴⁷ But as I shall demonstrate, this concern with psychology was essential to his internationalism. Woolf sought to provide a framework for a global order in which economies and states were structured in the interest of global rather than national prosperity, and would argue that although the institutional frameworks necessary for an international order had been in existence since the nineteenth-century, their

¹⁴⁶ Harold D. Lasswell, “The Psychology of Hitlerism” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 4, Issue 3, July 1933.

¹⁴⁷ For example, in a fifteen page *Political Quarterly* critique of E.H. Carr’s *The Twenty Years Crisis*, which will be discussed in the following pages, Woolf used the terms ‘psychology’ or ‘psychological’ a total of twenty seven times to refer to what a modern writer might now conceptualize as attitude or character. Woolf, “Utopia or Reality?” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 11, Issue 2, April 1940.

implementation would require the establishment of an ‘internationalist psychology’ within Britain and other European states. The next section will examine the internationalist critique of the sovereign state expressed by Woolf and Gilbert Murray, and argue that the desire to establish international governing bodies capable of impeding state aggression drew upon an abstract conception of international spirit, mind or psychology.

The problem of the state

When Woolf stood as an unsuccessful Labour candidate in 1922, he defended his affiliation with the party as a decision informed by a need for “a complete break with dangerous and extravagant foreign policy.” British socialists, he argued, needed to support an authentically democratic League of Nations, disarmament, non-aggression, and the “equitable settlement” of German reparations, and Woolf’s public self-definition as a Labour supporter and candidate was based upon the party’s potential to provide a vessel for a politics of cooperative internationalism.¹⁴⁸ By the next decade, however, Woolf had become critical of Labour’s foreign policy, and outlined its flaws in a 1933 *Political Quarterly* article. The 1920s, in his view, had been an optimistic decade, in which “it looked as if the forces making for peace and economic recovery were very slowly reasserting themselves,” but this illusion had been rudely interrupted by a violent economic earthquake.¹⁴⁹ Of the five great powers of the Council of the League, Japan had flouted its aims and withdrawn, and both Italy and Germany had become Fascist

¹⁴⁸ Leonard Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, 38.

¹⁴⁹ Woolf, “Labour’s Foreign Policy” in *the Political Quarterly*, Volume 4, Issue 4, 1933, 506.

dictatorships – the latter “one of the most savage and senseless dictatorships that has been tolerated by a civilized European population for at least two centuries.” The two remaining powers, France and Britain, were thus taxed with upholding responsibility for peace and international cooperation, and although France’s leadership was genuinely democratic and peaceful, Britain’s National Government, led by the disgraced Labour leader James Ramsay MacDonald, was “averse to international co-operation, hostile to the strengthening of the League, [and] obstructive to any radical scheme of disarmament” with a foreign policy of “muddled and imitative economic nationalism” resting upon a basis of the “most unintelligent form of British conservatism.”¹⁵⁰

The Labour Party’s foreign policy, as represented by the views of former Foreign Secretary and current Party Secretary Arthur Henderson, was a restatement of its commitment to fostering international cooperation under the auspices of the League. Woolf was a strong supporter of the League and did not explicitly object to this program, but argued that the organisation’s success or failure was a matter of internal economic and psychological transformation.¹⁵¹ Fascism, in Woolf’s view, was a product of the breakdown of international political and economic systems, representing “a last desperate attempt to keep capitalism and the system of the sovereign national state going.”¹⁵² Labour needed to advocate for “an ordered transition from individualist capitalist economic system to some form of communal or socialist economic system” and defend “an ordered international system regulating the relations between states and preventing

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 506-508.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 510-512.

¹⁵² Ibid, 522.

war.” In Woolf’s view, a meaningful Labour Party foreign policy should not merely seek to affirm Britain’s commitment to the League, but rather should conflate its economic and international policies in a united attack upon Fascism and Barbarism. More than simply staying true to the League, Woolf advocated purging it of fascist powers, and sought to use the League itself as a weapon against Fascism. He also advocated an energized and unified left, but unfortunately found it to be factionalized. The right and left wings of the Labour Party were equally irresponsible with regards to foreign policy; moderates supported the League, but were unprepared “to purchase it at the price of socialism” while for the left of the party the League of Nations represented capitalist interests and was not a force for genuine progress.

Woolf, anxious about the implications of this situation, cautioned that: “if civilization is to be saved, the forces of civilization now in disunion and disintegration must unite” - a goal which appeared increasingly elusive as “the communist quarrel[ed] with the socialist and the socialist with the liberal and the pacifist with the League supporter and Mr. Keynes with the free trader and Professor Zimmern with all of them.”¹⁵³ Fighting Fascism, in Woolf’s terms, was thus a matter of creating a unified left which firmly supported international government but was prepared to do battle with the dark forces of political barbarism.¹⁵⁴ Socialism and internationalism were thus inextricably linked, and Woolf argued that a transformative egalitarian socialism was the only force which might fight what he considered to be the oppressive psychological conditions associated with both economic inequality and fascist militarism.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 524.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 514.

Casper Sylvest has argued that during the interwar years, the concept of anarchy ceased to be associated with a pre-social notion of the state of nature, and instead became linked to the nation state.¹⁵⁵ The Great War had caused internationalists to reflect directly upon the *structure* of the international realm and embed anarchy within an international system premised upon state sovereignty.¹⁵⁶ For Leonard Woolf's fellow internationalist and LNU leader Gilbert Murray, the nation state had been the Achilles heel of liberal civilization. The nineteenth century had been a time of expansive liberal freedoms, improving quality of life, and the beginning of an egalitarian economics, but it contained a fatal flaw – the comparatively novel belief in the sovereign and independent nation state.¹⁵⁷ National governments, Murray argued, were fundamentally selfish instruments: nation states operated for their own benefit and were required to legislate on behalf of their own fundamentally self-interested citizens, and state sovereignty had been to blame for the Great War and the accompanying cultural, political and social transformations which had both dismayed and captivated liberal intellectuals ever since. Murray argued that the continued acceptance of unproblematic state sovereignty would lead only to disastrous failures of social, intellectual and political cooperation, including future wars. But he also suggested that it was “international relations, the very spot where the nineteenth century showed its most fatal weakness, that we seem most

¹⁵⁵ Casper Sylvest, “Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism, 1900-1930”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 2005), 263-283.

¹⁵⁶ Sylvest, 274-6.

¹⁵⁷ Gilbert Murray, *The Ordeal of this Generation: The War, the League and the Future* (New York: Harpers, 1929), 41-57.

conspicuously to have discovered the right method for rehabilitating the ordered world.”¹⁵⁸

In a 1930 *Political Quarterly* article, Leonard Woolf argued that the global economy and global communications had become inherently interconnected, but that while the interests of consumers and statesmen alike lay in regulated international trade and the peaceful adjudication of international disputes, post-Great War Europe had been marred by a regressive nationalist ‘psychology’ which impeded peaceful internationalism. Woolf argued that the nineteenth-century had been a struggle between nationalism and internationalism. The century had ended with the assassination of the arch-duke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, an event which had been preceded by a quarter-century of nationalism and ultimate military disaster, and since that moment nationalist and internationalist “communal psychology” had been in conflict. The unfortunate victims of the former retained a blinkered conception of patriotism: the nationalist, Woolf argued,

thinks of a world of completely independent States or nations, and regards himself as an individual belonging to and owing loyalty to only one unit in that world. He identifies his own interests passionately with those of his own nation, and he is rarely, if ever, conscious of any common bond or interests between nations. Hence in nationalist psychology the society of nations almost inevitably becomes a world not only of independent but also of hostile States.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Murray, 178-190.

¹⁵⁹ Leonard Woolf, “From Sarajevo to Geneva” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 1, Issue 2, April 1930, 187-8.

Although states had been growing ever more economically and diplomatically interconnected throughout the nineteenth century, their populations continued to ascribe to a national rather than international psychology. National borders, in Woolf's analysis, had become veritable frontiers of the mind, with political, economic, social, and military consequences, and the political disaster of the Great War had resulted from a confrontation between globally interconnected industrial modernity and a 'nationalist communal psychology.' The Versailles Peace had reflected the incommensurability of an interconnected world with nationalism, as it "hastily decided to finish off the building which had begun as an Arc de Triomphe with the stucco cupola of a Temple of Peace."¹⁶⁰ The crude mechanisms of international government, meanwhile, had emerged haphazardly and without direction in the nineteenth century, and were becoming institutionally recognised through the formal apparatus of the League of Nations, but nationalistic passions continued to seethe through the foreign policy of much of continental Europe.¹⁶¹ In Woolf's view, it was the disjoint between this internationalizing global order – in which British citizens were constantly participating as consumers and members of the global economy – and the 'inward looking' cultural particularity of nationalist psychology which was responsible for the interwar tension between nationalism and international citizenship.

For Woolf, encouraging the development of an internationalist psychology was necessary for global peace. While psychology provided a conceptual tool for establishing the boundaries of national identity, its fundamentally mental or psychological character

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 189-190.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 197.

meant that it could simultaneously *challenge* formal political boundaries. Because psychology tied identity to the mind of populations, the thoughts and attitudes of these populations could also be deployed by internationalists seeking to subvert the primacy of the state. Woolf suggested that in mass politics states of mind, however crude or sophisticated, were political realities, and believed that by cultivating an internationalist psychology the conflicts which had led to the Great War could be avoided, and an international reality reconciled with public opinion.

The International Mind and The Twenty Years Crisis

The League of Nations was a much loved but troublesome child for interwar progressives. In the 1930s the diplomatic policy disasters of German re-militarization, the Abyssinian crisis and the Manchurian crisis rendered the League's failings glaringly evident: supporters and proponents of the League of Nations, who had for decades been characterized as utopians for their lofty pacifist intentions, were tarnished, and the League's failure rendered its supporters' intellectual foundations subject to a great deal of scrutiny by both contemporaries and historians. As a result, the ideas which had undergirded its establishment and subsequent development were thrown, for decades, into a sharp and often unflattering spotlight. Scholarship of the interwar debates about the feasibility and desirability of world government during this period has been dominated by a central conflict between 'realist' and 'utopian' theoretical approaches to international governance. Utopians supported liberal and universalist foreign policy aims, and believed that foreign policy could be made rational and peaceful through the intervention

of international bodies such as the League of Nations, while Realists, in contrast, doubted the capacity for reason and morality to order the social, and presumed that international politics were essentially conflictual.¹⁶² While both schools have provided crude caricatures of their opponents' thought, idealism became a term of more fervent derision during the post-war period.

Scholarship of liberal internationalism in the interwar period must account for the towering influence of Edward Hallett Carr. Appointed chair of international relations at the University of Aberystwyth in 1936, Carr was a vociferous critic of the attitudes which had undergirded the central internationalist institutions of the interwar period, and in particular the increasingly fraught League of Nations. In *The Twenty Years Crisis*, published in 1939, Carr attacked the notion that international institutions such as the League of Nations could check state aggression, and denigrated the optimism of post-war internationalism, embodied by Wilsonian rhetoric and the League, as 'utopian' and 'idealist.' Not to be confused with philosophical idealism, idealism or utopianism in international relations was based upon a sense that reason, if applied rigorously, would of necessity coerce human actors and states towards the right action. Carr's 'idealists' included intellectuals and internationalists such as Alfred Zimmern, Norman Angell and Arnold Toynbee, who were critiqued for their faith in "the utopian doctrine of the efficacy of rational public opinion" expressed through institutions like the League, as well as for their espousal of the Mazzinian belief that a natural harmony of national interests could prevail should states act in their own self-interest. Rejecting models of

¹⁶² Duncan Bell, Intro to Duncan Bell ed. *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on Realist Theme* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

international government as naive, ignorant of power-politics, and overly optimistic about the universality and strength of moral or rational interests in the international sphere, Carr emphasised the fundamental brutality and chaos of inter-state relations. He referred to his own more pessimistic view as ‘realism’, and positioned its hard-headed and analytical lens as the starting point for a systematic understanding of the global world order.¹⁶³

Political philosopher Raymond Geuss has argued that realism, as a school of thought, represented a categorical rejection of a platonic optimism which suggested “a natural fit between the exercise of reason, the conditions of healthy individual human development, the demands of individuals for the satisfaction of their needs, interests, and basic desires, and human sociability.”¹⁶⁴ Realism, in short, denied that individuals pursuing their own needs could do so rationally, and therefore opposed the liberal conviction that human reason could “transcend the tragic character of politics.”¹⁶⁵ But while, for Carr, idealism was problematic because of its association with the liberal conception of a natural ‘harmony of interests’¹⁶⁶ Jeanne Morefield has argued that liberal internationalists were also engaged in a criticism of the atomistic liberal tradition which drew upon “an oddly transposed variety of Hegelianism” to embrace a theory of organic community. Examining liberal internationalists Gilbert Murray and Alfred Zimmern, Morefield argues that the internationalist aspirations which Carr characterised as idealist or utopian in *The Twenty Years Crisis* were, in fact, manifestations of the Hegelian philosophical idealism of late nineteenth-century Oxford liberalism. Although they did

¹⁶³ Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth Century Idealism*, 17-18.

¹⁶⁴ cited in Bell, *Political Thought and International Relations*, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Bell, 12.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

not identify explicitly with this school of thought, both Murray and Zimmern's internationalism combined a liberal commitment to individual freedom with a "serious regard for global community"¹⁶⁷ in a manner reminiscent of earlier Oxford idealists such as Bernard Bosanquet and D.G. Ritchie. At the heart of their internationalism was a "basic belief in the power of international 'spirit' or 'mind' to change global politics in fundamental ways."¹⁶⁸ As Morefield explains,

the great War had demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the biggest problems in international politics arose from forces of economic production and trade growing more international while political and social forces remained local, grounded in the selfish, often nationalist and expansionist, interests of states. In the idealist tradition of the Oxford Liberals, Murray and Zimmern approached such disparities as crises of Spirit.... The project of internationalists and the League of Nations in particular, they argued, was to encourage citizens and statesmen to participate in the movement of what Murray termed 'liberal Spirit' in the world, to take their bonds of duty to one another as seriously as they took those of their fellow nationals.¹⁶⁹

This call for an international 'spirit' or mind, separate from and essential to concrete material, economic or otherwise empirical considerations, was also central to Woolf's critique of *The Twenty Years Crisis*. In formal terms, Woolf was far from an idealist in the Oxford tradition. A product of fin-de-siecle Cambridge, his major intellectual influences were G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, thinkers devoted to the refutation of

¹⁶⁷ Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 5

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

the idealist notion that “the reality and the Idea coincided,”¹⁷⁰ and Woolf’s intellectual training would have sharply prejudiced him against Hegelian idealism – which Morefield characterises as “an incomprehensible state-oriented metaphysics with authoritarian implications.”¹⁷¹ But idealist notions of community were central to interwar internationalism, and provide the conceptual context in which Woolf’s concern with psychology as a force for international cohesion can be understood.

The foundations of idealist notions of community were metaphysical, intellectual, and based upon a conception of communal mind or spirit, and a core principle of idealist liberalism was the insight that “membership in a society conferred meaning on the individual.”¹⁷² Idealist reformers understood the state as a moral and ethical community, and saw individual behaviour as inextricable from and conditioned by its social context. Inspired in part by an interpretation of Rousseau’s notion of the General Will, as well as by a Platonic “emphasis upon organic spiritual community,” idealists conceived of public opinion as an “aggregate rather than collective interest.”¹⁷³ The community, in this context, achieved a new ethical importance, producing a conception of ‘wholeness’ in collectivity.¹⁷⁴ Communitarian liberals such as Hobhouse “identified both the ‘individual’ and the group-cum-nation as coequal units, capable of harmonious coexistence and mutual sustenance” and in both Hobhouse and Hobson’s thought, the ‘community’ was constituted by rational organic harmony and had an existence as an

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 68.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 62.

¹⁷² Sandra den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 157.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 214.

¹⁷⁴ Sandra den Otter, "Thinking in Communities": Late Nineteenth-Century Liberals, Idealists and the Retrieval of Community", *Parliamentary History* (1997)16, 67-84, 76.

entity.¹⁷⁵ Jose Harris has argued that because of “its emphasis on corporate identity, individual altruism, ethical imperatives and active citizen-participation – meshed and interacted with the mundane working of social policy,” idealism was a central and pervasive aspect of the underlying intellectual foundations of early twentieth century social reform and the welfare state.”¹⁷⁶

As a result of what Harris has termed an ‘idealist residue’ liberal internationalists could apply the same language of collective moral and intellectual community to the international realm¹⁷⁷; the League of Nations, Alfred Zimmern declared in 1928, was not a political organisation, but a “centre for thought.”¹⁷⁸ According to Zimmern, the League depended upon the intellectual will of the global community for its survival, expanding and “contract[ing] according to the psychological conditions and political possibilities at any given moment.”¹⁷⁹ The ‘international mind’ became a central concept deployed by interwar internationalists such as Zimmern, and was vital to the legitimation of the League of Nations as a political organ and as a tool for intellectual cooperation.¹⁸⁰

In Woolf’s writing, psychology, with its veneer of empiricism and scientific respectability, provided a way to access what Murray or Zimmern might more formally conceptualize as ‘spirit’ or ‘mind’ and reflected a conviction that quasi-metaphysical

¹⁷⁵ Freedman, *Liberal Languages*, 49.

¹⁷⁶ Jose Harris, “Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for Social Policy” in *Past and Present*, No. 135 (May, 1992), 116-141, 137.

¹⁷⁷ Harris, “Political Thought and the Welfare State.”

¹⁷⁸ Zimmern, “The Development of the International Mind” in *Problems of Peace: Lectures Delivered at the Geneva Institute of International Relations at the Palais des Nations* (1926), 6

¹⁷⁹ Zimmern, 6.

¹⁸⁰ For more on Zimmern and his conception of the international mind, see Frank Trentmann, “After the nation-state : citizenship, empire and global coordination in the new internationalism, 1914-1930” in Kevin Grant, David Levine, Frank Trentmann eds. *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, 1880-1950* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

collective mentalities or attitudes were legitimate constituents of foreign policy analysis and as substantively ‘real’ as economic and military might. As the League of Nations came under siege at the end of the 1930s, Woolf would challenge the validity of realist analysis by deploying a conception of international psychology which situated attitudes and states of mind at the origin of peace and liberal civilization.

In *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Carr argued that utopians sought to “project their own thought on the world itself” while realists approached the world empirically and studied it “as it was.”¹⁸¹ The ideal-driven utopian believed in the persuasive possibilities of reason, while the realist respected the inevitability of force. The utopian – or intellectual – operated teleologically: her desires drove her analysis, and her aspirations inspired her investigation. These distinct worldviews were applied to familiar types: Carr, a bureaucrat turned intellectual, argued that the former category were of necessity realists, while more brazenly academic types were prone to utopian projections.¹⁸² Carr allied the utopian’s “creative spontaneity” with “Free Will,” and characterised the realist, who was more concerned with causality, as a determinist.¹⁸³ International legislation, Carr argued, did not actually exist: international agreements, rather, were “contracts concluded by states with one another in their capacity as subjects of international law, and not laws created by states in the capacity of international legislators.” Carr asserted that international legislation against conflict was bound to fail because it could only use abstract, often rhetorical and fundamentally voluntarist persuasion to coerce.

¹⁸¹ Introduction to *E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939* (New York: Harper, 1964 [1939]), xxi.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis*, 12.

International governing bodies merely created certain special obligations for states willing to accept them and were not otherwise binding - treaties, in short, were not laws, and only bound those states which chose to accept them out of their own self-interest.¹⁸⁴ The maintenance of peaceful relations under an international covenant, furthermore, implied the maintenance of a legislative and institutional status quo, a state which could only be maintained to the detriment of civilization as a whole. And conflict was frequently the only path to progress: Carr cited Russell's statement that "without rebellion, mankind would stagnate and injustice would be irremediable."¹⁸⁵

Like Woolf, Carr was concerned with the intellectual matrices which informed public opinion. But for Carr, these matrices were frequently unconscious, and always informed by circumstance. Thought adjusted itself to purpose, theory arose from practice, and international policy would always follow the impersonal vagaries of international power. Quoting A.V. Dicey, Carr put it bluntly – '[c]ircumstances are the creators of most men's opinions' and opinion would frequently favour what was possible. This thesis was inherently relativistic: might *was* right, and the right was no more than the real: "[t]he doctrine of the survival of the fittest", wrote Carr, "proves that the survivor was, in fact, the fittest to survive."¹⁸⁶

For Woolf, this thesis was flawed because it was premised upon a deterministic tautology in which the 'real' was defined not by human concerns or good foreign policy, but by how things ultimately turned out. As he had in *After the Deluge*, Woolf made a

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 170-172.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 208.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 65-66.

strong case for the importance of thought against an empiricist ‘realism’ which identified state power as the most important force in the international realm. Woolf hit back at Carr’s realist-idealist dichotomy in the *Political Quarterly*. According to Carr’s view, “the interest of both Germany and Czechoslovakia in living peacefully together” was utopian – or unreal - “merely because Herr Hitler has a very large army, a very large air force, and a very loud and rasping voice.”¹⁸⁷ These factors, Woolf asserted, had swayed the German people but were no ‘realer’ than the embattled pacifist or liberal elements in German society. The *internationalism* which immediately followed the Great War had been as ‘real’ as the German *militarism* which undermined it, and to classify all conceptual or intellectual bases for international behaviour as ‘utopian’ was to create a meaningless distinction based upon an unforeseeable future.

Furthermore, Woolf suspected that Carr was simply sympathetic to aggressive foreign policy. “Professor Carr” Woolf argued, was “unconsciously infected with the temporary social psychology of the time, the acceptance of power and force and conflict as the primary (and therefore best) elements in social organisation and human relations.” Carr’s realism, in Woolf’s view, was a mere fig leaf disguising a nationalist and militaristic “psychology.”¹⁸⁸ Woolf argued that the emergence of a cooperative foreign policy between Britain and France in the early decades of the twentieth-century was due to a ‘psychological’ shift whereby the leaders of each state concluded that their long range foreign policy interests would benefit more from cooperation than non-cooperation. It was not abstract ‘power’ which determined the foreign policies of France and Britain at

¹⁸⁷ Leonard Woolf, “Utopia or Reality?” in the *Political Quarterly*, Volume 11, Issue 2, April 1940, 175.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 175.

the beginning of the twentieth century, but rather the very real personal attitudes of French and British leaders towards policies of cooperation or non-cooperation. Although this argument had a somewhat commonsense quality, it was a powerful critique of the ideological aspect of realism. While Carr critiqued idealism for a naive faith in institutions to limit 'real' state ambition, Woolf highlighted the mythic nature of power politics itself, highlighting the very concrete personal aspects of political decision making. If Britain and France's leaders could be led to cooperate merely out of *fear* of Germany, their motivations were psychological and emotional, and similarly personal and human qualities had the potential to change the direction of global foreign policy. The establishment of international peace depended upon whether "the psychology of common interests and co-operation [could] be made an active determinant of national policies," and Carr's 'realism', in Woolf's view, was merely the rationalization of a 'primitive psychology.'¹⁸⁹

In his response to *The Twenty Years Crisis* Woolf argued that public and elite opinion was *real* – and to emphasise 'practical' policy over the pursuit of idealist goals was to create a false distinction between thought and action, utopia and reality. In his critique of Carr Woolf suggested that in mass politics states of mind, however crude or sophisticated, were political realities, and the minds of interwar Europeans had become divided by a conflict between national and international psychology. By cultivating the former, Woolf believed that the conflicts which had led to the Great War could be avoided, and an international reality reconciled with public opinion.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 182.

For Woolf and other internationalists, civilization was an expansive project of modernisation and liberalisation which was at odds with the nation state and especially nationalism. As the Great War had shown, progressive civilization was too easily undermined by international conflict; while mass communications and international trade had created an internationally interconnected world, nationalism and state sovereignty threatened to derail the establishment of peaceful international relations by legitimating self-interested state behaviour and warfare. In Woolf's view, the success of international institutions was dependent upon positive popular attitudes towards international government and intellectual cooperation. This desire, expressed by other internationalists in terms of the cultivation of an international Spirit or mind, was formulated by Woolf in terms of a quasi-empiricist notion of psychology. By privileging the mental processes and attitudes of human actors, Woolf tied international cooperation to the interior worlds of populations, emphasising the individuals at the origin of all political movements and dismantling the state as the locus of civilization.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In *The War for Peace*, a book length response to *The Twenty Years Crisis* published in 1940, Leonard Woolf explained that a state was not a person. As compared to a person, a state was “an abstraction - no one ha[d] ever seen, smelt, or touched a state; no one ha[d] ever heard a state speaking, even out of the thunder on Mount Sinai or on the radio.”¹⁹⁰ A state could not operate or attack another state as it had “no power, will or force except metaphorically [and] in the world of real life its power, force, and will could [only] be applied by individuals against individuals.”¹⁹¹ Although Woolf admitted that these statements were obvious platitudes, they were for him “by far the most important and relevant, and most neglected, truths about international relations.”¹⁹²

This thesis has explored Leonard Woolf as a political thinker and internationalist. Woolf’s thought featured a persistent emphasis upon the individual political actor, and he frequently returned to the simple insight that political power and state sovereignty existed first and foremost in the minds of individual human beings. In the first section of this thesis I explored the contested rationality of the political actor amongst progressive intellectuals of the early twentieth century, who drew upon crowd psychology and psychoanalysis to articulate anxieties about mass suffrage and popular culture. Leonard Woolf was receptive to these anxieties, and did not believe that human actors were inherently rational, but nonetheless argued that approaches to history, politics, or the

¹⁹⁰*The War for Peace*, 6.

¹⁹¹ 6-7.

¹⁹² 9.

international realm which sought to deemphasise individual reason in favour of economic, meta-historical or metaphysical processes failed to acknowledge the degree to which ideas themselves were at the heart of political and historical change. In the second section of this thesis I showed that Woolf's concern with individual and intellectual – as opposed to material, emotional, ideological or mystical – explanations for social change would provide an intellectual defence of international government at a moment when the failed experiment of the League of Nations had rendered it unpopular. Leonard Woolf's views on the centrality of human reason and the fundamentally personal nature of political activity represented a left-liberal response to the anxieties which afflicted interwar Britain. Although Woolf's emphasis upon individual reasoning distanced him from contemporaries on the left such as John Strachey, Harold Laski, Victor Gollancz and G.D.H. Cole – all of whom saw Woolf's as excessively individualist and inadequately responsive to what they perceived as the structural and economic nature of historical change – Woolf's emphasis upon reason was more than an expression of political moderation, or response of the administrative strategies associated with a planning. Rather, as demonstrated by his critique of the *The Twenty Years Crisis* and his desire to establish a 'psychology' of peaceful internationalism, Woolf's emphasis upon reason and the political substance of individual thought represented a significant response to a broader tendency towards abstraction in the international and domestic spheres. His concern with psychology allowed him to situate nationhood and identity in the minds of human actors, and suggest that the development of an international psychology offered an

antidote to the civilizational collapse associated with state sovereignty, European nationalism and the wars which it engendered.

Woolf's concern with reason, emphasis upon the transformative power of human thought, and desire to counter nationalist tendencies with a cosmopolitan internationalism were constitutive of a broader focus upon reason, modernity, and individual agency. Although he operated at a moment when radical politics and psychology had rendered the rational capacities of the political actor increasingly suspect for progressive intellectuals, Woolf responded to this sense of crisis with an emphasis upon citizenship rather than system. Rather than looking inward to a pastoral or nostalgic vision of pre-modern, pre-imperial and rural England, or seeking to create a new utopia through an extensively planned socialist Britain, Leonard Woolf's interwar political thought retained both a fierce cosmopolitanism and a focus upon the individuals whose beliefs, anxieties and illusions were the primary determinants of global politics. His defence of the power of ideas remains resonant in a contemporary political landscape still prone to abstraction.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival Material:

Leonard Woolf Papers, University of Sussex Special Collections

William Robson Papers, London School of Economics and Political Science

Published Sources:

Periodicals:

The New Statesman,

The Nation and Athenaeum

The Political Quarterly

Books:

Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War. London: Left Review, 1937

Carr, E.H. *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*. Harper and Row: New York, 1964.

Durbin, Evan. *The Politics of Democratic Socialism: An Essay on Social Policy*.
London: Routledge, 1940.

Hobson, J.A. *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: J. Pott and Company, 1902)

Hobhouse, L.T. *The Rational Good*. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1921.

Hobhouse, L.T. *The Rational Good: A Study in the Logic of Practice*
(London:Routledge, 1993).

Heard, Gerald. *The Ascent of Humanity*. London: Cape, 1929.

Murray, Gilbert. *The Ordeal of this Generation: The War, the League and the Future*
(1929).

- Osborn, Reuben. *Freud and Marx*. London: Gollancz, 1937.
- Woolf, Leonard. *After the Deluge: A Study of Communal Psychology*. London: Hogarth Press, 1931.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Barbarians at the Gate* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1939), 41-2.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918*. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Downhill all the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 – 1939*. London: Hogarth Press, 1967.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-1911*. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Principia Politica*. London: Hogarth Press, 1953.
- Woolf, Leonard. *The Journey not the Arrival Matters: An Autobiography of the Years 1939-1969*. London: Hogarth Press, 1967.
- Woolf, Leonard ed. *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War*. London: Gollancz, 1933.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Quack, Quack!* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935).
- Woolf, Leonard. *Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904*. London: Hogarth Press, 1960.
- Woolf, Leonard. *War for Peace*. New York: Garland Pub, 1972.
- Zimmern, Alfred “The Development of the International Mind” in *Problems of Peace: Lectures Delivered at the Geneva Institute of International Relations at the Palais des Nations* (1926).

Secondary Sources

- Alexander, Peter. *Leonard and Virginia Woolf*. London : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1999.
- Ashworth, Lucian. *International Relations and the Labour Party*. Tauris: 2008.
- Annan, Noel. *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to his Times*. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1951.
- Archer, Clive. *International Organizations*. London, 1983.
- Attlee, Clement. *As it Happened*. London: Heinemann, 1954.
- Beer, Gillian. *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Bell, Duncan ed. *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on Realist Theme*. Oxford: University Press, 2009.
- Benewick, R. *The Fascist Movement in Britain*. London: Allen Lane, 1972.
- Blaazer, D. *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals and the quest for unity, 1884-1939*. Cambridge, University Press, 1992.
- Brooke, Stephen. "Problems of Socialist Planning: Evan Durbin and the Labour Government of 1945" in *The Historical Journal*, 34, 3, (1991).
- Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. London: MacMillan, 1977.
- Claude I., *Swords Into Ploughshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization*. London: University of London Press, 1965.
- Clarke, Peter. *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making*. Oxford: University Press, 1988.
- Clarke, Peter. *Liberals and Social Democrats*. Cambridge: University Press, 1978.
- Coates, Irene *Who's Afraid of Leonard Woolf: a case for the sanity of Virginia Woolf*. York: Soho Press, 2000.
- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1937*. Yale: Yale University Press, 1992.

- Collini Stefan. *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics*. Oxford: University Press, 2008.
- Collini, Stefan. *Public Moralists*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991
- Collini, Stefan *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Cross, C. *The Fascists in Britain*. London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961.
- Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1961.
- den Otter, Sandra. *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- den Otter, Sandra. "Thinking in Communities": Late Nineteenth-Century Liberals, Idealists and the Retrieval of Community" in *Parliamentary History* 16 (1997).
- Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Falby, Alison. *Between the Pigeonholes: Gerald Heard, 1889-1971*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008.
- Frame, William. "Sir Stafford Cripps and his Friends': the Socialist League, the National Government and the Reform of the House of Lords 1931-1935," in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 24, pt. 3 (2005).
- Freeden, Michael *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Gerson, Gal. *Margin of Disorder*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Glendinning, Victoria. *Leonard Woolf: A Biography*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 2006.
- Grainger, J. H. *Patriotisms: Britain 1900–1939*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Grant, Alexander and Keith J. Stringer ed. *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*. London: Routledge, 1995.

- Grant, Kevin, David Levine, Frank Trentmann eds. *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, 1880-1950*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Green, E.H.H., Duncan Tanner ed. *The Strange Survival of Liberal England*. Cambridge: University Press, 2007.
- Griffiths, Richard. *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-9*.
- Hall, Catherine. *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- Hall, Catherine and Sonya O. Rose ed. *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*. Cambridge: University Press, 2006.
- Harding, Jason. *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Interwar Britain*. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- Harris, Jose “Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for Social Policy” in *Past and Present*, No. 135 (May, 1992), 116-141.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*. London: Michael Joseph, 1994.
- Hurrell, A., *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society*. Oxford: University Press, 2007.
- Jackson, R. *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*. Oxford: University Press, 2000.
- Lawrence, Jon. “Fascist Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Interwar Britain: the Olympia Debate Revisited” in *Past & Present* 190 (2006).
- Lawrence, Jon. “Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence and the Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain”, *Journal of Modern History*, Sep2003, Vol. 75 Issue 3.
- Lawrence, Jon. “Labour – the myths it has lived by” in *Labour’s First Century*. Cambridge: University Press, 2000.
- Lawrence, Jon. “The Transformation of British Publish Politics After the First World War” *Past & Present*, Feb 2006, Vol. 190, Issue 1.

- Lawrence, Jon. "The Politics of Place and the Politics of Nation" in *Twentieth Century British History*, Jan. 2000, Vol. 11 Issue 1.
- LeMahieu, D.L. *A Culture for Democracy*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1996.
- Leventhal, F.M. "Leonard Woolf and Kingsley Martin: Creative Tension on the Left" in *Albion*, Vol. 24 Issue 2, 1992.
- Long, David and Brian C. Schmidt ed. *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- Long, David, and Peter Wilson ed. *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-war Idealism Reassessed*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Love, Gary "What's the Big Idea?: Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 2007; 42.
- Mandler, Peter. *The English National Character: the History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Marcus, Jan ed. *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury*. Hampshire: MacMillan, 1987.
- McKibbin, Ross. *The Ideologies of Class*. Oxford: University Press, 1991.
- McKibbin, Ross. "The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government", *Past and Present* 68, 1975.
- Mehta, Uday. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Political Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- McCarthy, Helen. "Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain" in *The Historical Journal* , 50, 4 (2007), 891-912.
- Meyerowitz, Selma. *Leonard Woolf*. Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Middleton, R.C., *Towards the Managed Economy. Keynes, the treasury and fiscal policy debate of the 1930s*. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Morefield, Jeanne. *Covenants without Swords*. Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Modelski, George. *The Principles of World Politics*. New York, 1972.

Murphy, Craig. *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850*. Cambridge: University Press, 1994.

Nuttall, Jeremy. “‘Psychological Socialist’; ‘Militant Moderate’: Evan Durbin and the Politics of Synthesis” in *Labour History Review* 2003, 68(2).

Ondaatje, Christopher. *Woolf in Ceylon: an Imperial journey in the shadow of Leonard Woolf*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005.

Overy, Richard. *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars*. London: Allen Lane, 2009.

Owen, Nicholas. “MacDonald’s parties: the Labour Party and the ‘aristocratic embrace’” in *Twentieth Century British History* 18 (2007).

Pedersen, Susan and Peter Mandler eds. *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.

Phillips, Kathy J. *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994.

Podos, Marnie. “‘A Story of Words, Opinions and a Few Emotions’: Leonard Woolf as Editor, Publisher, and Critic.” Thesis (Ph.D.) English Literature, Exeter College, Oxford, 2007.

Pugh, Martin. *Hurrah for the Blackshirts*. London: Jonathon Cape, 2005.

Pugh, Martin. “The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate” in *The Historical Journal*, 41, 2 (1998).

Pugh, Martin. “The National Government, the British Union of Fascist and the Olympia Debate” in *Historical Research* 2005, 78 (200), 253-254.

Robertson, Emma. “‘I Get a Real Kick out of Big Ben’: BBC Versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas Servicew, 1932-1948” in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol 28, No. 4 (October 2008).

Rosenfeld, Natania. *Outsiders Together: Virginia and Leonard Woolf*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Seaton, Jean. “Foreword: Journeys to Truth: The BBC as a Pragmatic Ethical Engineer at Home and Abroad in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol. 28, No. 4, October 2008.

- Skidelsky, Robert. *Oswald Mosley*. London: Papermac, 1990.
- Skidelsky, Robert. *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-31*. London, 1967.
- Sluga, Glenda. *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics, 1870-1919*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Spater, George and Ian Parsons. *A Marriage of True Minds: an Intimate Portrait of Leonard and Virginia Woolf*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.
- Spotts, Frederic ed. *Letters of Leonard Woolf*. London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1989.
- Stapleton, Julia. *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 114.
- Stewart, M. *Keynes and After*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980.
- Soffer, R.N. "New Elitism: Social Psychology in Prewar England" *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (May, 1969).
- Suganami, Hidemi. *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Sylvest, Casper. "Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism, 1900-1930" in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 2005), pp. 263-283.
- Sylvest, Casper. "Interwar Internationalism, the British Labour Party and the Historiography of International Relations" in *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 409-32.
- Sylvest, Casper. *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.
- Thompson, E.P. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" in *Past and Present*, No. 50 (February, 1971), pp. 76-136, 78:
- Thurlow, Richard. *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*. Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Ward Jouve, Nicole. "Virginia Woolf and psychoanalysis" in Sue Roe and Susan Sellers eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000); Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 182-3.

- Villis, Tom. *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006.
- Waltz, K. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.
- Wieler, Peter. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*. Cambridge: University Press, 1981.
- Wiener, Martin J. *Between Two Worlds: The Political Thought of Graham Wallas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Wight, Gabriele. and Brian Porter (eds.) *International Theory: The Three Traditions*. London, 1991.
- Wilson, Peter, "Leonard Woolf: still not out of the jungle?" in *The round table: the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 97 (394). pp. 147-160.
- Wilson, Peter. *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth-Century Idealism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Wilson, Duncan. *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1979.
- Winch, Donald. *Economics and Policy: A Historical Study*. London: Collins Fontana, 1972.