Populating sociology: Carr-Saunders and the problem of population

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Abstract

Research programmes in the social sciences and elsewhere can be seen as 'set-ups' which combine inscription devices and thought styles. The history of inscription devices without consideration of changing and often discontinuous thought styles effectively takes the historical dimension out of the history of thought. Perhaps thought styles are actually more important than the techniques of inscription that arise from them. The social sciences have relied upon multiple modes of inscription, often using, adapting or extending those invented for other purposes, such as the census. But the strategic prioritisation and deployment of specific inscriptions in analysis and argument has inescapably been dependent on particular thought styles; of which by far the most significant over the course of the first half of the twentieth century was eugenics with its specific problem of 'population'. This paper describes the way that Alexander Carr-Saunders took up the problem of population within early attempts to develop sociology. We ask whether Carr-Saunders can be considered a 'precursor' of a sociologist. The history of British sociology takes different shapes – as indeed does the very idea of a history of sociology – depending on how one answers this question.

Introduction

It is tempting to suggest that the history of disciplines can be written in terms of the successive invention of inscription devices. How else are disciplines to work on their objects without some kind of apparatus to render that object into thought, to make it visible and open to the discursive work of analysis and explanation? The discipline of sociology has certainly depended on such technical ways of rendering its objects thinkable – censuses, surveys, questionnaires, sampling techniques, opinion polls, interview methods, the diaries of participant observers, the tape recordings and transcripts of focus group discussions, the data gathered and tabulated by national statistical organizations and market researchers. Not to mention graphs, tables, figures, diagrams, and numbers of various sorts – correlation coefficients, factor analyses, time series and so forth. Of course, while sociologists have created some of these, they have borrowed and adapted many others from elsewhere. But perhaps it is advisable, at least when it comes to the genealogy of sociology, to adopt only

a weak form of what one might term *inscriptophilia*. That is to say, to recognise that the technical processes of inscription are only a part of what is going on in assembling something like a discipline, and that inscriptions are given salience and have their effects only to the extent that they are elements within a 'style of thought' – which may also include intellectual technologies of many different types – ways of generating problems, conceptions of evidence, argumentation, and proof.

Perhaps this is what Bruno Latour had in mind in his idea of a 'set-up' in his early and still striking work on the issue (Latour, 1987). He described an inscription device as 'any set-up, no matter, what its size, nature and cost, that provides a visual display of any sort in a scientific text' (ibid.: 68). For Latour, then, inscription was not merely a technical procedure: an entire array of relations is sometimes required before one can render something into vision and represent it in a stabilised form. Of course, in a sense, some inscription devices, are really just concentrated set ups. But while an inscription device 'can be a piece of hardware like a telescope . . . it can also be made of less compact, more diverse and heterogeneous material. A statistical institution employs hundreds of pollsters, sociologists and computer scientists gathering all sorts of data on the economy *is* an instrument if it yields inscriptions for papers written in economic journals with, for instance, a graph of the inflation rate by month and by branch of industry' (ibid.: 68–9).

If we examine the role of inscriptions in the history of British sociology we should certainly be alert to the role of these more heterogeneous set-ups. The study of particular associations and institutions – the Sociological Society, the Institute of Sociology, the Population Investigation Committee, Mass-Observation, the British Sociological Association, the London School of Economics, the Tavistock Clinic and so forth – would be an integral part of this, as each made certain 'set-ups' possible, providing a kind of ecological niche for the development of a modality of investigation and inscription. There was competition between those who had personal, professional and intellectual investments in these different niches.[1] But there is also a more fundamental problem for those who want to write the history of British sociology without imposing our present understanding of that discipline on its past, therefore assuming we know what sociology *is* (cf. Canguilhem, 1968). Because, for the first half of the twentieth century at least, not only was there no agreement on inscription devices among those working in these various ecological niches, there was also no agreement on the objects of sociology or on the problems to which it should address itself.

The lack of agreement on the problem space and objects of sociology was particularly important. Unless there is broad agreement on what you are studying, what you are attempting to know, that is to say on objects, it is difficult to gain any sense of progress or incrementality in knowledge. The notion of agreement, though, is probably too mentalistic in its connotations. What is at stake, rather, is the development of styles of thought and associated thought collectives that give a kind of purposiveness or focus to any inscriptional set-up,

together with some agreement as to the problem space towards which these are to be directed. Take Latour's example of the statistical institution. A statistical institution might be established by a wealthy benefactor and all the necessary pollsters, sociologists and computer scientists hired. But without a collectivity of thought amongst them, both logistically in terms of how they are organised in relation to each other and cognitively in terms of how they take their place within the demands of a particular thought style, the institution would generate little. Inscriptions galore might be produced, but it would be difficult to know how or why to deploy them in arguments and to what ends.

Such arguably was the plight of prominent institutions such as the Sociological Society and the Institute of Sociology within British sociology in the first half of the twentieth century. The organizations existed but not the thought style or the thought collective. Further, there was a pervasive uncertainty about whether sociology should be a specialist discipline or an overarching social science – should it be 'a science coordinating all the other sciences which are designated as social sciences', thus including anthropologists, psychologists, economists and all the other nascent social disciplines, or should it be a special science taking its place alongside these other specialisms?[2] To put it simply, there was no agreement as to what the object of sociology was, what its problems were, what its methods might look like, or what its specific task might be within the intellectual field.

Society and sociology

Of course, it seems all too easy to say that the object of sociology is 'society', and then to make broad and sweeping statements about how the discipline should proceed. In the early years of the twentieth century, those who lobbied for the discipline of sociology made many programmatic statements about what sociology actually is or should be. But this programmatic tone arose from uncertainty: it manifested a repeated – and repeatedly failing – endeavour to identify the proper object of sociology, its proper problem space. This problem dogged British sociology for at least the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, Philip Abrams (Abrams, 1981) dates the 'the seeds of [sociology's] subsequent crises' to as early as 1906 when

> one could find as many divergent definitions of sociology as there were sociologists. Already one could hear loud complaints about the uselessness of this variety of sociology, the arid pedantry of that, the misty philosophising of another, the political tendentiousness of yet another . . . The nature and province of the emergent discipline were the heart of the problem. That a social science was desirable was widely agreed. But what *was* the social and what would be involved in studying it scientifically. . . . (quoted in Bulmer, 1985: 5)

Abrams counts sixty-one definitions of the nature and aims of sociology in the first three volumes of *Sociological Papers* (op.cit.: 3).[3] Baudry Rocquin pre-

sents us with many such versions in his illuminating history of what he terms 'the floating discipline', pointing to failures of institutional attachment of British sociology from 1911 to 1938 despite the best efforts of the Sociological Society and the Institute of Sociology to promote the nascent discipline (Rocquin, 2006). For Hobhouse, for example, the answer to the question 'what do we mean by sociology' was simply 'a body of truth which would illuminate social understanding' (quoted in ibid.: 2006: 5), but this was not to prove much help in unifying the different conceptual and practical programmes of the three strands that the Society hoped to unite – eugenics with its focus on population and reproduction, Geddes-style civic sociology with its focus on the systematic study of geographical regions by observational methods, and Hobhouse style social ethics and philosophy.[4] This tripartite division seemed to be institutionalised when, in 1907, Galton left the Sociological Society to found the Eugenics Education Society, and when, a year later, Martin White, who had funded the Sociology Society, funded a chair at the London School of Economics which was taken by Hobhouse, who then became editor of the successor to the *Sociological Papers*, *The Sociological Review*.

In 1918, W.H. Rivers was still pondering the question as to what sociology might be, urging those involved to find some common unity, and lamenting the absence of agreed principles (ibid.: 10):

> It is now our task to establish methods and principles by means of which these facts may be used to build up one of those systematized and coherent bodies of knowledge which we call science. How little has been done towards the construction of such an edifice is shown by the widely divergent directions of the attempts which have been made to this end and by the absence of generally accepted principles comparable with those upon which other sciences are based.

The key figures who remained in the Sociological Society seemed aware of their predicament. Rocquin quotes Victor Branford, writing to J. Arthur Thomson, Professor of Human Anatomy at Oxford, in 1922: 'the Sociological Society has just been holding a week-end conference at New College, Oxford, to discuss the co-relation of social sciences. We had papers or speeches from many of the "big wigs" – Hobhouse, Marett, MacKinder, Graham Wallas, A.J. Carlyle, Lynton Myres, etc. . . . [T]he scientific result was rather negative, but I think the Conference brought home to most of those there the importance of co-relation and the character of the Problem' (ibid.: n.19).

A glance at the pages of the *The Sociological Review* over this period only confirms the difficulty – there are papers on everything from the definition of magic and the problem of decadence (in Volume 1 of 1908) to industrial co-operative production in Ireland and Spengler on Civilisation (in Volume 14 of 1922) but there was no agreement on objects, concepts, methods, let alone inscription devices – indeed very little that one might dignify as a 'set-up' at all. It is difficult to disagree with Victor Branford's comment in 1922:

> After a decade of varying editorship under Slaughter, Hobhouse, and Rad-
> cliffe, the [Sociological] *Review* came to stand for nothing but a tedious
> bundle of essays [. . .] and the membership of the Society fell from nearly
> 500 . . . down to 200. The job of building up again is far more difficult since
> we have against us the dead weight of all those years of failure and futility,
> when the Review stood for nothing definitely scientific. (quoted in Rocquin,
> 2006: 11)

But perhaps, some will argue, that is too sweeping a judgment. Branford and
Geddes had some kind of set-up surely. Rocquin quotes Farquharson on the
Regional Survey:

> [1)] Sociology, like all other sciences, must be based on factual observa-
> tions, methodically made; and these must be systematically arranged by the
> aid of verifiable hypotheses.

> 2) The student's observations may best begin with field investigation of the
> geographic facts of his own region. [. . .] Thus from physical geography we
> reach the complementary perspective of social geography, in other words of
> concrete sociology. From this 'Regional Survey' the student passes on to a
> comparative study of Nation & Empire . . . He thus passes from sciences to
> art, by a national transition from pure to applied sociology, from social
> survey to social service. (ibid.: n.24)

This was, however, not a set-up that would prosper, probably because while it
celebrated the accumulation of 'facts', it had little idea about what to do with
them. What should one do with all the facts of a region once they have been
collected? How should one pass from science to art to social service? Slogans
seemed to substitute for techniques. Of course, a certain degree of sloganeer-
ing is integral to scientific development. 'Words which formerly were simple
terms become slogans; sentences which once were simple statements become
calls to battle' (Fleck, 1979 [1935]: 43). But when Fleck invokes the power of
slogans he does so in the context of evolving research programmes tied to a
particular thought style embedded in a particular thought collective. One does
not invoke the slogans to start the whole thing off; or, at least, the slogans one
invokes should not be too general – 'sociology', 'society', etc. Nothing very
productive ever came from that. Rather, slogans need to be localised to their
thought-contexts and to engage with the concerns of existing thought styles
and collectivities.
   Where the proponents of the nascent discipline attempted their program-
matic statements, the typical result was more or less empty talk *about* society
rather than research into it. The key figures like Branford and Geddes were
mavericks, always stating a position on sociology but never settling on one.
This is not to condemn mavericks of course, but only to point out that disci-
plines evolve by the critical development of concepts that are embedded in

particular programmes of research and not by the accumulation of statements of intent. Perhaps Hobhouse at the London School of Economics might have been different, for he at least had a kind of political programme – one that shared with eugenics the wish to make social science a force for rational control of the improvement of humanity, but which resolutely opposed the view that this could be achieved by acting on human biology and reproduction. Hobhouse promoted a view of sociology as a study of the gradual evolution of the ethics and morals of humanity, and as a discipline that could provide the possibility of rational control of social forces to ensure the permanent progress of humanity. But despite his wide-ranging use of historical and anthropological sources to construct the ethical morphology of the progress of humanity, this was a sociology without a set up, more or less completely devoid of technique.[5] When Harper reviewed 'Sociology in England' for the US based journal *Social Forces* in 1933 he concluded:

> In the very . . . comprehensiveness of such a conception of sociology lies, perhaps, one of the explanations why it has failed to expand as an academic subject in England. Minimizing rather than accentuating its differences from the older sciences and concentrating on its more philosophic and integrative functions it [the definition of sociology under Hobhouse and Ginsberg] has not succeeded in gaining for itself any wide acceptance as a distinct scientific technique. [. . .] Students undertake no 'projects' and do no 'field work'. (quoted in Rocquin: 16)

Continental sociology was different of course, as everybody knows. Except that in fact there was no more continental sociology than there was British sociology until the institutionalization of the discipline after the Second World War. Marx and Weber were famously *not* sociologists, and Durkheim's guiding category was moral solidarity not 'society'. In any case, the usual contrast between a continental sociology that was unafraid of theory and a British sociology that was naïve and empiricist is misleading. Those continental writers who are now considered to be the founders of the more theoretical side of the discipline of sociology can be distinguished from other social philosophers because they genuinely engaged in programmes of research. And despite later complaints about the mindless empiricism of British sociology compared with continental theorists, it was actually that empirical attention that distinguished Durkheim, Weber, even Marx with his readings of the Blue Books, from the British thinkers who tried to found sociology over the next half century.

Population and eugenics

At this point, however, we should take a step back. By focusing solely on sociology and its vicissitudes as an academic discipline, this analysis no doubt

misses something central. For if one looks beyond these confines, there was one object around which social thought converged in the first half of the twentieth century: *population*. The concern with population was not specific to Britain, of course – it formed the very fabric of social thought across Europe and in many other regions across the later part of the nineteenth century and beyond, with its familiar concerns with under- and over-population, of migration within and between nations, with the socio-political consequences of the size of population, and of course with the quality of the population and the problem of degeneration. We might term this 'eugenics' – and much of it was. But we should use this term with care, because of the tendency to read eugenics through its apotheosis, and to place all those who participated in these debates within the line of thought that led inevitably to a Nazi politics of national destiny and the elimination of all those who threatened the purity of the race.

The problem of population hangs over all British social thought from the mid-nineteenth century up to and even beyond the Second World War. It is around this problem that we can observe the creation, utilisation and deployment of many early devices for 'inscribing society'. Even the great social survey tradition inaugurated by Booth, which amounts to the best image of a coherent and expanding research programme in early British social research, was concerned about the state of the population, its quality, and the threat that might be posed to it by degenerate elements.[6] This does not mean that all the early figures in British sociology were eugenicists in any simple sense, as we shall see. But the debate over population, over its changes over time, over the need to render it thinkable and manageable in the name of social progress, provided the basic horizon for debate in British social thought. This is not to say that there was some unified dogma or ideology in play. But it does suggest that if one wants to look for instances of creativity and innovation in twentieth century British sociology, perhaps the best place to look for it is among those debating the issue of population. And there is no better exemplar than the now more or less forgotten figure of Alexander Carr-Saunders.

Carr-Saunders and the problem of population

Our aim is not to argue that contemporary sociologists should 'rediscover' Carr-Saunders, let alone emulate him. But if one were looking for a prominent twentieth-century figure speaking 'in the name of society' he would be an obvious candidate (Osborne and Rose, 1997). His career, and his writing, can tell us quite a lot about the fundamental mutations in thought styles that have occurred under the name of sociology over the last hundred years. His written output appears nothing if not eclectic. It includes a much reprinted book on the social structure of England and Wales, two famous books on demography, a pioneering collaborative work on *The Professions* (1933), a guide to *Consumer's Co-operation in Great Britain* (1938), a study of *Young Offenders*

(1942), *The Biological Basis of Human Nature* (1942) as well as various lectures on eugenics and reports on higher education in Africa (Carr-Saunders, 1922; Carr-Saunders, 1928; Carr Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Carr-Saunders, 1936; Carr-Saunders, Florence *et al*., 1938; Carr-Saunders, Mannheim *et al*., 1942; Carr-Saunders, 1961; Carr-Saunders, 1963).

We will not get very far if we regard Carr-Saunders anachronistically as a sociologist in the narrow, disciplinary sense. He never regarded himself as such. It is true that J.M. Keynes labelled him as a sociologist, when he presented him with the first Galton medal in 1946, but he went on to describe him as 'the founder of the most important, significant and, I would add, *genuine* branch of sociology which exists, namely eugenics'.[7] Yet a glance at his career suggests that for him, as for Keynes – who had himself lectured to the Eugenics Society in 1935 on the economic consequences of a declining population – eugenics did not mean what it has come to mean today. So if Carr-Saunders was neither a sociologist, as we think of the term today, nor a eugenicist, as we think of that today, what was he?

Of course, he was not trained as a sociologist, not least because the discipline itself did not then exist in an institutional sense. As his obituary writers tell us, after two unhappy years at Eton, Carr-Saunders left to spend the next two years in Paris and the French Alps. Apparently it was there that he first became fascinated with biology, which he came to believe was the subject which would make the most progress in the future. He returned to take a first in zoology from Magdalen College, Oxford in 1908, was elected to a scholarship in biology at Naples, and then returned to Oxford as a demonstrator in comparative anatomy. He was excited by the relatively new field of genetics, and moved to London in 1910 to study biometrics under Karl Pearson. He became secretary of the research committee of the Eugenics Education Society, yet at the same time, from 1910 to 1914, he served as sub-warden of Toynbee Hall, the 'Settlement House' for earnest social reformers in the East End of London, which catered for those wishing to live and undertake social work in deprived urban areas. If that were not sufficient to demonstrate the range of his concerns, he was elected to Stepney borough council, and called to the bar by the Inner Temple in 1914. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, to which we are indebted for much of the above, tells us that:

> At the outbreak of the First World War Carr-Saunders enlisted in the ranks of the infantry but he was commissioned in the Army Service Corps and, after a year in France, was posted to a depot at Suez, where he remained, against his will, for the rest of the war. His duties left him leisure to plan a work on population that would 'view the whole problem . . . from an historical and evolutionary standpoint'. He came back in a state of depression and indecision, and accepted an offer to return to Oxford as a demonstrator in zoology. Here, however, he accomplished his grand design rapidly; his book *The Population Problem* (1922) did much to establish his reputation among his contemporaries, although it did not attract wide

attention at the time. Forty years later it was claimed as having anticipated later developments in ethology by its stress on behaviour that contributes to the survival of the group, and on the practices by which groups are secured of their territory.

Perhaps Carr-Saunders became a sociologist in 1923, when he was appointed to the Charles Booth Chair of Social Science at the University of Liverpool. It was here that he worked with Caradog Jones to produce *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales* (Carr-Saunders and Jones, 1927). His career took a new turn when, in 1937, he succeeded William Beveridge as Director at the London School of Economics, a post he held until his retirement in 1955. Carr-Saunders served as 'chairman' of the Population Investigation Committee from 1936 and was 'chairman' of the statistics committee of the Royal Commission on Population from 1944–49. He was president of the Eugenics Society between 1949 and 1953, but running counter to today's expectations of eugenicists, he was greatly concerned with higher education in the colonies, joining a commission on this topic in 1943, and later playing a key role in the development of university colleges in east Africa, Sudan, central Africa, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and the West Indies. In 1947 he became 'chairman' of the commission which promoted the University of Malaya, and in 1952–3 of the commission which led to the foundation of the multiracial University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

This was certainly an eclectic range of interests. But the problem of population appears again and again. What, then, was the problem-space of population for British social thought in the first half of the twentieth century?

The concept of population itself, as is well known, has a long history in the social sciences. In his lectures on *Security, Territory, Population*, Michel Foucault drew attention to the extent to which the problem of population and the exercise of apparatuses of security go together. Unlike legal power or disciplinary power, security is focused on probable events across a vital field with its own internal logics, with calculations of cost and bandwidths of the acceptable (Foucault, 2007: 6). The accomplishment of security presupposes knowledges of populations – of their rates of reproduction, morbidity, mortality, wealth, well-being. From the mid-nineteenth century on, we see the growth of a range of different knowledges and expertises of the population – medical statistics, economics, demography. And these knowledges would also be linked up with security, in the sense of that term in late nineteenth-century Europe – the obligation and aspiration of those who ruled to secure the population against all those things that threatened its well-being from within and without, not just from territorial aggression by enemies, but also from illness, want, pauperism, lack of employment and much more. So we see the emergence of the social sciences of security – of a security that had to be social. Insurance, of course, is the pre-eminent social technology that formed at the crossroads of a knowledge of populations and a science of security. But, in a different way, eugenics was situated

at the same point. Except that, in a sense, what eugenics found at that cross-roads was the management of individuals and their differential reproduction – that is to say, a problem of discipline that was inherited from nineteenth century concerns with the excessive breeding of the worst in society and the consequential inevitability of degeneration or race suicide. There was a positive eugenics, of course – encouragement of the best to breed, of careful choice of marriage partners and the like. But many eugenicists were more concerned with the negative, with the identification, management and sequestration of those deemed unfit; with limiting the reproduction of the feeble minded, the criminal, the morally unsound and the physically limited in the name of prevention of threats to the quality of the population.

Of course, this dichotomy between insurance and eugenics is too simplistic if it is seen as some kind of opposition between those who took a social point of view and those who took a biological point of view on population and security (c.f. Rose, 1985). In reality, there were close entanglements between the two. Take William Beveridge, a figure central to the formation of social security in the UK in the first half of the twentieth century. In his arguments for labour colonies – published in *Sociological Papers* in 1905 – Beveridge had not only argued for the sequestration of unemployables but also that they be denied the right to reproduce, reformulating the social problem in a eugenic direction (Beveridge, 1905). But the limitation of reproduction of the social problem group did not lead him to become a fully fledged eugenicist for whom the problem of population was posed in terms of the fear of degeneration. As Director of the LSE from 1919 to 1937, Beveridge argued fiercely for the need for 'social biology (genetics, population, vital statistics, heredity, eugenics and dysgenics)' in his wish to 'complet[e] the circle of the social sciences'.[8] He appointed Lancelot Hogben – himself a fierce opponent of the strategies of the eugenicists – to a Chair in Social Biology using funds provided for that purpose by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund (Dahrendorf, 1995: 243, 253). As Hogben put it Beveridge thought that population problems could only be properly understood once the 'rubbish about allegedly biological laws of population growth' was sorted out: 'human genetics was a morass of surmise and superstition . . . The rationalisation of race prejudice by appeal to biological principles was then plausible only because human genetics was so immature'.[9]

Carr-Saunders was hardly alone, then, in orienting himself to the problem space of population, seeing it as simultaneously biological and social, keenly interested in the implications of differential reproduction, not hostile to attempts to curb procreation among the social problem group, but attempting to rework the eugenic style of thought away from its apocalyptic focus on the decline of population quality. This involved both a deflationary move in terms of the political implications of eugenics and an 'inflationary' move in the problematization of population. In its search for the facts of population change, it required the *deployment* if not the invention of an extended range of inscription devices. In reformulating the problem of population in terms of the

collection, tabulation and analysis of empirical evidence, he helped to move eugenics towards what would later become sociology, even though this was not quite what most sociologists mean by that today.

Against degeneration

Eugenics in the early twentieth century had grown out of a concern with the quality of the population, and from arguments that a range of tendencies – from the lessening of selection pressures through charity and philanthropy to differential breeding of the better and worse segments of the population – was leading inexorably to degeneration (Rose, 1985: 73–5, and more generally Pick, 1989). Carr-Saunders, however, attempted to reformulate the problem of population away from this model of degeneration (Carr-Saunders, 1922). In the place of the central concern with a decline in quality of population, Carr-Saunders substituted the notion of the quantitatively optimum level of population (Carr-Saunders, 1922: 200–1). No one problem, he argued, should be considered without reference to its bearing both upon quantity and quality. At the present day, he continued, differential fertility is almost solely considered from the point of view of quality; it is forgotten that the reduction in the birth-rate may be actually demanded by economic conditions, and that such a reduction may of necessity have to begin among the upper classes. 'Though differential fertility by producing unfavourable germinal changes is to be to that degree deplored, yet we have to remember that, so far as quantity is concerned, failure to meet economic requirements might be a much greater misfortune' (ibid.: 476).

Carr-Saunders held that there could be no such thing as absolute population problems, only relative ones: neither over-population nor under-population were intrinsic problems in themselves; they were only so relative to productivity in the economy. There is only over-population, for example, if the economy cannot support that level of numbers. Moreover, as increases in wealth lead to decline in fertility, it may be that the best way to ameliorate deficiencies in population quality would not be through negative eugenics (birth control, etc.) but by encouraging fertility in those who were deemed capable of having eugenically viable offspring. Is it just hindsight that enables one to detect, in this concern, a nascent quasi-sociological perspective? Such a temptation would be strengthened by the fact that in *The Population Problem*, when considering the qualitative dimension, Carr-Saunders emphasises not the biological aspects of 'germinal' evolution but the role of the material conducts of different groups and classes – what he calls tradition.

This introduces a genuinely 'social' dimension into the analysis, even though it is not couched within any theory of 'society'. By 'tradition', Carr-Saunders means the transmission of skills, habits and behaviours, and he argues that these affect mental evolution as well as physical evolution. Thus Carr-Saunders modifies the Galtonian emphasis on biology, and argues that tradition takes

over from germinal evolution and becomes the guiding force in evolutionary development. The task now is not just to look at germinal constitutions but at the evolution of values via tradition. Such values are ultimately moral. The highest values are 'self-respect together with modesty, tenacity together with tenderness' (Carr-Saunders, 1922: 478). And the experience of war teaches us that these qualities are found as much if not more in the lower classes than in the upper classes, thus further modifying the emphasis of eugenics. An anti-biologistic and anti-degenerationist view, then, albeit one that still remains within a broadly eugenic problem-space.

Even if there is no overt discourse of 'society' here, Carr-Saunders does seek to make a link between the eugenic concern with reproduction and its consequences, and what might be termed a 'social point of view' (Rose, 1999). But what is at stake here is less a battle over the conception of 'society' than a dispute within particular thought collectives. Carr-Saunders's perspective is an attempt to undermine the way in which mainstream eugenics tried to explain social changes and their political implications in biological terms:

> The course of history is in the main dependent on changes in tradition which are for the most part independent of germinal change. Just as the outstanding happenings in the last century – the turning of thought and conduct in Germany, for example, along certain lines, which ended in so great a catastrophe – were due to changes in tradition and not to changes in the germinal constitution, so whether the problems now pressing upon European society are to be solved or whether some greater catastrophe, reaching a climax in a long course of years or bursting suddenly upon us, is to be the outcome, will depend upon changes in tradition and not upon germinal change. (Carr-Saunders, 1922: 482)

One can find something of the same attempt at re-balancing the emphases of eugenics towards a more social point of view in Carr-Saunders's little book on *Eugenics* published in 1926 in the Home University Library (Carr-Saunders, 1926). Eugenics, he says, is a science, a special field of enquiry into the part played by inheritance in human affairs; it must be distinguished from what is commonly understood by that term which 'calls to mind proposals for getting rid of persons with undesirable innate qualities and for encouraging the bringing into the world of well-endowed children' (ibid.: 18). This is 'applied eugenics', a very different thing from the science of heredity, and any such applied eugenics must be based on a detailed knowledge of different sections of the population and of 'what reactions different social forces and surroundings have upon those possessing ability so far as their contributions to future generations are concerned' (ibid.: 19). While Carr-Saunders asserts that his book focuses on what he terms the 'science' of eugenics, he makes use of statistics from a range of social surveys and other sources to cast doubt on many favourite assertions of the eugenicists: for example on the role of innate

intelligence in determining occupation (ibid.: 118–41) or criminality (ibid.: 141–49). If the inheritance of certain qualities plays a part in predisposing to crime, it is likely to be that criminals are 'emotionally peculiar in that they are social defective and emotionally unstable . . . so constituted as to feel less responsibility to their fellow-men than is felt by the rest of the population' (ibid.: 149).

Carr-Saunders thus begins to shift eugenics in the direction of an empirical sociological research programme, away from eugenic speculation and towards the analysis of statistics. And the statistical evidence shows that matters are variable: that inheritance 'plays but a small part in the unemployment problem' (ibid.: 159) but 'inheritance plays a not unimportant part in the problem of pauperism' (ibid.: 162). While 'inheritance plays some part, but no large part, in determining what a man will achieve' (ibid.: 163), 'the cessation of selection, which is a consequence of our efforts to mitigate the lot of the less well endowed among us, may permit the survival of unfavourable mutations [and hence] modern conditions may be allowing deterioration to occur' (ibid.: 219). In conclusion, even though doubt remains, Carr-Saunders accepts the eugenic premise: 'There is, however, enough material . . . to render some consideration of the control of racial change possible and desirable' (ibid.: 223). However there is a need for much more information 'on the germinal constitution of the race and the changes which are taking place in it' before effective social policy can be framed, perhaps through a Government department or something like the Swedish State Institute of Race biology founded in Upsala in 1922.[10] But he concludes that there is certainly a case for restricting the right of those who suffer from grave mental and physical defects to produce offspring, perhaps by changes in the marriage laws, perhaps segregation, perhaps even sterilisation to counter the deleterious effects of the cessation of selection, although he is doubtful of the efficacy of measures to increase the rate of reproduction of the better off. Carr-Saunders thus attempted to disturb the problem space of eugenics in the direction of a limited empiricism based on the study of the statistics of population, but he was not prepared to abandon that space itself.

Modification

By the 1930s in Britain, there seemed to be general agreement about the problem of population – it was in decline. As David Glass and Carlos Blacker put it, in the introduction to their pamphlet *Population and Fertility* in 1939:

In the course of the last year, the decline in fertility which has been proceeding in this country for more than half a century has frequently been brought to the notice of the public. It has been discussed several times in the House of Commons, . . . and it has been the subject of numerous articles in

the Press. The matter has also been extensively dealt with in the correspondence columns of newspapers. Many people are in the habit of putting forward on this subject opinions which are based on personal problems which happen to be occupying their minds at the time, or on pre-conceived political theories. (Glass and Blacker, 1939: 1)

Indeed the pamphlet was published by the Population Investigation Committee, explicitly formed 'to examine the trends of population in Great Britain and the Colonies and to investigate the causes of these trends with special reference to the fall of the Birth Rate' (ibid.: Frontispiece).

Carr-Saunders's Galton Lecture to the Eugenics Society in 1935 had stimulated the Eugenics Society to establish this committee (Carr-Saunders, 2004 [1935]). In this lecture, drawing on themes present in his work from the early 1920s, he advocated a move from negative to positive conceptions of eugenics. Negative eugenics was founded on the belief that the principle problem was population quality and its decline a result of differential reproduction, and it drew from that its major strategic focus on reducing the rates of reproduction of the 'unfit'. But there were several issues with this conception, not least that the main problem was not so much that of quality but of quantity. Whether because of birth control or for other reasons, families were limiting the numbers of children, and the result was changing the balance between the forces of birth and death: 'we are not only not replacing ourselves, but are between 25 and 30 per cent below replacement rate. In other words, if the forces of birth and death, as they now are in this country, were to play upon a population of stabilized age grouping, the population would decrease by between 25 and 30 per cent in thirty years' (Carr-Saunders, 2004 [1935]: 150). The reduction in the birth rate was not a problem confined to the wealthier classes but occurring across society as a whole. It was, said Carr-Saunders, a problem of numbers overall, and none of the measures proposed by the negative eugenicists would address this problem in any real or significant manner. To put it bluntly, eugenicists had hitherto been too much concerned with questions of quality and too little concerned with questions of quantity: the urgent issue to address was that of the prospect of underpopulation.

Carr-Sanders did not, however, entirely turn his back on Galton's concerns about the quality of the hereditary material of certain sectors of the population. Indeed he suggested that this problem remained significant, because there were considerable differences in rates of reproduction within classes and the evidence did support the view that those of the lowest intelligence tended to have larger families and were an exception to the general trend of equalisation of the birth rate across class. He was not opposed to promoting birth control though he doubted that those most in need of it would respond too well to the propaganda in favour of its use. He was not, in principle, opposed to voluntary sterilization of the less fit as had been proposed by Carlos Blacker. But negative eugenics on its own would not address the problem of the decline in the overall size of the population. And he did not share the

complacency of many that a decline in the size of the population was to be welcomed. 'Excessive numbers, for instance, are not a cause of unemployment. To a sociologist there is something radically unhealthy about a situation where people are failing by so large a margin to replace themselves. And within the field of eugenics the situation is surely deplorable if the essence of eugenics is the perpetuation of the community from its more promising elements. The fertility of this section, and I am speaking not in terms of social classes but of endowment wherever found, is 50 per cent below replacement rate'.

So positive eugenics was what was required – not a policy of eliminating the unfit as such, still less attempting 'to breed a race of supermen, but to raise the fertility of those who are not definitely subnormal until at least they replace themselves' (Carr-Saunders, 2004 [1935]: 149). We needed to encourage larger families amongst those deemed the fittest – or at least the least unfit – in society, above all in the middle classes. For they were currently responding to 'an inherent desire' to have smaller families now the option was available to them, without any awareness of the consequences for the population as a whole and the implications for the future of their country. 'Any positive population policy must therefore have two objects: first, to make it universally understood that, with a system of voluntary parenthood, a community can only survive if participation in the task of replacement is undertaken as a normal social duty, and secondly, to remove obstacles to, and to create facilities for, the fulfilment of this duty' (ibid.: 156). And to facilitate this, what was needed was research, scientific research to identify all the social factors, from housing and transport to reasons for having children, that would facilitate this positive population policy. Here, at least, though Carr-Saunders did not make this explicit, was a new opening for sociology or something like it.

Set-up

This social approach opened problems of population to empirical study. Of course, early eugenicists, like Karl Pearson and others, often made reference to empirical evidence (Pearson, 1901; Pearson, 1909). In the decade before the First World War, under the series title of Studies in National Deterioration, many such analyses were produced from the Biometric Laboratory that Pearson founded in the Department of Applied Mathematics of University College, where he was a Professor, aided by funds from the Worshipful Company of Drapers (Heron, 1907; Heron, 1910; Heron, 1912). And they had directly addressed the issue of the decline in the birth rate, using the statistical techniques that Pearson himself had developed, notably the correlation coefficient. Thus in 1906, David Heron, Pearson's research assistant, analysed Census data in order to determine the degree to which the reduced fertility of English wives was associated with social status or social problems. The results were alarming: the lowest 25 per cent of the adult stock was producing 50 percent of the next generation (Heron, 1906; c.f. Rose, 1985: ch. 3). But, starting

from his work published as *The Social Structure of England and Wales* in 1927, Carr-Saunders began to develop this polemical use of statistics into what might become sociological approach to the question of population (Carr-Saunders and Jones, 1927).

To do this, Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones deployed inscriptions already collected for other purposes, notably in the Census, to analyse the empirical features of the population – housing, distribution, occupation, class, education, poverty, inequality, etc. The first edition of *The Social Structure of England and Wales* contains some 82 tables, mostly reworking data derived from the 1921 Census, together with many visual representations of population structure and population changes in bar charts and graphs. It is, the authors suggest, perhaps the first attempt 'to treat contemporary social data from what may be called the morphological point of view' (ibid.: xiii). Such a morphology is 'concerned only with what can be quantitatively described' yet it weaves this into a coherent scheme which starts from the overall features of the population and goes on to explore how it is distributed: first by age and sex, then by marital condition and family groupings, hence by housing conditions, and then by geographical organization, industry, income and wealth, education and entry into occupation, state provision against misfortunes such as ill health and unemployment, taxation, savings and insurance, charity, poverty, crime, inborn qualities. Only after that description do Carr-Saunders and Jones turn to the eugenic concern – the changes in the rate of increase of the population and their consequences.

Morphology

The classical eugenic programme had been biopolitical in ambition but disciplinary in form – it hoped to manage population quality by acting upon the bodies of specific individuals and their reproductive activities, constraining and restricting some, encouraging and rewarding others, trying to ensure an alignment between individual acts of procreation and the well being of the nation. But Carr-Saunders' morphology of social data exemplifies a different strategy, more aligned to a strategy of security. It remained concerned with the problem of population, but made use of the set-up provided by the Census and its statistical analysis in relation to various social parameters, to enable it to be grasped at a different level. Population was now a positive domain of human beings of diverse types, in various relationships and forms of life, shaped by multiple social and 'traditional' factors. Thus, by addressing the social factors that shaped individual decisions to reproduce, and by analysing the milieus within which such individual decisions were to be made, Carr-Saunders made it possible to imagine a politics of population that was quite different from that of earlier eugenics – a kind of Keynesian biopolitics of population (cf. Donzelot, 1979).

This is why Carr-Saunders referred to his analyses of population in the successive editions of his work on the social structure of England and Wales as *morphological*. Morphology, for a biologist like Carr-Saunders, deals with the form of living organisms and their parts, and the relationships between their structures and is particularly bound up with the work of classification. And these analyses of population were to attempt just that. They did not, as with eugenics, deploy selective statistics to substantiate a predefined argument shaped by a political imperative. Rather, all those tables and charts aimed to inscribe and visualise the form of the population, the relation between its elements, and thus to aid in the work of classification (Carr-Saunders and Jones, 1937; Carr-Saunders, 1958).

This morphology is bound up with a biopolitics of the population that broke with many of the biopolitical tropes of eugenics. Around this new style of thought, Carr-Saunders began to assemble a small but dedicated thought-collective based, eventually, around the institutional site of the London School of Economics. It is not surprising that, when the members of this collective turned their attention to questions of delinquency and social control, their interest was also morphological, to describe and classify, a project that required them to attend as much to 'normal' families as to those inherently deemed problematic or 'abnormal'. Thus *Young Offenders* (Carr-Saunders, Mannheim *et al.*, 1942) was composed out of a large survey of offenders appearing at court, but it compared their characteristics with those of a large control group. These comparisons largely took the form of tabulation, which they had used to such good effect in the studies of population. Indeed classification, categorisation, tabulation and comparison are visual means of argumentation, used to reveal the characteristics that distinguish the young offender and his or her family from the controls.

A normal family, on Carr-Saunders's model, consists of a husband and wife living with children; an abnormal family consists either of two adults who are not man and wife living with their children, or one adult/parent living with their children. On a classically eugenic model one might expect, no doubt, that delinquents would be concentrated in abnormal families, enabling the conclusion that delinquency is reproduced in a more or less closed pool of the eugenically 'unfit'. Hardly surprisingly Carr-Saunders's tabulations suggest to him that there is a strong correlation between delinquency and family abnormality and indeed a large proportion of delinquency related to boys from single-parent households (ibid.: 61). 'This is evidence of a fairly well-marked degree of association between delinquency and families of abnormal structure' (ibid.: 149). But this thought style did not give priority to the internal, psychological or moral qualities of the individual who was to become a delinquent. The explanatory variable it introduced was a social one – or at least a variable related to the internal culture of the family – namely, 'atmosphere'. The normality or abnormality of the familial atmosphere was at least as if not more important than the structural normality or abnormality of the family itself:

> We arrived at the striking conclusion that the chance of a delinquent coming from a home with an abnormal atmosphere was three or four times as great as the chance of a delinquent coming from a home with a normal atmosphere. Of the six characteristics employed to assess whether the atmosphere in the home was normal, the attitude of the parent to the case was the most important; harshness or indulgence, or an alternation of both, shown by the parents to the case is far more frequent for delinquents than for controls. (ibid.: 150)

Almost the only place in the argument where modes of explanation associated with eugenics appear is when the authors try to account for the fact that there is a high frequency of 'irregularity of employment' among fathers of delinquents: 'After giving due weight to "systems" of casual labour and other conditions not connected with employees, there can be little doubt that restlessness and instability of temperament, together with poor mental and moral equipment, contribute to irregularity of employment and therefore to low economic status. Thus relative poverty may be due to defective character and equipment' since most poor families – normal or abnormal – do not appear to produce delinquents (ibid.: 95–6). But far from this leading to a eugenic train of thought about the inheritance of a defective constitution, Carr-Saunders and his fellow authors turn to a social argument in accounting for the transmission of pathology across generations: 'It is easy to understand how irregularity of parental employment may become a disturbing factor in a boy's life and so become connected with delinquency' (ibid.: 96).

When Carr-Saunders reaches for a theory of delinquency, what comes to hand is certainly biology, though not the biology of eugenics but the biology of disease. We might liken unfortunate circumstances, Carr-Saunders suggests, to a kind of pathology – and variations in those circumstances can be likened to more or less virulent pathogens. And we might consider that those who resist that pathology have a certain sort of 'immunity' – either complete or partial – and perhaps those who succumb have a kind of 'susceptibility': 'Looking at delinquency with the help of this parallel, we may say that it occurs when some outward circumstance, which we may compare with a pathogenic organism, exerts an influence upon a person who is not immune to that kind of attack' (ibid.: 154). It is to psychology, to a psychological study which was not carried out because of the effects of wartime, that Carr-Saunders looked for an account of immunity and susceptibility. Eugenics inextricably mingled psychological and social modes of explanation, but we can see here the beginnings of the division of intellectual and explanatory labour between the sociological and the psychological that would function to free sociology from eugenics. While fully aware of the limitations of statistics of crime, Carr-Saunders begins here to open the space of a positive empirical and non-eugenic sociology of crime.

And yet the ambivalence remains. In 1942, the same year as the publication of *Young Offenders*, Carr-Saunders delivered the Hobhouse Memorial Lecture in Cambridge under the title 'The Biological Basis of Human Nature'.

He was certainly critical of eugenic enthusiasts and propagandists, and argued that eugenics was founded on a rudimentary knowledge of the population and of a form of genetics that predated the rediscovery of the works of Mendel. Yet he was far from circumspect in his conclusions about the effects of genetics on human character and qualities:

> There are so many weak genes for intelligence in existence that no insignificant fraction of the population has numerous pairs of such genes with the result that they are feeble–minded. . . . It is important to realize that genetic endowment is poor enough to justify an attempt at eliminating deleterious and weak genetic material . . . Unfortunately there is every reason to suspect that the genetic material in any civilized society is deteriorating in average quality. (Carr-Saunders, 1942: 18)

Although in this lecture Carr-Saunders was also concerned with differential fertility, he worried that so much energy was being spent to compensate those individuals with 'unsatisfactory genes instead of providing sound genes for each new recruit to the race . . . If, as appears to be the case at present in Europe and North America, the less intelligent of our species continue to breed more rapidly than the able, we shall probably go the way of the dodo and the kiwi' (ibid.: 19, 22). And, he concluded:

> It is nearly eighty years since Galton set the eugenic movement on foot. He may, as I have suggested, have been overhasty [but] it appears that we now have sufficient information upon which to begin to take action if we so wish . . . [and in answer to those who think that environmental reform is sufficient, so that all may profit from it] The first point to be made in reply is that there remains a not inconsiderable element in the population which cannot, by reason of inferior hereditary endowment, take advantage of a good environment; the mentally defective, for example . . . Eugenic action is complementary and not alternative to other forms of social policy. The second and much more important point is that, unless appropriate measures are taken, the level of hereditary endowment will fall. If it falls, an increasingly large proportion of our population will be unable to profit from our social arrangements, however excellent . . . The Romans, it has been said, prided themselves on being the degenerate descendants of the gods; we pride ourselves on being the very creditable descendents of apes. We shall cease to be a credit to our ancestors if we allow our genetic inheritance to deteriorate. (ibid.: 24)

Government

This style of thought, concerned with rendering social and moral life into thought in the form of categories and classifications, frequencies and comparisons, social influences and moral atmospheres, has consequences for

interventions into biopolitical issues such as birth-control and parenting, as well as for interventions into working and industrial life. Carr-Saunders's set-up was linked to a programme of government: it was embedded within a problematic of a social liberalism which holds both that social life must be governed in the name of security, but that this must be done in a way that avoids 'excessive' government. This social liberalism, as it was developed in Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century, thus sought a middle way between the twin evils of centralised state planning – 'socialization' – and the untrammelled excesses of an unregulated free market. Hence Carr-Saunders's work on co-operatives, for instance, tried to identify a 'social' but not a 'socialized' movement, one that is neither capitalist nor socialist. Co-operatives are about fitting labour into capitalism, not revolting against it: they were 'the most effective means of reconciling private interest with the public good' (Carr-Saunders *et al*., 1938: 34). They are one of two 'missing links' between capitalism and the state; the 'middle way between *laisser faire* liberalism and rigid planning on a compulsory basis, and in this aspect it has a strong claim to the allegiance of all those who believe some form of economic planning is necessary, in the interests of order and justice, but who dislike the element of coercion in other systems which are offered for their approval' (ibid.: 534).

The other 'missing link' is to be found in the professions. Like cooperatives, professions are to be instruments of a flexible social liberalism. At the outset of *The Professions* (Carr-Saunders, 1928) Carr-Saunders offers no recognisably 'sociological' definition of a professional organisation. He proceeds not from theory, but by empirical means, initially specifying the central professions – law and medicine – then spiralling out the analysis from these. Professions are describable only by a 'complex of characteristics' with only law and medicine showing all the basic properties (ibid.: 284, 287). One of the key aims of this analysis is to argue against the view that professions are stultifying, closed organisations. On the contrary, a profession, by defending the integrity of a particular technique of service, is a locus for the generation of civic values of responsibility, freedom and vitality. They are antidotes to statism. So, Carr-Saunders argues, the common idea that the professions are not progressive is a mistake, based on the selective reading of history and generalisation from particular cases:

> Desire to associate and ability to do so are pre-requisites of professionalism, and not only of professionalism but also of any society which is vital and free. When men cannot associate, they are not free; when they do not wish to associate for common ends, they have no living purposes. Free fellowship is evidence of vitality and freedom. . . . If it is to be constructive as well as vital, it must be purposeful and based upon the recognition of concrete and definite needs . . . the new elements must take shapes which are in harmony with the old pattern. If these conditions are fulfilled, the resulting associations will exert a stabilizing as well as a progressive influence upon society. (ibid.: 495)

Professions, then, at least in Britain, are instruments of innovation and of continuity which operate to secure the vitality and security of a free society. Their role in Britain contrasts, Carr-Saunders insists, with America where public opinion dominates and to Russia where the state dominates. They are also a means of balance between public and state (ibid.: 497–8). This means that a key problem for government becomes the extent of the linkages between profession and State, for 'When a professional association is employed in the mechanism of regulation, it becomes an organ of State, and however powerful it may be, it loses its freedom' (ibid.: 307).

In the concluding pages of *The Professions*, Carr-Saunders makes a distinction between 'socialization' and 'monopolization' (ibid.: 479). Limited socialization of the professions can be conducive to vitality and initiative so long as the state does not take a monopoly of control; otherwise self-determination is threatened, as is the crucial 'vitality and initiative' of the profession and its ability to experiment. In return, professions should also seek to contribute to initiatives of the state. Professions should also be allowed to take an active part in the formulation of public policy; 'it is of vital importance that they should make advances and not wait until they are invited' (ibid.: 486). All in all, the profession is constituted as a liberal political 'technology that channels creative flows within the framework of security'; 'No more can be said than that there should be many channels of communication between Knowledge and Power and that they should be kept wide open. There should be a free circulation of proposals and of criticisms, and the mechanism should be flexible and capable of easy adaptation as circumstances demand' (ibid.: 489).

Carr-Saunders's work on co-operatives and the professions, at first sight, seems somewhat at odds with his work on population, and appears more 'sociological' than demographic. But actually, these different studies operate within the same thought style. This way of thinking generates knowledge of populations and their constituent parts that is consonant with, and provides a resource for, a social liberal view of the appropriate rationalities and technologies of government. Social knowledge supports a limited role for the state, one which would intervene only lightly, and not directly upon individuals, but at the level of collectivities and population, operating indirectly upon their vital properties and functions according to a knowledge of social morphology.

Conclusion

Did Carr-Saunders succeed in founding a sociology? As we hope to have shown, the answer to this is yes and no. His morphological approach to population moved – if this is not too teleological a way of phrasing it – towards something *almost* recognisable as sociology (as is traceable from the successive versions of *The Social Structure of England and Wales*) but without, so to speak, actually arriving there. Carr-Saunders may have found new ways of

working with the multiple inscriptions that came to grid the social and institutional spaces of early twentieth century social liberalism, but he founded no thought style that was capable of being self-generating in terms of its forms of evidence, objects and inscriptions (cf. Hacking, 1992). His programme used inscriptions but did not generate its own set-up in a dynamic and evolving problem-space. Like the social liberalism to which it was tied, it would not survive the Second World War. And the whole idea of a population policy, as it had been envisaged in the 1930s, was brought into terminal disrepute by the apotheosis of eugenics in Nazi Germany: worries about differential reproduction and the proliferation of the unfit and feeble minded came to seem increasingly misguided. To the extent that Carr-Saunders's concepts were more or less devoted to struggling against eugenics whilst remaining within the space of eugenics, they would share the same fate. And even more fatal to the Carr-Saunders programme, in post-war Britain was that the problem of population quantity and quality that had formed the backdrop to the entire thought style of eugenic reason began to be transformed.

As we have already mentioned, Carr Saunders had initiated the development of a Commission on Population in his Galton lecture to the Eugenics Society in 1935 and The Population Investigation Committee was established by the Society with him as the 'chairman' the focus was on the nature, causes and implications of the decline of the birth rate. The pamphlet by Glass and Blacker reporting one of the first attempts at a statistical study of the problem was replete with tables, diagrams, bar-charts and formulae in attempting to place the debate on a factual basis. The authors were heartened by the recent passage of the Population (Statistics) Bill into law, which established 'a system of registration which will enable us to say with authority what exactly is happening to fertility in this country, how the decline is taking place in different regions of the country and the different occupations and social classes . . . changes in vital registration [which] are thus of the highest importance' (Glass and Blacker, 1939: 51). Lamenting the spread of birth control, they conclude on a rousing political note

> it is possible that the desire to raise fertility may soon become one of the most potent forces making for social progress; and if, at some time in the future, the peoples of the world collectively object to raising children for cannon fodder – if they respond to national policies likely to lead to war by refusing to have children – this desire may even become a force making for international peace. (ibid.: 101)

The concern with population decline continued across the period of wartime. A Royal Commission on Population was set up in 1944 'to examine the facts relating to the present population trends in Great Britain; to investigate the causes of these trends and to consider their probable consequences; to consider what measures, if any, should be taken in the national interest to influence the future trend of population and to make recommendations' (Royal

Commission on Population, 1949: iii). The Commission appointed three specialist committees (statistics, economics, and biological and medical) and a family census – directed by David Glass – was taken in 1946. However, by the time the Commission issued its report in 1949, the problem of population decline did not seem so urgent. Indeed, its basic co-ordinates had been reversed.

Despite the war, or perhaps because of it, reproduction rates increased in the post war years, and there was a marked excess of births over deaths. Even though the Commission felt that there would probably still be some reduction in family size, the dire predictions of the pre-war years seemed unrealistic:

> Today the question arises how far the underlying realities have been altered by the remarkable increase in births which has taken place in recent years. Not only has the excess of births over deaths risen to a very high level: the Net Reproduction Rate has been well above unity for several successive years. . . . There is certainly some deficiency. On the other hand it is equally certain that the deficiency is not nearly as great as the pre-war reproduction rate calculations suggested. (Royal Commission on Population, 1949: 221)

Attention now turned to the consequences of reductions in the rate of mortality, and hence of an ageing population with increased demands for retirement pensions and perhaps a different threat to progress consequent on an aging society:

> Our own view is that the danger of losing the qualities that make for progress, while not overwhelming, is sufficiently real to provoke serious consideration. Certainly, we need to be aware of the difficulty, and to let our arrangements be such as to give every chance to the reduced supply of youth and enterprise which will be available to us in the future. (ibid.: 121)

With population growth new priorities emerged, albeit ones which were, no doubt, in their way no less pro-natalist. But this was a different kind of pro-natalism – tax relief for families, improved family services and other measures to make parenthood more attractive. And it was in this pro-natalist spirit that research on population trends was now conducted. There was research on pregnancy and childbirth jointly with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. There were studies of family size and social mobility. There were studies of marriage and divorce trends. There were studies of birth control practices. And from 1947, the pages of the journal *Population Studies*, published by the Population Investigation Commission, were filled with studies of population changes and fertility rates in different countries and the impact of birth control practices, occupation and other social factors.

What was being established here was a new relation between social knowledge and the work of government, not tied to social liberalism, but to post-war welfarism. This was indeed a new political project for social knowledge. For

David Glass, in 1950, social policy and social planning without social knowledge – of housing, of health services, of education for social mobility – would be based on beliefs and value judgements: social research was required to test assumptions and to evaluate results (Glass, 1950). Sampling, surveys, schedules and statistics would entrench social research firmly in the apparatus of the welfare state. This insistence on the factual tabulation and charting of diverse zones of social life was to play its role in the novel biopolitical spaces opened up within the apparatuses of post-war welfarism. Perhaps this was the 'political arithmetic' which Lancelot Hogben had hoped for when he opened his intemperate introduction to the collection of essays under that title with the sentence 'The study of population is the only branch of social research with its own logical technique for the detection and co-ordination of *factual* data' (Hogben, 1938: 13).[11]

Glass quotes Hogben's pre-war pessimism about social science at the end of his inaugural lecture: 'A university is a good house for an accredited science. It is not a lying-in hospital' (Glass, 1950: 30 quoting Hogben, 1938: 46). No doubt he is right in identifying, in those heady post-war days, a new spirit of hope and adventure, and we should not decry his aspiration for social science to participate in that adventure. But was 'political arithmetic' to be the progenitor of sociology as a social science? A.H. Halsey has argued strongly that this tradition of political arithmetic, linking factual social research to the demands of social administration in a democratic welfare state, providing the evidence base for policy and the means of its evaluation and accountability. (Halsey, 1994). For others, even at the time, this was 'a trivialisation of sociology and a retreat from the consideration of significant social problems into the wastelands of methodological rigour and ethically neutral theory' (A. Tropp, 1956, quoted in Banks, 1967: 1). In any event, a thought style takes shape, bound up with a new set of problems generated by welfare government and state planning. A thought community develops and a 'set-up' is generated using the new type of cohort study that Glass had pioneered. The series of studies of education and social mobility undertaken by Halsey and Floud are examples of this version of sociology as demography, basically as a reinvention of political arithmetic (Floud, Halsey *et al*., 1956). Inscriptions abound – population is rendered into thought in the form of multiple classifications on all manner of criteria, arranged in tables and graphs of all sorts. Halsey argues that this was an 'egalitarian analysis of social inequality . . . consciously carrying on the tradition of political arithmetic – marrying a value-laden choice of issue with objective method of data collection and analysis' (Halsey, 1985: 161). But the style suffered, no doubt, from certain limits derived from its very positivism; as if to suggest that the generation of numbers will generate their own conclusions. In spite of the methodological sophistication and the undoubted political commitment of its proponents, what this style of thought arguably lacked was any autonomous problematising and conceptual dynamism of its own that would demarcate it as a thought style from other conceptions of social science – not least existing forms of statistics and social demography – and enable it to prolong itself as an autonomous style of

thought so as to become, in the terms that Ian Hacking has applied to the laboratory sciences, self-vindicating (cf. Hacking, 1992).

In any case, there was agreement that sociology in the post-war period, if it was to survive at all, would have to be a social science as opposed to a eugenic one. Concepts such as stratification and social mobility, grounded in surveys and classifications, became ways of thinking about questions of population outside of any eugenic remit. In the process, sociology contributed to a different, non-eugenic, social biopolitics. The initial excitement of those such as Glass about the radical spirit of this new age of social planning, and of sociology's place within it, soon evaporated. Across the 1950s, empirical sociology became tied to the governmental rationality of welfare, but seldom reflected upon its own part in making up the very social domain that it took as its space of operations and which came to define its boundaries and its criteria for success. This set the stage for the ferment of radicalism that overwhelmed the discipline in the 1960s, in part motivated by a rediscovery of, and critical reflection upon, those limits, and the political rationality that defined them. For a brief moment, sociology partook once more in the heady enthusiasm of being a discipline of the future, before being marginalised by a different form of reaction, the scepticism and at times even the illiberalism of the neo-liberal moment.

Notes

1 As many have suggested, thought collectives are often defined by differentiation from their rivals: see, for example, Abbott, A.D. (1988). *The system of professions: an essay on the division of expert labor*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

2 The quote is from the introductory pamphlet to the first volume of *Sociological Papers*, quoted by Collini (1979: 199) who discusses this debate in some detail.

3 Collini (1979) tells us that Abrams was actually quoting a paper by Sir C.L. Tupper in the first volume of *Sociological Review:* Tupper, C.L. (1908). 'Sociology and comparative politics.' *Sociological Review* 1 (1): 209–226.

4 The best discussion of Hobhouse and sociology remains Collini, S. (1979). *Liberalism and sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and political argument in England, 1880–1914*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press., especially Chapters 6 and 7.

5 See the discussion in Dahrendorf's history of the LSE: Dahrendorf, R. (1995). *LSE: a history of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895–1995*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

6 We might note here *The New Survey of London Life and London Labour* which Bulmer tells us was carried out at the LSE between 1937 and 1932 and 'was merely the largest of a considerable number of social surveys, concerned particularly though not exclusively, with the social consequences of structural unemployment and the Great Depression' Bulmer, M. (1985). *Essays on the history of British sociological research*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. (p. 9). Apparently it was funded by Laura Spelman Rockefeller's Foundation, under the part of the grant intended for Modern Social Conditions and directed by Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, retired Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, and hence known to Beveridge: it was carried out largely independently of academic Departments at the LSE: 'the study is nowadays largely forgotten, and left little residue' (ibid.: 18).

7 Keynes, quoted in Blacker and Glass (1967: 368). Keynes describes Carr-Saunders as being 'by common estimation to-day the most distinguished sociologist in the country' (ibid).

8 The relations between biology and sociology across the first half of the twentieth century are worthy of note. Geddes, who was a co-founder of the Sociological Society in 1903 with Victor Branford among others, was originally trained as a biologist like Carr-Saunders and Lancelot Hogben. Tom Harrison, founder of Mass-Observation, was an ornithologist, and Bulmer describes Mass-Observation as a kind of social bird-watching (p. 11).

9 Quoted in Milo Keynes, Lancelot Hogben, FRS, Newsletter of Galton Institute, March 2002, available at http://www.galtoninstitute.org.uk/Newsletters/GINL0203/Lancelot_Hogben.htm, accessed 25.2.08.

10 Carr-Saunders uses this older spelling of what is now more conventionally rendered as Uppsala.

11 Emphasis in original – Hogben's introduction, written after his resignation from the LSE in part because of his failure to convince his colleagues of the need for a factual empirical basis for a science of society – is also an assault on the pretentions of economics – including that practised by his colleagues at the LSE – to be a science. Political arithmetic was the term chosen by William Petty in the seventeenth century to describe his contention that a new science of government should and could be based, not on prejudice and opinion, but on numbers: Petty, W.S. (1687). *Two Essays in political arithmetick, concerning the people, housing, hospitals, &c. of London and Paris*, London.

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