BETA
Bureau
d'économie
théorique
et appliquée

Documents de travail

« Family and Women in Alfred Marshall's Analysis of Progress and Well-being »

Auteur

Virginie Gouverneur

Document de Travail n° 2021 – 03

Février 2021

Bureau d'Économie Théorique et Appliquée
BETA

www.beta-umr7522.fr

@beta_economics

Contact :
jaoulgrammare@beta-cnrs.unistra.fr

Université de Strasbourg · cnrs · Université de Lorraine · INRAE · AgroParisTech

Family and Women in Alfred Marshall's Analysis of Progress and Well-being

Virginie Gouverneur[*,**]

Abstract: Standing out from most nineteenth-century economists, Marshall addresses the role of women and the family in the progress of society entirely from the perspective of economics. His ideas on the subject developed throughout the course of his career as an economist. In the early 1870s they appear in the background of his analysis concerning ways to increase laborers' welfare. At the end of the 1870s, he presents the influences of the home, and especially the influence of the mother, as decisive causes of the individuals' efficiency and character. These developments form the ground upon which Marshall's ideas will later be systematized, leading to their inclusion in *Principles* in the form of a complete theory situated at the heart of his analysis of well-being and progress. The purpose of the article is to compare Marshall's treatment of the question of the role of women and the family in the progress of society with his analysis of well-being and progress, as well as their respective evolution, for the period between the1870s and the last edition of *Principles* in 1920.

Keywords: Alfred Marshall, progress, well-being, economic woman, household economics.

JEL Codes: B10, B13, I31, B15, A12, I25

Standing out from most nineteenth-century economists, including those of his predecessors who addressed the role of women and the family in the progress of society, Marshall takes up this issue entirely from the perspective of economics. He would thus make a significant contribution to the development of household economics, while at the same time anchoring the justification for the traditional sexual division of labor—whereby the man provides for the

[*] University of Strasbourg, University of Lorraine, AgroParisTech, CNRS, INRAE, BETA, 67000, Strasbourg, France.
[**] University of Haute-Alsace, F-68100, Mulhouse, France.
Correspondence may be addressed to Virginie Gouverneur, BETA (office No. 151), Pôle européen de gestion et d'économie, 61 avenue de la Forêt Noire, 67000, Strasbourg, France; email: virginie.gouverneur@uha.fr.
For critical comments and helpful suggestions I wish to thank participants of the 2019 History of Economics Society (HES) Conference, organized at Columbia University, New York, and participants of the 2019 Charles Gide Workshop "Evolutions of the disciplinary boundaries of economics with the other sciences", organized at the Teluq University, Montreal, where an early version of this paper was presented.

needs of the family while his wife manages the household—in the economic field. He deals with the question primarily in his major economic text *Principles of Economics*[1], the first edition of which appeared in 1890 followed by seven further editions (1891, 1895, 1898, 1907, 1910, 1916, 1920). However, the question was not totally absent from his previous work: as early as the 1870s, he expressed ideas on the subject under the theme of the means of the progress for laborers and the improvement of their well-being. The purpose of this article is to offer a new reading of Marshall's analysis of the role of women and the family in the progress of society, in light of his more general analysis of well-being and progress. Marshall's work in economics is marked by a longstanding concern about poverty, the cause of the impoverishment of the population and degradation of the quality of life (Caldari, 2006; Backhouse and Nishizawa, 2010: 4). It is largely motivated by the question of how enhancing well-being in its various dimensions, which include notably an economic as well as a moral dimension. These features, we maintain, have induced Marshall's interest in the issue of the role of women and the family in the progress of society, generally considered by his contemporaries as outside the field of study of economics. In order to strengthen our point, the article traces the evolution of Marshall's treatment of this issue, by comparing it with the development of his analysis of well-being and progress, for the period between the1870s and the last edition of *Principles* in 1920.

In the contemporary literature Marshall's analysis of the role of women and the family in the progress of society has gradually been presented as combining two sides, one economic, the other ethical. In the early 1990s, Pujol focused on Marshall's depiction of the contribution of women to economic growth as set down in the last edition of *Principles* (Pujol 1992: 128, 139). Two years later, Groenewegen extended Pujol's analysis by arguing that the views expressed in *Principles* relate in particular to the role of women in the regeneration of the English *race*, and so must be linked with Marshall's interest in social Darwinism and eugenics (Groenewegen 1994: 97–103; 1995: 499–501). In a recent article, Bankovsky (2019) has defended the thesis that Marshall's household economics, expounded in *Principles*, challenges the standard interpretation of his economics as pre-ethical, the family appearing therein as the ideal sphere for cultivating ethical virtues favorable to the development of the capitalist society.

The present article intends to supplement the existing literature in several ways. First, it goes beyond the recognition of the crucial place of ethics in Marshall's analysis of the role of

1. Now *Principles*.

women and the family in the progress of society, presenting this analysis as inseparable from his analysis of well-being and progress. Second, it apprehends Marshall's analysis fully as the fruit of a long process of maturation resulting in theorization in *Principles*, and seeks to clarify the links between this process and the developments of Marshall's economic thought. To this end, it examines a number of Marshall's works prior to *Principles*, and reviews the changes occurring throughout the book's subsequent editions. The article is thus divided so as to reveal three main stages in the theorization of Marshall's ideas. The first part sheds light on the analysis in its infancy, consisting of scattered ideas embedded in considerations relating to the progress of the laborer's well-being, before being developed and systematized from the late 1870s. The second part considers how Marshall's analysis in *Principles* becomes an integral part of his global analysis of well-being and progress. The third part deals more particularly with developments of Marshall's views about the contribution of the unpaid domestic work to family well-being.

1. The infancy of Marshall's analysis

Marshall's serious study of economics began in 1867, connected with his interest in ethics and his growing concern with social questions (Keynes 1924: 327). The analysis of his first economic writings allows to show how his economics progressively becomes permeated by the idea that the family environment and stay-at-home mothers contribute to developing the qualities of gentlemen and ladies so essential to the amelioration of the working classes, and to well-being. Then, the development of Marshall's ideas in *The Economics of Industry* at the end of the 1870s has the result of clarifying the role of the family and women in the progress and well-being, and initiates the theorization in *Principles*, in which Marshall's global analysis of progress and well-being takes all its dimension.

1.1. Early writings

Four texts written during the first half of the 1870s are considered in this section: *Lectures to Women* ([1872–3b] 1995), "The Future of the Working Class" ([1873] 1995), "The Theory of Foreign Trade" ([1873–7] 1975) and "Some Features of American Industry" ([1875] 1975). These contain the seeds of Marshall's analysis of well-being and progress, as they reveal his views on the great social issues of pauperism, poverty and more generally the means of progress in the laborers' welfare. Simultaneously, they mark the beginnings of a strong

conception of the influences of family, the home and housewives as driving forces in the improvement of the working class. This may reflect the influence of Herbert Spencer's and Friedrich Hegel's theses on Marshall's vision of the role of women and the family in the progress of society. Very early on Marshall was captivated by Spencer's works, including *Principles of Biology* (1864, 1867), in which Spencer puts forward the idea of biological differences between the sexes (Hodgson 1993: 407; McWilliams Tullberg 1995: 65; Whitaker 1975: 109). He was also interested in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1837[1975]), and Bankovsky has shown that he extends Hegel's vision of the family in two philosophical texts dating from the early 1870s, "Notes on Hegel's Philosophy of History" (1871–3[2005]) and "Long Essay on the History of Civilisation" (1872–3a[2005]).[2]

Lectures to Women (1872-3): The laborer's welfare as depending on family ties

In the Easter Term of 1872–3, in Cambridge, Marshall delivered his six-part *Lectures to Women* addressing economic questions directly connected to the welfare of laborers. They aim notably to highlight the means of bringing "into existence causes that tend perpetually to increase welfare", and thus contain the outlines of Marshall's definition of welfare (Marshall [1872–3b] 1995: 148).[3] In the lectures, welfare appears to have a moral dimension that depends on the strength of the "moral character" and the capacity to feel pleasure through the noble sources of joy, as well as an economic (or a material) dimension depending on "efficiency" (105, 140). Its basis appears to be wealth, which includes both material items such as comforts and non-material elements such as "culture" and "time" (123–4). It therefore depends above all else on the laborers' "general education", which, according to Marshall, requires a strengthening of the "family tie" and of the sense of parental responsibility, and the provision of "leisure" time that can be devoted to recreation and family life (106, 116, 140).

In pointing out the urgency of remedying the evils affecting laborers, Marshall condemns in particular the "sacrifice of man to production" (96, 99). There is an urgent need to alleviate the plight of the poor people by making them into "gentlemen and ladies", or into men and women of "a higher order" (98, 119, 128). Marshall thinks that the "best investment of the

2. According to Bankovsky, Marshall would deduce from his reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* that the modern family promotes self-reliance as well as unselfishness through a conception of unity based on the capacity to feel at one with a whole (Marshall 1871–3[2005]: 73; Bankovsky 2019: 7). Moreover, family life would teach individuals about the social value of work (Marshall 1872–3a[2005]: 24; Bankovsky 2019: 8).

3. In his *Lectures to Women*, Marshall uses primarily the term "welfare" to refer to "the welfare of mankind" (Marshall [1872–3b] 1995: 148). In later writings, he priviledges the term "well-being" ([1873–7] 1975: 24).

capital of the country is to educate the next generation"; they would thus become "productive" and "valuable men" (106, 119, 138). In other words, the "right" expenditure consists in investing in the "production of culture"—or in "the cultivation of the lower classes"—which constitutes "real wealth" just as much as do factories (92, 96, 123, 127, 141). Education improves man's "moral tone" by allowing him to acquire the "qualities" of a "gentleman", namely "an agile cultivated mind", "trustworthiness", "self-reliance" and unselfishness (107, 145). The "pliability of intellect, rapidity in managing things … power of managing men", as well as trustworthiness, are essential to the laborer's efficiency and depend on his or her childhood education (105). Self-reliance refers to the capacity to raise oneself, without "being a burden on society", through one's own powers, that is through the power "to judge rightly" rather than being "patronised", through "work" rather than relying on private charities (97, 107, 117). Individuals' "work" is an important element in their capacity to raise themselves. Lastly, unselfishness may be understood as the willingness "to bear and to forbear to do and to suffer for the welfare of those around him" (107): this is conducive to the tendency to make sacrifices for others.

The development of these qualities and personal "powers" of mental growth opens up the "noble sources of joy", including the "joy of independence" or freedom of individual action, and the joy of "caring for … one's children" (117, 118, 119). It is closely associated to the "sense of family obligation" (140). Intelligence and trustworthiness rest in particular on the education received by the child, which itself depends on his or her parents' education and capacities of self-reliance and unselfishness. In regard to the fulfillment of family duties, Marshall draws a distinction between the educated and uneducated classes. Two responsibilities have to be inculcated in the members of the lower classes, as they are in particular essential to strengthen the man's moral character and his feeling of responsibility as head of family (141). First, imprudent marriages would be avoided if he were aware of the obligations taken on with marriage (105). Marshall states, in Malthusian terms, that early marriage encourages an uncontrolled growth of the population which exerts pressure on the means of subsistence (116). A man must learn to feel that, before starting a family, he must be able to guarantee a certain "state of comfort" (100): in this sense, the "strengthening of the family tie" would mitigate the harmful rapid growth of the population (140). Second, the members of the lower classes must feel parental responsibility toward their offspring and see the necessity of sacrificing for them, whose future wages depend on their efficiency as laborers (103). Yet this parental willingness to sacrifice for "the future welfare of their children" is seen as lacking in the lower classes and must therefore also be increased (104–5).

To inculcate these responsibilities amounts to kindling new "noble" sources of enjoyment, such as the capability of "rejoicing as their children grow in everything that they would have them grow in" (118–9, 123, 127, 129). By teaching people to love their children, the connection between the interests of children and parents will be increased (103–5, 107, 119). Marshall points out that there is a positive link between the strength of "the family tie" and the sense of family obligation, and the ability to make sacrifices for others, in particular for the children who will form the next generation (107, 140). The strengthening of family ties will bring into existence new sources of joy which will tend perpetually to increase welfare, since "each new joy is a new stimulus to work; a new cause for avoiding vice; a new means of living" (148). Family life and family ties will induce the father to send his child to school and will give him "new tendencies to work for an end" (127); the child, in turn, will gain a higher perception of the value of work and the "capability of feeling the pleasure of being able to stand up and feel that one is doing one's work" (118). Only love, rather than lure of profit, can promote this exemplary behavior on the part of the paternal figure. Indeed, "the parent … in most cases does not reap the benefit of the increased expenditure" on the education of children (103). Carried by the joys of family life, the father would work and save in view of the welfare of his family, and his children, or his sons in particular, would be encouraged to adopt the same behavior once they are adults (153).

Education, then, promotes the welfare of laborers by strengthening family ties and, reciprocally, family ties encourage self-reliance, unselfishness, and a sense of duty and work. That being said, these positive effects on the progress of the members of the working classes would only reach their full potential if children and parents are freed from stultifying overwork. In order for the education of the poor to make them "productive" and provide them with "intelligent capital", it is necessary to reduce their hours of labor (95, 119). The expenditure of time, "that most valuable wealth, most real capital", is an essential question for Marshall (124). Children and adult laborers must benefit from sufficient leisure time to be able to devote themselves to recreation and culture (150). This has different implications for adult women and men in terms of labor regulations. Marshall lists the Factory Acts passed during the 1840s as among the elements which have most fundamentally promoted the progress of the working class. They have partly remedied the "awful abominations in the factory districts", notably through the regulation of the work of women and children (116).[4]

4. The first laws limiting children and women's labor were introduced in the 1840s. In 1842, the Mines and Collieries Act prohibited their underground work in coalmines. The Graham's Factory Act of 1844 limited their

Marshall notes that in most of the inquiries about the way in which children were overworked, it was found that the only point considered important by the parents was how far it would affect themselves; in some cases they had even "pawned their children's future wages at the pawn shop for drink" (104, 137). Moreover, the reduction of men's hours of labor would induce a better use of wages and leisure time which, after long and exhausting hours of labor, can only be wasted by smoking and drinking in a public house (106). Marshall then develops in three texts this idea that overwork, even more so with regard to children and women, hurts family life and blocks the noble sources of joy that it can provide. He also places a little more emphasis on the influences of home and woman on character.

Three texts: Home influences on efficiency and character

Marshall's ideas on the progress of the working classes are summarized in a paper entitled "The Future of the Working Classes", that he reads on 25 November 1873 at a *conversazione* of the Cambridge Reform Club. The paper is concerned with how to help members of the working classes to become gentlemen and ladies. By introducing a distinction between the cases of skilled artisans and unskilled laborers, Marshall indicates several elements which promote "culture and refinement of character" (Marshall [1873] 1995: 158). Among other things, he points out the necessity to relieve the working classes from excessive work. In order to illustrate the dangers induced by long hours of rough work he transcribes the words of a "needle-woman", revealing the unceasing and harsh character of her work. Alongside this reference to women's working conditions he posits that the woman's presence at home is beneficial to her husband, who, once back from work, "may pass a tranquil and restful evening in a healthy and happy home, and so may win some of the best happiness" (161). At the same time, an uneducated man, whose the brain is dulled by exhausting work, cannot fully enjoy the "pleasures of home" (161). A better education, added to the reduction of his hours of labor as well as the regulation of his wife's work, would promote better use of his leisure time by increasing his openness to the noble sources of joy to the exclusion of drunkenness.

In the mid 1870s Marshall began to work on a book expounding his theory of foreign trade ([1873–7] 1975), which would never be published in its entirety. In the extant manuscripts, we find explicit references to the determinant role of home influences on character. As

---

daily working hours in factories to 12 hours. In 1847, the Ten Hours Bill for women and children marked the end of this series of restrictions. No further legislative attempts to reduce the length of the working day were made until the beginning of a new campaign for a nine-hour day in the early 1870s (Lewis and Rose 1995: 101).

Marshall explains, these influences would be kindled by a rise in the wages of the present generation, for such a rise "improves not only the physical nurture and the school education of the next generation, but also what is even more important the general tone of the home influences by which their character is formed" (24). These influences are determinant in the culture of the qualities of "trustworthiness and prompt intelligence" which are required to perform "higher classes of work" and "to make a profitable use of … leisure" (24). In this way, an increase in the wages of one generation causes an increased efficiency in the next generation, except in those districts "in which men, women and children have been subjected to such severe toil as to disincline them for the peaceful pleasures of home" (24). In particular, "the children of mothers who have been debased by their work have but little appreciation of any but sensual pleasures", so that many of them "are apt to make such use of any increase of their wages so as to diminish rather than increase their own efficiency and the well-being of their households" (24). Thus, Marshall posits a link between the presence of women in the home and individuals' character, efficiency and capacity to promote the well-being of their family, long before the 1880s when he began to write *Principles*.

In "Some Features of American Industry", written in the same period, he also endeavors to highlight the links between economic conditions and the character and sources of "ethical growth" or progress ([1875] 1975: 375). He again lists the qualities which are the attributes of gentlemen and ladies and points out the family's role in nurturing fundamental factors of "ethical growth" (375). In his depiction of the American family, he presents the American woman as able to comprehend the need for "hard work and self-sacrifice" with a view to her daughters' benefit (370). He thus suggests that the stay-at-home mother is a role model for her daughter. Some years later, the effects of home influences on the individuals' character and well-being are further clarified in *The Economics of Industry*, first published in 1879.

1.2. A turning point? *The Economics of Industry* (1879)

Here we examine developments of Marshall's ideas on the role of women and the family in the progress of society in *The Economics of Industry*. The book contains a deeper analysis of the role of family affections–a concept replacing that of family ties–and highlights the effects of *female* character on the character of the nation as a whole. These developments prefigure the systematization of Marshall's ideas, which will culminate in the inclusion of a real theory within *Principles*. By emphasizing this continuity, we adopt a different perspective from that espoused by Pujol and Groenewegen who focus on the contrast between the ideas on the

inequality between men's and women's wages contained in *The Economics of Industry*, and those later expressed in favor of the control of women's wages in *Principles* (Pujol 1992: 129; Groenewegen 1994: 82–5).

Women's wages versus women's work outside the home

The Economics of Industry, resulting from the joint work of Marshall and his wife Mary Paley Marshall, was published under both their names in October 1879. One of the peculiarities of the book is to contain a paragraph devoted to the analysis of wage inequalities between men and women, as well as ways to reduce these inequalities (A. and M. P. Marshall 1879: 175–7). This paragraph identifies the reasons why women's wages are lower than those of men when both sexes are doing work of equal value, highlighting two great sources of wage inequality. First, it points out the role of custom, by which "both women and their employers have been in the habit of taking it for granted that the wages of women must be low" (175). Then it explains that the effect of the custom is reinforced by the fact that the "occupations for which women are well fitted are few, and therefore overcrowded and badly paid" (175). Lastly, it presents remedies to women's low wages. While the progress of machinery opens new opportunities of work for women (notably in the domain of telegraphy), women's interventions as teachers in higher education are growing. Moreover, A. and M. P. Marshall encourage the better usage of women's managerial capacities, urging that they be employed in business management.

Marshall would never repeat this type of analysis of wage inequalities between the sexes. This may in part be explained by the fact that the opinions expressed in the chapter were rather more those of M. P. Marshall (Gouverneur 2018: 78-81). Although the joint production was a sales success—it was reprinted nine times between 1879 and 1891 and a revised edition was published in 1881—, A. Marshall never liked the book, criticizing its elementary nature and brevity. Thus, despite continuing high demand, the book was allowed to go out of print in the early 1890s, being replaced by an abridged version of A. Marshall's *Principles of Economics*, published in 1892 under the title *Elements of Economics of Industry* under his name alone. Marshall's attitude may also be explained by the evolution of his own position on women's access to high education, which, as highlighted by McWilliams-Tullberg (1995), underwent significant changes between the late 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s. Before 1877, Marshall, then lecturer at St. John's College in Cambridge, was invested in the fight to promote women's access to higher education, something that can in part be explained by the influence of Henry Sidgwick and several members of the Grote Club heavily involved in the

women's education movement. His thoughts on the subject underwent a reversal after his move from Cambridge to Bristol College in 1877, Marshall opposing more and more to any activity of women which would interfere with their role within the domestic sphere.

That being said, Marshall's paragraph on women's wages in *The Economics of Industry* co-exists with strong positions against women's work outside the home. This is in part linked to the context surrounding the publication of the book. The campaign for the Nine Hours Bill resulted in the 1878 Factory and Workshop Act, which brought all the previous Acts together in one consolidated form, and again reduced women's and children's hours of labor. Moreover, evolutionary theories had gained further ground during the 1870s. Charles Darwin's famous book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* was published in 1871.[5] In a paragraph about the differences in the mental powers of the sexes, Darwin explains that the "woman seems to differ from man … chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness", and he presents the traditional sexual division of labor, based on "the present inequality between the sexes", as being an essential part of evolutionary progress (Darwin [1871] 1906: 326–9; Groenewegen 2007: 134). The year 1876 saw the publication of the first volume of Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, which captivated Marshall (Hodgson 1993: 407). In this book Spencer opines in his theory of social evolution that extra-domestic activities are incompatible with the main social function of women, which is that of reproducers of the "race" (Spencer 1876: 725–44). As regards the education of women, he considers that they must only be able to grasp all the elements relating to the domestic sphere, this being all that a good education of children entails (769). Three years later, in *The Data of Ethics* (June, 1879), published some months before *The Economics of Industry* (October, 1879), Spencer clearly distinguishes the mother's from the father's duties within the home (Spencer 1879: 24, see also 70, 261, 264). A good mother is one who, "ministering to all the physical needs of her children, also adjusts her behavior in ways conducive to their mental health"; a bad father "is one who … does not provide the necessaries of life for his family" (25). Several passages of *The Economics of Industry* echo these views of differentiated sex roles as regards progress in the well-being of the working class.

5. As Groenewegen has argued, there is no factual evidence indicating precisely when Marshall read or re-read *The Descent of Man* (Groenewegen 1995 : 500).

Family affections, mothers' influences and progress

In the introduction of *The Economics of Industry*, A. and M. P. Marshall explain that the science of economics is concerned with that part of "human well-being" which is directly connected with the acquirement of material wealth (A. and M. P. Marshall 1879: 5–6). Its subject matter is thus wealth, including material wealth as well as personal wealth, the latter consisting of the physical, mental and moral faculties that contribute to make men efficient in the production of material wealth. Therefore, the attainment of the economic conditions of well-being is inseparable from the nurture of varied faculties and, more generally, the culture of the character of the people. Indeed, "the efficiency of man's labour in production" depends on "his physical strength and energy, his knowledge and mental ability and his moral character" (9). The growth of these elements is in great part conditioned by family-related decisions and the childhood environment.

In line with the ideas expressed in *Lectures to women*, A. and M. P. Marshall explain that "the efforts of the legislator and of the moralist should be directed towards improving the character of the people; and towards discouraging … the rapid increase of numbers" (30). Members of the working class are often deprived of the sense of family responsibility and of the faculty of forethought which would lead them to start a family only if they were able to feed and educate their children. They should be unwilling to marry without being capable of attaining "a certain amount of necessaries, comforts and luxuries of life", the chief of them being "a good physical, moral and mental education for [the man's] children" (28, 32). In this sense, "economic progress depends much on changes in the Standard of Comfort of the people, and therefore on the strength of their family affections" (28, 38). In case of a "high Standard of Comfort … social opinion requires parents to provide wholesome rooms, nourishing food and a good education to their children", thus favoring their future efficiency as workers (102). Parents' natural instincts are an essential cause of the supply of unskilled labor. A rise in wages would thus not "fail to benefit" the next generation of workers "except in districts in which men, and, what is perhaps more important, women have been rendered hard, coarse and reckless by the nature of their occupations" (102). As for the supply of skilled labor, it rests on parents' investment of capital in the education of their children, which depends on their resources as well as their capacities for forethought—that is, their ability to discount future advantages to their children at a low rate of interest—and self-sacrifice, traits that are lacking in the lower classes (106–7). Family affections are also a driving force for the accumulation of capital, in the sense that "those who are anxious for the well-being of others are more likely to save than to spend all their incomes" (38). The "affection for others" gives

a chief motivation for saving, by increasing the male breadwinner's "will to save for the benefit of his children … and invest personal capital in them" (38).

Defending the male-breadwinner model, A. and M. P. Marshall suggest that the wife should not participate in the family income (102). Even though they recognize that "when the laborer's wife and children can earn good wages, he may be able to bring up his family in comfort even when his own wages are low", they consider that "this correction is of much less importance than at first sight appears" (102). A mother working for wages neglects the part of the household work which "would promote the health and the moral, if not the intellectual education of her children" (102). Moreover, some of her wages would be wasted by hiring domestic servants to do the rest of the domestic tasks (102). Thus, the gains obtained through the wife's work outside the home, equivalent to the opportunity cost of the woman staying at home, would be lower than expected. By breaking the family tie and disrupting domestic life, married women's work damages the physical, mental and "moral well-being" of the children, as well as their efficiency as future workers (102). Several passages of *The Economics of Industry* develop the idea, present already in "The Theory of the Foreign Trade" ([1873–7] 1975), that home influences, and particularly the mother's influences, play a decisive role in the formation of the character and efficiency of production. Thus, "a man's physical and moral qualities depend chiefly upon the character of his home in youth … if his mother had energy and kindness and honesty, he is pretty sure to have these physical and moral qualities which are a necessary condition of industrial efficiency" (110). More generally, "the character of a nation depends chiefly on that of the mothers of the nation—on their firmness, and gentleness and sincerity. It is in childhood, and at home, that the workman must learn to be truthful and trusty, cleanly and careful, energetic and thorough, to reverence others and to respect himself" (12). Home influences are decisive for developing in children the qualities of gentlemen such as trustworthiness, unselfishness and self-respect.

Some years later, in "Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty" (1883), Marshall would reiterate his point by linking the progress of society to the character of women. According to him, "Progress in general and the abolition of poverty depend above all things on the strength and gentleness and purity and earnestness of the women of England"; indeed, "[i]t is they that form character when it is most plastic", so that "[i]f the mothers of a nation are ignoble that nation must fall; if they are noble it must rise" (Marshall 1883: 210). In embarking on writing his *Principles* in the early 1880s, Marshall then sets out to systematize his ideas on the role of women and the family in the progress of society, so much so that they give form to a real theory, located at the heart of his analysis of well-being and progress.

2. *Principles*: Theorizing the role of women and the family in the progress of society

The *Principles* expound an analysis of well-being and progress which has been significantly refined. Well-being and progress appear as multifaceted concepts, marked by the influence of both evolutionary theories and eugenics, the latter field emerging in the 1880s. Galton, upon whom ideas about the heredity of character had already had a certain impact, described his social thought as "eugenics" in 1883, after the death of his cousin Darwin. He thus sought to found "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race" (Darwin [1871] 1906: 135–6; Galton 1904: 1). As early as the first edition of *Principles*, Marshall, contrary to Galton, insists on the importance of avoiding the degradation of nature by improving nurture (Aldrich 2019: 13). He would take careful note of further developments in the field of eugenics, and the changes made in the subsequent editions of *Principles* aim in large part at integrating these developments as he saw them (Groenewegen 1994: 101; 2007: 134). They concern in particular his vision of the progress, which, as we will see, may be understood as the progress of well-being, and that Marshall presents, in line with his previous work, as largely dependent upon family affections and the mother's influences.

2.1. The progress of well-being as the ultimate aim of economics

Through the different editions of *Principles*, Marshall's definition of well-being has evolved. The successive clarifications bring as many improvements in his analysis of well-being and progress, and highlight the role of education in the elevation of the character and development of the faculties of both sexes. If this analysis still gives a central place to the fight against poverty, it insists even more on the determining effect of the individuals' environment, in particular the family environment, on the quality of the population.

Marshall's definition of well-being

As early as the first edition of *Principles*, Marshall stressed the role played by economists in the attainment of "the higher well-being of man" (Marshall 1890: 4; 1961: 4).[6] Later, in the fifth edition of *Principles*, he added a chapter which seeks to identify "the order and aims of

6. Although in 1874, in an article published in the Labour newspaper *Bee-Hive*, Marshall wrote that the science of political economy must leave to her "sister", "the Science of Ethics", the task of answering "questions of moral principles", he later defined ethics as the "mistress" of economics (Marshall [1874] 1993: 128; 1893: 389). This shows the preponderant role that he gives to ethics in defining the objectives to be achieved (see also on this point Coats and Raffaelli 2006).

economic studies" (Chapter IV, Book I, 1907: 38–48; 1961: 38–48). Economics can then be defined–in the words of Rozenn Martinoia–as a scientific tool in the service of a normative end, the higher "wellbeing of the present and coming generations" (Marshall 1907: 38, 46; 1961: 38, 46; Martinoia 2006: 94, 2010: 1). Marshall puts emphasis on the case of young people, "whose faculties and activities are of the highest importance both to the moralist and the economist", so that "the most imperative duty of this generation is to provide for the young such opportunities as will both develop their higher nature and make them efficient producers" (Marshall 1891: 748; 1961: 720). The economist has "to inquire whether the present industrial organization might not with advantage be so modified as to increase" these so-called opportunities; for, indeed, "the argument that if such a change had been beneficial, it would have been already brought about by the struggle for survival, must be rejected as invalid" (1890: 308; 1961: 248). Challenging social Darwinism, Marshall states that there is room for favouring the "true progress of the human race" (1895: 81; 1961: 20)[7]: by modifying "circumstances" and "character" it is possible to "bring about new conditions of life still more favourable to character" and "to the economic, as well as the moral, well-being of the masses of the people" (1907: 48; 1961: 48). The fifth edition of *Principles* thus brings to light a bi-dimensional definition of well-being, the concept designating both the economic well-being, measured by the surplus of economic agents and the national income, and the moral well-being, made up of non-measurable elements such as mental strength, moral health and self-respect. In the sixth edition of *Principles*, Marshall adds that "progress may be hastened by … the application of the principles of eugenics to the replenishment of the race from its higher rather than its lower strains, and by the appropriate education of the faculties of either sex: but however hastened it must be gradual and relatively slow" (1910: 248; 1961: 248). This extract illuminates his growing attachment to the eugenicist views on the amelioration of the human race as well as to the idea that progress rests on men and women being educated to accomplish distinct roles.[8]

7. It may seem paradoxical that Marshall's endorsement of Spencer's theses goes hand in hand with a critique of Social Darwinism. Spencer is known to have advocated absolute laissez-faire. However, his position evolved in favor of a certain interventionism in the late 1880s (Becquemont 1996: 83-8).

8. The theory of a need for the differential education of men and women is close to the views defended by the conservative stance of the eugenics movement, which would emerge in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Eugenics Education Society, created in 1907, was presided over from 1911 to 1928 by Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles Darwin. The conservatives militated for the preservation of sexually differentiated social roles, opposing women's access to higher education and considering that the exercise of managerial duties

For Marshall, progress in well-being requires above all the remedying of social problems. He considers that the economist must provide "guidance in the practical conduct of life, and especially of social life" (Marshall 1895: 118; 1961: 42). The great problem of the time is poverty. As Marshall explains,"'the destruction of the poor is their poverty' and the study of the causes of poverty is the study of the causes of the degradation of a large part of mankind" (1890: 2–4; 1961: 3). Hence the importance that he attaches to the study of "the growth of population in numbers, in health and strength, in knowledge, ability, and in … character" (1895: 215, 252; 1961: 139, 173). Economics is a study of human beings which aims at solving human beings' practical problems (1890: 1; 1961: 1). This implies taking into account the importance of "ethical forces", including the sense of family obligation and family affections, as among the motives influencing the actions of individuals (1890: vi; 1961: vi). They play in particular a role in improving the quality of the population.

Improving the quality of population

On the issue of population growth, Marshall lays emphasis on the effect of family-related decisions, urging people to delay marriage and reduce family size through self-control. According to him, "there is no doubt that the parents can often do better in many ways for a small family than a larger one. … [A]n increase in the number of children who are born causes an increase of infantile mortality; and this is an unmixed evil" (1890: 257; 1961: 202). But while "persons with a high sense of duty, are especially likely to be influenced by the doctrine that large families are injurious to the world and that they can do better for a small than for a large family", the mass of the poor laborers have to be educated; Marshall continues, "we must affirm with Mr Galton that if the doctrine were to be acted on generally by the upper part of the nation including the great body of the more intelligent and capable artisans, but not the lowest classes, it would cause the race to decay" (1890, 256; deleted in the third edition). Pointing to childhood education and environment as being among the main causes affecting the character, Marshall then departs from the eugenicists on an important point. Rather than the hereditary transmission of characters, he insists on the influence of environmental factors on character, echoing in this respect the hygienists of the time (Martinoia 2010: 13–4). In the lower ranks of society, "[m]any of the children … are

---

could only divert them from "their natural and most glorious burden", namely the reproductive function. In the same way, women's work in factories was considered to lead them to neglect their "natural … maternal duties" (Whetham 1909: 198–201, 210–11, 220; Kevles [1885] 1995: 89).

imperfectly fed and clothed; they are housed in a way that promotes neither physical nor moral health; they receive a school education which … goes only a little way; they have few opportunities of getting a broader view of life or an insight into the nature of the higher work of business, of science or of art; they meet hard and exhausting toil early on the way, and for the greater part keep to it all their lives" (Marshall 1890: 2, 590; 1961: 2, 562). Conversely, the children of parents who have grown up under wholesome influences "are likely … to be better nourished and better trained; to acquire more wholesome instincts; and to have more of that regard for others and that self-respect which are the mainsprings of human progress" (1895: 329; 1961: 248). Indeed, "the son of the artisan has further advantages" than the son of the ordinary laborer since "[h]e generally lives in a better and cleaner house, and under material surroundings that are more consistent with refinement than those with which the ordinary labourer is familiar"; moreover, "[h]is parents are likely to be better educated, and to have a higher notion of their duties to their children; and … his mother is likely to be able to give more of her time to the care of her family" (1890: 592; 1961: 563–4). This idea of the need to improve childhood education and home influences in the lower classes underpins Marshall's entire analysis of the role of women and the family in the progress of society.

2.2. Two sources of progress: Family affections and the mother's influences

Marshall mentions two sources of progress located in the family unit. While family affections largely explain the investment of capital in the education of children, the mother's influences have a determinant role in what he calls general education.

Family affections, self-sacrifice and the education of children

Poverty, according to Marshall, is a cumulative phenomenon. People who have been deprived of the opportunity to develop their nature have less power to provide for the material wants of their children or develop their abilities. Indeed, "the investment of capital in the rearing and early training of the workers of England is limited by the resources of parents … by their power of forecasting the future, and by their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children" (Marshall 1890: 282, 590; 1961: 561–2, 660–1).[9] Conversely, "any change

9. Bowman draws the conclusion from these remarks that private parental initiative is inefficient and therefore State intervention is necessary (Bowman 1990, 35–44). Here we put more emphasis on Marshall's recommendations for getting parents to play their role in the investment of capital in children's education. We

that awards to the workers of one generation better earnings, together with better opportunities of developing their best qualities, will increase the material and moral advantages which they have the power to offer to their children: while by increasing their own intelligence, wisdom and forethought, such a change will also to some extent increase their willingness to sacrifice their own pleasures for the well-being of their children" (1890, 591; 1961, 562–3). In so far as "increased wages are used to improve the physical, mental and moral strength of the present rising generation … high wages are a cause of that efficiency and 'social morality' which enable wages to be permanently high".[10] In this sense, "the power of rightly using such income and opportunities, as a family has, is in itself wealth of the highest order"; but it is "of a kind that is rare in all classes" (1898: 720; 1961: 720). The investment in the rearing and education of children depends on two faculties that are little developed in individuals: first, the "telescopic faculty", which gives "the power of realizing the future" by estimating "at a high rate future ills and benefits", and rests on prudence, temperance and "self-control" (1890: 611–2; 1961: 680); second, the propensity to self-sacrifice, which refers to the action of "family affections" that are as "fairly regular" as economic laws, and impacts "the accumulation of "material" capital *for* children—by inducing the man "to work and save in order to secure a future provision for his family" (1890: 611–2; 1961: 680)—and the accumulation of "personal" capital *in* them (1890: 590, 701; 1961: 562, 660–1).

Marshall thus describes an "economic man" who is not perfectly selfish (Marshall 1885a: 28), including among the influences which govern such a man's actions the "ethical forces" or altruistic motives which lead to "self-sacrifice and devotion" (Marshall 1890: vi; 1961: 6). This, then, is not an "abstract man" but "a man of flesh and blood", who is not below delight "in sacrificing himself for the good of his family" and "the love of a virtuous life for its own sake" (1895: 89; 1961: 6, 27). Marshall's words in a letter dating from 1902 take on their full meaning here. Marshall claims to be following the line of "mere Darwinianism", considering that Darwin "seems to me to have … emphasize[d] the dominance of sacrifice for future generations as an or even the essential element of progress".[11] With regard to the investment of personal capital in children, family affections prevail over the pursuit of self-interest, and

---

thus agree with Nishizawa who has argued that, for Marshall, the family and the individual are central and strategic to economic progress and growth (Nishizawa 2002: 307).

10. Marshall 1885[1996], Letter 160: To the editor, *The Times*, 30 May, "The Present Position of Political Economy": 193. See also Marshall 1890: 295; 1961: 229–30.

11. Marshall (1902) 1996, letter to B. Kidd, Vol. 2: 385; cited in Martinoia 2006: 95.

they are therefore an essential cause of "economic progress" (1907: 668; 1961: 668).[12] As Marshall explains, "many first-rate abilities go for ever uncultivated because no one, who can develop them, has had any special interest in doing so"; "the only persons, who … are very likely to invest much in developing the personal capital of a youth's abilities are his parents" (1891: 705; 1961: 661). No future returns can be expected from such an investment, since "whoever may incur the expense of investing capital in developing the abilities of the workman, these abilities will be the property of the workman himself"; therefore, "those who bear the expenses of rearing and educating him receive but very little of the price that is paid for his services in later years" and their "virtue … remains for the greater part its own reward" (1890: 588-9, 593–4; 1961: 560–1, 565).

Marshall distinguishes two types of education and abilities. The investment of capital in the technical education of children develops the "specialized ability", namely "that manual dexterity and that acquaintance with particular materials and processes which are required for the special purposes of individual trades" (1890: 263; 1961: 207). Though both parents participate in the sacrifice, Marshall suggests that it is the role of the male-breadwinner to support the payment for the studies of "his son" (1890: 701; 1961: 660–1). "General ability", meanwhile, consists of "those faculties and that general knowledge and intelligence which are in varying degrees the common property of all the higher grades of industry" (1890: 263; 1961: 207). Its development occurs in the family and depends greatly on the preservation of home influences.

Home influences and general ability

In *Principles*, Marshall develops his argument against overwork, of which he increasingly points to the destructive effect on the influences of the home and the mother, and more generally on the progress in the quality of life. He adds the following statement in the second edition of *Principles*: "very little account is taken of the evil effects of the overwork of men on the well-being of the next generation; although the hours of children are regulated by law in their own interests, and those of women in the interests of their families" (Marshall 1891: 740; 1907: 694). The sentence is included in the chapter entitled "Progress in relation to standards of life" when it is added in the fifth edition; and in the sixth edition it finally

12. The term "economic progress" is added in the fifth edition of *Principles*, in which the initial chapter entitled "The influence of progress on value" is divided into two chapters, Book VI, chapter XII, entitled "General influences of economic progress" and chapter XIII, entitled "Progress in relation to standards of life".

becomes: “[t]he coming generation is interested in the rescue of men, and still more in that of women, from excessive work” (1910: 694; 1961: 694). Rescuing parents from excessive work is necessary to increase efficiency and strengthen the character of the producers of the coming generation, thus saving them from “living in a home in which the father and the mother lead joyless lives”; indeed, “[a]ble workers and good citizens are not likely to come from homes from which the mother is absent during a great part of the day; nor from homes, to which the father seldom returns till his children are asleep” (1891: 748; 1961: 720–1).

Among the influences shaping the character, those of the family, especially the mother, play a decisive role: “[g]eneral ability depends largely on the surroundings of childhood and youth”, and “[i]n this the first and far the most powerful influence is that of the mother” (1890: 263; 1961: 207).[13] Notably, “self-mastery”, this “important condition for the highest work”, depends on the “elevation of the ideals of life”, due in great part to “the influence of the mother in early childhood” (1890: 251–2; 1961: 198). It follows that “in estimating the cost of production of efficient labour, we must often take as our unit the family”; “the cost of production of efficient men” cannot be treated “as an isolated problem; it must be taken as part of the broader problem of the cost of production of efficient men together with the women who are fitted to make their homes happy, and to bring up their children vigorous in body and mind, truthful and cleanly, gentle and brave” (1890: 592–3; 1961: 564). Marshall includes among the “necessaries for the efficiency of an ordinary agricultural or of an unskilled town labourer and his family … a sufficient freedom for his wife from other work to enable her to perform properly her maternal and her household duties” (1890: 123; 1961: 69). He believes that “the degradation of the working classes varies almost uniformly with the amount of rough work done by women”; women subjected to too hard working conditions lose their “tender and unselfish instincts” and are “hardened by the strain and stress of unfeminine work” (1890: 592; 1961: 564).[14] They can no longer fulfill their “duty of building

13. Even more so than Galton, Marshall believes in the strong influence of the mother on her children: “According to Galton the statement that all great men have had great mothers goes too far: but that shows only that the mother’s influence does not outweigh all others; not that it is not greater than any one of them. He says that the mother’s influence is most easily traceable among theologians and men of science, because an earnest mother leads her child to feel deeply about great things; and a thoughtful mother does not repress, but encourages that childish curiosity which is the raw material of scientific habits of thought” (Marshall 1890: 263; 1961: 207).

14. This reference to the tender and unselfish instincts of women re-echoes Darwin’s remarks about mental differences between the sexes in *The Descent of Man* (see section 1.2.).

up a true home, and of investing their efforts in the Personal capital of their children's character and abilities" (1890: 727–8; 1961: 685). Conversely, though more severe restrictions of women's work would probably "lessen the national dividend", it would be only temporarily, until the woman's presence at home would exert "its full effect" on the character and "efficiency of the workers", so that "even from the point of view of material production, there would be no ultimate loss" (1891: 740; 1961: 694).

The limitation of women's hours of labor must be supplemented by the control of their wages (Pujol 1992: 128; Groenewegen 1994: 90). Indeed, the rapid rise of women's wages compared to those of men is a "gain" insofar as it develops their faculties, but an "injury" insofar as it tempts them to desert the home (1890: 727–8; 1961: 685). It causes infant mortality (1890: 252–3) by inducing women to "neglect their family duties in order to earn money wages" (1891: 256–7; 1895: 280, 594; 1961: 198, 529). As Reisman has argued, there is here both a substitution effect—the opportunity cost of spending time at home rather than at work is all the higher—and an income effect—the family money income increases all the more through women's work (Reisman [1987] 2011: 49–50). It is therefore necessary to modify incentives by keeping women's wages low, thus preventing them putting their natural duties behind the attractions of "dearly bought wages" (Marshall 1890: 263). The question then arises of whether and how it is possible to compensate the decrease in the family money income due to the control of women's work and wages. Marshall's answer consists in laying emphasis on the addition to the family well-being caused by the woman's presence at home.

3. The contribution of household work to family well-being

In the first edition of *Principles,* Marshall aims to mitigate the significance of the loss of money income suffered by households deprived of the wife's wages by offsetting this loss with the gains induced in the family's real income. Yet a slight change of perspective then appears in his argument developed in the second edition concerning the effect of household management on the family's utility, this depending on wives' skills in domestic economy.

3.1. Valuing the services rendered by the housewife

By emphasizing the effects of the presence of women in their home on the family's real income, Marshall paves the way for measuring the economic value of the unpaid domestic work, that is its contribution to the economic well-being. However, we will see that he does

not oppose the practice of excluding it from national accounts, thus making prevailing common practices over scientificness.

Unpaid domestic work as an income-generating activity

In the first edition of *Principles*, Marshall develops the idea—already expressed in *The Economics of Industry*—that mothers' work outside the home is the result of an irrational choice, based on the persistent belief among the lower classes that "the family income" is "increased by all that the mother earns when she goes out to work" (Marshall 1890: 252–3). The wife, by working, actually substitutes "less important gains for more important" and diminishes "the income of the family" (1890: 281, see also 179). The argument refers to the way in which wages are used in working-class households: the decrease of the family money income is not a real evil if it "could be met exclusively by the abandonment by all classes of the least worthy methods of consumption" (1890: 731; 1961: 720). Given the prevalence of bad consumption patterns at the time, "the things" that the wife "can buy with her earnings are of far less importance for the health and happiness of the family than the mere material services she could have rendered them if she had stayed at home, to say nothing of her moral influence in educating the children, in keeping the household in harmony and making it possible for her husband to be cheered and soothed in his evenings at home" (1890: 253). The consumption gains obtained by adding the wife's wages to the family's money income do not counterbalance the losses induced by their absence from the home. Besides a negative effect on the family's health and happiness, the wife, by working, diminishes the real income of the family, equivalent to the total money income earned minus the wages paid to domestic workers hired by "the factory woman … to tend her children and to do some of her household work" (1890: 140). Then "by staying at home", the wife, while "diminishing the [family's] money income by the amount of her wages", "would increase [its] real income" by an amount equivalent to the economic value of the services rendered, assessed by the wages which would be otherwise paid to hired domestic workers (1890: 140).

All these passages mentioning the effects of the quasi-permanent presence of the woman at home on the real income of the family are deleted from the second edition of *Principles*. This is the first manifestation of Marshall's tendency to place ever more emphasis on the money income of the individual units and, more generally, on money as the instrument of "exact measurement of the steadiest motives in business life" (Marshall 1907: 14; 1961: 14). In the first edition of *Principles*, Marshall explains that "for some of the practical purposes of life it is customary to consider only [a man's] money income", defined as "those elements of the

[individual's] total real income which come to him in the form of money", to which "are … sometimes added … elements … which save him some pecuniary expense" (Marshall 1890: 139–40). The first and last parts of this extract are deleted in the third edition, replaced in the following terms: "with the growth of a money economy there has been a strong tendency to confine the notion of income to those incomings which are in the form of money" (1895: 143–4; 1961: 71). Marshall distinguishes the modern money economy from the "primitive" economy in which a "very small part of the income" of the families "is in the form of money", and the family income includes all the "benefits" derived from the stock of resources in wool, cooking utensils, etc. (1895: 143–4; 1961: 71). The second part of the extract, referring to the individual's real income, is deleted in the fourth edition, along with a whole paragraph specifying the differences between the "real income" and the "money income" (1890: 140).

While a service for which a person receives a payment directly or indirectly in money "swells his nominal income", "no services that he performs for himself are commonly reckoned as adding to his nominal income" (1890: 139–40; 1961: 72). Yet, as Marshall points out in the three first editions of *Principles*, these services "may be a very important part of his total real economic income if they are of a kind which people commonly pay for having done for them" (1890: 139–40; slightly modified in 1891, 135; modified in 1898: 149, see below). When most references to the notion of "real income" are deleted in the fourth edition of *Principles*, Marshall clarifies the distinction between two types of unpaid services. While it is best generally to neglect "trivial" services,[15] "account should for consistency be taken of" services which are "of a kind which people commonly pay for having done for them" (1898: 149; 1961: 72). By applying this reasoning to the services rendered by the housewife, who prepares food as would a domestic cook and keeps her children rather than entrusting them to a nurse, it appears that she increases the family income by the amount of the wages which would be paid to hired workers. The unpaid domestic work thus appears as an income-generating activity. This consideration stops, however, at the doors of the home.

15. Marshall gives an example of trivial services in the fourth edition of *Principles*: "For a similar reason it is not worth while to take separate account of the simple services which nearly every one renders to himself, such as putting on his clothes; though there are a few persons who choose to pay others to do such things for them" (1898: 149; 1961: 76).

Unpaid domestic work in national accounts

Marshall affirms that the value of the unpaid domestic work done by housewives should be counted in the "social income"—"estimated by adding together the incomes" of the members of society (1890: 140; 1961: 76). In the first four editions of *Principles* he writes that "every service rendered … is a part of the national income", this including the "services which one person may be hired to perform for another" (1890: 141; deleted in the fifth edition). The sentence is replaced in the fifth edition by the idea that the inclusion of the work of domestic servants "raises no great[16] statistical difficulty", since it can be "assessed … at the value of their remuneration in money and in kind"; but there is "some inconsistency in omitting the heavy domestic work which is done by women and other members of the household, where no servants are kept" (1907: 79; 1961: 79–80). Despite this inconsistency, as Marshall explains in the third and subsequent editions of *Principles*, "it is best … to follow the common practice, and not count as part of the national income or dividend anything that is not commonly counted as part of the income of the individual" (1895: 589; 1961: 524). Thus, "the services which a person renders to himself, and those which he renders gratuitously to members of his family or friends are not reckoned as parts of the national dividend, but are left to be accounted for separately" (1895: 589; 1961: 524). When the passage was added in the third edition of *Principles*, Marshall's remarks were completed with a footnote—itself an abbreviation of a longer footnote dating from the first edition (1890: 561)—in which he recognizes that "[i]t would be possible, and for some theoretical purposes, it would be best to include them" in the national dividend (1895: 589). In this way, housewives' efforts involved in rendering services would "be counted as part of the labour and capital which are agents of production", while the "services and the benefits themselves" would "be counted as earnings of labour or interest of capital" (1895: 589). Finally, the footnote is deleted from the fifth edition, in which Marshall also adopts the definition of "labour" and "capital" simply as "the sources of all that income of which account is commonly taken in reckoning up the National Income" (1907: 79; 1961: 79). Despite the need for theoretical consistency, Marshall chooses to allow the common practice of considering only the individual units' money income to prevail. Pujol has argued that in this way Marshall abandons all pretense to scientific method in excluding from consideration an important share of total production, household production (Pujol 1992: 133–4). In the same line, Brennan has asserted that though Marshall considers in *Principles* the possibility of using broader notions of labor and capital than those usually used

16. The word "great" was added in the eigth edition.

in economic texts, he finally adopts the "customary discourse" and "popular conventions" which find expression in "national accounting standards" which have never embraced these broader notions (Brennan, 2006: 415–7). Marshall's apparent ambivalence may, however, be clarified. According to him, the ultimate aim of the economist is to solve practical problems. To attain this end, it is necessary, as he notes in the third edition of *Principles*, to adopt a "language that is intelligible to the general public", namely the "language of the market-place" (1895: 103, 144; 1961: 51, 71). The purpose of building an "exact" science (1907: 14; 1961: 14) is in this sense subordinate to the purpose of contributing to the "higher wellbeing of man" through the resolution of practical problems (1890: 4, 88; 1961: 4, 38).

3.2. Making women into able housekeepers

From the *Principles*' second edition onwards Marshall no longer explicitly focuses on the positive effects of women's presence at home on the family's real income, but rather on the gains obtained in the family's utility through a careful management of the household budget, which requires developing the female economic agents' abilities in domestic economy. This may be in part linked to his growing emphasis on bettered spending and saving patterns as a key element of human betterment (Reisman 1977: 9). His depiction of the role of wives in the management of the household gives then birth to the figure of the economic woman.

The role of women in the management of the household budget

In the second edition of *Principles* Marshall includes a chapter (Chapter V, Book III) on the "choices between different uses of the same thing", which addresses in detail the subjects of expenditure and domestic economy. He explains that "the true key-note of economic progress is the development of new activities rather than of new wants", and that better consumption patterns would emerge with "a rise in the standard of life", which "implies an increase of intelligence and energy and self-respect; leading to more care and judgment in expenditure, and to an avoidance of food and drink that gratify the appetite but afford no strength, and of ways of living that are unwholesome physically and morally" (Marshall 1891: 738; 1961: 689). The transformation of consumption patterns begins in the family, and Marshall points out the role of wives in the management of the household budget. In a money economy, good management consists in distributing "resources wisely between different uses" by "weighing against one another the (marginal) utilities of two different modes of spending" money, so that "the marginal utility for each purpose shall be the same" and "the aggregate of utility …

may be a maximum" (1891: 177; 1961: 119). Marshall emphasizes the role of experienced housekeepers in advising young working-class households of the need for the careful management of their budget. In particular, "they may avoid spending impulsively a great deal of money on furniture and other things; for, though some quantity of these is really needful, yet when bought lavishly they do not give high (marginal) utilities in proportion to their cost" (1891: 176–7; 1961: 119). Women must learn to manage the family budget without incurring superfluous expenses which do little for the physical and moral health of the family. In the same vein, in a commentary on Henry Higgs's paper "Workmen's Budgets", Marshall affirms that "Something like the whole imperial revenue, said 100 millions a year, might be saved if a sufficient number of able women went about the country and induced the other women to manage their households as they did themselves" (Higgs 1893: 288). The widespread good management of households would have positive effects on the national saving rate, so that the total value produced by able female managers could be assessed in terms of the imperial revenue saved.[17]

Moreover, Marshall considers that good management of the household budget must go hand-in-hand with the efficient production of goods and services consumed by the family members. Throughout the editions of *Principles* he lauds the "skilled housewife" who "with ten shillings a week to spend on food will often do more for the health and strength of her family than an unskilled one with twenty" (Marshall 1890: 248–9; 1961: 195–6). For him, the excessive infant mortality in the poorer classes "is largely due to the want of care and judgment in preparing their food; and those who do not entirely succumb to this want of motherly care often grow up with enfeebled constitutions" (1890: 248–9; 1961: 195–6). Marshall develops the point in the second edition of *Principles* by stating that "the vital problems of domestic economy relate as much to wise action as to wise spending" (1891: 177; 1961: 119). Indeed, "the greatest faults in domestic economy … are faults of production rather than of consumption" (1891: 177; 1961: 119). Marshall states that "the French housewife" is able to produce with limited means more "good finished commodities" destined to satisfy wants than "the English and American housewife" (1891: 177; 1961: 119). He pursues this celebration of the French housewife in *Industry and Trade*, saying that "[the Frenchman's] income is generally smaller than that of the Englishman; but his wife is an economical manager, and turns inexpensive food to good account … expenditure is generally

17. We therefore agree with the idea defended by Le Bouteillec and Charles (2006-7 : 21) that, in Marshall, the consumption of working families appears to create economically quantifiable values.

kept down below income; and France is in the first rank of capitalist countries" (Marshall [1919] 1920: 117). Even where the husband's wages are modest, they may not be fully consumed by the preparation of meals, so that the remaining part can be used for saving. By detailing in this manner the characteristics of the able housewife, Marshall gives tangible form to the figure of the economic woman.

The emergence of the economic woman

In the fifth edition of *Principles*, Marshall compares the "abler … primitive housewife" who in controlling the family's stock of wool tries to contribute "as much as possible to the family wellbeing" (Marshall 1891: 175; 1961: 117) to the "abler businessman" who in controlling any business aims at "the ideally perfect distribution" of resources (1907: 357–8; 1961: 357–8). As regards the activity of the modern housewife who in managing the household budget seeks to maximize the household's utility, he considers that this cannot be described as a form of business. In the "language of the market-place" (1891: 123; 1961: 71), the term "business" entails commodification, and must be contrasted with the "kindly services which are prompted by … family affection" (1890: 353; 1961: 291). While the "man is largely influenced by egoistic motives in his business life" —most of his actions being guided by the selfish desire for pecuniary gain—, the conduct of the good housewife is ruled by "delight … in sacrificing [her]self for the good of [her] family" and "love of a virtuous life for its own sake" (1895: 89; 1961: 26–7). Family affection induces her to best meet the needs of her family, to work hard and sacrifice her time and energy to increase the well-being of her husband and children. As Marshall explains, the economist who is concerned with "the ultimate aims of man" must "take account of differences in real value between gratifications that are equally powerful incentives and have therefore equal economic measures" (1895: 77; 1961: 17). Women's work outside the home (motivated by the pursuit of pecuniary gain) and housekeepers' management of the household (driven by altruistic motives) both lead to gains in the family income, the one through its direct effects on the money income, the other through its indirect effects on saving. The second type of pattern is preferable to the first since housewives thus represent a model of virtue, self-sacrifice and work. The family, preserved from any market-oriented relationships, is the primary place of the expression and growth of the ethical forces governing the behavior of the economic agent. In such a context, male children would become good breadwinners: self-reliant, hardworking and saving. Female children, like their mothers, would become good housewives: energetic and thrifty. While women must be freed from unfeminine work, they may be efficient managers and producers

in their home. In the bounds of the family sphere, they would develop their higher faculties through activity, just as the men do in their places of work (1890: 1; 1961: 1–2).

Far from denying the economic value of the housewife, Marshall suggests how to estimate it in a footnote which discusses the ways of calculating the value of male and female immigrants, equated to the addition to the national wealth caused by their arrival in the country (1890: 593; 1961: 565). As he explains, the value of an immigrant can be calculated by deducting from the discounted value of the future services that he or she would render the discounted value of the services produced by others that he or she would consume. The estimate would gain in accuracy if female immigrants "are credited with having supplied" the services "which women render as mothers, as wives and as sisters" while the male immigrants are "charged with having consumed these services" (1890: 593; 1961: 565). That said, this does not lead to any principles which are amenable to more general application, so that the recognition of the economic value of the housewife remains at an abstract level. The point is that even if the contribution of housewives to the national wealth is measurable, it constitutes only a small part of their contribution to the human well-being, which goes far beyond this. The fundamental part of their contribution relates to elements of well-being which are not capable of measurement, such as the moral and mental health of the individuals under their care. Marshall indeed defines well-being as a complex concept with many facets, as detailed in his unpublished manuscripts on *Progress* (Caldari and Nishizawa 2014: 233). It is not reducible to a measurable quantity; as he says, "measurability", although it "should be always present" in the economist's mind, "should not … be prominent" (Marshall 1885b: 161).

5. Concluding remarks

Marshall's analysis of the role of women and the family in the progress of society can be read as a corollary of his general analysis of well-being and progress. His ideas about this role developed throughout the course of his career as an economist. In the early 1870s they appear in the background of his analysis concerning ways to increase laborers' welfare, which above all involves educating them so that they become true gentlemen and ladies. At the end of the 1870s, with the publication of *The Economics of Industry*, Marshall clarifies the role of women and the family by presenting the influences of the home, and especially the influence of the mother, as determinants of the efficiency of laborers, and of the character of individuals. These developments form the ground upon which his ideas will later be systematized, leading to their inclusion in *Principles* in the form of a complete theory situated

at the heart of his analysis of well-being and progress. In this way, Marshall offers a justification of the prohibition of women's work outside the home rooted in economic theory. Two areas in particular are explored in *Principles*: the role of family affections and of the mother in the rearing and education of children and, therefore, in the well-being of the present and future generations; and the need to train women in domestic economy, so that they gain efficiency in managing expenditure, thus contributing to the household's utility as well as to the adoption of better consumption and saving patterns. In both cases the housewife appears as a *homo economicus*, defined by Marshall as an economic agent driven by altruistic as well as egoistic motives, and capable of developing his or her nature and faculties through work.

Through these insights, Marshall makes a significant contribution to the development of household economics. His enlarged conception of the *homo economicus*, which now appears as a dual (male/female) figure, allows him to provide an integrated account of the actions of housewives. Their contribution to economic well-being is capable of measurement, this justifying its inclusion among the objects of study proper to the science of economics. But the real value of housewives is elsewhere, and relates to their contribution to human well-being in all its complexity. Marshall's study of this contribution is in accordance with the main features of his analysis of well-being and progress. It places in the foreground the need to solve practical problems by using the intelligible language of the market-place, and mitigates the importance of developing a concrete measure of the contribution of housewives to economic well-being, which appears as a secondary element of their contribution to human well-being. The figure of the economic woman thus emerges as the product of a broad conception of well-being and progress. It would be interesting to discern what happens to it in ulterior analyses of well-being and progress, particularly within the framework of welfare economics. For example, Arthur Cecil Pigou would adopt a conception of well-being different from that of Marshall, placing greater emphasis on economic welfare, namely the part of welfare which could be measured in money. This may have consequences in terms of the importance given to the contribution of housewives to the non-economic as well as economic welfare. Would, in other words, the economic woman survive the hegemony of the economic man?

References

Aldrich, John. 2019. "Eugenics in British Economics from Marshall to Meade." *Economics Department, University of Southampton*. Retrieved from: http://www.economics.soton.ac.uk/staff/aldrich/0%20aldrich%20eugenics.pdf

Backhouse, Roger E. and Tamotsu Nishizawa. 2010. *No Wealth but Life–Welfare Economics and the Welfare State in Britain, 1880–1945*. New York : Cambridge University Press.

Bankovsky, Miriam. 2019. "Alfred Marshall's Household Economics: The Role of the Family in Cultivating an Ethical Capitalism." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 43(1): 249-67.

Becquemont, Daniel. 1996. "Herbert Spencer : progrès et decadence." *Mil neuf cent* (14): 69-88.

Bowman, Rhead S. (1990) 1996. "Smith, Mill and Marshall on Human Capital Formation." *History of Political Economy* 22 (2): 239–59. Reprinted in *Alfred Marshall—Critical Assessments Second Series*, edited by John Cunningham Wood, Vol. 8, 27–46. London and New York: Routledge.

Brennan, David M. 2006. "Defending the Indefensible? Culture's Role in the Productive / Unproductive Dichotomy." *Feminist Economics* 12(3): 403-25.

Caldari, Katia. 2006. "Progress." In Raffaelli, Becattini and Dardi 2006: 483-7.

Caldari, Katia and Nishizawa, Tamotsu. 2014. "Marshall's 'Welfare Economics' and 'Welfare': A Reappraisal Based on his Unpublished Manuscript on Progress." *History of Economic Ideas* 22(1): 51-67.

Coats, Bob W. and Tiziano Raffaelli. 2006. "Economics and Ethics." In Raffaelli, Becattini and Dardi 2006: 182-9.

Cook, Simon J. 2005. "Marshall's Essay on the History of Civilisation." *Marshall Studies Bulletin* (9).

Darwin, Charles. (1871) 1906. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London: John Murray.

Galton, Francis. 1904. "Eugenics: its Definition, Scope, and Aims." *The American Journal of Sociology* X(1) (July): 1-25.

Gouverneur, Virginie. 2018. "Harriet Taylor Mill, Mary Paley Marshall and Beatrice Potter Webb: Women Economists and Economists' Wives." In *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought*, edited by Kirsten Madden and Robert W. Dimand, 73-89. London and New York: Routledge.

Groenewegen, Peter. 1994. "Alfred Marshall – Women and Economic Development: Labour, Family, and Race." In *Feminism and Political Economy in Victorian England*, edited by Peter Groenewegen, 79-109. Aldershot and Brookfield: Edward Elgar.

Groenewegen, Peter. 1995. *A Soaring Eagle: Alfred Marshall 1842-1924*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Groenewegen, Peter. 2007. *Alfred Marshall Economist 1842-1924*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Mcmillan.

Hegel, Georg W. F. (1837) 1975. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Higgs, Henry. 1893. "Workmen's Budgets." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 56(2): 255-94.

Hodgson, Geoffrey. 1993. "The Mecca of Alfred Marshall." *Economic Journal* 103(417): 406-15.

Kevles, Daniel J. (1885)1995. *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

Keynes, John Maynard .1924. "Alfred Marshall: 1842-1924." *The Economic Journal* 34(135): 311-72.

Le Bouteillec, Nathalie and Loïc Charles. 2007. "Les économistes et 'La cité des femmes' : le débat théorique sur l'accès des femmes au marché du travail (1850-1914)." EconomiX Working Papers 2007-6, University of Paris Nanterre, EconomiX.

Lewis, Jane and Sonia O. Rose. 1995. "'Let England Blush: Protective Labour Legislation, 1820-1914." In *Protecting Women – Labour Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880-1920*, edited by Ulla Wikander, Alice Kessler-Harris and Jane Lewis, 91-124. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Marshall, Alfred. (1871–3) 2005. "Notes on Hegel's Philosophy of History." In Cook 2005: 72–80.

Marshall, Alfred. (1872–3a) 2005. "Long Essay on the History of Civilisation." In Cook 2005: 18–72.

Marshall, Alfred. (1872–3b) 1995. "Lectures to Women." In Raffaelli, Biagini and Tullberg 1995: 85–155.

Marshall, Alfred. (1873) 1995. "The Future of the Working Classes." *Read at a Conversazione of the Cambridge Reform Club* (Nov. 25). In Raffaelli, Biagini and Tullberg 1995: 156-75.

Marshall, Alfred. (1873–7) 1975. "The Theory of Foreign Trade." In Whitaker 1975, Vol. 2: 117-81. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co.

Marshall, Alfred. (1874) 1993. "The Laws of Political Economy. What they can teach and what they cannot teach." *Bee-Hive*, April 18, and "The Province of Political Economy" (response to Holmes's "The Teaching of Political Economy", *Bee-Hive*, April 25), *Bee-Hive*, May 2. In *Alfred Marshall: Critical assessments*, edited by John Cunningham Wood, Vol. IV, 120-124, 125-128. London: Routledge.

Marshall, Alfred. (1875) 1975. "Some Features of American Industry." In Whitaker 1975, Vol. 2: 352-77.

Marshall, Alfred. 1883. "Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty." *Daily Bristol Times and Mirror and the Western Daily Press for February 20, February 27 and March 6*.

Marshall, Alfred. 1885a. *The Present position of Economics*. London: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1885b. "How far do Remediable Causes Influence Prejudicially (a) the Continuity of Employment, (b) the Rate of Wages?" In *Industrial Remuneration Conference*, 1885: 173-83.

Marshall, Alfred. 1890. *Principles of Economics*, 1st ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1891. *Principles of Economics*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1895. *Principles of Economics*, 3th ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1898. *Principles of Economics*, 4th ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1907. *Principles of Economics*, 5th ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1910. *Principles of Economics*, 6th ed. London and New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. [1961]. *Principles of Economics*, 9th (variorum) edition with annotations by C. W. Guillebaud, Vol. I: text, Vol. II: notes. London: Macmillan.

Marshall, Alfred. 1892. *Elements of Economics of Industry*. London and New York: Macmillan and Co.

Marshall, Alfred. 1893. "Response to the President's address." *Economic Journal*, 3: 387-90.

Marshall, Alfred. (1919) 1920. *Industry and Trade*, 3rd edition. London: Macmillan and Co.

Marshall, Alfred. [1996]. *The Correspondence of Alfred Marshall. Economist, 3 Vol.*, edited by John K. Whitaker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marshall, Alfred and Mary Paley Marshall. 1879. *The Economics of Industry*, London: Macmillan and Co.

Martinoia, Rozenn. 2006. "L''ère marshallienne': équilibre, bien-être et question sociale dans l'Angleterre victorienne." *Romantisme* (133): 93-102.

Martinoia, Rozenn. 2010. "Alfred Marshall et les générations futures." *Sustainability Workshop*, University of Louvain.

McWilliams Tullberg, Rita. 1995. "Marshall's Contribution to the Women's Higher Education Movement." In Raffaelli, Biagini and Tullberg 1995: 47-75.

Nishizawa, Tamotsu. 2002. "Alfred Marshall on human Capital and Future Generations." *Hitotsubashi University's Economic Review* 53(4): 305-321.

Pujol, Michèle A. 1992. *Feminism and Anti-Feminism in Early Economic Thought*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, 1998.

Raffaelli, Tiziano, Eugenio Biagini and Rita McWilliams Tullberg. 1995. *Alfred Marshall's Lectures to Women*. Aldershot and Brookfield: Edward Elgar.

Raffaelli, Tiziano, Giacomo Becattini and Marco Dardi. 2006. *The Elgar Companion to Alfred Marshall*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Reisman, David. (1987) 2011. *Alfred Marshall: Progress and Politics*. New York: Routledge.

Spencer, Herbert. 1864–7. *Principles of Biology*, 2 vol. London: Williams & Norgate.

Spencer, Herbert. 1876–96. *Principles of Sociology*, 3 vol. London: Williams & Norgate.

Spencer, Herbert. 1879. *Data of Ethics*. London: Williams & Norgate.

Whetham, William C. D. and Catherine D. Whetham. 1909. *The Family and the Nation - A Study in Natural Inheritance and Social Responsibility*. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

Whitaker, John K. 1975. *The Early Economic Writings of Alfred Marshall 1867-1890, 2 Vol.* London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co.