

## LIBERALISM VS. DEMOCRACY

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A process that drew attention at the turn of the century, and even earlier, was the movement from a bourgeois-liberal society into a mass-democratic society. Not all of those who observed this process made the same judgments about it. Some, including the European socialists and the founding generation of American social planners, welcomed democratization; others, such as Max Weber, considered it to be an inevitable outcome of capitalism, technology, and the spread of the electoral franchise. Still others, typified by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (1829–1894), prominent jurist and a decidedly anti-egalitarian liberal, protested the unseemly haste with which J. S. Mill and his friends greeted the new democratic age: “The waters are out and no human force can turn them back, but I do not see why as we go with the stream we need sing Hallelujah to the river god.”<sup>1</sup>

The tension between liberalism and its successor ideology, and between the social classes embodying those ideas, provides a recurrent theme in 19th-century political debates. The Huguenot prime minister under France’s liberal July monarchy and a distinguished historian of England, Francois Guizot (1787–1874), considered democracy to be as much of a curse as monarchical absolutism. As French prime minister in the 1840s, Guizot fought doggedly against the extension of the limited franchise, the *cens*, from propertied taxpayers to other French citizens. He distinguished sharply in his speeches and political tracts

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<sup>1</sup>James Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, Stuart D. Warner, ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1993), p. 156. For Weber’s views on the growing relation between bureaucracy and modern democracy, see *From Max Weber*, Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. and trans. (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 139; in the same work, pp. 113–14, Weber suggests in “Politics as Vocation” that modern democracy must choose between soulless officialdom and charismatic leadership; and Max Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, Johannes Winklemann, ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1958), pp. 532–33. For Joseph Schumpeter’s arguments about the connections and differences between bourgeois liberalism and social democracy, see Joseph Schumpeter, “Sozialistische Möglichkeiten von heute,” *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 48 (1922): 305–6; Francois Perroux, *La Pensée économique de Joseph Schumpeter: les dynamiques du capitalisme* (Geneva: Droz, 1965); also see Schumpeter’s study of the decline of bourgeois liberal society, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Unwin University Books, 1943), most particularly pp. 81–87.

between those civil rights suitable for all citizens, such as freedom of worship, and the vote. By means of the second, Guizot maintained, the lower class could destabilize society, radically redistributing property and bringing resourceful demagogues to power.<sup>2</sup> He believed the bourgeoisie formed a *classe capacitaire*, those who would be guided by Reason and their stake in society in directing the actions of government. Indeed Guizot recommended the idea of “creating a state through representation which would fully reflect the values of bourgeois aristocracy.”<sup>3</sup> Although in 1831 he fought for an electoral law that would give representation to government functionaries and other professionals who paid lower taxes than required for franchise eligibility, he nonetheless argued for the special suitability of the upper-middle-class for political participation. Only that class combined wealth with formed intelligence.

The English jurist William Lecky (1838–1903), who admired Guizot, devoted his long polemical work *Democracy and Liberty* (1896) to the polarity between liberal order and democratic equality. Surveying England’s parliamentary history in the second half of the 19th century, Lecky worried that a universal franchise was irreversibly changing both English society and the English state.<sup>4</sup> His book appeared at a time when English socialism was becoming a political power, and Lecky devotes more than 140 pages to analyzing this new radicalism. In 1893, the Independent Labour Party officially came into existence in the Yorkshire town of Bradford. Since the elections of 1874, however, avowed socialists had sat in the British Parliament, and socialist labor unions had been around since the 1850s. To the consternation of German liberals, German socialists, meeting in the Saxon town of Gotha, had drafted a program in 1876 calling for public ownership of the means of production. The Gotha socialists also demanded an entire battery of social programs to be introduced by a properly democratized German state.<sup>5</sup> In

<sup>2</sup>See Pierre Rosanvallon’s intellectual biography of the famed liberal statesmen, *Le Moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), pp. 75–86, 132–40.

<sup>3</sup>Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot*, pp. 95–104; and Guizot’s address before the French Assembly on 5 October 1831, cited in *Histoire parlementaire de France, recueil complet des discours prononcés dans les Chambres de 1819 à 1848 par Mr. Guizot* (Paris 1863–1864), 1, p. 316. Despite his reservations about popular rule, Guizot also praised France as “genuinely democratic” in *Histoire parlementaire de France*, 1, p. 178. The statesman then went on to limit his definition of good democracy to the principle and operation of legal equality for French citizens.

<sup>4</sup>William Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1981) 1, pp. 303–4.

<sup>5</sup>For a generally sympathetic, well-researched study of German socialism in English, see W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party: 1875–1933* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981).

France, the revolutionary-socialist Jules Guesde (1845–1922) sat in the Chamber of Deputies from 1893 on and, as Lecky reminds us, Guesde, in the *Catéchisme Socialiste*, presents the family as an “odious form of property,” one destined to give way to a multiplicity of sexual relations for men and women alike.<sup>6</sup>

One way to look at such social quarrels is to observe how dated they are. These battles were supposedly waged between reactionary and democratic liberals. Those liberals who were just and humanitarian, it has been argued, went with changing times, while others who were not, such as the Franco-Italian economist and sociologist Vilfredo Pareto, fell into bad company, and even sometimes into fascism. Implicit in such a view is the distinction that more and more modern liberals have drawn throughout the 20th century, between themselves and those they have replaced. It is a purely strategic stance which minimizes the reality of past conflicts. Like the “mainstream” New Deal liberal historiography in postwar America, this liberal historical view stresses the natural progression of things by which the new liberals took over from the old.

It is possible to perceive continuity in the movement from a bourgeois liberal society into a more democratic one. But that continuity is not the same as direct continuation, as was noted by Max Weber, Joseph Schumpeter, and other early 20th-century social commentators. Rather, we are dealing here with a series of points leading from a bourgeois age into a post-bourgeois age, i.e., with a process of displacement which went on for several generations. Thus, Weber focused on “rationalization” in analyzing the movement from a bourgeois-capitalist society toward a bureaucratized-socialist society. A liberal-bourgeois world created the secularist foundations and economic organization necessary for socialist rule. Another pessimistic social commentator with liberal leanings, Joseph Schumpeter, believed that the middle-class concept of freedom encouraged the expression of critical opposition. This tolerance undermined the belief system of an older liberal society and prepared the way for social democracy. But neither of these attempts, by old-style European liberals, to find links between two distinctive social and political formations denies the differences between them. Both Weber and Schumpeter were looking at the conditions in which social changes took place, and they note the overlaps as well as distinctions between the epochs in question.

Panajotis Kondylis, a Germanophone Greek scholar whose

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<sup>6</sup>Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, 1, p. 324.

work is not yet widely known, breaks new ground in this respect. Kondylis examines the distinctions between liberal bourgeois and mass democratic societies by looking at their literary and cultural artifacts. Modern democracies differ from pre-modern ones, according to Kondylis, in that modern democracies dissociate citizenship from cultural and ethnic identities, and in the way in which mass production affects society. The modern, as opposed to pre-modern, democrat is not communally situated and has a fluid cultural identity being shaped by a consumer economy.<sup>7</sup> He also inhabits a culture that remains hostile to the older liberal universe. Postmodernism in literature and literary criticism, Kondylis argues, is the latest in a series of cultural strategies aimed at subverting the 19th-century liberal order. The refusal to recognize a fixed or authoritative meaning for inherited texts, which is characteristic of postmodernism, represents an assault upon “liberal” education. Contrary to the world of moral and semantic order presided over by an ethical deity, which bourgeois liberals preached, the postmodernists exalt indeterminacy. They decry the acceptance of tradition in discourse, as well as in political matters, as a “fascist” act of domination—or as the inadmissible allowance of the past to intrude upon the present.

Nowhere does Kondylis call for the eradication of post-modernism or make the facile assumption that by opposing it the present generation can resurrect the bourgeois world. He contends that liberal and mass democratic societies are not only distinct but mutually antagonistic, and that this antagonism has expressed itself culturally as well as socio-economically. For over a hundred years, bourgeois liberalism has been under attack from authors and artists, presenting views about human nature and the nature of existence antithetical to bourgeois convictions. Materialism, atheism, and pluralism have been three such world views, which the bourgeoisie long viewed with justifiable suspicion. Deconstructionism is a more recent form of cultural criticism aimed at inherited assumptions about meaning. By now, Kondylis maintains, the old liberals have been reduced to a “rearguard struggle [*Nachhutgefecht*],” while watching their opponents take over culture and education.<sup>8</sup>

But the reason for this reduced liberal presence, Kondylis explains, is not an insidious contamination by a cultural industry

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<sup>7</sup>Panajotis Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk—und Lebensform: Die liberale Moderne und die massendemokratische Postmoderne* (Weinheim: Acta Humaniora, 1991), pp. 188–207.

<sup>8</sup>Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk-und Lebensform*, pp. 169–88.

separated from the rest of society. Cultural radicals have done well in mass democracies because they continue to target the liberal order which the democrats deposed. The cultural opposition continues to mobilize even after the political war has ended. Victorian rigidity, social status, and elitist attitudes about education have all remained the butts of academic and literary criticism, and this opposition points back to the conditions of strife in which mass democracy arose. This cultural insurgency, Kondylis observes, draws strength from a subversive source which once served liberalism in *its* war against the past. The Enlightenment tradition of critical rationalism was crucial for the war of ideas waged by the bourgeoisie and its defenders against the remnants of an older world. Despite the attempt to integrate this outlook into a bourgeois vision of life, Enlightenment rationalism has played a new destructive role, as the instrument of a war against the bourgeoisie on behalf of openness, skepticism, and material equality.<sup>9</sup>

These pointed observations about the culture of mass democracy do not deny the fact that cultural differences exist among democrats. Deconstructionists and liberal-democratic absolutists still fight over the values to be taught in history and literature courses. And some advocates of post-World War II abstract expressionism, such as Hilton Kramer, have now come to oppose later schools of art as relative cultural traditionalists.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, radically anti-bourgeois movements have remained powerful in our cultures, as mass democracy continues to struggle against the remains of an older heritage. In the United States, traditional liberal and agrarian-democratic forces stayed alive into the 20th century, and resisted the inroads of the democratic-administrative state. Mass democracy needed a cultural as well as political strategy to triumph, and the values and concepts juggled by our literary and now media elites are the keys to the emergence of a postliberal society and politics.

Kondylis also makes clear that mass democracy could not have developed without the demographic and economic revolutions that transformed Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Industrialization, agricultural modernization, an urban working class, the disappearance of a family based craft

<sup>9</sup>Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk- und Lebensform*, pp. 238–67; see also Kondylis's analysis of the classical conservative, as opposed to classical-liberal, worldview in *Konservatismus: Geschichtlicher Gehalt und Untergang* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1986).

<sup>10</sup>See Hilton Kramer, *The Revenge of the Philistines: Art and Culture, 1972–1984* (New York: Free Press, 1985); also the anthologized essays from Kramer's magazine, *The New Criterion Reader: The First Five Years* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

economy, and the operation of assembly-line production were the factors, Kondylis observes, contributing to mass democracy. Although imperial Rome experienced the concentration of uprooted *proletarii* in its swelling, strife-ridden cities, it could not have produced a modern political movement, because it lacked both mass production and mass consumption. Earlier societies had to deal with perpetual scarcity and with the need to share limited resources in a communal setting. The modern West, by contrast, provides more and more material gratification to socially isolated individuals.<sup>11</sup> Its politics are therefore predicated on hedonism and individual self-actualization, values that give an ethical dimension to a consumer economy. Mass democratic politics also advocates material equality, as opposed to the exclusively formal or legal equality preached by 19th-century liberals.

By stressing the ties between modern democracy and material pleasure, Kondylis also explains why modern democracy cannot appeal effectively in the long run to an ethic of austerity. At the end of the 18th century, both American and French Revolutionaries invoked classical ideals of republican simplicity, a practice found preeminently in the political writings of Rousseau. Self-indulgence and luxury were viewed as aristocratic flaws and, among 19th-century French republicans, as upper-middle-class vices. Democratic and later socialist revolutionaries even tried to exemplify the moral conduct which they hoped to enforce in a society of equals. The Jacobin socialist Louis August Blanqui (1805-1881) lived and dressed like a priest; and the self-proclaimed republican Sénécal in Gustave Flaubert's novel *L'Education sentimentale* (1869) is made to appear eccentric in his extreme pursuit of virtue. Sénécal is shown embracing dietary and sexual restraints and scorning sumptuous living.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, the Marxist president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, has denounced the homosexuals in his homeland. Mugabe is outraged that "sodomists and sexual perverts" continue to be found there and scoffs at the idea of "rights for those given to bestiality."<sup>13</sup> All of these revolutionary democratic or socialist appeals to public virtue hark back to republican models

<sup>11</sup>Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk- und Lebensform*, pp. 208–26.

<sup>12</sup>See Albert Thibaudet's preface to Gustave Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965). In one particularly revealing scene, following the February 1848 Revolution in Paris, Sénécal, Dussardier, and other republican zealots featured in Flaubert's novel exhort a crowd, without success, to accept lives of material austerity. One speaker, who speaks of the need to follow the primitive church, is shouted down by an alcohol vendor as a "calotin" (religious fanatic), pp. 323–33.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in *The Washington Post* (9 September, 1995): A-19.

that Kondylis views as incompatible with mass democracy. What distinguishes the latter from the former, in his opinion, is the prevalence of hedonism associated with mass production and mass consumption. This ethos express itself as a ceaseless desire for consumption combined with resentment against those who have more access to pleasure.<sup>14</sup>

It was the failure of liberalism, from the standpoint of mass democracy, to move decisively enough toward material equality and individual self-expressiveness that led to its undoing. The defenders of bourgeois liberalism temporized when faced by the sociological evidence of inequality in their own society. They claimed to be more interested in freedom than in the further pursuit of equality, but were also more committed to family cohesion and gender distinctions than to individual freedom. The reason for this is clear, according to Kondylis. Bourgeois liberals were both economic innovators and perpetuators of an urban civilization going back to the Middle Ages. In their heyday, they spoke about sweeping change, but were never as dedicated to the social and cultural implications of a consumer economy as were those who replaced them.<sup>15</sup>

Basic to this thesis is the recognition that liberalism is a “bourgeois ideology,” a set of ideas and principles indissolubly tied to the Western middle class. This does not mean that liberal principles are reducible to material interests, nor that they should be dismissed as a pretext for economic exploitation. In the early 1950s, John Plamenatz tried to separate “ideology” from the pejorative associations many Marxists had loaded onto that term. According to Plamenatz, “The word ‘ideology’ is not used to refer only to explicit beliefs and theories. Those who speak of ‘bourgeois ideology’ . . . often mean by it beliefs and attitudes implicit in the bourgeois way of speaking and behaving, and sometimes they speak of bourgeois theories and doctrines as if they did little more than make explicit these beliefs and attitudes.”<sup>16</sup>

Understood in the cultural sense and not simply as a theoretical instrument of self-justification, liberalism exemplifies “bourgeois ideology.” It designates not just liberal ideas but also their social setting, that is, the context without which liberalism becomes merely a collection of disembodied concepts or slogans. When Benjamin Constant and Francois Guizot

<sup>14</sup>Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk-und Lebensform*, pp. 167–69.

<sup>15</sup>Kondylis, *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk-und Lebensform*, pp. 21–49.

<sup>16</sup>John Plamenatz, *Ideology* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), p. 21.

argued for a political *juste milieu* in the 1820s, in the form of constitutional monarchy, they were not simply advocating moderation or an Aristotelian golden mean. They were looking at the educated *haute bourgeoisie* as a natural leadership class which could maneuver between the equally disastrous shoals of absolute monarchy and democracy. Guizot identified that class with the modern nation state. He believed that this political order and the bourgeoisie would benefit from their historically necessary association.<sup>17</sup> This cultural context does not mean that the French doctrinaires, as the constitutional liberals in post-Napoleonic France called themselves, have nothing to teach our own generation. It is rather to insist on the need to avoid tendentious parallels, which arrange past figures and past movements in accordance with current appetites for a usable past.

What I am emphasizing here is the need for contextualization, the avoidance of which typifies contemporary zealotry. Appeals to human rights, as historically unbounded absolutes, now resound in political debates in which opposing sides accuse each other of relativizing values. Wars and social policies are justified by invoking self-evident truths, even though what is true in these truths may be different now from what seemed self-evident about them two hundred years ago. Pointing this out is not the same as relativizing all truth. It is only to question the opportunistic and decontextualized uses to which the past has been bent.

This decontextualization of liberalism can happen in two ways: either when we place liberalism into an eternal present going back and forth in time, or else when we make its real history into a stepping stone to the present. A particularly striking case of the first comes up in F.G. Bratton's *The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit* (1943), a once widely esteemed defense of the "liberal heritage." In his preface, Bratton explains that "liberalism is not to be viewed as a 19th-century phenomenon ending with the Second World War. As an attitude toward life it has a history of 2,500 years. It goes back to the Age of Reason and the Reformation and to earlier, distant attempts to establish intellectual freedom and the life of reasons."<sup>18</sup> In the journey that follows, from Plato through Jesus to John Dewey, Bratton celebrates thinkers who he believes have pointed in his own direction. Thus, he favorably contrasts one North African Christian Platonist, Origen, with another, Augustine, presenting

<sup>17</sup>Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot*, p. 53; and Robert Fossaert, "La Théorie des classes chez Guizot et Thierry," *La Pensée*, (January/February 1955).

<sup>18</sup>F.G. Bratton, *The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1943), p. ix.

the first as a proto-liberal and the second as an obscurantist.

In *Liberalism*, John Gray also assigns liberal ratings to thinkers who lived long before the liberal era. Gray praises Pericles's "Funeral Oration" (or its reconstruction by the historian Thucydides) for its "statement of liberal egalitarian and individualist principles."<sup>19</sup> He thereby ignores the pervasive stress in that speech on living for the public good, which was paradigmatic for ancient Greek democracy. Modern liberal individualism existed only incipiently, if at all, in Greek antiquity, a point documented in works from N.D. Fustel de Coulanges's *The Ancient City* to Paul Rahe's *Republics Ancient and Modern*.

Among the readings of liberalism which try to shove its past into a triumphalist present are the academic apologetics discussed in the first chapter. In all fairness, it should be said that even probing critics of contemporary liberalism ascribe to it an excessively long genealogy. Christopher Lasch, John P. Diggins, and the ethical philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre have all written critically on the "liberal heritage" which they believe has descended more or less intact from earlier centuries.<sup>20</sup> Faith in material progress as a means of solving moral problems, a buoyant skepticism about religious questions, and, especially in Diggins's analysis, individual autonomy as the end of social policy are all, in their opinion, permanent aspects of the liberal worldview. This worldview is thought to define liberalism, whether it preaches a free-market economy or the need for social democracy. Diggins and other perceptive commentators contend that people would not go on for generations speaking about a liberal heritage unless one truly existed. Those who admire John Dewey and John Rawls could, for the same reason, find something in Adam Smith and John Locke to admire. Otherwise they would not fix the same label upon all of these *maitres à penser*.

This view of a liberal heritage is, furthermore, based on a reliable axiom in historical research, that a long-term and

<sup>19</sup>John Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); also my review essay on this book in *Modern Age* 37 (Spring 1995): 264–69; N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Ville Antique* (Paris: Hachette, 1874), especially pp. 131–265. Fustel notes (p. 238) that connubial restrictions were so severe in Greek city-states and in the early Roman republic that offspring were viewed as illegitimate if the parents were not from the same polity—or from confederated ones. An Athenian law still in force as late as the fifth century, B.C., and mentioned by Plutarch, declared that "*nothos ho ek zenes e pallakidos—hos an me eks astes genetai nothos einai*." One was considered "*nothegenes* [base-born]" who sprang from a stranger or concubine.

widely held belief in the persistence and integrity of a movement cannot be entirely illusory. Note that while classical-liberal John Gray sees his own liberalism transformed by modern social democrats, he nonetheless searches for shared ground between himself and them.<sup>21</sup> But this approach raises its own methodological difficulties. It overlooks several generations of agitated debates between liberals and democrats. These debates include Guizot's warnings about the "sovereignty of numbers" and Stephen's assaults on J.S. Mill's faith "that all people should live in society as equals."<sup>22</sup> Indeed much of the political debate in Western Europe from the second half of the 19th century into the early decades of the 20th testifies to the deep divisions between old-fashioned liberals and democratic reformers.

The French anthropologist Louis Dumont, in *Homo Aequalis*, treats as the unifying theme of the modern West the rise of "individualism within the world." Unlike the ascetic ideals of medieval Christianity and Eastern contemplative religions, Western modernity has been characterized by the belief that individual fulfillment should take place within society. This individual consciousness, Dumont explains, does not require that people withdraw from a hierarchical world based on status relations. To the contrary, it has encouraged individuals seeking success and self-expression to find it in a changing and increasingly atomized society.<sup>23</sup> Dumont's analysis treats the intellectual history of the Western world as a steady movement toward expressive individualism, from the Protestant Reformation to the rise of a contractual view of civil society in John Locke and in other early liberal theorists. Implicit in this interpretative perspective is the stress by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies on the movement from traditional communities to functionally oriented and highly mobile societies. Dumont focuses on the cultural and intellectual bases underlying Tönnies transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, and he places that transition into a continuum of thought going back to the early modern period.<sup>24</sup>

Dumont's thematic stress on "individualism within the world" underscores a problem found in explorations appealing to root causes: they account for both too much and too little. By

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<sup>21</sup>Gray, *Liberalism*, p. xi.

<sup>22</sup>Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, pp. 136; 137–64 *passim*.

<sup>23</sup>Louis Dumont, *Essais sur L'individualisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983), pp. 33–133.

<sup>24</sup>Dumont, *Essais sur L'individualisme*; see also Louis Dumont, *Homo aequalis, I: Genèse et épanouissement de l'idéologie économique* (Paris: Gallimond, 1977).

citing a single force that is made to account for modern culture, Dumont ignores the distinctiveness that marks specific phases of Western history from the Reformation onward.<sup>25</sup> Though clearly he knows that the Protestant idea of the individual experience of divine grace has little to do with contemporary views of individual self-gratification, Dumont's interest in cultural continuity leads him to play down such a difference. His study of individuality in the West causes him to overlook short-term cultural changes, even those with powerful cumulative effects. To the extent that our own study deals with two successive epochs, what Dumont disregards is, for us, significant. Moreover, liberal democracy has accelerated some aspects of that long-range process outlined by Dumont, while making others less important. Material redistribution, as a means of individual fulfillment, has become basic to our own liberal democratic age, while the cohesion of the nuclear family has grown weaker as liberalism has lost out to liberal democracy. Differences in values can be perceived in short-term political transformations, even if the general trend of modernity is what Dumont describes.

Critics of the old bourgeois liberalism are, finally, too hasty in linking liberal concern about the social question to economic interest. As Gertrude Himmelfarb has demonstrated with regard to Victorian attitudes about work and philanthropy, questions of character formation and family responsibility were tied together in the Victorian middle-class mind. Himmelfarb argues that such an association was not a threadbare defense of low factory wages or of the lack of public works programs. Rather, it came from widely shared assumptions about the social good. The broad middle class, extending from bankers and mill owners to shopkeepers and church canons, rejected a welfare-state conception of government because of what they assumed were its socially destructive effects.<sup>26</sup>

Even if modern liberals disagree with these judgments, their disagreement does not justify substituting their own adaptation for the "liberal tradition." Whether welfare-state democrats

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<sup>25</sup>This tendency to overgeneralize about the Reformation roots of what seem aspects of late modernity is already present in Dumont's depiction of John Calvin; see Dumont, *Essais sur l'individualisme*, pp. 72–80. Dumont's association of individual self-sufficiency and a revolution against established hierarchy, with Calvin's conception of predestined grace, also bears a striking resemblance to French clericalist polemics against Protestant modernity. This theme dominates, for example, in Jacques Maritain's *Trois Réformateurs: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1925), a work that also draws a provocative, although not entirely well-documented, line from the Reformation to modern individualism.

<sup>26</sup>Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

and public administrators have refined or degraded the original article is beside the point. What they have done is to change that article in ways that would make it unrecognizable to earlier generations. Nor will it do to speak of the *failure* of earlier liberals to see the world like modern liberals. If they had seen the world differently, they would not have been liberals but social-democratic advocates of public administration. American historian James Kloppenberg accounts for Weber's liberal skepticism about "such concepts as the 'will of the people'" by pointing to the "longer context of German history." Weber, as interpreted by Kloppenberg, could not imagine the meaningful practice of egalitarian politics because "Germany had no tradition of popular sovereignty and liberals repeatedly put their faiths in elites rather than democracies to accomplish their goals."<sup>27</sup> True, 19th-century German bourgeois thought did not produce as much radical ferment as its English and French counterparts. But Weber's liberal doubts about the people's capacity to rule was not restricted at the turn of the century to Germanophone observers. Kloppenberg, as a social democrat who thinks of himself as "liberal," looks for "larger contexts," i.e., the peculiarities of German history, for his own ideological use: to detach the "liberal tradition" from traditional liberal views which he finds distasteful.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike today's liberals, traditional ones entertained deep reservations about popular rule. A belief that democracy leads inevitably to socialism was common to French liberals of the 1830s and 1840s, and it is equally apparent in Lecky, Pareto, Weber, and other liberal observers at the end of the century. Pareto and Lecky feared that democracy would bring forth a trade-union approach to economic policy. Unless put under some kind of control, democratically elected trade unionists would add to unemployment by driving up wages, which would then harm the most-expendable workers. Democratic spokesmen would also agitate to impose tariffs on foreign goods, and this would hurt domestic consumers while unleashing reprisals from those countries whose goods were being excluded. The effects from such economic measures would then be blamed on the owners and captains of industry, and social-democratic governments would cite this accusation to justify their confiscation of the means of

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<sup>27</sup>James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 389.

<sup>28</sup>Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, pp. 387-88; also Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890-1933* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973).

production.<sup>29</sup>

This fin-de-siècle prediction about trade-union democracy revealed the persistent liberal fear about a seizure of property, which would take place at the urging of socialists. Despite the French Revolution of 1848, in which bourgeois and social democrats went from being allies to violent enemies, a liberal view did persist, that democratized governments would become radical ones. Socialism or rampant social disorder would accompany the advent of a universal franchise. Thus Fitzjames Stephen declared with finality in 1874: “The substance of what I have to say to the disadvantage of the theory and practice of universal suffrage is that it tends to invert what I should have regarded as the true and natural relation between wisdom and folly. I think that wise and good men ought to rule those who are foolish and bad. To say that the sole function of the wise and good is to preach to their neighbors, and that everyone indiscriminately should be left to do what he likes, should be provided with a ratable share of the sovereign power in the shape of the vote, and that the result of this will be the direction of power by wisdom, seems to me the wildest romance that ever got possession of any considerable number of minds.”<sup>30</sup> Like Stephen, Lecky feared that democracy would lead to capricious and unstable government, by overwhelming and sweeping away any national leadership. He predicted almost 20 years before it happened that the House of Lords would be disempowered; and in the 1890s he also warned that “the dissociation of the upper classes from . . . public duty is likely to prove a danger to the community.”<sup>31</sup>

Liberal critics of mass democracy offered differing but equally grim predictions about the disposition of power in a democratic age. In the 1870s, Stephen could find no cohesive group of political leaders which might create stable rule in the world as imagined by J.S. Mill. His opponents were mere dreamers who, like the “Radicals” (the term by which he designated Mill and his circle), “look forward to an age in which an all-embracing love of Humanity will regenerate the human race.”<sup>32</sup> Though the Radicals complain of the “petty social arrangements” in Victorian England, they lack the hardness of mind, Stephens observes, to change things for the better. In time

<sup>29</sup>See especially Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, 1, pp. 350–65.

<sup>30</sup>Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 156.

<sup>31</sup>Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, 1, p. 303.

<sup>32</sup>Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 180; also B.E. Lippincott, *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938).

they would be swept aside by better-organized fanatics.

Another liberal critique of democracy, widespread among the doctrinaires of the 1820s, was its *primitive* character, which made it unsuited for the 19th century. Charles Rémusat and Guizot both stressed the idea that democratic republics were a product of classical antiquity. Given their need for cultural homogeneity, severe public morals, and highly restricted citizenship, popular polities did not seem destined to flourish in the 19th century. Unlike Guizot's democratic critic, and traveller in the New World, Alexis de Tocqueville, the doctrinaires did not believe that the European future belonged to democracy. They viewed the American experience as *sui generis*. According to Guizot, Americans had established popular sovereignty because they had been able to build a regime without an inherited class system.<sup>33</sup> Tocqueville's depiction of localism as the essence of American democracy seemed to confirm Guizot's judgment. It offered a political picture that Guizot and other doctrinaires thought had no bearing for France or for Europe in general. A Europe of highly centralized nation-states required a stable social pillar drawn from the educated bourgeoisie in order to maintain political stability. Democratic primitivism, as revealed in the chaos of the French Revolution, was the political alternative, Guizot complained, into which his democratic critics would plunge France and the rest of Europe.

The doctrinaires pointed portentously to the Jacobin rule in 1793 as a precedent for democratizing experiments. As Guizot explained in the essay "De la démocratie dans les sociétés modernes," "Democracy is a cry of war; it is the flag of the party of numbers placed below raised against those above. A flag sometimes raised in the name of the rights of men, but sometimes in the name of crude passions; sometimes raised against the most iniquitous usurpations but also sometimes against legitimate superiority."<sup>34</sup>

While Tocqueville and Guizot underlined the link between American democracy and America's decentralized republic, a new and fateful view of the American regime surfaced in the theorizing of George Bancroft (1800-1891). Jacksonian Democrat, career diplomat, and author of the 10-volume *History of the*

<sup>33</sup>Francois Guizot. "De la démocratie dans les sociétés modernes," *Revue française* 3 (November 1837): 197-208; for a general discussion of the American political example as presented by Tocqueville on the French doctrinaires, see Pierre Manet, *Intellectual History of Liberalism*, Rebecca Balinski, trans. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 93-106.

<sup>34</sup>Guizot, "De la démocratie dans les sociétés modernes," p. 197.

*United States*, Bancroft admired and popularized in the United States German idealist philosophy. As a young man he had studied in Göttingen, Berlin, and Heidelberg, and while in Germany, became intimately familiar with the historical speculation of G.W.F. Hegel.<sup>35</sup> His own work incorporated several unmistakable Hegelian themes: that history showed the progressive unfolding of the divine personality; that this process was reflected in the advance of human liberty; and that liberty had developed most fully in the Protestant Germanic world. For Bancroft, unlike Hegel, however, this progress toward liberty reached its culmination on American soil. Bancroft presents the American people as the ultimate bearers of divinely ordained liberty and makes this point explicit at the end of his *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States* (1882): “A new people had arisen without kings or princes or nobles. They were more sincerely religious, better educated, and of nobler minds and of purer morals than the men of any former republic. By calm meditation and friendly councils they had prepared a constitution which, in the union of freedom with strength and order, excelled every one known before.”<sup>36</sup>

The spirit of the people thus described was held to be democratic, and Bancroft ascribed to Americans a collective wisdom which found expression in their political architecture. The American federal union, as he saw it, was no mere convenient state but “the only hope for renovating the life of the civilized world.”<sup>37</sup> The political institutions fashioned and inspired by America’s democratic people assumed in Bancroft’s writing a mystical quality, and his insistence that the voice of the people is the voice of God led Tocqueville to remark that “pantheism is the religion most characteristic of democracies.”<sup>38</sup>

The American capacity for self-government which Bancroft exalted was not in the end the American propensity for local self-rule. Bancroft glorified a *national* democratic will, and his *History of the United States* ends appropriately with the topic “consolidating the union.” According to Bancroft, an American people and an American national government were both inchoately present even before the colonies formed a nation-

<sup>35</sup>Two favorable biographical portraits are R.B. Nye, *George Bancroft* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944); and Lilian Handlin, *George Bancroft: The Intellectual as Democrat* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

<sup>36</sup>George Bancroft, *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: D. Appleton, 1882), 2, p. 366.

<sup>37</sup>Bancroft, *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States*, p. 366.

<sup>38</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Henry Reeve, trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 2, pp. 31–32.

state: “For all the want of government, their solemn pledge to one another and mutual citizenship and perpetual union made them one people; and that people was superior to its institutions, possessing the vital form which goes before organization and gives it strength.”<sup>39</sup>

One does not have to strain to find here a Jacobin imagination hidden behind Hegelian language. A consolidated American national government, a powerful executive representing the popular will, and a global civilizing mission are the visionary expectations that one can read into Bancroft’s patriotic scholarship. Although his *History of the United States* deals predominantly with the colonial period, it points more toward the American future than back to the eighteenth century. Bancroft is celebrating the *progress* of the democratic spirit as embodied in the American nation. In the process, he replaces an older American liberal-constitutional identity with one that Guizot and Tocqueville might have associated with their own 18th-century French revolution.<sup>40</sup>

While Bancroft celebrated the triumphant course of democracy in America, others, among them European liberals, grew increasingly agitated about the inevitability of popular rule. This anxiety, in some cases, became more pronounced as the 20th century began to unfold, and social problems in Europe appeared to be worsening. The most detailed critical treatment of democratic rule produced by a European liberal was *Trasformazioni della Democrazia* (1921) by the sociologist-economist Pareto. Pareto’s example, as John Gray remarks, makes dramatically clear how the pre-1914 liberal mind was placed irreversibly “at a crossroads.”<sup>41</sup> In the face of a democratic franchise, riotous trade-union strikes, and the intrusive presence

<sup>39</sup>George Bancroft, *History of the United States*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1872), 10, p. 592.

<sup>40</sup>The debate about extending the suffrage in early and mid-19th-century Europe centered on differing opinions concerning the political capacity of the working class and the advance of human consciousness. Without knowingly being part of that debate, Bancroft took a position in regard to it. Moreover, in Europe, such democratizing views were associated generally with political centralization and, eventually, with the adoption of social policy. See Guizot, *Réaction et suffrage universel en France et en Allemagne* (Paris: Société d’histoire de la révolution de 1848, 1963). Rosanvallon aptly notes in *Le Moment Guizot* (pp. 136–37) that a democratic franchise was seen in the mid-19th century as an “anticipated recognition of a popular capacity more than as a consequence of the principle of civil equality.” Underlying it was the anticipation of continued human progress, which would result from the expanding of human intelligence.

<sup>41</sup>In conversation with the author, 25 June 1993; see also Herbert W. Schneider, *Making the Fascist State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 101–3; and Franz Borkenau, *Pareto* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1936), pp. 18–21.

of public administration, some liberals embraced authoritarian solutions. Of these, Pareto was perhaps the best known and the most deliberate, as can be judged from his social writings. In *Trasformazion*, he outlines the characteristics of the democratic epoch and its relationship to the period that had preceded it. In the 19th century, a parliamentary regime had come to Italy as the result of a fateful alliance between a “demagogic plutocracy” and the popular classes. Both had opposed the rule of landed wealth and the ecclesiastical establishment, but drew apart after a liberal, constitutional, and unified Italy had come into existence. Thereafter, the laboring class had worked to seize the wealth of the liberal middle class; by the twentieth century, it had also turned against the parliamentary institutions on which the plutocracy had built its political legitimacy.

In the aftermath of World War I, from which Italy had emerged on the side of the victors but financially crushed, unions took over the railroads, ironworks, and factories in Milan and throughout the industrialized North. Red Guard units were formed to police the worker-occupied areas, and though these units carried out the summary executions of the enemies of the working-class, the national government (then under revolving premierships) avoided military force. There was political calculation behind this hesitancy. The largest bloc in the post-war Italian parliament was the Socialists, who in 1919 had voted to nationalize key industries. They and the Catholic social-democratic Popolari held enough votes to bring down any government, and both were afraid of estranging their constituents by releasing armed forces against the *sindicalisti*. Meanwhile, landless peasants, *braccianti*, were grabbing land from large estates as a paralyzed national government conferred on these expropriations *ex post facto* approval.<sup>42</sup>

Pareto vented particular contempt on Giovanni Giolitti (1842–1928), the aged prime minister who formed his fifth and most disastrous government amid these trials. Pareto mocked Giolitti’s “cowardice (*viltà*)” when he responded to Red Guard violence with the statement that intervention would be “tantamount to capital punishment, which would be inappropriate at the present time.” Pareto contrasted Giolitti to those fascist squadrons who in the fall of 1919 moved against the “Red baronies” in Bologna and the Po Valley. For Pareto, the plutocracy had become “timorous [*imbelle*] and imbecilic,” and the

<sup>42</sup>Luigi Einaudi, *La condotta economica e gli effetti sociali della guerra italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1933); and Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), 1, especially pp. 419–544.

only groups which now seemed capable of exercising power were nationalists and union leaders: "Among the propertied class the sentiments of self-defense and property are largely spent and have begun to transform themselves into a nebulous, uncertain social responsibility, what others call 'social duty,' used interchangeably with work now defined as a 'right.' In some parts of Italy, workers invade the land and perform useless tasks, thereafter claiming the right to receive wages, which the owner has a duty to pay them. The response of many bourgeois is approval."<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, Pareto notes that the hatred and combativeness manifested by the unionists toward the propertied class no longer elicited resistance: "On one side of the class divide, one sounds the trumpet and moves on to the assault; on the other, one bows one's head, capitulates, or better yet, joins the enemy and sell one's property for thirty pieces of silver."<sup>44</sup>

In two political commentaries published in 1923, following the fascist advent to power of October 1922, Pareto expressed the hope that Mussolini's regime would restore economic and political order. In January 1923, he perceived "as the major difference between past and present governments that one ignored economic issues, paying attention to demagogic sentiments and particular interests, while the new government is seeking to reestablish an equilibrium between social forces."<sup>45</sup> At the same time, Pareto warned against the danger of taxing heavily those who were salaried or small landowners, and he recommended that moderate unionists be consulted in setting economic policy.

In September 1923, he also suggested how the fascist regime might best reform the structure of government. Pareto urged Mussolini to maintain a free press: "Let the crows caw, but be indefatigable in repressing [rebellious] deeds! Experience demonstrates that leaders who embark upon this path of censorship find headaches, rather than benefits. It may help to imitate ancient Rome: not to occupy oneself with theology but attend only to actions."<sup>46</sup> Pareto also advocated putting into place a new parliament which would express popular sentiments without crippling the executive. Though he readily admitted the failure of Italy's earlier parliamentary experience, he nonetheless thought that the new regime should not operate without elected institutions. He believed such institutions were

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<sup>43</sup>Vilfredo Pareto, *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, Mario Missiroli, ed. (Milan: Capelli Editore), pp. 111–12.

<sup>44</sup>Pareto, *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, p. 113.

<sup>45</sup>Pareto, *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, p. 162.

<sup>46</sup>Pareto, *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, pp. 169–70.

necessary to stabilize and legitimate the fascist order.

In assessing these comments, written shortly before Pareto's death, it is important to keep in mind two critical factors. First, there was no reason for Pareto (and others) to believe in 1922 that the Italian fascist regime would later go berserk and ally itself, ideologically and politically, with Nazi Germany. In the early 1920s, the Italian fascists expressed neither racist nor anti-Semitic ideas, and they were willing to offer leadership in a country that had broken down economically and was on the verge of political collapse. Second, Pareto saw his own class, the bourgeoisie, as spent and demoralized. And though he hoped to preserve some of its creations, particularly a free market, a free press, and religious liberty, he did not believe that his own social class would be able to do so. He therefore thought it was necessary to turn to what he, like Machiavelli, designated as the "lions," bold warrior forces, to save what had been devised by those who had become "foxes," parliamentary schemers and finessing plutocrats.<sup>47</sup>

What Pareto saw happening in Italy seemed to belong to a broader civilizational context. Throughout his writing, he used the concept of "uniformities," which he applied to both economic and social affairs and which he claimed to have derived from an "experimental research method." The long-term invariability of the income curve and the equivalent advantages to producers of a "perfectly organized" monopoly and of an unimpeded free market are two such laws that are worked out in Pareto's major economic works. In *Trattato di Sociologia generale* (1916), he developed a theory of psychological predispositions to explain social behavior. In this analysis we find six such predispositions, which Pareto called "residues" and associated with changing movements and ideologies, known as "derivations." The six residues underlying group behavior are the instinct for combination, the persistence of aggregates, the desire to manifest one's beliefs, sociality, the integrity of the individual, and the sexual drive.<sup>48</sup>

It is the instinct for combination and related residues three and four which actuate groups on the rise, while the persistence

<sup>47</sup>See Missiroli's preface to *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, pp. 9–31; and W. Rex Crawford, "Representative Italian Contributions to Sociology: Pareto, Loria, Vaccaro, and Sichele," *An Introduction to the History of Sociology*, H.E. Barnes, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); and Paolo Maria Arcani, *Socialismo e democrazia nel pensiero di Vifredo Pareto* (Rome: Volipe, 1966).

<sup>48</sup>The *Trattato* was translated as *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology*, Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston, trans. (New York: AMS Press, [1935] 1983), esp. pp. 2458–72.

of aggregates and the concern about individual interest are most characteristic of established elites. Pareto discussed those residues operating within Italian society in the context of his social observations. He believed that the waning of liberalism, conspicuous in his own country, was taking place throughout the industrialized West. The liberal bourgeoisie had lost its assertiveness in the face of an insurgent working class and of other “democratic” forces expressing instincts for combination and group solidarity.

In World War I, according to Pareto, the parliamentary plutocrats had triumphed over the German military aristocracy but had succumbed to the democratic classes without which they could not have hoped to win the war. The only force now able to resist the revolutionary socialists, Pareto maintained, were the nationalists who drew upon the same residues prevalent among the socialists. Socialism and nationalism seemed to be related derivations, both resulting from residues leading to collective action.

Among his last published remarks were those on Italian constitutional reform addressed to the new fascist government, on 25 September 1923: “Under democratic ideology runs the current of fascism which overflows at the surface. But beneath that runs a countercurrent. Beware lest that countercurrent overflow! Beware lest you bestow upon it power by trying to close it off completely!”<sup>49</sup> Pareto believed that the fascists and their socialist enemies were harnessing the same democratic enthusiasm which a now-declining liberal society had given up trying to oppose. He felt that the fascists would have to coexist with social democracy, but hoped they would do so on their own terms.

Pareto’s appeal to some aspects of the liberal heritage occurred in the face of what he took to be an irrevocable political change. The march toward democracy would continue no matter what, and the “decadence of the Roman plutocracy was only a portent of the destiny towering above our own plutocrats.”<sup>50</sup> An

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<sup>49</sup>These last two written works by Pareto are attached to Missiroli’s edition of *Le Trasformazioni*, pp. 161–73.

It should be stressed that we are here dealing with Pareto’s view of Italian fascism. Though Renzo de Felice may be right in treating the Italian fascist movement as a modernizing force associated with the historical Left, Pareto perceived it differently, namely as a possible safeguard for the achievements of bourgeois civilization. See Renzo DeFelice’s by now widely-accepted view of the Italian fascist movement in *Interpretations of Fascism*, Brenda Huff Everett, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

<sup>50</sup>Pareto, *Le Trasformazioni della Democrazia*, p. 109.

activist and redistributionist democratic government was about to arrive, and unlike Lecky a generation earlier, Pareto had no doubt that a corresponding elite was arising to take charge of modern democracy. Political upheavals did not transpire randomly, but were the work of purposeful elites who took advantage of their consequences. Faced by the Italian nationalists and the priesthood of “the social proletariat,” Pareto opted for what he considered to be the more moderate democratic leadership. In fact, he chose what turned out to be the less farsighted of the two aspiring democratic elites. In the 20th century, it was the exponents of working-class democracy, and not of democratic nationalism, who made the more compelling claim to represent liberal democracy.

Significantly, social-democratic planners took over a form of discourse more closely akin to Pareto’s than to that of the Italian fascists. In Scandinavia, England, and the United States they appealed to “experimental-scientific” methods in education and public policy, and they presented their takeover of civil society as an act of liberating individuals and upholding their rights. But they also appealed effectively for several generations to democratic legitimacy, unlike the Italian fascists who were forced to manufacture popular endorsements for their plans. It is not surprising that by the end of the century social democratic planning has given rise to what Charles Krauthammer calls “reactionary liberalism: holding fast to the structures and constituencies of the welfare state, come what may.”<sup>51</sup> More interesting is the fact that this “liberal democracy” held up for more than half a century in the most prosperous and literate areas of the world, with popular approval.

This result indicates that some European liberals read the political future with clearer eyes than others. Despite his demonstrated polemical skill, Fitzjames Stephen underestimated J.S. Mill’s capacity to plan a popular regime. Mill did not intend to leave the uninstructed mass to do as they please. Maurice Cowling notes that Mill staked his democratic hopes on a Religion of Humanity, “a better religion than any of those which are ordinarily called by that title,” and on a “new clerisy” which would work to instill a universal faith in rationality. Unlike the Anglican clergy and most of the English professoriate, Mill’s clerisy would propagate scientific method and political sociology, seen as the true science of society.<sup>52</sup> This

<sup>51</sup>Charles Krauthammer, “Jones Beach and the Decline of Liberalism,” *Time* (Sep. 5 1994): 82.

<sup>52</sup>Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

elite would arise in response to social need and to the spread of secular rationalism. It would train citizens to emulate its own rationality and bring them into fellowship with the advocates of social progress everywhere.

Cowling further argues that Mill's devotion to intellectual freedom was conditioned by his concern about "great minds" being crushed by mediocrity. Mill was less of a libertarian than someone looking out for the "highest natures," "noblest minds," and the advancement of scientific "truth." Note that Mill favored extensive state intervention in the economy and the ongoing redistribution of incomes. He also hoped that his own elite would take charge of the "general culture." It would thereby become possible to teach and apply his own utilitarian ethic, which Mill assumed would bring forth a new social morality. All enlightened citizens would eventually accept the utilitarian notion that the Good is that which maximizes general happiness. But, as Cowling perceives, the "highest end," which men here were imagined to pursue in quest of pleasure, was whatever Mill and his confrères desired for themselves. They never doubted that their own social preferences would come to prevail in a democratic age.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, Fitzjames Stephen and his younger brother Leslie Stephen, though both sagacious critics of Mill, did not fully see his authoritarian side. They did not grasp the "inquisitorial certainty" which Cowling exposes at the core of his method of inquiry. Nor did they appreciate the dogmatic way in which Mill generalized about subjects he had never studied: "Mill knew little in detail about the history of British society in the two hundred and fifty years before he was born. His denigration of its polity and religion was based neither on close observation nor on exact historical knowledge."<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Mill's liberal critics underestimated the power of his vision of a new clerisy crafting and directing a democratic order. However weak may have been his grasp of the past, Mill evoked a society of democratic planners which would arise after his death. His twisting of historical data and fudging of laws of human progress were of less significance than Mill's ability to

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1963), pp. 87–88; and J.S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (New York: Aris Press, 1995), p. 110.

<sup>53</sup>Cowling insists that Mill's conviction, as stated in *Utilitarianism*, that general happiness can best be advanced by making everyone rational and free of religious prejudice, undergirds his entire ethic. See Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, pp. 52–53 and Mill's *Utilitarianism* (New York: American Classical College Press, 1988), pp. 192–93.

<sup>54</sup>Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p. 145.

foresee mass democracy at work. No other mid-19th-century figure, including Tocqueville, exhibited such understanding of the dawning democratic age even if that understanding, as in Mill's case, was ideologically colored. And only one European liberal, Max Weber, revealed comparable insight in plotting the likely course of modern democracy. Unlike those liberals who trembled over the fate of property and parliamentary civility, Weber associated democratic life with the "iron cage of bureaucracy." Like Pareto, he was willing to entrust democratic government to plebiscitary leaders, but not because of the fear of anarchy, but because of his dread of bureaucratic despotism.<sup>55</sup>

In an oft-quoted letter from Weber to the sociologist of elites, Robert Michels, at the end of World War I, Weber questions the intelligence or honesty of those who exalt the "will of the people." He goes on to admit that "genuine wills of the people have ceased to exist for me; they are fictitious. All ideas aiming at abolishing the dominance of man over man are 'Utopian.'"<sup>56</sup> In 1918, Weber observed even more incisively: "In large states everywhere modern democracy is becoming a bureaucratized democracy. And it must be so; for it is replacing the aristocratic or other titular officials by a paid civil service. It is the same everywhere, it is the same within parties too. It is inevitable."<sup>57</sup> Despite the attempt by Weber's critics to attribute such remarks to the "anemia of German liberalism," what they indicate is Weber's deep perception of a secular trend: the intertwining of mass democracy and public administration as the shape of things to come.

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<sup>55</sup>Two of Weber's extended observations on the need for plebiscitary authority in modern democracy to circumvent bureaucratic tyranny are *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds., Ephraim Fischoll, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1, pp. 268–69; and Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, Harry Lohn, trans. (New York: John Wiley, 1975), p. 653.

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 87.

<sup>57</sup>Max Weber, "Speech for Austrian Officers in Vienna," *The Interpretation of Social Reality*, J.E.T. Eldridge, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 197. See also Roslyn Wallach Bologh, "Max Weber and the Dilemma of Nationality," in *Max Weber's Political Sociology*, Ronald M Glassman and Vatro Murvar, eds. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 175–86.