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Civil Society and Democracy in Nineteenth Century Europe:
Entanglements, Variations, Conflicts

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Abstract

It is ironic that the travelogue of a French aristocrat became one of the canonical texts of American democracy. Even today, American liberals and conservatives rely on *De la Démocratie en Amérique* to support their arguments and assume that Tocqueville's insights, including his conviction that voluntary associations are the bedrock of American democracy, are still relevant today. However, in a historical and transnational perspective, Tocqueville's famous passages in *Democracy in America* are as unexceptional as the American society of his time, given the enthusiasm for associative sociability by eighteenth and nineteenth-century practitioners of civil society in France, Germany, the Habsburg Empire and Russia. Revisiting the history of these "sociable societies" provides an answer to the question whether voluntary associations can be considered schools for democracy or not.

Zusammenfassung

Es entbehrt nicht der Ironie, dass der Reisebericht eines französischen Aristokraten zu einem kanonischen Text der amerikanischen Demokratie aufstieg. Noch heute berufen sich Liberale wie Konservative in den Vereinigten Staaten auf *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, um ihren politischen Argumenten Gewicht zu geben. Dabei gehen sie davon aus, dass Tocquevilles Analysen, insbesondere seine Überzeugung, die Grundlage der amerikanischen Demokratie beruhe auf ihren freien Vereinigungen, noch heute von Bedeutung sind. Aus historischer und transnational vergleichender Perspektive lässt sich aber feststellen, dass Tocquevilles Einsichten in *Die Demokratie in Amerika* ebenso wenig einen Sonderstatus einnehmen wie die amerikanische Gesellschaft seiner Zeit. Das zeigt die Leidenschaft der Praktiker der Bürgergesellschaft für gesellige Vereine in Frankreich, den deutschen Staaten, dem Habsburgerreich und Rußland im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Ein neuer Blick auf die Geschichte dieser ‚geselligen Gesellschaften' gibt Antwort auf die Frage, ob freie Vereinigungen Schulen der Demokratie sind oder nicht.

Inhalt

It is ironic that a French aristocrat wrote one of the canonical texts of American democracy. Even today, American liberals and conservatives rely on Alexis de Tocqueville's travelogue, published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840, to support their arguments. Sociologists and political scientists also assume that Tocqueville's insights, including his conviction that voluntary associations are the bedrock of American democracy, are still relevant today. Tocqueville marveled at the way Americans participated in countless associations, thereby breathing life into their democracy. This kind of civic activity was fundamentally different from what he observed in continental Europe.

Echoing the connection Tocqueville made between associations and democracy, the political scientist Robert Putnam was alarmed by the initial findings of empirical research that he published in his 1995 *Journal of Democracy* article "Bowling Alone." He found that although there were more American bowlers than ever before, fewer and fewer belonged to bowling clubs. Membership in associations as varied as the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, and the Freemasons had also sunk dramatically in the previous forty years, as had participation in local civic life. Only national organizations like the American Association of Retired Persons, which promote merely special interests and offer no sociability, continued to flourish.[1] Americans no longer go bowling together: they watch television, surf the Internet, and are represented by organizations with which they communicate exclusively by mail. For Putnam there can be no true democracy, but only a "couch potato democracy," if citizens do not participate actively in civic associations. Even the fact that Americans are increasingly willing to subsidize charities that benefit the community is, for Putnam, no substitute for social intercourse. "Social capital," that is, specific, measurable resources of civic life, which in turn build on social networks, norms, and trust, is more important for a democracy than individual acts of charity.

Putnam became a public figure almost overnight thanks to his thesis that twentieth-century Americans had lost the social capital they had accumulated by participating in voluntary associations since the beginning of the Republic. "Bowling alone" became a catchphrase, like David Riesman's "lonely crowd" of the 1950s or, more recently, Robert Bellah's "habits of the heart." These phrases were also the titles of best selling sociological studies that asserted that isolation and lack of public spirit endangered the polity. Since the publication of "Bowling Alone," Putnam, whose work had never attracted much attention outside academic circles, has become a public figure associated with the call to "reinvest" in social capital. His thesis not only provoked discussion, but also generated ambitious, quantitative

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[1] Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone: "America's Declining Social Capital," Journal of Democracy 6 (1995): 65-78; "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," American Prospect 24 (1996): 34-48, and, more recently, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community (New York, 2000). Putnam had already argued in his classic study of the difference in political culture between northern and southern Italy that democracy depends on the historical tradition of civic engagement through voluntary associations. Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton, N.J., 1993), esp. pp. 89ff.

research projects (one undertaken by Putnam himself and one directed by his Harvard colleague Theda Skocpol) that have produced contradictory results.[2]

This paper will not take up the question of whether or not Americans today actually participate less in voluntary associations. Rather, I will examine, in historical and comparative perspective, several of Putnam's (and his critics') underlying assumptions, assumptions that call upon Tocqueville and his understanding of American democracy and are essential in giving Putnam's empirical findings their putative political weight. In other words, I will historicize the argument, which has attained the status of a dogma, that voluntary associations and democratic governance are intimately connected. Accordingly, I will first revisit the argument as it appears in *Democracy in America*. Why did Tocqueville believe that voluntary associations were vital to democracy? How can we explain his passionate call for a political science concerned primarily with the study of associations? I will then place Tocqueville's thesis in the context of what might be called the "sociable society" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here, I seek to question the notion that the diffusion and popularity of voluntary associations is a unique feature of American society and democracy. On the contrary, I will suggest that Tocqueville's argument is intimately bound to a common European, transatlantic civic tradition and will illuminate the entanglements and variations in which this tradition manifested itself historically. Finally, I will contrast Tocqueville's thesis (as well as those of his current followers) with the history of civil society especially in the late nineteenth century when "club mania" reached its height. Can voluntary associations, from an historical perspective, be considered schools for democracy? Or does the call for virtue and common civic purpose accompanied by the associational enthusiasm inevitably create undemocratic practices, such as the social and moral disciplining of those who are not considered virtuous, which in turn provoke the formation of associations with different political imperatives?

I. Tocqueville as Analyst of the Human Soul in the Age of Democracy

Tocqueville discusses voluntary associations in both parts of *Democracy in America*, albeit in different ways. In the first part of his work, an analysis of the United States' political system, Tocqueville attributes to associations a significance that is widely accepted today and resonates within the work of Putnam and others. Americans, according to Tocqueville, resolve their social and political differences not by turning to the authorities but by establishing an association. In this way they take responsibility for their own lives and work toward the common good. Americans constantly form a bewildering range of associations, some of which, like the temperance associations, promoted goals that seemed quite strange to the French nobleman. Tocqueville identified freedom of association, even more than freedom of

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[2] Putnam, Bowling Alone; Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 29 (1999): 511-57; Theda Skocpol and Morris Fioring, eds., Civic Engagement in American Democracy (Washington, D.C., 1999); Theda Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy," Social Science History 21 (1997): 455-79.

the press, as one of the most important political rights. Despite some dangers which he attributed to the freedom of association, he recognized that it provided a defense against an even greater danger inherent in a democracy: the political tyranny of the majority.[3]

It would be misleading, however, to interpret Tocqueville's ideas as if he were an early sociologist studying political institutions, or to see his emphasis on associations simply as a call for more civic engagement and more levels of mediating power. Tocqueville was skeptical about democracy and hostile to the nascent sociological scholarship of his day, as Wilhelm Hennis showed in a brilliant essay twenty years ago. Tocqueville was looking for a way to prevent the separation between man and citizen and between individual and society. As Hennis puts it: "The relationship between man and citizen is the central problem in truly political thinking. By contrast, for sociologists, it is no longer a problem." This preoccupation set Tocqueville apart from his younger contemporary Karl Marx. "Tocqueville, much more realistically than Marx, could only see the elimination of the problem in the framework of an egalitarian democratic tyranny. The driving force of his intense, intellectual approach was to prevent the problem from being eliminated in this way."[4]

Tocqueville continued the tradition in classical political theory that investigates the impact a form of government has on its citizens and their virtue and measures the quality of the government accordingly. His primary concern was not just the political constitution of a polity but rather the "constitution of the souls" the polity produces. That is say, he was concerned with the social and moral basis of politics, an issue that contemporary political scientists tend to view as extrinsic to their field.[5] Tocqueville considered human feelings and the process of their formation more significant for politics than rationally thought-out rights and interests. He was convinced that "states were not defined by their laws, but rather from their origins by the feelings, thought processes, ideas, and hearts and minds of their inhabitants."[6] As an "aristocratic liberal," Tocqueville shared a skepticism about the coming democratic age with his contemporaries John Stuart Mill and Jacob Burckhardt.[7] He considered himself, in the words of Hennis, an "historian of the soul," an analyst of the order and disorder of human

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[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, 2000), p. 183.

[4] Wilhelm Hennis, "Tocquevilles 'Neue Politische Wissenschaft'," Aspekte der Kultursoziologie, ed. Justin Stagl (Berlin 1982), pp. 385-407, 390; Raymond Aron, "Tocqueville and Marx," in History, Truth, Liberty (Chicago, 1985), pp. 165-95.

[5] See the critical remarks in Herfried Münkler's introduction to his edited volume Bürgerreligion und Bürgertugend: Debatten über vorpolitische Grundlagen politischer Ordnung (Baden-Baden, 1996), p. 8; and "Politische Tugend: Bedarf die Demokratie einer sozio-moralischen Grundlegung?," Die Chancen der Freiheit, ed. Herfried Münkler (Munich, 1992), pp. 25-46.

[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, Letter dated October, 26, 1853, cited by Hennis, "Tocquevilles 'Neue Politische Wissenschaft'," p. 395.

[7] Alan Kahan, Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville (New York, 1992). "One person with a belief is a social power equal to ninety-nine who have only interests," wrote John Stuart Mill in his "Representative Government," cited by Brian Harrison, "The Rhetoric of Reform in Modern Britain: 1780-1918, " in Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain (Oxford 1982), p. 378.

souls in the age of democracy.[8] The decisive question for Tocqueville was how to avoid, particularly in a democracy, the impoverishment of citizens' souls that would lead to despotism.

Tocqueville thought that voluntary associations were an answer to this question. Therefore, the crucial passages about the importance of associations are found in the second part of his book, where he discusses the influence of democracy on the sentiments, mores, and manners of its citizens. This part of Tocqueville's work deals in particular with Americans' *emotional life* and its impact on politics. "Sentiments and ideas renew themselves, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed only by the reciprocal action of men upon each other," he writes. [9] This idea formed the basis of his political thought. According to Tocqueville, human interaction, which was subordinated to strict rules in corporate societies, must be artificially brought to life in democratic society.[10] "And this is what associations alone can do."[11]

Tocqueville believed that the most significant associations in this regard are those that remain purely sociable and exist to improve their members' mores and manners and to enrich their emotional lives. Such associations are much more significant than those that promoted explicitly political or commercial purposes, which Tocqueville discussed in the first part of *Democracy in America*. Only those associations that are seemingly nonpolitical and above special interests free their members from selfishness and create new bonds in modern, egalitarian societies. These are precisely the bonds (*liens*) that play such an important role in Tocqueville's political thought. "Among the laws that rule human societies," writes Tocqueville, "is one that seems more precise and clearer than all others. In order that men remain civilized or become so, the art of association must be developed and perfected among them in the same ratio as equality of conditions increases."[12] Conversely, the more the bonds between men loosen, the more the political foundation of democratic society erodes. The less citizens practice *l'art de s'associer* the greater the toll on their civility and the greater the likelihood that equality will degenerate into despotism.

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[8] Hennis, "Tocquevilles 'Neue Politische Wissenschaft'," p. 402.

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, 2000), p. 491.

[10] "People today, no longer attached to one another by any ties of caste, guild, or family, are all too inclined to be preoccupied with their own private interests, too given to looking out for themselves alone and withdrawing into a narrow individualism where all public virtues are smothered." Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution [1856], ed. François Furet and Françoise Mélonio (Chicago, 1998), 1: 87.

[11] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, 2000), p. 491. See, more generally, André Jardin, Tocqueville: A Biography (New York, 1988), pp. 101-278; Lynn L. Marshall and Seymour Drescher, "Americans Historians and Tocqueville's Democracy, " Journal of American History 55 (1968): 512-32; Sean Wilentz, "Many Democracies: On Tocqueville and Jacksonian America," in Reconsidering Tocqueville's 'Democracy in America', ed. Abraham S. Eisenstadt (New Brunswick, N.J., 1988), pp. 207-28; James T. Kloppenberg, "Life Everlasting: Tocqueville in America," Tocqueville Review 17 (1996): 19-36.

[12] Tocqueville, Democracy in America, p. 492.

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In an apocalyptic vision, Tocqueville describes a democratic society no longer supported by citizens' sociability: "I see an innumerable crowd of like and equal men who resolve on themselves without repose, procuring the small and vulgar pleasures with which they fill their souls. Each of them, withdrawn and apart, is like a stranger to the destiny of all the others: his children and his particular friends form the whole human species for him; as for dwelling with his fellow citizens, he is beside them, but he does not see them; he touches them and does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone, and if a family still remains for him, one can at least say that he no longer has a native country. Above these an immense tutelary power is elevated, which alone takes charge of assuring their enjoyments and watching over their fate. It is absolute, detailed, regular, far-seeing, and mild. It would resemble paternal power if, like that, it had for its object to prepare men for manhood; but on the contrary, it seeks only to keep them fixed irrevocably in childhood".[13]

Thus, according to Tocqueville, sociability is of the utmost political importance because it creates new bonds between individuals, bonds that an emerging democratic society destroys as it destroys the old corporate order. The "new political science," which Tocqueville intended to establish as the "mother science of democratic countries," was to concern itself primarily with the art of association. The progress of all other sciences, as he passionately—but without consequence for later scholarship—declared, depends on the progress made in this new science.[14]

It is this political connection between associations and civic virtue that neo-Tocquevillians today have in mind, though in a far more superficial sense than Tocqueville himself, when they lament the decline in voluntary associations.[15] When Putnam claims that membership in voluntary associations improves citizens' quality of life, he is referring to the practical advantages that will follow when communities attain high "social capital": incomes will be higher because individuals will have forged economic ties; there will be better education, better health, more security, and a lower crime rate. Putnam is not thinking of what Tocqueville believed to be the quality of citizens' souls—their civic virtue—as outlandish as this belief might seem today.

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[13] Ibid., p. 663. Tocqueville asserts dryly in the preface to The Old Regime and the Revolution, 1: 88, that even twenty years after the publication of Democracy in America nothing had occurred in the world that would have caused him to speak and think differently. Democracy continued to conceal the threat of despotism: "the average level of hearts and minds will never cease to decline as long as equality and despotism are combined."

[14] Tocqueville, Democracy in America, p. 492.

[15] See esp. Putnam, Bowling Alone, as well as, for example, Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument, " Dimensions of Radical Democracy, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London, 1992), pp. 89-107. For a more critical stance see the articles in Amy Gutmann, ed., Freedom of Association (Princeton, N.J., 1998), and, most recently, Mark E. Warren, Democracy and Association (Princeton, N.J., 2001).

## II.	The "Sociable Society" of the long Nineteenth-Century—from Boston to Saint Petersburg

Eighteenth and nineteenth century "practitioners of civil society" on both sides of the Atlantic never doubted the intimate connection between associations, civic virtue, and politics. Tocqueville was not alone in his views, and it was not just in American society that voluntary associations were prized and widespread. Rather, the emphasis on sociability and civic virtue can be seen as part of a specific pan-European, transatlantic discourse, and its attendant social practices, from the Enlightenment to the First World War. What follows is a preliminary attempt to understand the history of associative sociability as an exemplary case of an "entangled history" or "histoire croisée" that crosses national boundaries and challenges the nation state paradigm.[16]

Widely accepted arguments from social history and the history of political ideas run counter to this thesis. Stated in simple terms, the thesis claims that classical republicanism and civic humanism, with their emphasis on political virtue, traveled from Renaissance Italy to eighteenth-century America. By the end of the century, these concepts were replaced by the belief in progress and the pursuit of individual interests, which, by producing equality, ultimately conferred stability on a market society. However, the Aristotelian discourse on civic virtue was not replaced but *transformed* during the periods of the late Enlightenment and early liberalism. Sociability and moral improvement became the path to civic virtue and civil society, a transformation that occurred amid the sense of crisis that accompanied the revolutions of the late eighteenth century. "For Revolutionary Americans sensibility and sociability became modern surrogates for the classical virtue that theorists for millennia had thought necessary for sustaining a republican government," Gordon Wood has noted. "Some substitute for this ancient martial virtue had to be found, and many discovered it in what was increasingly perceived as the natural sociability, sentimentality, and politeness of people."[17] The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century took a variety of forms in the English speaking and continental European worlds. However, all of its manifestations shared a belief in what Kant described as the "unsocial sociability" inherent in human beings, their tendency to isolation and their need for association with others.[18] This anthropological understanding of civil society stayed within the Aristotelian tradition by connecting individual virtue and the common good. In their social interactions, human beings were supposed to acquire the social virtues they needed as citizens of a polity. Political theorists as well as lesser known practitioners of civil society stated over and over again that sociability led to "mutual improvement, for in-

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[16] See, most recently, Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen," Geschichte und Gesellschaft 29 (2002): 607-36; and, more generally, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Geselligkeit und Demokratie: Vereine und zivile Gesellschaft im transnationalen Vergleich, 1750-1914 (Göttingen, 2003).

[17] Gorden S. Wood, "The American Love Boat," review of Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America's Romantic Self-Image by Andrew Burstein, [New York 1999], New York Review of Books (October 7, 1999), as well as Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York, 1991).

[18] Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent [1784]," Basic Writings of Kant, ed. Allen W. Wood (New York, 2001), pp. 122-23.

creasing our knowledge and mending our hearts."[19]   Thus, classical republicanism and enlightened liberalism, which intellectual history sharply and unnecessarily separates, share the concept that the natural sociability of human beings—their ability to acquire civic virtue through association with others and to govern themselves according to the laws of reason— will counter the modern tendency toward individualism and its corrosive effects on the polity.[20]

This was Tocqueville's concern, and he was by no means alone. One only needs to think of his liberal contemporaries in southwestern Germany, Carl von Rotteck and Carl Theodor Welcker, editors of the famous liberal *Staatslexikon*, who articulated similar concerns in articles on *"Association*," *"Gemeinsinn*," (public spirit) and *"Bürgertugend*" (civic virtue).[21] They considered free associations "the source of all higher humanity and culture," grounded in an anthropological "drive for sociability" and divine providence. "Other creatures can satisfy their needs, protect themselves, and fulfill their destinies without a great deal of social interaction. Men can sustain themselves only through associations (that may vary widely in time, place, and circumstance) through mutual exchange of ideas, experiences, and abilities. It is in precisely these associations that men can attain a higher level of development as well as the necessary incentives and means to realize the richness and greatness of their potential."[22]

Like Tocqueville, Rotteck and Welcker regarded associations as a way to lead individuals out of selfishness and isolation. Consequently, they believed that public spirit was "the

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[19] Tristram Burges, Solitude and Society Contrasted (Providence, R.I., 1797), p. 19, cited by Peter Clark, British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World (New York, 2000), p. 413; as well as, among others, Lawrence E. Klein, Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1994); John Mullan, Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford 1988); Daniel Gorden, Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789 (Princeton, N.J., 1994).

[20] Similiarly, Kahan, p. 5f.; and Daniel Walker Howe, Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), pp. 10ff. For the notion of a sharp distinction between classical republicanism and liberalism, see, e.g., Joyce Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); and, of course, John G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton, N.J., 1975); and, especially, "Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought", Politics, Language, and Time. Essays on Political Thought and History (Chicago, 1989), pp. 80-103; for a good summary of the argument see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," Journal of American History 79 (1992): 1-38. For a comparative perspective see the contributions to Jürgen Heideking and James H. Henretta, eds., Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750-1850 (Cambridge, 2002).

[21] See, e.g., Paul Nolte, "Bürgerideal, Gemeinde und Republik: 'Klassischer Republikanismus' im frühen deutschen Liberalismus," Historische Zeitschrift 254 (1992): 609-56; also, more generally, Dieter Langewiesche, "Frühliberalismus und Bürgertum 1815-1849," in Bürgertum und bürgerlich-liberale Bewegung in Mitteleuropa seit dem 18. Jahrhundert, ed. Lothar Gall (Munich, 1997), pp. 63-129.

[22] Carl Theodor Welcker, "Association, Verein, Gesellschaft, Volksversammlung," Das Staatslexikon: Encyklopädie der sämmtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände, ed. Carl von Rotteck and Carl Theodor Welcker (Altona, 1835), 2: 21, 23.

most beautiful fruit of the spirit of association."[23] True virtue consisted in self-denial and a willingness to subordinate selfish interests for the common good. The article on "Bürgertugend" and "Bürgersinn" contains an even pithier formulation: "The art of all politics and political constitutions, all wisdom about a just and happy formation and preservation of a civil society, of civil life and rights, are worthless without civic virtue and its most important features: a sense of civility and civic courage. These constitute the lifeblood of civic associations. They would wither and die without them."[24] Civic virtue, like virtue in general, is promoted through "spiritual and moral development; education and practice; enlightenment, improvement and strengthening of the moral sense; and subordination of the selfish and immoral to the moral." The practice of virtue and sociability belong together in civil society. By contrast, absolutism leads to the moral degeneration of citizens; their virtue rots and decays. "Despotism, wherever it has thrived, has invariably led to selfishness, sensuousness, cowardice, and idleness, thereby corrupting the majority of its citizens, especially its civil servants."[25]

Numerous examples reveal such discursive links between classical republicanism and enlightened liberalism during the decades immediately before and after the turn of the nineteenth century. Even more surprising, these examples transcended the borders of the emerging national states of that time. One only need be reminded of the Masonic lodges of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which were without question a pan-European and transatlantic phenomenon. Recent studies depict a fundamentally different picture of the lodges than that presented in the well-known and influential studies of Reinhart Koselleck and François Furet.[26] The differences are especially noticeable in the interpretation of Masonic secrecy, a practice that appears so bizarre to us today. Koselleck and Furet, following Carl Schmitt and Augustin Cochin, considered the enlightenment morality of the Freemasons an emancipatory ideology of the Third Estate, the new middle class that assembled in the lodges to conspire against the state. In this way, Koselleck and Furet also explain the practice of Masonic secrecy. Secrecy opened up a protected space where middle-class Freemasons could claim a moral authority that ultimately questioned the political authority of the Old Régime. However, recent studies of western European and Russian Freemasonry contend that this interpretation does not take into account the Freemasons' self image and social practices; moreover, they argue that Koselleck and Furet cannot explain the popularity of the lodges in the English-speaking world.[27] In continental Europe the lodges attracted both the aspiring middle classes

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[23] Carl von Rotteck, "Gemeingeist oder Gemeinsinn," in Staatslexikon, ed. Rotteck and Welcker (Altona, 1838), 6: 448.

[24] Carl Theodor Welcker, "Bürgertugend und Bürgersinn," in Staatslexikon, ed. Rotteck and Welcker (Altona, 1846), first supplementary vol.: 748.

[25] Ibid., pp. 749-50.

[26] Reinhart Koselleck, Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society [1959] (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); François Furet, Interpreting the French Revolution (Cambridge, 1981).

[27] Margaret C. Jacob, Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe (New York, 1991); Douglas Smith, "Freemasonry and the Public in Eighteenth-Century Russia," Eighteenth-Century Studies 29 (1995): 25-44; and Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia (DeKalb, Ill., 1999); Robert Beachy, "Club Culture and Social Authority: Freemasonry in Leipzig, 1741-1830," in Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History, ed. Frank Trentmann (Providence, R.I., 2000), pp. 157-75; Steven C. Bullock, Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry

and the enlightened nobles, who together distinguished themselves from the "common people." The mystery-shrouded lodges thus did not serve as meeting places for an enlightened counter elite that rejected the monarchical state. Rather, they became "places of social compromise."[28]

Why, then, did the lodges place so much emphasis on secrecy? Secrecy was not intended to mask political ambition or conspiracy, but to create artificially a protected social space in which virtue, the key concept for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Freemasons, could thrive. This explains the popularity of Masonic lodges and secret societies in general in the United States after the 1840s—a fact that Tocqueville overlooked. Like Koselleck and Furet, Tocqueville understood secret societies as a consequence of the tension between state and society in continental Europe. Why then should there be secret societies in a democratic country with a weak state? Even in continental Europe, as Margeret C. Jacob has shown, Freemasonry preserved the characteristics that stemmed from the political culture of England and Scotland at the end of the seventeenth century. The French, Dutch, and German Masonic lodges "transmitted and textured the Enlightenment, translated all the cultural vocabulary of its members into a shared and common experience that was civil and hence political. Rather than imagining the Enlightenment as represented by the politics of Voltaire, or Gibbon, or even Rousseau, or worse as being incapable of politics we might just as fruitfully look to the lodges for a nascent political modernity."[29] Freemasons corresponded across state boundaries; when they traveled, they could visit lodges in other cities and thereby easily enter local society. Thus the political and moral language of the Enlightenment circulated throughout the cosmopolitan lodges, regardless of state and cultural boundaries.

The connection between virtue, sociability, and the improvement of society was fundamental for Russian Freemasons as well. They believed that the cultivation of virtue would protect society from moral (and therefore political) corruption, just as Tocqueville maintained. The practice of morals and manners, or *nravouchenie*, led to virtue. One way of achieving this was through the elaborate rituals of Freemasonry. "The lodge, therefore, occupied a privileged place in the social landscape of the public. Its inhabitants claimed both to possess secret knowledge required to attain virtue and to be the personification of virtue. This, less than the danger of state repression, accounts for the main function of Masonic secrecy. For through their actions, the Masons attempted to establish a hierarchy within the public based not on the nobility of one's family, nor on one's rank (*chin*), status at court, or wealth, but on one's proximity to virtue, having placed themselves at its pinnacle. The Masons saw themselves as engaged in nothing less than the construction of a new man, a man of morals and virtue who possessed the traits necessary for the maintenance of the social order and the betterment of the

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and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996). For a summary, see James Van Horn Melton, The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 252-72. For an excellent commentary on Koselleck and Habermas, see Anthony J. LaVopa, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," Journal of Modern History 64 (1992): 79-116.

[28] Daniel Roche, "Die sociétés de pensée und die aufgeklärten Eliten im 18. Jahrhundert, " in Sozialgeschichte der Aufklärung in Frankreich, ed. Rolf Reichardt and Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht (Munich, 1981), p. 115; and, in general, Les républicains des lettres: Gens de culture et Lumières au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1988).

[29] Jacob, p. 224.

common weal."[30]   This emphasis on the social value of virtue is not unique to the lodges. Rather, it is at the core of both the European Enlightenment and early liberalism and propelled the eighteenth and nineteenth century passion for associative sociability.

The lodges saw themselves in the eighteenth century and even more in the nineteenth century as "schools of civic virtue" in Tocqueville's sense. For example, one pamphlet circulated by a south German lodge in 1859 states that Freemasonry will accomplish "what neither the state nor the church can. It will increase and spread *inner* virtue and probity." Civil society could not command inner virtue "without becoming a judge of opinions and thoughts. This in turn would lead to the worst kind of tyranny and would be contrary to the true purpose of human society." Therefore, it was necessary to have social gathering places like the lodges, where individuals could "work the rough stone," their "inner sense of morality," "in order to promote the common good, which civil society could not bring about; to sustain wisdom, freedom, and virtue in their essential purity; to eliminate the divisions and rifts that the interests of states, religions, estates, and other accidental relationships have created so that men can be united once more through their common bonds and be governed according to the law of reason. According to this law we are *human beings* and nothing else."[31]   This moral and political self-understanding explains why the lodges stuck to their secret rituals during the nineteenth century, a period of increasing openness and publicity. They wanted to keep one place free from the conflicts of an increasingly democratic society, a place where virtue could thrive. This suggests why Masonic lodges and other secret societies did not disappear during the century after the Enlightenment, as Tocqueville and many of the historians who followed him expected. Rather, these organizations regained their popularity and importance in Great Britain, the United States, France, and the German states in the 1840s; in Italy and Austria-Hungary in the 1860s; and in Russia in the decade after 1905.[32]

The example of the lodges shows that a firm belief in the relationship between associations and virtue can be found on both sides of the Atlantic during the "long nineteenth century." Freemasonry formed a "sociable International" that spanned the globe from Boston to Saint Petersburg and from Copenhagen to Naples. It encouraged the exchange of ideas and opinions, practitioners and practices. However, Tocqueville attributed the sharp contrast between American democracy and the societies of continental Europe to the absence of volun-

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[30] Smith, "Freemasonry and the Public," pp. 35, 37.

[31] Pandora, oder interessante Mittheilungen über alte und neue Freimauerei, aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlasse eines Geweihten (Stuttgart, 1859), pp. 38-39.

[32] See, e.g., Philip Nord, "Republicanism and Utopian Vision: French Freemasonry in the 1860s and 1870s," Journal of Modern History 63 (1991): 213-29; and "Freemasonry," chapter 1 in The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Avner Halpern, The Democratisation of France, 1840-1901: Sociabilité, Freemasonry and Radicalism (Atlanta, 1999); Sudhir Hazareesingh and Vincent Wright, Francs-Maçons sous le Second Empire: Les Loges provinciales du Grand-Orient á la veille de la Troisiéme République (Rennes, 2001); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, Die Politik der Geselligkeit: Freimauerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft, 1840-1918 (Göttingen 2000); and "Nationalism and the Quest for Moral Universalism: German Freemasonry, 1860-1914," in The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to World War I, ed. Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (Oxford, 2001), pp. 254-79.

tary associations, in particular in France. The second part of *Democracy in America* is no longer a true travel book but a political theory of civil society. After he completed the first part of the manuscript, it dawned on Tocqueville that he was more concerned with the question of how equality affects the thoughts, feelings, and habits of citizens than he was about the specific manifestations of equality in American society.[33] His view of American society was one of a French aristocrat engaged in analyzing the dangers that democracy, which he thought would inevitably come, held for the old European social order. This vantage point prevented Tocqueville from perceiving the degree to which voluntary associations were already transforming the old regimes on the European continent at the very time he was writing *Democracy in America*. As a Parisian aristocrat, the sociability of local civil society in the French provinces, where voluntary associations were highly popular, was not part of his experience, nor even conceivable. Because Tocqueville was so preoccupied with the state, he could not understand the essential characteristic of voluntary associations: that they are rooted in local society. "Gentlemen's clubs, choral groups, learned societies and other associations were all predominantly provincial," as Carol Harrison has shown. "In the case of associative sociability, Paris was not the best vantage point for the observation of French society."[34] The fact that freedom of association was often restricted shows how uneasy the state felt about the sociable ambitions of its citizens, but it does not reveal the true extent of urban sociability. Maurice Agulhon's observation that throughout the nineteenth century a sociable society coexisted with a hostile state holds true not only for France.[35] Ironically, there is much better documentation for the activities of the voluntary associations in Europe than in the United States, thanks to dossiers kept by authorities suspicious of associations.

As in the case of the lodges, voluntary associations were a product of the language and practices of England's political culture. England already had large numbers of clubs and associations during the eighteenth century in addition to the familiar coffeehouses. For example, 20 percent of the male population of the town of Norwich belonged to a voluntary association in 1750. These clubs and associations spread to New England and to the continent towards the end of the eighteenth century.[36] On both sides of the Atlantic, the associations now served

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[33] Marshall and Drescher, pp. 523-24.

[34] Carol E. Harrison, "Unsociable Frenchmen: Associations and Democracy in Historical Perspective," Tocqueville Review 17 (1996): 41-42; and, in more detail, The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation (Oxford, 1999).

[35] Maurice Agulhon, Le cercle dans la France bourgeoisie 1810-1848: Etude d'une mutation de sociabilité (Paris, 1977).

[36] See, as essential to what follows, Philip Nord, Introduction to Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe, ed. Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord (Boston 2000), for Britain: Peter Clark, British Clubs; Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth-Century City (Leicester, 1986); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850 (London, 1987); John Dwyer, ed., Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland (Edinburgh, 1993); Jonathan Barry, "Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Associations and the Middling Sort," in The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550-1800, ed. Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (New York, 1994), pp. 84-112; R. J. Morris, "Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850," Historical Journal 26 (1983): 95-119; Class, Sect, and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, 1820-1850 (Manchester, 1990); "Clubs, Societies and Associations," in The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, ed.

as social laboratories for civil society following radical political upheaval and crises. Mary Ryan has called the period between 1825 and 1845 as the American "era of associations."[37] In the United States "men and women came together to form hundreds and thousands of new voluntary associations expressive of a wide array of benevolent goals—mechanics' societies, humane societies, societies for the prevention of pauperism, orphans' asylums, missionary societies, marine societies, societies for the suppression of vice and immorality, societies for the relief of poor widows, societies for the promotion of industry, indeed societies for just about everything that was good and humanitarian."[38] At the same time, a similar network of associations arose in France and Germany, which has been studied in detail only recently as part of the social and cultural history of the middle classes.[39] Even more suprising, associations mushroomed in societies that did not have a strong "bourgeoisie". In Hungary, for example, nobles like Count István Széchenyi initiated the founding of numerous Casino socie-

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F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge, 1990), 3: 403-43; Simon Gunn, The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914 (Manchester, 2000)

[37] See Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County (New York), 1790-1865 (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), p. 105; Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 58-93; "Civil Society as Democratic Practice: North American Cities during the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 29 (1999): 559-84; Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 192-229; John S. Gilkeson, Jr., "A City of Joiners: Voluntary Associations and the Formation of the Middle Class in Providence, 1830-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1981), and Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940 (Princeton, N.J., 1986); Richard D. Brown, "The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760-1820," Journal of American History 61 (1974): 29-51.

[38] Wood, Radicalism, p. 328.

[39] See, most recently, the excellent study by Harrison, Bourgeois Citizen, which corrects the older notion that nineteenth-century French society lacked a vibrant associational life. The standard History of Private Life, ed. Philippe Ariés and Georges Duby (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), for example, does not mention associations in its volume on the nineteenth century while it discusses Enlightenment sociability in the volume on the eighteenth century. The classic works of Maurice Agulhon discuss sociability primarily in the political context of the French republican tradition, see Agulhon, Le cercle, Pénitents et Francs Maçons de l'ancienne Province, 2d ed. (Paris, 1984), "Vers une histoire des associations," Esprit 6 (1978): 13-18; "L'histoire sociale et les associations," Revue de l'économie sociale 14 (1988): 35-44; and Étienne François and Rolf Reichardt, "Les formes de sociabilité en France du milieu du XVIIIe siècle au milieu du XIXe siècle," Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 34 (1987): 453-72; for a comparative perspective see Étienne François, ed., Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750-1850 (Paris, 1986). By contrast, much of the literature on early nineteenth-century German associational life was a by-product of the historiography concerned with the German Bürgertum. See Thomas Nipperdey, "Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert," in Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 174-205; Wolfgang Hardtwig, "Strukturmerkmale und Entwicklungstendenzen des Vereinswesen in Deutschland, 1789-1848," in Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland, ed. Otto Dann (Munich, 1984), pp. 11-50; David Blackbourn, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," in David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, The Peculiarities of German History (Oxford, 1984), pp. 159-292; Jürgen Kocka, "The European Pattern and the German Case," in Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell (Oxford, 1993), pp. 3-39; Dieter Hein and Andreas Schulz, eds., Bürgerkultur im 19. Jahrhundert: Bildung, Kunst und Lebenswelt (Munich, 1996); Gisela Mettele, Bürgertum in Köln, 1750-1870: Gemeinsinn und freie Assoziation (Munich, 1998), which is representative of many recent studies about the importance of civic life in nineteenth century German cities.

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ties on the model of clubs that he had seen during his travels in England.[40] Foreigners who emigrated to Russia, especially Englishmen and Germans, founded their own associations (first in Saint Petersburg) and opened them to the local elite. Other cities with large German minorities, such as Riga or Moscow, followed Saint Petersburg's example, as did Saratov later in the 1840s.[41]

"Moral improvement" and *Bildung*, *obrazovanie* and *émulation* were the terms used in different countries to express the political and moral objectives of sociability. Self-improvement, derived from social interaction, was intended to generate and strengthen a belief in civic virtue and, more generally, humanity. This belief often had Christian undertones. Tocqueville and many of his contemporaries believed that associative sociability derived its deeper meaning from the Christian ethic of brotherly love.[42] Only those who learned to govern themselves, their thoughts, and feelings in associations were capable of governing others. The purpose of the associations, similar to that of the lodges, was to pursue individual virtue as well as the common good, which were united in the ideal of what Lothar Gall called the "*klassenlose Bürgergesellschaft*" (classless civil society) so typical of the liberalism of the time.[43] French and German citizens during the early nineteenth century, like their American counterparts, believed that individual interests were by definition narrow and politically destructive. Only those capable of renouncing their own interests could open their "souls" in association with others and thus strengthen the bonds of civil society.[44]

The associations of the early nineteenth century, which at the time were primarily open only to educated and wealthy men, were intended to provide relief from the conflicts that arose in a man's profession, in his family, and in local politics.[45] They also clearly provided amusement in a socially respectable context. By joining an association, members became part of the sociable society, practicing civility and manly virtue and displaying those qualities to the outside community and their families in parades and public gatherings. "The club's rationale was an alternative to home life, where an ethos of fraternalism replaced the ties of family."[46] Naturally, associations also served social and political purposes. They blurred old social boundaries between nobles and bourgeois and created new boundaries between the upper and lower classes. The social practice of civic association, like liberalism more gener-

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[40] Robert Nemes, "Associations and Civil Society in Reform-Era Hungary," Austrian History Yearbook 32 (2001): 29.

[41] Lutz Häfner, Gesellschaft als lokale Veranstaltung: Kazan' und Saratov (1870-1914) (Vienna, 2003).

[42] Hennis, "Tocquevilles 'Neue Politische Wissenschaft'," p. 396; Kloppenberg, p. 30.

[43] Lothar Gall, "Liberalismus und 'bürgerliche Gesellschaft': Zu Charakter und Entwicklung der liberalen Bewegung in Deutschland," in Liberalismus, ed. Lothar Gall (Cologne, 1976), pp. 162-86.

[44] William Reddy, The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814-1848 (Berkeley 1997), p. xi; similiarly, Harrison, Bourgeois Citizen, p. 38; Mettele, p. 341.

[45] Anne Vincent-Buffault, L'Exercice de l'amitié: pour une histoire des pratiques amicales aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles (Paris, 1995), p. 217.

[46] John Tosh, A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England (New Haven, Conn., 1999), p. 129.

ally, produced "tolerance and intolerance—the elastic, always potentially inclusive aspects, and the continually contested and renegotiated exclusions which characterized it as well."[47]

It is, however, also clear that nineteenth century passion for association originated in large part from a political and moral understanding of the same problems inherent in civil society that Tocqueville had described so forcefully. Tocqueville's famous passages in *Democracy in America*, viewed from that perspective, are as unexceptional as the American society of his time. It is misleading to attribute political and social aims to the practitioners of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century civil society, aims that they would not even have been able to conceptualize. In their political language, informed by the early modern tradition, "*Bürgertum*" meant civic virtue and a sense for the common good. It did not refer to a socio-economic class and its political interests.[48] By analyzing the political language of the time, one can not only detect traces of classical republicanism in nineteenth century liberalism, but also liberalism's transnational framework. Only by abandoning social history's assumption that there is a close connection between the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class and liberalism as its emancipatory ideology can one understand the popularity of liberal ideas and practices within educated and elite circles in societies that lacked a strong bourgeoisie. One of the most common of these liberal ideas was the notion that one can improve society through sociability.[49]

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[47] Dagmar Herzog, Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Baden (Princeton, N.J., 1996), p. 83.

[48] See Nolte, "Bürgerideal," p. 628; as well as the semantic findings in Reinhart Koselleck and Klaus Schreiner, eds., Bürgerschaft: Rezeption und Innovation der Begrifflichkeit vom Hohen Mittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart, 1994); Reinhart Koselleck, "Three bürgerliche Worlds? Preliminary Theoretical-Historical Remarks on the Comparative Semantics of Civil Society in Germany, England, and France," in The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts (Stanford, 2002), pp. 208-17; Willibald Steinmetz, "Die schwierige Selbstbehauptung des deutschen Bürgertums," in Das 19. Jahrhundert, ed. Rainer Wimmer (Berlin 1991), pp. 12-40; Andreas Wirsching, "Bürgertugend und Gemeininteresse: Zum Topos der 'Mittelklassen' in England im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert," Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 72 (1990): 173-99; Dror Wahrman, Imagining the Middle-Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840 (Cambridge, 1995).

[49] See, e.g., Nemes; similarly for Russia: Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," American Historical Review 107 (2002): 1101. Some Polish historians of liberalism argue in the same way. See, e.g., Jerzy Jedlicki, A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization (Budapest, 1999) and Maciej Janowski, Polish Liberal Thought up to 1918 (Budapest, 2002).

III. "A Skat Club Is a Skat Club Even if it Calls Itself the 'Freedom Skat Club'": Associations and Democracy at the End of the Nineteenth Century

"Liberalism," as Reinhart Koselleck once observed, "is best described as a movement that consumed itself. That was the price it paid for success."[50] The history of liberal enthusiasm for voluntary associations is a case in point. The passion for association of the first half of the nineteenth century turned out to be only a prelude to the *"Vereinswut"* (*rage de s'associer*, association mania), as contemporaries called it, that characterized the two decades following Tocqueville's death in 1859. Voluntary associations grew ever more popular in the 1860s and 1870s as European and American societies overcame their different political and social crises. Associations now sprang up not just from Boston to Saint Petersburg, but also in the west as far as San Francisco and in the east as far as Kazan.

The end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery ushered in a "golden age of fraternity" in the United States. Secret societies like the Odd Fellows, the Druids, the Red Men (which admitted only palefaces), and the Good Templars flourished. The Masonic lodges and the Evangelical moral reform societies, which both originated in England, provided the cultural paradigm for these societies: "The plain citizen sometimes wearied of his plainness and, wanting rites as well as rights, hankered for the ceremonials, grandiloquent titles, and exotic costumes of a mystic brotherhood," as Arthur M. Schlesinger has observed. New types of associations emerged dedicated to specific purposes: leisure, gaining professional advantages, or fostering ethnic identities. Americans were already a "nation of joiners" during the half century before the Civil War; during the decades after the war, however, virtually all important social, economic, and cultural developments in American society can be understood in the context of the history of voluntary associations.[51]

The liberalization occuring in continental European states that were becoming increasingly national societies (or societies divided by nationality, as in the case of Austria-Hungary) was also related to the unprecedented growth of associations. Historians have not recognized the extent to which the association movement gained momentum after 1860 in the French and German provinces.[52] Germany became, like the United States, a nation of joiners. Belief in the intimate connection between sociability and civic virtue did not necessarily disappear as a result of the massive increase in less socially exclusive associations such as gymnastic organi-

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[50] Reinhart Koselleck, "Liberales Geschichtsdenken," in Liberalismus, nach wie vor: Grundgedanken und Zukunftsfragen, ed. Willy Lindner (Zurich, 1979), p. 37.

[51] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," American Historical Review 50 (1944): 15-16. See Mark C. Carnes, Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America (New Haven, Conn., 1989); Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism (Princeton, N.J., 1989); Lynn Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930 (Princeton, N.J., 1984).

[52] Patricia R. Turner, "Class, Community and Culture in Nineteenth-Century France: The Growth of Voluntary Associations in Roanne, 1860-1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1994); Klaus Tenfelde, "Die Entfaltung des Vereinswesens während der industriellen Revolution in Deutschland (1850-1873)," in Dann ed., pp. 55-114. Both works run counter to the older notion that voluntary associations experienced a decline after 1860.

zations. Rather, that belief was translated into a new language that appeared to capture the sentiments of the time. For example, an orator at a gymnastic competition in Dessau in 1865 said, "Associations constitute a preparatory school for *Bürgertum* [civic sense]. They allow the most beautiful civic virtues to blossom: self-control, manly discipline and modesty, friendship and devotion. In sociability the narrowly drawn boundaries of society are blurred; men become men (*Menschen*) and begin to see others as men."[53]

After the Habsburgs loosened the laws governing associations in 1867, the number of voluntary associations grew significantly in their empire. In Pressburg (Bratislava/Pozsony), with its Hungarian, German, and Slovakian citizenry, there were only eleven officially approved associations during the 1850s. By the 1870s this number rose to approximately eighty, encompassing more than eighteen thousand members.[54] The industrial city of Aussig (Ústí nad Labem) in northern Bohemia had scarcely any associations before 1860. By 1870 there were thirty two, and during the following decades this number doubled. These increases are representative of the growth of associations throughout the Austrian part of the empire.[55] Likewise, a vibrant associational life arose in Naples after 1860. Previously, there were only a few associations in Italy in northern towns such as Milan.[56]

In Russian provincial towns, local society was increasingly shaped by associations after the Crimean War and during the period of the "great reforms," the greatest being the emancipation of the serfs. In a multiethnic city such as Odessa there was already an "English Club" in 1831, but many new associations arose later—for instance, a German club called "Harmonia," a "Club of the Well Born," and a Jewish association known as "Beseda." The new local elite of Odessa businessmen, entrepreneurs and government officials met in these clubs and associations.[57] States now generally policed associations far less systematically, if at all. This holds true not just for Russia but also for Germany (in particular after the repeal of the law against socialism in 1890) and for Austria-Hungary.[58] Historians who do not look be-

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[53] Quoted in Svenja Goltermann, Körper der Nation: Habitusformierung und die Politik des Turnens, 1860-1890 (Göttingen, 1998), p. 102; for France Pierre Arnaud Les athlètes de la république: Gymnastique, sport et idéologie républicaine, 1870-1914 (Toulouse, 1987).

[54] Elena Mannová, "Middle-Class Identities in a Multicultural City: Associations in Bratislava in the Nineteenth Century" (paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Urban History: Cities in Europe. Places and Institutions, Venice, September 3-5, 1998); in general, Hannes Stekl, Ernst Bruckmüller, Peter Hanák, and Ilona Sármány-Parsons, eds., Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie, 2: Durch Arbeit, Besitz, Wissen und Gerechtigkeit (Vienna, 1992).

[55] Hans Peter Hye, "Vereine in Aussig (Ústí nad Labem), 1848-1914," Germanoslavica. Zeitschrift für germanoslawische Studien 2 (1995): 244.

[56] Marco Meriggi, Milano borghese: Circoli ed élites nell'Ottocento (Venice, 1992); Daniela Luiga Caglioti, Associazionismo e sociabilità d'élite a Napoli nel XIX secolo (Naples, 1996); Alberto Mario Banti, "Public Opinion and Associations in Nineteenth-Century Italy," in Bermeo and Nord, eds., pp. 43-59.

[57] Guido Hausmann, "Die wohlhabenden Odessaer Kaufleute und Unternehmer: Zur Herausbildung bürgerlicher Identitäten im ausgehenden Zarenreich," Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas 48 (2000): 41-65; in general, Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West, eds., Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia (Princeton, N.J., 1990).

[58] "The authorities were not in a position to monitor Russian associations because of the 'maloljudstvo' (understaffing). Years often went by before ministries realized that associations were not providing regular reports. As

yond a state's legal restrictions on associations miss the phenomenon completely, just like the overworked state authorities did. And while there were certainly fewer associations in the east than in the west, it is astonishing to see the degree to which similar types of associations and similar motives for forming associations transcended national boundaries. It is equally remarkable that the enthusiasm for voluntary associations occurred in all these countries simultaneously.

These common features are even more evident during the final wave of association formation, between the late 1880s and the outbreak of the First World War. Countries that already had a well-developed network of associations saw the number of those associations explode. For example, membership in secret societies rose to 5.4 million members in the United States alone. According to contemporary estimates, 20 percent of the United States' male population belonged to a secret society. A review of city directories of twenty-six North American towns proves that the late nineteenth century was "a time of unusually vigorous associational growth." The increase in voluntary associations at the end of the nineteenth century was especially apparent in small towns, just as it was at the beginning of the century. Proportionally, associations were less dominant in the rapidly growing metropolises.[59] In Europe too, there is much evidence that the enormous growth of associations around 1890 was predominantly a phenomenon of small and midsize towns. For example, a microethnological study of Weinheim, a small town located between Mannheim and Heidelberg, points to an unusually strong growth in voluntary associations after 1890.[60] Of the 275 associations formed in Roanne (northwest of Lyon) between 1860 and 1914, 90 percent arose after 1880 and 50 percent after 1900. As in other French provincial towns, the majority of these associations served social aims and not primarily political or special interests. Together, these civic associations formed the social backbone of the Third Republic.[61]

Even in those countries, especially Austria-Hungary and Russia, that had had relatively few voluntary associations, local society became more and more dominated by associational networks as the century drew to a close. For example, Prague's city directory lists seven hundred associations in 1890 but sixteen hundred in 1901. The German-Jewish writer Paul Lepin was able to assert that there was no distinct German population in Prague before 1914, just a group of German associations.[62] As in other parts of the Habsburg empire, associations now increasingly served political purposes, constructing ethnic Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, and

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a result, most associations were able to operate freely and without surveillance": Häfner, p. 181. Similiary for the Austrian Empire: see Hye, and for Germany, drawing on examples from the annual police reports in Leipzig since 1896, see Marven Krug, "Reports of a Cop: Civil Liberties and Associational Life in Leipzig during the Second Empire," Saxony in German History: Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830-1933, ed. James Retallack (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2000), pp. 271-86.

[59] Gamm and Putnam, pp. 514, 533.

[60] Heinz Schmidt, Das Vereinleben der Stadt Weinheim (Weinheim, 1963), p. 30; similiary for another German town: Rudy Koshar, Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), p. 96.

[61] Turner, "Class, Community and Culture," p. 4.

[62] Gary Cohen, The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914 (Princeton, N.J., 1981), p. 52.

Hungarians, national boundaries that were not in place before the advent of mass politics.[63] Yet, as Karl F. Bahm has shown, using the example of the German-Czech worker Wenzel Holek, individuals could still belong to both socialist *and* nationalist or German *and* Czech associations.[64]

As in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, associations in this period transferred ideas and social practices, which often originated in Britain, across national boundaries. It was not unusual for associations to have transnational ties, especially if they pursued common goals. Victorian reform societies, such as the temperance movement, even spread their message of virtue and alcoholic abstinence to Russia.[65] Russian society at the end of the tsars' empire was not simply an affair of the state. It possessed a public sphere of societal relations, described by the contemporary term *obshchestvennost'*. More than half of the 2,200 charitable organizations that existed in Russia in the early twentieth century were founded after 1890.[66] In 1897 there were 400 voluntary associations in Saint Petersburg, and by 1912 Moscow had 600. These included museum societies, which are regarded as the classic embodiment of the ideal that civility and moral improvement could by achieved through culture.[67] In Saratov there were only two associations before 1850, yet by 1899 there were thirty-seven and, by 1914 there were 111, ranging from an Esperanto club to a vegetarian society.[68] "With their very existence these societies contested the traditional right of the state to represent

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[63] Jeremy King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948 (Princeton, N.J., 2002). Czech, Slovak and Hungarian historical scholarship about associations in the Habsburg monarchy has primarily focused on their impact on the emergence of ethnic identities. See Zsuzsanna Török, "Free Associations in Dualist Hungary (1867-1914/18): Recent Approaches in Historical Writing," (unpublished manuscript, Central European University, Budapest, 2001). For a trenchant critique of the "ethnicism" implicit in much of the historiography of the Habsburg empire, see Jeremy King, "The Nationalization of East Central Europe," in The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present, ed. Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur (West Lafayette, Ind., 2001), pp. 112-52.

[64] Karl F. Bahm, "Beyond the Bourgeoisie: Rethinking Nation, Culture, and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe," Austrian History Yearbook 24 (1998): 25.

[65] Patricia Herlihy, The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late-Imperial Russia (Oxford, 2002), p. 8.

[66] Adele Lidenmeyr, Poverty Is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia (Princeton, N.J., 1996).

[67] Joseph Bradley, "Voluntary Associations, Civic Culture, and Obshchestvennost' in Moscow," in: Clowes et al., eds., pp. 131-48; and "Merchant Moscow after Hours: Voluntary Associations and Leisure," in Merchant Moscow: Images of Russia's Vanished Bourgeosie ed. James L. West and Jurii A. Petrov (Princeton, N.J., 1997), pp. 133-43; more generally, David Wartenweiler, Civil Society and Academic Debate in Russia, 1905-1914 (Oxford, 1999); Manfred Hildermeier, "Rußland oder Wie weit kam die Zivilgesellschaft," in Europäische Zivilgesellschaften in Ost und West: Begriff, Geschichte, Chancen, ed. Manfred Hildermeier, Jürgen Kocka and Christoph Conrad (Frankfurt, 2000), pp. 113-48; and „Liberales Milieu in der russischen Provinz: Kommunales Engagement, bürgerliche Vereine und Zivilgesellschaft 1900-1917," Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas 51 (2003): 498-548.

[68] Häfner, pp. 221-22; as well as the introduction to scholarship in Russian about associations in Irina N. Ilina, Obshchestvennye organizatsii Rossii w 1920-e gody (Moscow, 2000), pp. 10-33, and the contributions in Gesellschaft als lokale Veranstaltung: Städtische Selbstverwaltung, Geselligkeit und Assoziierung im ausgehenden Zarenreich, ed. Guido Hausmann (Göttingen, 2002).

alone the interests of the people," as the Russian historian A. S. Tumanova has noted."[69] Because twentieth century scholarship has focused so exclusively on the tradition of the authoritarian state, it has ignored the plethora of associations in central and eastern Europe before the First World War.[70] In contrast, scholars in the United States and Great Britain, which saw their countries in an unbroken liberal tradition, attributed paramount importance to the history of voluntary associations as evidence of that continuing liberal tradition.

A panoramic view from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century reveals a picture of sociable societies emerging within the *anciens régimes* of eighteenth-century continental Europe and spreading in density from west to east as the nineteenth century progressed. By 1914 virtually all of urban society in Europe revolved around associations even though the majority of its states were constitutional monarchies, not democracies. In the words of Agulhon, the trend in association formation was "multiplication, diversification, and, naturally liberalization."[71] In short, there was no decline in civic associations during the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, the sociable societies of Europe and the United States prove the contrary and bear witness to the transnational quest for social and moral improvement through association. That quest binds these societies much closer together than one would suspect given the nationalism of the time, or than the historiography of the post-1914 period, with its attempts to charge special paths to modernity, would seem to indicate.[72]

Yet, even as the spread of voluntary associations reached its apex, suggesting a triumph of liberal ideas and practices, criticism of the *Vereinsmeierei* (club mania) increased. These critics included not just Christian conservatives and radical socialists but especially liberals. Because the phenomenon of associations became so general, and because the number of associations exploded, it seemed difficult to maintain that associating with others promoted the political idea of improving mankind through the development of virtue and the sense of common good. The more widespread the phenomenon of associations became and the more it embraced previously excluded groups, the more unbelievable this claim, along with the reliance on the political power of virtue and civilization, became. "A Skat club is still a Skat club even if it calls itself 'Freedom Skat Club'," wrote Robert Michels contemptuously in 1906 when he surveyed what he considered the philistinism of the countless worker associations

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[69] A. S. Tumanova, Obshchestvennye organizatsii g. Tambova na rubezhe XIX-XX vekov (1900-1917 gg.) (Tambov, 1999), p. 133.

[70] Geoff Eley's remark on the historiography of the German Kaiserreich holds true for much of the literature on the Habsburg Empire as well: "If liberalism in Bismarckian and Wilhelmine Germany was such a broken reed, historians see little point in studying the emancipatory purposes of local associational life. If the main story was decline and degeneration of liberalism and the public sphere, then the value of looking at the associational arena tends to fall." Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), p. 299.

[71] Agulhon, "Vers une histoire des associations," p. 18.

[72] Two exemplary studies that correct in different ways a historiography that is bound to the national paradigm are Daniel T. Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); and Margaret L. Anderson, Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany (Princeton, N.J., 2000).

supposedly devoted to culture.[73] It was not the spirit of associations, therefore, that was in crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. It was rather the political and moral vision of a society built on associations, a vision Tocqueville had formulated so passionately.

It should be stressed that this disintegration of the claim to virtue, sociability, and moral improvement was a result of democratisation, not the converse. Worker associations in England and Germany that had served to promote social reform and moral "improvement" within the working class under the supervision of liberals evolved in the course of the century into an alternative culture that rejected liberal tutelage and conceived its own vision of mutual improvement through association. Workers used associations in turn to mobilize their political interests against the moral leadership demands of the liberal elite.[74] This trend also led to a change in social practices. Nineteenth-century associations had effortlessly combined practical advantages and *Bildung*, amusement and political interests. By the end of the century, however, a multitude of associations emerged that dedicated themselves to the promotion of just one of these purposes. Trade unions and political parties arose out of the associations and rid themselves gradually of the social and moral baggage of the sociable society. They now served only to represent special interests and mobilize political action. It was not just in England that working class associations like the "friendly societies" gave up all pretense of promoting sociability during the last third of the nineteenth century and began instead to function exclusively as insurance companies. Mass culture, which was just beginning to be dominated by commercial interests, promoted activities that transcended class, such as sport, for leisure. Sports also involved associations, but such organizations were devoted to physical ideals, not necessarily "moral improvement."[75]

European Catholicism, which was seen by contemporaries as the most fierce opponent of liberalism, turned to associations to protect itself from the secular state. It mobilized associations throughout society, reaching even the rural population, to promote its social purpose and political objectives. In this way it resembled the workers' movement. It was not just wealth or *Bildung* that determined who belonged to associations before they became democratized at the end of the nineteenth century. Religious affiliation and gender also played important roles; civic virtue was equated with both Protestantism and masculinity. Until the end of the nineteenth century, women were mostly excluded from respectable clubs, lodges or civic as-

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[73] Robert Michels, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie" [1906], in Masse, Führer, Intellektuelle (Frankfurt, 1987), p. 119. I am indebted to James J. Sheehan for bringing this quotation to my attention and for his careful reading of this essay.

[74] See, e.g., Richard N. Price, "The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Reform Ideology," Victorian Studies 15 (1971): 117-47; Marie-Véronique Gauthier, Chanson, sociabilité et grivoiserie au xixe siècle (Paris, 1992); Patricia R. Turner, "Hostile Participants? Working-Class Militancy, Associational Life, and the 'Distinctiveness' of the Prewar French Labor Movement," Journal of Modern History 71 (1999): 28-55; Vernon Lidtke, The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany (New York, 1985); Thomas Welskopp, Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz (Bonn, 2000); Victoria E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914 (Berkeley, 1993).

[75] P. H. J. H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875 (Manchester, 1961), p. 211; Peter Bailey, Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City (Cambridge, 1998).

sociations. To be sure, networks of womens' associations, which often promoted social and moral objectives such as charity and social reform, often in evangelical language, were already emerging by the early nineteenth-century from Boston to Saint Petersburg. However, by the end of the century they contested more fundamentally and with an international scope the claim by male sociability to represent moral, and hence political authority. Jews, who had long been excluded from equal participation in civic associations of Central Europe, were now more welcome or, with the rise of political anti-Semitism, formed their own associations, similar to that of the Masons, such as B'nai B'rith, which was founded by German Jewish emigrants in New York in 1843 and, after the 1880s, spread across Europe.

The particular political and social context of a society determined which minority was excluded from "respectable" sociability. But few barriers were as severe as those that excluded African Americans from white, middle class American associations. These remained closed even to free and "respectable" African Americans, who early on formed their own associations and secret societies. In 1818 an English visitor to Philadelphia wrote: "No respectability, however unquestionable, no property, however large, no character, however unblemished, will gain a man, whose body is (in American estimation) cursed with even a twentieth portion of the blood of his African ancestry, admission into Society."[76] Accordingly, African Americans in Philadelphia and elsewhere attempted to create lodges and associations that surpassed those of the white middle classes in respectability and civic virtue. The twin phenomena of social exclusion and growing competition in the moral claims that associations made promoted their proliferation throughout all the societies under investigation, while at the same time calling into question their traditional political and moral imperatives.

The belief in a connection between association and liberal universalism also suffered as a result of yet another Janus-faced liberal success, the rise of nationalism. The claim to represent the common good was already interwoven with the idea of the nation in the late Enlightenment and early liberal periods. Tocqueville claimed that the fatherland was both the strongest and most durable bond holding men together in a democracy. And Welcker (to cite just those examples referred to earlier) wrote in 1846 that dying for one's country was the highest civic virtue. This liberal claim would reveal its true meaning only later during the period of national wars.[77] It is well known that nineteenth-century liberal nationalism organized itself through associations. To the degree to which the sociable societies transformed themselves into national societies, however, appeals to nationalism represented conflicts within and between states rather than an abstract common good.

The universality of the association and its success during the century before 1914 rested, paradoxically, on the fact that civic associations incorporated both universal claims and special interests. Social historians have shown that associations represented the most important medium for developing and strengthening new identities in the nineteenth century. These identities could be national, social, religious, or gendered. Those new identities in turn set

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[76] Gary B. Nash, Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840 (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 226.

[77] Welcker, "Bürgertugend," p. 751.

their own, occasionally anti-liberal, agendas. "The proliferation of associations was not matched by a reinforcement of the *values* of civil society," as Adrian Lyttelton has observed for Italian society. The more plural the sociable society became in its composition, the more fragmented the claim of the liberal *Bürger* to represent society and to exercise political and moral leadership became.[78] To be sure, "the persistence of the association as a model for public participation in an age of nationalist political mobilisation guaranteed the survival of much of the liberal tradition, its modes of community decision-making, and its distinctive internal hierarchies, well into the age of mass politics". However, as Pieter Judson has also noted for the Habsburg Empire, "the gradual and ongoing integration of new social groups into the *Bürger* polity was bound to weaken the tight hold that the liberal elites had traditionally exercised over local social and political life through their positions in the voluntary associations."[79] The social democratisation and political diversification of associational life encouraged a turn to radical nationalism and "ethnicism" of the liberal elites (and not just those of Austria-Hungary) to reclaim their moral and political leadership, thereby renouncing much of early liberalisms universalist aspirations.

Skepticism arose not just about liberal ideas but also about social manifestations of liberalism like the practice of associations. That laws were passed guaranteeing freedom of association only in 1901 in France and in 1908 in Germany is not a result of a supposedly authoritarian character of the state, but rather a reflection of the fear French republicans and German liberals had of the political impact of associations, like those under the tutelage of the Catholic church, which did not promote "progressive" objectives. The proliferation of the enthusiasm for associations through all elements of society spawned a growing fear among liberals that society was losing its moral compass, which had previously been guaranteed by the liberal domination of associational life. Max Weber, for example, declared indignantly at the first meeting of German sociologists in 1910 that the modern, "last man" was "an association man (*Vereinsmensch*) to a horrible, unimaginable degree." "One has to believe this can not be surpassed since associations had been formed whose sole purpose was to eliminate associations."[80]

This quotation suggests that sociologists and political scientists, practitioners of scholarly disciplines that were just emerging in the late nineteenth century, were doubtful about the political and moral significance of associations. Despite, or rather precisely because of the mass expansion of the phenomenon, they did not take that significance for granted as Tocqueville and his contemporaries did. To be sure, the international left, from Petr Kropotkin to Eugène Fournière, discussed the political and moral value of associations and declared them

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[78] Adrian Lyttelton, "Liberalism and Civil Society in Italy: From Hegemony to Mediation," in Bermeo and Nord eds., p. 79.

[79] Pieter M. Judson, Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996), p. 265; as well as King, Nationalization; John W. Boyer, Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897 (Chicago, 1981); and Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918 (Chicago, 1995).

[80] Max Weber, "Geschäftsbericht," in Verhandlungen des Ersten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 19. bis 22. Okt. 1910 in Frankfurt/M. (Tübingen, 1911), p. 53.

to be kernels of ethical socialism.[81] Catholic conservatives, such as the French historian and sociologist Augustin Cochin, maintained that there was an intimate connection between the uncanny rise of mass democracy and associative sociability. That the first modern party in France, the *Parti radical, républicain et radical-socialiste*, evolved in 1901 out of the Masonic lodges seemed like an empirical proof for Cochin's thesis.[82] But it is striking how most sociologists and political scientists neglected the phenomenon or dealt with it just in passing. A typical example is James Bryce's *American Commonwealth* (1888), an attempt to rewrite *Democracy in America* for his time. Like Tocqueville, Bryce traveled around North America and collected his observations. But he was convinced that only an Englishman like himself or an American (and, by implication, no Frenchman) "can grasp the truth that the American people is an English people, modified by the circumstances of its colonial life and its more popular government, but in essentials the same."[83]

Bryce departed from Tocqueville not only in his jingoism. Positivistic belief in the infallibility of facts also informs *The American Commonwealth* and makes it difficult for today's reader to digest. While Tocqueville draws powerful conclusions from simple observations, Bryce dwells on his empirical material without offering much insight; while Tocqueville studies the Americans' elusive mores and manners to learn about the workings and hidden dangers of democracy, Bryce devotes over a thousand pages to a description of the political institutions of democracy (state and municipal government, political parties and national government). Tocqueville devotes two entire chapters to associations and emphasizes their political value in creating civic virtue and public spirit. By contrast, in the single paragraph devoted to associational life in his multivolume work, Bryce asserts in sober terms that associations offered practical advantages for the organization of special interests and in influencing public opinion.[84] According to Bryce, politics has nothing to do with morality and virtue. It has to do with hard facts that can only be determined dispassionately and objectively. Although Bryce often praised his distinguished French predecessor, he criticized Tocqueville's theory of democracy in devastatingly harsh terms: Tocqueville's "new political science" may have been stimulating, but it certainly was not scientific. The belief that virtue and politics were

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[81] Eugène Fournière, L'individu, l'association et l'état (Paris, 1907); Petr Kropotkin, Mutual Aid, a Factor of Evolution [1890-1908], ed. Paul Avrich (New York, 1972). Kropotkin describes his vision of associations in an article about "anarchy" for the Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed., 1910), 1: "Voluntary Associations . . . would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national, and international, temporary or more or less permanent—for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defense of the territory, and so on; and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs."

[82] See Cochin's posthumous published Les sociétés de pensée et la démocratie, Étude d'histoire révolutionnaire [1921], new edition under the title: L'esprit du Jacobinisme, une interprétation sociologique de la Révolution Française (Paris, 1979); and Fred Schrader, Augustin Cochin et la République Française (Paris, 1992); Halpern, pp. 390-423.

[83] James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, 2: 936, and "The Predictions of Hamilton and Tocqueville" [1887], in The American Commonwealth [1888] (Indianapolis, 1995), 2: 1546.

[84] Only one laconic sentence is devoted to associations in ibid., p. 1567: "The habit of association by voluntary societies continues to grow." On Bryce and Tocqueville, see the introduction, by Gary L. McDowell to ibid., 1.

hopelessly intertwined, together with Tocqueville's passionate and pessimistic tone, seemed to Bryce, and to many contemporary sociologists and political scientists from across the ideological spectrum and on both sides of the Atlantic, at best antiquated.

Max Weber is an exception. Deeply influenced by the sense of crisis that gripped fin de siècle Europe, Weber found new meaning in classical political theory's concern with civic virtue and sociability. Weber was concerned not just with an analysis of rationally organized capitalistic society but with modern society's effect on the "constitution of souls," on the "humanity of the individuals" (*Menschentum*) who belonged to it. In response to the critics of his *Protestantische Ethik*, Weber wrote: "My *central* interest was not the advancement of expanding capitalism. Rather, my concern was with the development of *humanity*, which was created by the intersection of religious and economic elements", a specific "ethical lifestyle," as he notes elsewhere, that was spiritually "adequate" for "the economic level 'capitalism' represented, and which proved that capitalism had conquered the human 'soul'."[85] Weber thus went beyond the positivistic spirit of the sociologists and political scientists of his day, even though he is considered to be representative of them today. His political concerns are also evident in his interest in voluntary associations.

Weber shared Tocqueville's understanding that sociability was fundamental. For Weber, it was not just a question of the expansion, interweaving, and composition of associations, but rather, a "question of how human behavior was generally influenced by the varying demands of membership in associations."[86] "How does belonging to an organization affect an individual internally?" asks Weber. "Does it exert influence on the personality as such? Which specific ideal of 'manliness' is cultivated deliberately or consciously or even unconsciously?" "What connection exists between an association (of any kind), from a political party to, and this sounds like a paradox, a bowling league, and what one would call a *Weltanschauung* in the most general sense?"[87] In short, what kind of man does civil society produce?

In his reservations about ordinary bowling leagues, which hold symbolic significance for Putnam today, Weber expressed his own skepticism as to whether evoking the connection between virtue and sociability was still in keeping with his time. In the end, "it was common practice that associations that originated in seminal ideas (*Weltanschauungsideen*) became mechanisms that contradicted their original purpose. This was a result of the 'tragedy' inherent in any attempt to realize ideas in practice." Furthermore, "every successful association shares the characteristic that as soon as it begins to develop its own machinery and starts to spread its propaganda, it will in a sense become banal and dominated by professionals (*Berufsmenschentum*)." It is these professionals who will, according to Weber, destroy politi-

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[85] Max Weber, Die protestantische Ethik II: Kritiken und Antikritiken, ed. Johannes Winckelmann (Gütersloh, 1978), pp. 303 and 55 n. 5, cited by Wilhelm Hennis, Max Webers Wissenschaft vom Menschen (Tübingen, 1996), p. 44.

[86] Cited from Marianne Weber, Max Weber, Ein Lebensbild [1926], (Munich, 1989), p. 428; similiarly, also, Weber, "Geschäftsbericht," p. 58. More generally, see Wilhelm Hennis, Max Webers Fragestellung (Tübingen, 1987); as well as Martin Hecht, Modernität und Bürgerlichkeit: Max Webers Freiheitslehre in Vergleich mit den politischen Ideen von Alexis de Tocqueville und Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Berlin, 1998), pp. 199-250.

[87] Weber, "Geschäftsbericht," p. 55.

cal virtue, and who will in the future inhabit the capitalistic social order. He writes passionately at the end of the *Protestantischen Ethik* that these "last men" will be "experts without spirit, hedonists without a heart."[88] Like Nietzsche, Weber identified this as the core problem of modernity: "How can we oppose this machinery to keep a part of humanity (*Menschentum*) free from the destruction of the soul that results from the exclusive domination of the bureaucratic ideal?"[89]

It may have been Nietzsche's influence that caused Weber to doubt whether voluntary associations promoted or hindered this politically dangerous "destruction of the soul." Nietzsche was mockingly contemptuous of the liberal belief in the political value of sociability. He drew a sharp contrast between his own "aristocratic concept of virtue" and the coming of mass democracy that was apparent in the spread of associations throughout all levels of society. When "last men" gather together like sheep in "sociable societies" and "democratic fatherlands," they lose their true political virtue, which requires isolation and a focus on individualism. In an era of massive associational growth, of "philistinism" and *Vereinsmeierei*," Nietzsche valued just one virtue: solitude. "Solitude is a virtue for us, a sublime tendency and impulse toward purity which inevitably guesses how impure relations must be when men come into contact with one another in society." Nothing seemed more absurd to Nietzsche at the end of the nineteenth century than the liberal conviction (based on faith in associations) that social interaction leads to civic virtue: "Every association breeds vulgarity—in some way, in some place, and at some time."[90]

Tocqueville believed throughout his life that face to face interaction in associations was the only way to thwart despotism and to ensure that it did not conquer the human "soul." Despotism walls people off in their private lives and takes advantage of their tendency to keep apart. "Their feelings toward each other were already growing cold; despotism freezes them."[91] However politically opportune a belief in civic virtue and sociability may seem today, historically, the consequences of such a belief were ambiguous. One of the pastimes of nineteenth-century practitioners of civil society was not just working for the common good but excluding and disciplining those who did not meet their social or moral standards.[92] Voting in nineteenth century associations was not just an exercise in democratic practice, but more often a mechanism for excluding those considered unworthy of the blessings of civil

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[88] Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, 9th ed. (Tübingen, 1988), 1: 204.

[89] Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik (Tübingen, 1924), p. 413.

[90] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," [1885] in Kritische Studienausgabe, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich, 1988), 5: 232. To be sure, this contempt for late-nineteenth century club mania is not a German or European peculiarity but can be found on both sides of the Atlantic as well. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nitzsche's American kindred spirit, for example, once wrote: "At the name of a society, all my repulsions play, all my quills rise and sharpen." According to Emerson, men join associations based on the principle: "I have failed, and you have failed, but perhaps together we shall not fail." Robert M. Gay, Emerson (Garden City, N.Y., 1928), p. 142; Ralph W. Emerson, Works (Boston, 1883-1887), 3: 252, cited by Schlesinger, p. 20

[91] Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution, 1: 87.

[92] Nord, Introduction to Bermeo and Nord, eds., p. xxxi; similiarly Harrison, "Unsociable Frenchmen"; Ryan, "Democratic Practice"; and Frank Trentmann, Introduction to Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History, ed. Frank Trentmann (Providence, R.I., 2000), pp. 3-45.

society. Therefore, Tocqueville's thesis that democracy is fundamentally connected to associations, a thesis frequently invoked today by friends of civil society, must be placed in historical perspective. How associations were constituted, what social and moral claims they made, and what occasionally unintended political results those claims may have produced must be examined more carefully.

Even though the nineteenth century was not a democratic age it was the century of democratisation. More and more segments of society participated in civic life through voluntary associations. However, a vibrant associational life could entail anti-democratic effects, something that became even more apparent after the First World War. It was not a lack of a civic tradition of associative sociability that gave rise to fascism in Italy or National Socialism in Germany. To the contrary, those political movements evolved out of the associational network of civil society.[93]

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[93] See, for example, Roger Chickering, "Political Mobilization and Associational Life: Some Thoughts on the National Socialist German Workers' Club (e.V.)," in Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 307-28.

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