

Reading Bonnell's book, two further questions in particular arise. First, how can his findings be related to the history of the divided labour movement in the Weimar Republic? While Bonnell's focus on socialist mass mobilization is of central importance, one could object that it tends to disregard the precursors of the SPD's split and failure in 1914, and, more important, at the end of Weimar Germany. Some parts of the book – the ones on prejudices against Polish workers (p. 52), on the socialist emphasis on war and comradeship (pp. 105–108, 125–126), on something like a specific German notion of work (pp. 62–67), and the orientation towards the *Volk* – indicate that nationalism and antisemitism also existed within the labour movement. Were these precursors marginalized by the uniting promise of a better socialist future? And did the promise's integrating force wane and the diverging ways of understanding it unfold their explosive power in 1918/1919 when the historical possibility to realize it was finally there? Chapter 8 points in that direction. It argues conclusively that there existed no concrete idea “about what a republic meant” (p. 196) but fairly discusses the anti-republican sentiments in parts of the labour movement and their impact on the failure of Weimar Germany.

Second, how were the SPD and the important themes around which it was centred influenced by the International, and how does the book's case study relate to labour movements in other countries? While Bonnell discusses the theory and practice of internationalism at some points (Chapter 2), he explicitly excludes comparative and transnational perspectives. As with any case study, this limitation reflects practical reasons. Nevertheless, it raises important further research questions such as: To what extent did the organized labour movements in other countries centre around the same topics, and in which way did they differ from the German case? Was there, for example, a unique German tradition in notions of labour and work? Future research on these questions can build on Bonnell's approach, by offering a similar thematic history of the labour movement in Weimar Germany and other national contexts.

These further questions notwithstanding, Bonnell's impressive monograph offers rich new insights for historians familiar with the field and can also serve as an introductory overview. Furthermore, Bonnell's study convincingly demonstrates that labour history is not just a specialized field, but highly important for modern German history; it offers crucial approaches to examining this interrelated history. This joint perspective should inspire further research on different issues such as the history of democracy and democratization, including the local and regional level of analysis. Since the book will be valuable to a large audience, it is only to be welcomed that an affordable paperback edition was published by Haymarket Books in October 2021.

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PHILIP, MARK. *Radical Conduct. Politics, Sociability and Equality in London 1789–1815*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2020. xi + 273 pp. £75.00. (E-book: \$80.00.)

It is well known that of the holy trinity of French revolutionary virtues, liberty, equality, and fraternity, the last remains by far the least well studied. Just why this should be the case is less clear. Perhaps the metropolitan English (under study here) are less inclined to the solidarity which fraternity implies than to more individualistic forms of sociability. Perhaps it is because the first two are abstract political concepts, while the third is primarily emotional, and harder to calibrate. A vastly greater array of evidence is also required to flesh out its multiple appearances. Yet, indisputably the passionate embrace of equality that the Revolution inspired in so many in England, and the challenge to deference this entailed, represented a new model of manners, as well as a revival of earlier forms of interchange. As in the seventeenth-century English revolution, the promise of equality unleashed a torrent of enthusiasm for similarity of dress, new modes of address, and new theories as to the ideal future both heralded. Unlike the previous century, however, Britain had now witnessed more than a century of material growth, and with it the onset of another passion, for luxury and distinction, which threatened to serve as a counterweight to revolutionary principles where these appealed to stoicism, Spartanism, and Rousseauist simplicity. Could the wealthiest nation in the world, and one of the most snobbish, convert to revolutionary sociability and a new culture of belonging, as defined by the new principles of equality, in literary circles, in coffee houses, in the street? It did not; but the effort remained.

Just how this process played out in London during the French revolutionary period is the subject of Mark Philp's latest study. Philp will be well known to readers as one of the most accomplished historians and editors of the political thought of the epoch. From his early study of Godwin's *Political Justice* (1986) through his account of Thomas Paine (1989) and his collection of Paine's writings (1995) to his edition of Godwin's writings (1992, 1993), to his study of *Political Conduct* (2007) and of politics and language in this period (2014), and his digital edition of Godwin's diaries (2012), Philp has proven to be an assiduous and talented interpreter of this most vibrant of periods in British intellectual, social and political history.

This volume augments this outstanding contribution by focusing on the London "middle orders" who made up Godwin's literary circle and others like it, men like Thomas Holcroft, and a great many women, including Mary Hays, Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Alderson, and Mary Wollstonecraft, who amongst others are given special attention here. For while not all the new radicals assumed that the rights of man meant practical rights for women too, female participation in political and intellectual debate was greater now than at any preceding period, and the new sociability was marked by a previously unknown frankness of interchange, made the more remarkable by the puritanical, Nonconformist upbringing of many of its protagonists. These women were the pioneers of the later feminist movement, and their forging of circles of friends is well detailed here. Some, notably the "unsex'd" Wollstonecraft, whose reputation would not be revived for a century, paid a heavy price for the role.

What novelties distinguished the sociability of the middle classes who came to age in the 1790s? The educated elite were hardly a cross-section of the wider society, or even of London's radical activists, for whose popular origins they had some contempt, sympathy for aspects of the revolutionary project being insufficient to bridge the traditional chasm between those inside and those outside the system. As the first part of the book indicates, disagreement was common even when a coalescence of opinions, especially in politics, was the expected result of "rational" and "candid" debate, where "candour" was expected to result in the conquest of "truth" by "error". Here, Godwin is central, not least in his bold frankness in acknowledging in a public memoir of his wife Mary Wollstonecraft the

social dangers of the new authenticity, which backfired so spectacularly in this case because of the candour with which he described their intimacy. Also important was what Philp terms the *leitmotif* of Godwin's *The Enquirer* (1797), the pursuit of equality in personal relations, the quest for which became central in his relationship with Wollstonecraft. The middle section of the book focuses on gender, and especially female perceptions of what the new equality permitted. The final section and chapter concerns music, dance and song, an underestimated but at the time still vital dimension of radical interaction, as the bonds of politics were cemented by forms of sociability which are now by and large lost to us.

Using Godwin's personal and public life as a template for discussing changes in Britain, or even London, across this period, has advantages as well as drawbacks, as Philp acknowledges. As perhaps Britain's foremost disciple of Rousseau, and the central hero (or villain) of the "New Philosophy", he had strong views about authenticity and sincerity of manners and conduct, which helps to tie him to revolutionaries on the other side of the Channel. His social circle was very wide, especially after *Political Justice* made him a cause célèbre, and earned him the discipleship of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and others. His reluctance to acknowledge the worth of outdoor political activism, however, cost him the friendship of John Thelwall, the most able leader of the London Correspondence Society, and cut him off from the Paineites, the most substantial group of reformers in the mid 1790s. This marked a divide between the more intellectually self-conscious new sociability of the elite and the more Jacobinical directness of the popular reformers. Occasionally both sides met in the emerging "public sphere", at least until the government suppressed political debate. Deeper ties between them were rarer. Godwin's "disinterested benevolence" could not reckon with the emerging class-oriented politics of the dispossessed, while his philosophical individualism clashed with the demands for a new collectivist strategy for artisans and manufacturers, whose outlook directly expressed their sense of their self-interest. Even traditional elite reformers like Horne Tooke found *Political Justice* "foolish".

Philp characteristically illustrates this variety of interchanges with a rich melange of citations from primary sources. More than in his previous works, he gives us a sense of the French Revolutionary debate as a personal and emotional transformation for thousands. Categories like "republicanism", which expressed political ideas also implied an outlook, mode of expression, and form of dress. The haughty arrogance, venality, and corruption of the elite were contrasted with the sense of a noble cause in which all mankind would be benefited by the newly defined unity of the dispossessed. The new sociability was as infectious as the excitement of the times, and as delightful: it afforded, at least for a time, until the establishment closed ranks again, a warmth across groups hitherto divided by their feelings of class difference. For a time, at least to a handful of Rational Dissenters, this political divide seemed breached by the prospect of a new world of deeper, truer, more intimate human relationships in which friendship would be cemented by a shared vision of truth. It was not to be, but the vision itself is no less noble for all that. It was too radical in its cultural politics, and in Godwin's hands too utopian, for the times, as former friends like Samuel Parr made clear when jumping ship to rejoin the establishment. The Godwin circle remains an ideal focal point for understanding these cultural fissures, and Philp expertly explores its many nooks and crannies, revealing a wealth of detail about Godwin's connections, successes and failures.

Just where all this new sociability was headed by 1815 remains unclear, but interesting. The New Philosophy was battered to death by its theological opponents in particular, for whom the entire project marked the death knell of civilization itself, an argument familiar to us today in the condemnation of liberalism as such by the far right. Its personal liberality,

particularly in sexual relations, was eroded by the evangelical reaction led by Hannah More, which swept across Britain initially in reaction to Paine, then to Godwin, and which did so much to define the Victorian ethos. How far it ever intersected with plebeian radicalism remains unclear. Did it mark the beginning of some notable nineteenth-century political affiliations, since the title of “comrade” was first used, alongside “citizen”? Or socialist sociability of the utopian republican type, where anti-urban belongingness was to become so central, as Owen visited Godwin some fifty times? Or another phase in the progress of “unsocial sociability”, as the gap between classes widened? Did it reflect a cultural revolution that prioritized personal over political transformation, and the eternal dialectic of private and moral reform as necessarily preceding political change, as would become evident again in the case of John Stuart Mill in the 1830s, and the revolutionaries of 1968 once more? Did it herald that ultimate erosion of deference to aristocracy and the Church which is not yet completed even in the twenty-first century? We have grown accustomed to thinking that such cultural revolutions do not result in the conquest of error by truth, whatever greater sociability they may produce. But in an age in which candour is ever more battered by blustering untruth, Philp provides a sobering reminder of the optimism of our forbearers.

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