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Civil Society

A Reader in History, Theory and Global Politics

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Contests over Civil Society: Introductory Perspectives

John A. Hall and Frank Trentmann

The last years of the second millennium saw the remarkable triumph of 'civil society'. Politicians repositioned themselves as friends of civil society; non-governmental organizations presented themselves as champions of a historic idea. The media disseminated its omnipresence. Such was the success of civil society, that its incorporation in academic grant proposals became an (almost) irresistible temptation. It became so 'universally talked about in tones that suggest it is a Great Good', *The Economist* observed in 2001, but 'for some people it presents a problem: what on earth is it? Unless you know, how can you tell if you would want to join it?'¹ Others started to complain of this cultural inflation and found it difficult to see 'how uncritical adoption and use of this term advances peoples' struggles for basic rights, for self-determination, liberation and decolonisation'.² What, then, to make of civil society: rediscovered thinking tool, emancipatory panacea, or new imperialism? A fundamental concept of civic education for pupils, scholars and politicians alike, or a confusion altogether, a mere multitude of competing tongues best kept out of 'serious' social theory and public policy?

This volume is a critical introduction to arguments about the nature of civil society – past and present. Significantly, the revival of interest in civil society has tended to reproduce rival and competing traditions, rather than to promote an open, critical engagement between different moments and traditions across time and space. Instead of avoiding disagreement or privileging one essential meaning of truth, this volume seeks to turn to good advantage the series of debates employing and contesting civil society in order to think about the attractions and limitations of this concept. These contemporary contests are, however, only the last in a series of historical debates over civil society. Rather than offering one tradition or the other, this reader is the first to offer a selection of central debates about the concept from sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe to contemporary debates across the world. Instead of a 'Whiggish' triumphalist account of the contemporary resurrection of a particular essence of the idea, this essay and this volume, then, offer a pathway to enter and re-evaluate civil society through its competing

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strands, strands that always combined anxieties as well as remedies for problems in human relations in the modern period.

This critical approach is complemented by a decision to broaden the frame of analysis in three directions. It looks beyond Britain, France and Germany to include imperial, post-colonial and transnational dimensions.³ In decisive places it moves beyond the received canonical texts to illustrate the contested nature of civil society at certain historical moments. And it places some select documents of the diverse practices within civil society alongside intellectual sources. Such a critical and comparative approach, we hope, will make for productive reading – and re-reading – for those advocates and commentators on civil society who come to the debating table with little, selective or dogmatic knowledge of the competing traditions and practices of civil society as well for those scholars whose interest in the history of the subject rarely engages with the shifting political terrain of its use today.

As in the late twentieth century, civil society moved to the centre of discourse in late seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe as a useful concept to think about problems of society and politics as well as to describe social formations. Its historical fortunes have risen and ebbed, seeing a social and global expansion in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, followed by challenges and crises resulting in its almost complete annihilation during the era of totalitarianism and cold war. These cycles structure this reader. What began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an argument about civil society *as* political society (pp. 26–30 Hooker, pp. 30–3 Locke), developed in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a series of competing ideas and practices about civil society as an independent universe, *distinct from* state and market. Civil society continued to be associated with the activities of government in some traditions,⁴ but was now complemented by an expanding sense of the relatively autonomous universe of civil society. How did civil society work, what produced it, what and who should be part of it? What are and should be its relationship to state and market? Did the European concept have universal characteristics and, if so, what were the obligations and policies for advanced societies to export civil society to colonial peoples?

These questions produced different answers from different thinkers and social movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This enriched normative and political debate was accompanied and fed by the unprecedented historic social expansion of civil society. As with the idea, the world of practice expanded at different speeds and rhythms in different countries but there can be little doubt about the massive proliferation of clubs, associations, reading societies, freemasonry and informal spaces of civil society in the modern period, stretching from Britain to Imperial Russia, and from American cities to German provincial towns.⁵ In the English town of Norwich in 1750, for example, every fifth male was a member of an

association. Some clubs were open to women. Freemasonry produced an international network, stretching from France with 40,000 members in 1789, including artisans and small traders, to administrative towns in Russia, where about 3,000 masons spread a new culture of philanthropy. This associational culture continued to expand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but by now the idea of civil society was beginning to lose its attraction and was placed under siege by more totalizing modern ideologies. The remarkable revival of civil society from the late 1970s onwards took place against the backdrop of totalitarian experience in Europe, dictatorship in Latin America and communism in Asia.

This volume is structured around the ebb and flow of the concept, giving due attention to the competing meanings in different settings, past and present. At the same time, it is also an invitation to think about the European and global expansion of civil society. Much of the literature in the field has tended to observe civil society within a particular society or to explore a particular dimension at one moment in time. This has benefits of depth, but for the advocate as well as student of civil society it risks a loss of perspective on the changing overall contours of the civil society debate. Recent comparative studies and the debate over 'global civil society' prompt a more kaleidoscopic approach. Our purpose in this introduction is to map the characteristic tensions within a field of discourse, showing their presence and salience across time and space. The contests over civil society can be fruitfully viewed in terms of anxieties about difference, strains of commercial society, fears of totality and dependence, and the tensions between theory and praxis.

Anxieties about difference

The new mobilization of civil society in seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Europe, beyond the inherited classical framework of *societas civilis sive res publica*, occurred at a moment of anxiety, not confidence. The religious conflicts and tensions culminating in the reformation and counter-reformation in sixteenth-century Europe led to a more thematic exploration of the nature and claims of civil society as public government vis-à-vis rival theocratic claims of sovereignty by some protestant sects and Papacy – a question at the centre of Hooker's writings (pp. 26–30). The experience of war and civil wars across seventeenth-century Europe produced an even greater and more wide-ranging debate and conflict about how to cope with difference – difference between sects, ideas, and social groups. The eighteenth century is famously known as the age of enlightenment, but it is equally important to notice that, although diminishing, fears of conflict and of emotions and extremism running wild – beyond the scope of social or self-discipline – never altogether disappeared. Indeed, much of the growing emphasis on civility, on polite manners and the self-disciplining effects of

living in civil society, can be understood as a way of coping with anxieties.⁶ The pursuit of civility and the growing purchase of civil society as a way of viewing society here fed into each other. Civil society provided a language and a code of moral behaviour. Conversely, historical actors' pursuit of civility raised the standards, criteria and prominence of civil society as a model of integrating social relations peacefully. Open physical violence or confrontation became less acceptable as middling groups raised the norms of civility and the state acquired a monopoly of violence.

Much of this dynamic revolved around shifting attitudes to the possibility and limits of religious toleration. Yet the relative success of toleration in some European societies should not be viewed entirely as a culturally pre-determined transformation or some sudden act of enlightenment on behalf of rulers and ruled. Arguably, one factor in the more tolerant atmosphere was the unintended consequence of great power politics. Perhaps the most fundamental consideration to be taken into account in this regard was the inability of any side in the great European wars of religion to triumph absolutely over its rival. The political and social import of stalemate is beginning to be recognized by social and political theorists.⁷ Bluntly, when one cannot triumph over a rival, the alternative of putting up with each other begins to suggest itself. This consideration should not distract attention from more specific mechanisms. In Britain after the revolution of 1688, for example, William III needed the political and fiscal support of dissenters and Catholics.⁸ Still, at the most general level, domestic toleration was the beneficiary of international violence between states, especially the imperial conflict between Britain and France in Europe and North America.

This is not of course to say that commentators and actors were without vital and interesting ideas about mechanisms concerning violence and fanaticism internal to society. Dominique Colas's important *Civil Society and Fanaticism* traces some of these debates back to Luther, and then to Leibniz and Spinoza. Particular attention in our volume focuses on the high-powered difference of opinion between Hume and Smith, close friends and intellectual allies, uncharacteristically at odds on this occasion – albeit about means rather than ends. Both Hume and Smith loathed fanaticism. Hume was all too familiar with the power of the Presbyterian establishment that had blighted his chances for employment. Hume's argument is characteristically brilliant, and of very great interest since it sees him wobbling at a crucial juncture (pp. 37–43). At first sight his hope is for a diminution of enthusiasm within the established church – that is, the slow creation of a respectable pillar of society in which parsons, bishops and presbyters cease, as in the novels of Jane Austen, to be overly concerned with matters of belief. But Hume then argues against himself. The retention of an established church was not in itself desirable, for its adherents would never be friends to civil liberty. True friends to liberty were those who had experienced sectarian fanaticism, and progressed beyond it. Smith's position is wholly different.

Sectarian fanaticism could be controlled by the market principle. Let sects compete with each other, for in so doing they would block dangerous enthusiasm in general.⁹

If Smith had these fears, it is as important to note that he had hopes as well. Civil society within his work is best seen as a medium for forging new bonds of solidarity or for teaching new forms of discipline – especially if the social psychology described in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is read prescriptively rather than descriptively. The fact that we hate to be disturbed, especially by the pain of others, makes us wish not to disturb others – for we learn to judge our actions as if they were seen by a ‘universal spectator’. Self-command and other-direction accordingly rule the day. Civility, orderliness and manners matter in this world, and most certainly militate against any unbridled assertion of the romantic self.

The social and cultural realities of eighteenth-century polite society reflected the advancing emphasis on civil behaviour and the growing preoccupation, indeed obsession, with fostering virtuous behaviour and sensibility, but also fears of passions and sociability spinning out of control. Already Hooker had emphasized sociability as a key characteristic of civil society (pp. 29–30). The prescriptive advice circulated in new journals like the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* in the early eighteenth century offered the middling classes a blue-print to try out new recipes of self-command, sensibility and sympathy (pp. 53–5). The Victorian discourse of the two spheres has clouded a sense to which this earlier eighteenth-century culture of sociability had also opened new social spheres for women.¹⁰ As Millar’s influential writings show, civil society could be seen to advance in tandem with a greater regard for women and their social and intellectual contribution to social life (pp. 55–60). Not all commentators, however, embraced the new world of clubs, associations and coffee houses with equal optimism. Many an eighteenth-century commentator made fun of the cult of clubs, an attitude well captured in the account of the ‘Farting Club’ (pp. 69–70). The *Female Tatler*, moreover, worried that coffee houses and the culture of sociability made men effeminate and undermined the virility of the British nation. In France, men mixed with women in conversation, giving them a knowledge of the world; in Britain, ladies were sent off to talk amongst themselves about domestic decorative goods (pp. 60–1).

The concern with fanaticism underlying the eighteenth-century debate about sects and toleration is as present in current debates. The classic statement here is Gellner’s account of the ability of Islam to resist secularisation (pp. 268–71). Gellner’s argument was stated well before the emergence of fundamentalist Islam,¹¹ but it gained widespread prominence as the result of the politics of Ayatollah Khomeini and of Islamic fundamentalism more generally. But his view has been subject to widespread criticism. Norton’s selection in this volume is representative of thinkers who believe that those wishing to change the character of Islam, from a public religion of Godly

rule to one of private consolation, will eventually win out.¹² A rather different and highly original critique is that of Varshney, quick to note the presence of a traditional and much criticized binary opposition between 'tradition' and 'modernity' within Gellner's account (pp. 271–5). Varshney's central contention is that there is far more civility within 'traditional' societies than is often realized. Whilst this carries weight, one wonders nonetheless whether a distinction ought to be drawn between tolerance before and tolerance after the entry of the people onto the political stage. It may be that the full meaning of the civil society is in the end best reserved for the latter.¹³

In current debates about the prospect of civil society it has been tempting to contrast such religious dimensions of social life in the East with a more secular history of civil society in the West. Such a contrast is debatable and disguises the ideological filtering of civil society in many liberal traditions. Canonical figures like Hume or Smith cannot be read on their own but need to be placed in the context of a rich on-going debate with competing versions of civil society. One such tradition, and perhaps the most widely disseminated and institutionally strongest version in eighteenth-century England, was an Anglican vision of an organic unity between civil society, established Christianity (Anglicanism) and monarchy. Here civil society was an essential arena of social trust and political stability, but always premised on the virtues provided by established religion. Next to Edmund Burke (pp. 96–9), the Rev. Thomas B. Clarke's sermon is a typical example of this tradition which made up the majority of titles concerned with civil society in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Social trust and reciprocity required a belief in the Supreme Being, for, as Clarke argued, 'surely he who despises his sacred duties towards the divinity, will not regard his social ones towards man.' (p. 50) Lack of faith promised '[w]ars perpetual, dissensions eternal, robbery universal.' (p. 49) Religion, not nature, produced a belief in social justice, these Anglican proponents of civil society argued.¹⁴

Even for Locke, the argument for civil society had a significant religious basis and offered a bounded sphere of toleration. Practical reason and Christian belief were inseparable. Atheism, Locke feared, would dissolve the functioning of practical reason, a reason that included fear of the avenging God and human obedience to His Law that was the Law of Nature.¹⁵ Nor did the secular component necessarily gain in the Western evolution of civil society. In the nineteenth century, associational life was instilled, even inspired, by evangelicalism and pietism, and expanded into a transnational imperial network through missionary societies (pp. 119–28). Far from being marginal, abnormal or pathological, then, religion played an integral role in the historical evolution and exportation of European civil society. The spiritual influence in civil society movements in Central and Eastern Europe in the last few decades is not a novel development but part of this longer pattern.

Strains of commercial society

The great transformation causing these anxieties was the accelerating expansion and new dominance of commercial society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Christian tradition of political theory in the West had of course produced a culture of distrust for money-making as a distraction from the care of one's soul. But the new world of commerce posed an unprecedented challenge to the received tradition of republicanism, which stressed the virtue and virility of civic-minded propertied citizens as vital sources for the maintenance and defence of public life and community. Did commerce threaten to sap the sources of this virtuous civic culture, or might it produce new sources of social solidarity as well as political strength?

In one subtle political argument civil society emerged in favourable alliance with this new world of commerce. Montesquieu (1689–1755) offers a way to follow this tightening connection. *The Persian Letters* makes much of the personal freedoms – especially for women – of the fashionable world of Paris, whilst *Considerations on the Greatness of the Romans* shows virtue to be both militaristic and so strenuous as to be hard to maintain. The 'douceur' of commerce, its moral and civilizing effect on social and international relations, is the theme of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748; pp. 71–5 below). Commerce advanced civil society by breaking through 'the barbarism of Europe'. Commerce here appears 'a cure for the most destructive prejudices', both creating 'agreeable manners' within communities and fostering peace between them. Trade created conditions of mutual dependence and facilitated an interest in and curiosity about different cultures. Or as popular radical supporters of Free Trade in the nineteenth century would put it more bluntly: a shopkeeper does not keep a handgun under the counter to shoot his customers. With the evangelical revival, the secular argument for the *douceur* of commerce now began to mobilize Christian thought. Had not God created a world of different climates and resources so as to encourage humans to engage in peaceful exchange?

Yet, Montesquieu's new endorsement of commerce came with strong qualifications. Commerce could strengthen or weaken public life depending on the nature of government. Montesquieu made an important observation that has been all too easily forgotten in de-politicized liberal and neo-liberal approaches to this question: the spirit of commerce united nations and individuals in different ways. Where people were moved only by the spirit of commerce, it left behind societies where 'all the moral virtues' ended up for sale. In monarchies, the connection between merchants and public affairs left behind a culture of distrust. It was only in 'free states', that is republican governments which had a vibrant culture of civic virtue, that commerce provided 'safety'. Writing against the background of international wars and rivalry, there is a sense here that nations had a choice: they might preserve their independence in the form

of territorial autocratic monarchies but it could also be generated by a more open and commercial nation. Montesquieu turned to England to find a society that had taken 'advantage of each of these great things at the same time: religion, commerce, and liberty.'¹⁶

The dominant critic of this appreciation of commerce's civilizing potential was Jean Jacques Rousseau, perhaps the greatest of all modern representatives of the tradition of civic virtue. What mattered for Rousseau was less the lack of social solidarity brought by civil society than the psychic misery and social dependence that it inevitably entailed. Rousseau took to task writers who had told of a linear, triumphant progression from a barbaric and vicious state of nature to civil society. Far from being a site of oppression and human misery where people were unfree and 'continually cutting one another's throats to indulge their brutality' (p. 75 below), the state of nature was marked by equality amongst people unpolluted by luxury or notions of power and servitude.¹⁷ It was civil society, with the introduction of private property and an increasingly competitive pursuit of commercial gain, that introduced base motifs of domination and imitation. Before civil society, people could be happy with themselves; in civil society, they became slaves to the conventions of social tastes and habits and their happiness depended on the testimony of others: 'the savage lives within himself, while social man lives constantly outside himself, and only knows how to live in the opinion of others.' (p. 79 below) The vision of freedom in civil society, in other words, was far from free but embedded in power and involving the loss of independent consciousness.

Commerce was an important conduit of this social pathology. Commercial society promoted unprecedented social differentiation – the proliferation of specialized tasks and skills and the transgression of inherited social orders. For most social thinkers what mattered here was a general feeling that atomization would undermine social order. This argument lies at the back of Hegel and Marx. It is equally present in the mind of Smith. In a beautiful and profound passage in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, mixing social observation with social theory, (pp. 79–84 below), Smith accepts part of Rousseau's position, which he knew well, but in such manner as to go beyond Montesquieu's already diffident acceptance of the world of commerce. Smith had little doubt about the new culture of consumption unleashed by commerce on social groups, high and low. People had become obsessed with acquiring a seemingly infinite number of 'trinkets', 'frivolous objects' and a 'multitude of baubles'. The new commercial cultures of consumption made completely new people, changing their habits, appearance, their identity and interactions.¹⁸ 'All their pockets are stuffed with little inconveniences', Smith observed. They even 'contrive new pockets, unknown in the clothes of other people, in order to carry a greater number.' (p. 80 below) The poor aspire to the comforts of the rich. Civil society is like a hamster-wheel where individuals are in an endless race for higher status and distinction. Only at

the end, 'in the last dregs of life', does the disappointed individual find that 'wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquillity of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys.' (p. 81 below). Some eighteenth-century observers, like 'Mrs. Crackenthorpe', warned of the dangerous consequences of this civil society in action, with its new public spaces and its obsession with ever more refined 'tea-cups, sugar-tongues, salt-shovels' (p. 61 below) and the like: British society was losing its strength as men were becoming effeminate in coffee houses and women were being packed off to tea parties. Smith's view was more subtle and highlighted the paradoxical workings of civil society. Individuals might have become locked into a status-seeking game paying more regard to what 'the spectator' thought than their own free will. Yet, from the perspective of civil society as a whole, this 'deception' also had virtuous consequences. For it was 'this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind' (p. 83), leading to new technologies, better and more food, and communication between peoples. Competitive status-seeking and the pursuit of greater wealth also, Smith argued, carried a built-in mechanism for social harmony: being able to fantasize becoming rich made the poor person accept a culture of social inequality, rather than opting for violence or anarchy. Commerce and consumption, in short, created and stabilized a civil society.

The debate about the relative costs and benefits of commerce for civil society was not resolved by the irreversible transformation created by industrialization. Far from it, attention to industrial society created new anxieties about pauperism and the loss of community and self in a society structured around profit, markets and a division of labour. Hegel projected the social consequences from a market society into the future and turned to corporations as a way of reinstating ethical life (pp. 129–35). This projection, again, should be read as documenting fears of depersonalization rather than as evidence of material social transformation. But it was Marx who took this debate one step further, building, as is well known, on Hegel, but also drawing on Ferguson's emphasis on the social and civic costs arising from the division of labour. Modern society, for Marx, had not only fragmented a civic community by destroying an (admittedly idealized) organic unity of civic virtue and economic interest (pp. 135–8). It produced a split identity of the self. The economic creation of the bourgeoisie had been complemented by the political creation of the citizen in the French Revolution. In civil society, the rights of man, proclaimed by Tom Paine and revolutionaries in France and elsewhere (pp. 99–102), did not go beyond egoistic man. The French revolution dissolved the old society, but the freedom it granted was limited: man received the freedom of property and the freedom of trade, but was not freed from property or materialism as such. The self had become divided: abstract universal citizen in politics and materialistic individual in civil society. Full human emancipation, Marx argued, required

the overcoming of this division and the recognition of personal forces as social forces.

There is of course a huge difference between Marx and western Marxism; that is, between a great theorist expecting a revolution for broadly materialist reasons and those descendants who explained the failure of a revolution to occur by stressing, not altogether in the spirit of the master, that cultural co-optation of one sort or another had, so to speak, unmanned the working class. If the earliest of such thinkers was Lukacs and the most extreme Marcuse, the most important for our purposes was Gramsci.¹⁹ Social life was structured quite as much by belief as by hard realities for Gramsci, with revolutionary fervour being undermined by the 'hegemony' of ruling ideas that existed within civil society (pp. 186–90). Still, the difference between Marx (and then Soviet Marxists) and western Marxism does not in the most crucial sense really matter. For both schools wished to end atomization and to restore the unity of mankind. Perhaps the greatest of all critiques of what it meant to live under regimes that sought to remove the differentiation of civil society so as to re-create a simple and unified solidarity was that penned by Leszek Kolakowski, the great historian of Marxism who lived for many years in communist Poland before being forced into exile in the West. In conditions of social complexity inherent in any industrial society, simplicity can only be achieved through brute force – a brute fact which promises that any such programme is self-defeating (pp. 206–9).

Late twentieth-century discussions show the on-going ambivalence about the pairing of commerce and civil society. Should commerce and markets be viewed as integral to civil society, or as a sphere of profits and materialism that distracts from a purer, more deliberative and higher ethical plane of civil society? Where today's commentators stand with regard to this question has as much to do with the intellectual and cultural traditions they bring to the rediscovery of civil society as with the material realities of the economy in their respective societies. Thus the normative model of deliberative politics developed by Jürgen Habermas remains sceptical of the commercial world of consumption long criticized by his Frankfurt School teachers (pp. 222–6). From a more communitarian perspective, American commentators like Robert Putnam have viewed media culture as a key source of a weakening civic life in the United States (pp. 227–31). For Michael Sandel, media and consumer markets are potential forces of disintegration, stretching people's more manageable sense of belonging to distinct communities (pp. 196–9). Similarly, Havel's plea for 'living in the truth' was directed not only at a post-totalitarian socialist regime but also written from within a deep suspicion of the ethical consequences of mass consumption. These intellectual traditions, then, drew on an older critique of consumer society where consumers were pictured as passive, unfree servants of corporate firms and culture industry – an approach that ignored the many ways in which consumers have at times been 'active' and emancipatory agents in

civil society, fashioning new identities for themselves and others in the process.²⁰

It is easier to be critical of markets when one has the benefit of living with a market system of provision, and one reason for the sometimes passionate and idealistic embrace of markets by many civil society champions in Eastern Europe was precisely that markets held out an attractive counter-weight to the power of the state. Critical voices pointed out that such appeals were often inflated and down-played the sources of social solidarity under socialism (pp. 203–6, Hann). Yet, in market-based societies too, past and present commentators have highlighted the frequent (though far from automatic) synergies between commercial development and civil society. Conscious and organized consumers have often been at the forefront of social activism and civic engagement, from cooperatives, British Free Traders, and consumer leagues in America and Europe in the generations before the First World War, to more recent transnational consumer activism.²¹ Far from being some pure autonomous sphere, John Keane argues, global civil society was in part fuelled by the transnational energies of turbo-capitalism (pp. 287–92).

The current debate about the nature and future of 'global civil society' is an opportune moment to recall the earlier international dimension of this problematic relationship between commerce and civil society. After Montesquieu's 'douceur of commerce', a cosmopolitan strand of ethics emerged from within the lodges of freemasons and texts by writers like Kant that searched for ethical transnational bonds beyond the bonds provided by commercial exchange. For Kant, civil society became an attractive frame for administering *universal* justice (pp. 93–5). It is not necessary, however, to imagine a stark contrast between cosmopolitan unity in civil society and social separation in traditional society. As Lessing makes clear in his Masonic dialogues, freemasonry always divided as well as united different people (pp. 43–8). Civil society offered people a way of thinking beyond states, communities and ranks, but this did not mean that commentators were blind to the fact that division was an integral component of civil society: 'It cannot unite men without parting them.' (p. 45) Freemasonry was diversified just as civil society was.

It would be a mistake to project onto civil society a linear view of a growing awareness of cosmopolitan ethics and peace. Rather, the debate about ethical bonds uniting people in different states developed alongside a debate about the implications of commercial civil society for the military demands of states. Civil society might be nice, but how would political communities be able to survive and exert their will in an increasingly commercial world? The selections from Ferguson and Gibbon amount to an exchange about the necessities for military defence. No thinker is more ambivalent about the new world than Ferguson in his great *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (pp. 83–8). His approval of a world of polish and refinement in which virtue is no longer, as it was for the Spartans, the business of the state breaks down

when confronting questions of defence and service to the community. Commerce, polish and refinement will make us soft, and so unable to defeat nomads and tribesmen, trained by the adverse conditions of peripheries to be fit and blessed with military skills. His worries are all too easy to understand: Highlanders had, after all, marched through Edinburgh in 1745. Nonetheless, Gibbon countered this view, despite his admiration for Roman virtue (pp. 88–92). The world had changed. Riches now allowed us to buy weapons of such effectiveness that nomadic conquerors would never again be able to destroy the centres of civilization. That is by and large the view held by our own generation. Or is it? Did not the assault on the Twin Towers of New York on September 11th demonstrate the military effectiveness of outsiders? If history has not yet seen fit to answer that question, one can at least say that the outsiders in question believed commercial society to be soft and weak.

Paradoxes of totality

The revival of interest in the notion of civil society in the twentieth century has a particular flavour, somewhat removed from the fears of atomization and social decay noted in earlier historical moments. What has come to the fore now is a reaction to ideologies of all sorts that seek to make the world whole. Jean-Paul Sartre's account of Marxism made much of its totalizing ambition, and it is precisely this quality that is in question here. What is at issue takes us back to Rousseau, that is, the desire to re-create – or perhaps to create – unitary selves in a world in which self and society merge seamlessly into each other. Indeed, a similar position can be traced to a heated and bloody confrontation in Reformation Europe in the 1530s–50s when Luther, Melancthon and Calvin rallied to the defence of civil society against those millenarians who believed they could overcome the gulf between civil society and the City of God.²² It was modern totalizing ideologies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that sought to erase differences on this earth. In contrast to Sartre's emphasis, Marxism was not the only totalizing philosophy of the modern world. Equal attention should be given to the ideas and practices of at least two other forces: nationalism and liberalism. There is no want of literature on nationalism and liberalism but, interestingly, these subjects have rarely received the recognition they deserved in relation to the changing dynamics and spaces of civil society.

Instead of positioning civil society straightaway opposite fascism and socialism, it may be helpful to broaden the question, to ask about the more general pressure put on civil society – as a concept and practice – by the rise of new modern ideologies. This has the additional advantage of proceeding with a more appropriate temporal perspective on the transvaluation and declining significance of civil society, for it makes us look beyond the era of the two world wars. Clearly, the tremendous suffering caused by the

social and ethnic projects of fascism and socialism was the backdrop for the more optimistic retrieval of civil society in the 1980s–90s, but this does not tell us much about the history of the crisis of civil society leading up to the inter-war years. Fascism and socialism combined in an attempt to finish off civil society. Leninist policies and Lenin's rejection of the rights of man were a brutal version of Marx's earlier critique of the split of man into citizen and bourgeois (pp. 135–8, pp. 180–2). Neither was very squeamish about the use of violence to overcome this perceived duality and restore totality. Yet totalizing programmes confronted a concept of civil society that had already become a weak player, softened by the changing use and potential in modern ideologies and increasingly losing its earlier more autonomous strength. Guild socialism and pluralism gave civil society a new flowering at the turn of the twentieth century (pp. 155–73), but this was a short-lived spring in a generally much harsher climate which saw the overall decline of civil society as a moral and intellectual project in the second half of the nineteenth century. Liberal imperialism and nationalism left their imprint on civil society.

If liberalism provided an arena to explore representational aspects of democracy for civil society, especially at the level of local self-government, it also worked as an expansionist framework in which civility and imperial mission operated in tandem. James Mill reveals the tensions at work. Here was a liberal utilitarian whose long-term hopes for Indian society were informed by a stark opposition between the advanced moral, physical and institutional culture of British civil society and the barbarous, rude and litigious habits of the Hindu. Civil society here required trust and reciprocity, which required modern law. As a liberal mission for exportation, civil society therefore required legal and institutional transformation as well as cultural uplifting. Communities, and the natural environment in which they lived, needed acts of social reconstruction to become the realm of civil society, through the exercise of power as well as persuasion.²³ It would be wrong, however, to see this process only in a one-directional manner. Imperial administrators also returned from India to Britain with new knowledge and questions that could make them challenge a civilizing equation between property-rights and a society based on contract.²⁴ At the same time, there can be little doubt that colonizers and colonized had uneven positions of power in this relationship. Liberal Christian imperialism was less pluralistic than many earlier forms of European power and conversion, such as that of the Jesuits. Missionaries' optimistic visions of building a new society of brotherhood in the early nineteenth century gave way to a bleaker more racialized view of biologically inferior subjects in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁵

These imperial sources are usefully read alongside more recent post-colonial writings. For they show that civil society cannot be located exclusively within European nation-states. Civil society contained an expansionist

imperial strand which placed metropole and colony as interactive and dependent settings within the same framework. For the current debate about which societies have the historical qualifications for becoming a member of the civil society club, this means that it is problematic to invoke some exclusive European advantage. The imperial nature of many European states meant that civil society left its impact on non-European societies whether they wanted it or not. For the more recent debate about civil society in former colonies, this has had conflicting repercussions. The imperial flavour of earlier confrontations, made for a good deal of scepticism, even suspicion, leading some post-colonial writers to look to community rather than civil society. Anti-colonial nationalism refused to accept membership in a 'civil society of subjects' and opted instead for its own narrative of community, as suggested in Chatterjee's work (p. 284). Emphasizing the contradictions of Western civil society and arguing against a holistic dichotomy between metropole and colony, the Comaroff's have argued that attempts to retrieve the idea of civil society for Africa need to locate the uncivil dimension of colonization against the specificities of local histories (pp. 279–83).²⁶

Nationalism was a second ideological and social project that changed the trajectory of civil society. As a concept cherishing difference, civil society can be seen as the opposite of nationalism and, as we have already noted, new ideas of cosmopolitanism and new transnational networks were one strand in the modern history of civil society. Yet we should not ignore that in some contexts nationalist ideas also presented themselves as the natural and appropriate expression of civil society. The selection from Sieyès already reveals the desire for a common, unitary social will (pp. 102–5). Nineteenth and early twentieth-century European history generalized this desire. The use of civil society for the preservation of difference now moved into new terrain. Instead of a pluralist embrace of different ethical or normative positions, difference could now mean protecting different social classes and nations against a drift of flattening uniformity. Civil society was endorsed as the natural setting of social hierarchy and separation of distinct national cultures. 'Civil society in a rich nation is always an aristocracy, even under a democratic constitution,' (p. 139) emphasized Heinrich von Treitschke, the liberal nationalist historian and advocate of a Prussian-led united Germany. Civil society here stood in opposition to social liberal and social-democratic ideas of full civic participation, social mobility, and deliberative politics. Social democracy represented 'unpatriotic cosmopolitanism.' Civil society preserved national consciousness and power. Its pillars were property, piety and patriotism. Much had been made by earlier writers on civil society about property as a starting point in the history of civil society – Locke importantly included property of life and person in his definition. For Treitschke, property now functions not only as a defensive position against social redistribution, but as a resource of national identity, pride and cultural

diversity against a homeless, globalizing homogeneity: 'out of love to the inherited domestic four posts arises the noble pride of love for the fatherland and the certainty that the multi-faceted richness of national civilization shall never be replaced by the same old dull routine of a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie [Weltbürgertum].' (p. 139) Treitschke looked backwards to Aristotle to legitimize civil society as a frame stabilizing social relations and state power alike by keeping 'the masses' in their place, preventing class antagonism, and fostering respect for the nation-state.

There was already a good deal of suspicion of popular democracy in this national-liberal appropriation of civil society – the 'masses' were not fit for government.²⁷ The next two generations saw a more profound, decisive assault on the participatory and deliberative traits of civil society. The attempt to exclude the people from the political arena came to an end. But the mobilization of the masses was not managed on liberal democratic lines; on the contrary, dislike of liberalism pervaded the intellectual and social atmosphere of the time. Parties were attacked as vehicles of sectional interest, not instruments of deliberate reasoning bringing out a higher rationale of civil society. Both Lenin and Schmitt had little trust in different groups being able to reach peaceful agreement through plurality and reasoning (pp. 180–2; 182–5). Accordingly, both bolshevism and fascism offered versions of the truth to which the people should be led – the key implication being that those who would not accept the truth were nothing less than traitors. The cult of leader appealed to this non-deliberative, organic imagery of the popular will, as evident in bolshevism as in fascism.

If reactions to the French revolution had begun a move toward national awakening, geopolitical competition then suggested to many state elites that a more homogeneous citizen body would increase the functional capacities of their states. This was certainly true of late Tsarist Russia, hopeful that Ukrainians could be turned into Russians proper so that a multinational empire could become a classical nation-state. The fact that states fought over their peoples, that conflicts between homelands and minorities structured politics, did much to create those fears of disloyalty that made ethnic cleansing such a popular force in Europe's dark twentieth century. This is the world in which, as Perez-Diaz put it, the state became a moral project (pp. 193–6). If social and national unity were state tasks, so too was the need for economic development – the final social force in question. The intermingling of such forces took various forms. If Hitler and Stalin between them did much to homogenize the populations of Eastern Europe in the midst of war, both were so deeply attractive to their supporters because their great moralities promised to give unity and meaning to life. Furthermore, both led to imitative strategies elsewhere. Communism is perhaps best seen as a late development strategy in general, but authoritarian nationalism equally laid claim, especially in Latin America, to be a successful late development strategy.

Life within authoritarian states armed with a moral project became in time unbearable. Kolakowski's writings in the mid-1970s are a particularly eloquent and high-powered account of why this is so (pp. 206–9). In conditions of social complexity, attempts to create unity between self and society must involve coercion – and, one can add, of nations quite as much as of classes. The world of civil society is accordingly one of diminished ambition, a world which seeks softness rather than absolute truth. This is nicely emphasized here by Walzer, who has approached civil society as a project of projects (pp. 209–12). Civil society here becomes a determination to live with differences. It is a common agreement, a consensual matter, that difference cannot be avoided.

Certain implications follow from this. To begin with, the post-communist prism of anti-totality helps to sharpen our view of earlier anxieties about state power. The Elizabethan theologian Richard Hooker had been among the first systematically to explore civil society as political society and its relationship to the independent claims of religious groups like Calvinists and Papists. Here civil society was a social and political response by individuals, fearful of violence, delegating the protection of their interest to a 'civil regiment' or governing institutions (pp. 26–9). By the time of John Locke, a century later, the argument for civil society had broadened into a consideration of a government abusing its powers and into an argument for the right of resistance. Civil society was now mobilized against totalizing regimes like absolute monarchy. For Locke, civil society was still a political society, but not all political societies (such as absolute governments) were civil societies (pp. 30–3). Here was the paradigmatic birth of the modern anti-totalizing uses of the civil society argument.

The tremendous expansion and ideological legitimization of state power in the late nineteenth century saw a fresh emphasis on the social spaces and social character of citizens. 'What we actually see in the world', J.N. Figgis observed on the eve of the First World War, 'is not on the one hand the State, and on the other a mass of unrelated individuals; but a vast complex of gathered unions, in which alone we find individuals, families, clubs, trades unions, colleges, professions, and so forth', all groups that exercised functions 'which are of the nature of government.' (p. 161) Debates about collectivism, socialism and 'mass society' produced a variety of attempts to protect civil society against centralizing state tendencies or collectivism. The answers advanced by different European thinkers and social reformers reflected the ways in which different national traditions viewed state, liberalism and commercial society. In France, Durkheim argued that the state was simply too far away from the modern individual for any connection leading to moral integration to be established; equally, the family had become too small a unit to allow general integration within a society for a modern society with division of labour. Balance in society dependent upon the creation of a mid-level within society that, for Durkheim, prevented the

atomization of society by market forces. Professional organizations, that is, a modernized guild system, would be able at once to incorporate the individual whilst being of sufficient size to speak to and to be taken seriously by the state (pp. 173–9). In Germany, Gierke was more critical of guilds as compulsory associations and favoured a more organic image of community (pp. 155–60). Tönnies used the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* und *Gesellschaft* to draw attention to the different modes of ideas and practice between exclusive social systems and more open, inclusive and market-oriented civil societies (pp. 152–5). But this distinction, though real, should not be overdone; for Tönnies the two systems were not sequential, one replacing the other, but co-existed.²⁸ Cattaneo's focus of concern was slightly different. Nation-state formation could create such homogeneity as to squeeze out minorities. Accordingly, he sought to find a better balance within society by championing federal arrangements (pp. 163–8). Differently put, political arrangements could be created which would further democracy in the fullest sense, by creating a frame within which national differences could be respected – and not extirpated by the false democracy wherein a simple majority could establish its own tyranny. The enemy for the guild socialists was rather different, namely the bureaucratization of the world envisioned by the Webbs.²⁹ Socialism has indeed always been somewhat schizophrenic, being drawn alternately to the poles of liberty or efficiency. Cole represented a move towards the libertarian end of the spectrum (pp. 168–73). Any full consideration of his work must note, however, his ultimate inability to create a truly plausible constitutional arrangement for the society he so much wished to bring into being.

Furthermore, there is a world of difference between a liberal tradition stressing difference and civility and a republican tradition of civic virtue always hankering after a degree of unity – or, indeed, Anglican, conservative and national uses of civil society equally concerned to create unity between church and state or between classes and nation. For consensus, albeit limited in scope, lies at the heart of liberalism. There is a boundedness to the liberal project precisely because not everything is allowed. This insight should not be left at the purely theoretical level. There is a paradox about the history of civil society. The insistence on a measure of consensus, on types of behaviour necessary to civil conduct within society, could be decidedly illiberal, as the imperial and post-colonial texts make clear, as do the nationalist selections where civil society becomes a bulwark against mass democracy. Civil society could be mobilized quite as much for expansionist projects that sought to minimize, overcome or erase cultural differences. Just as civil society was not always opposite or outside political society, so it was not always a 'soft' opposite to totalizing ideologies, but sometimes harnessed to modern ideologies themselves. Advocates in today's world do well not to erase these illiberal workings of civil society from their collective memory.

Praxis and theory

Praxis and theory flow in and out of each other in the approach to civil society outlined above. Civil society here is always a construct of ideas and a social praxis that disseminates norms of civility, structures social and political behaviour, and informs knowledge of self and others. This reciprocal relationship needs emphasis, since most studies or policies of civil society have tended to proceed from either a purely theoretical, discursive position or from an analysis of social action and associational practice. The selection of some sources detailing social practices alongside more philosophical texts here is therefore not merely to approach civil society from below as well as from above. In addition, it is an argument for a more dynamic cultural and political understanding of civil society that views social actors and concepts as interacting in the same framework. We can distinguish between two levels of praxis. First, there is the use of civil society as a working tool informing actors' habits and views of themselves and of others, already discussed. Second, there is the reverse flow, that is how practices of civil society shape new norms and habits of political action and reasoning.

This second level of practice concerns the benefits of social self-organization. The classic statement of this position is of course that of Tocqueville, the great exponent of the view that a taste for liberty results from the practice of self-government (pp. 106–16). Tocqueville's argument is more subtle than is often realized. In particular, he makes much of various spill-over effects. Political activity has the capacity to create a lively citizen body able to organize all sorts of spheres of social life. Equally, the lively citizens of a commercial world will tend to participate in political life. There is at least the possibility of a beneficent cycle here. Still, Tocqueville remains aware that commerce might yet lead to passivity and so to despotism. It is this latter strain that has been developed by Robert Putnam, especially when lamenting the effects of television viewing (pp. 227–31).

This modern appropriation of Tocqueville is, however, not entirely appropriate. On the one hand, Tocqueville is well aware that social self-organization by itself may in fact undermine a civil society. French politics had after all seen the clandestine activity of secret societies, keen to undermine the social order. The brilliant argument about the social and political conditions that ensure that groups add to civil life makes this clear (pp. 116–18). On the other hand, the extent to which Tocqueville changed his mind in his later work is not generally appreciated. His insistence on the potentially corrupting influence of commerce, that is, his loyalty to the tradition of civic virtue in general and his love of Rousseau in particular, always made him suspicious of popular activity. Only in his work on the French revolution did he come to argue that distrust, the incapacity to join together in liberty in the democratic age, resulted from the legacy of the old regime – which had so separated the classes, through a policy of divide and rule, as to make

it impossible for them to co-operate together (pp. 118–19). There is an interesting resonance here with Skocpol's assault on Putnam. She too refuses to blame the people. Particular background social conditions are required in order for participation and co-operation to flourish (pp. 234–7).

The contemporary debate about changing associational habits should be treated as an invitation to a more complex and contingent view of associational life in relationship to social and political identities and processes, past and present. The impact of associations on social and political procedures and mentalities does not follow along a universal equation, but is determined by the political traditions and cultural resources that actors bring with them to the clubhouse. The then unprecedented high levels of associational membership in Weimar Germany did not diminish the degree of violence – far from it.³⁰ High levels of associational membership in today's Federal Republic of Germany, by contrast, coincide with peaceful, democratic culture. Surely, there is a world of difference between groups of men and women joining a voluntary automobile veterans' club and young men joining the stormtroopers. Philanthropy, a crucial sphere of associational culture from the seventeenth century to the present, often involved projects of paternalism and social discipline that were a far cry from the often rosy picture of pluralism painted today (pp. 143–6). Rather than being a natural home for deliberative reasoning associational life reflected the changing emotional household of society and culture. Evangelicalism and pietism injected an unprecedented emotional energy into clubs and societies, of which missionary and domestic reform associations made up a growing bulk in nineteenth-century Europe.

In addition to different purposes and motivation, the political traditions and cultural values and resources that precirculate in society also influence the practices of associational life in and outside the associational meeting. A popular radical tradition of emancipation, for example, can provide disadvantaged members of society, like Ms. Layton of the Women's Cooperative Guild, with a script of personal empowerment (pp. 146–9). By contrast, in a less vibrant democratic culture, associations can become havens of retreat from the complex and frightening demands of modern social and political life, as for the men of the turn of the twentieth-century *Schlaraffia* in Hamburg who developed an elaborate cultural world of nostalgia and romanticism away from mass society (pp. 149–51). Associational life can make for myopia and political passivity as well as for liberation and civic connectedness, a point well known to satirists and social observers since the eighteenth century (pp. 69–70; pp. 185–6).

These limitations, ambivalences, or deficits in the high age of civil society in Europe are important because they suggest the need for a more open consideration of associational practices in other cultures today. Against the background of these complex, ambivalent histories, it is problematic to invoke a European ideal-type. Much of the debate about the prospects of civil society in non-European settings has been conducted on an uneven

debating field, comparing their social historical potential (the number of associations in the past, the relative openness of professional and urban groups, their relationship to state power, etc.) with models of the public sphere in eighteenth-century Europe developed by Habermas in the 1960s that have since been viewed more as an ideal type than as a meaningful representation of the more conflictuous and hierarchical and less deliberative processes of the multiple forms of publics at work in modern Europe.³¹ Associations in China, informal neighbourhood networks in the Middle East, and religious groupings in India, may look less like unfamiliar potential members of the civil society club if viewed against European civil societies that recognize their social complexities, tensions, and limits.

Conclusions

The great revival of interest in the concept of civil society began in the 1970s and perhaps reached something of a peak two decades later. At the level of global civil society, the numerical expansion of international non-governmental organizations in the 1990s is remarkable: transnational social movements (like missionary or anti-slavery movements) can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, but over one quarter of the 11,693 INGOs in existence in 2000 (and more than a third of their members) emerged after 1990.³² These were years in which there was so visceral a reaction against totalizing politics that the introduction of market forces to balance state power seemed an unadulterated good. Recent years have seen some questioning of the salience and usefulness of the concept of civil society. One worry that came to the fore concerned the nature of social groups themselves. Merely to strengthen group life was not to guarantee civility or decency in social life. 'Compelled associations', Nancy Rosenblum correctly argues, can be repulsive in so far as they resemble cages from which human beings cannot then escape (pp. 244–9). Perhaps more important was the revival of a generalized disquiet about commerce. For one thing, there was ever greater awareness of the brutal consequences that had followed on privatization, especially in the former Socialist Bloc. More generally, the increasing intensity and speed of economic connections around the world threatened to so disrupt nations and states as to rule out of court the base of social solidarity upon which civil society depends.

A change in mood should not for a moment be taken as an injunction to take the concept of civil society less seriously. Perhaps the most obvious point to be made in conclusion is that historical awareness forces us to see that the debates about civil society have waxed and waned, again and again. It is very likely that this will continue. However, before ending with a final note as to why that is so, it is useful to review three particular new insights that follow from putting together the varied texts in this reader.

We can note, to begin with, that civil society is very distinctly not the same, conceptually or in terms of reality, as democracy. Civil society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not particularly well equipped to handle the demands or questions derived from popular politics. Accordingly, civil society did not lose its central position in social theory for no reason; indeed, on the contrary, one can argue that many thinkers in the tradition of civil society assembled here did not concern themselves centrally with democratic politics. All in all, it might not be wise to overburden the concept of civil society with contemporary projects of democratic renewal. This is not, however, to say that the concept has nothing to offer democratic theorists. Bluntly, it always behoves us to remember that democracy is not necessarily 'nice', as de Tocqueville so clearly realized. Fascism was a popular moral project, at least for a period, whilst ethnic cleansing has not been, as recent years have demonstrated, without its popular supporters. In the last analysis, democracy is only really attractive when it takes unto itself some of the characteristics associated with civil society.

This particular set of readings makes us realize that non-European or global debates about civil society are not simply a new episode. Very much to the contrary: they continue to engage with many of the problems and debates European societies had as well – the relationship between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, between plurality and order, between shared religious and cultural values and toleration, between self-governing associations and their relative dependence on states and markets. Liberal and conservative versions of civil society co-existed with nationalist readings. It is unwise to view the concept of civil society through some sort of Whiggish or evolutionary narrative of democratic perfection that advances with time. Most civil society ideas were developed as arguments about political society, and as such involved the state, be it as secular governing authority or as Christian state with a religious establishment. Civil society could be utilized by thinkers and social movements to reinforce ideas of nation-state and imperial mission just as much as an emancipatory idea checking the abuse of state power. Either way, the idea of civil society developed in tandem with, not in isolation from, political society broadly defined.

Let us conclude finally by offering an explanation as to why the fortunes of civil society have risen and fallen over time, and why this is likely to remain so. The concept is, to use Bryce Gallie's useful term, 'essentially contested'.³³ The idea of difference which lies at the heart of civil society has enormous moral attraction. Do we know everything? Are we certain that a particular set of standards is always correct? The fact that the answer must be negative suggests a degree of relativism. But we know that any full-blooded relativism must be repulsive, and very dangerous. So a civil society will always wobble between allowing difference, and insisting that such difference be bounded. Hence civil society must be at once an agreement, a consensus, and a recognition of difference. There can be no final balance

here, for historical forces have shifted and will continue to shift boundaries. We would not accept the Anglican view that all must believe in God, but have long accepted a great deal from the Enlightenment – the condemnation of slavery and the rights of man (and woman). It seems that questions of human rights are now altering the balance again. Civil society is not and will not somehow become closed and final, either theoretically or practically.

Notes

- 1 John Grimond, 'Civil Society,' in *The World in 2002* (London: Economist Newspaper Ltd, 2001), p.18.
- 2 Aziz Choudry, *GATT Watch*, 5 January 2002. Select further reading from the vast and growing literature on civil society can be found on p. 301 of this volume, below.
- 3 This historical–geographical broadening could, of course, be continued in other fruitful directions as well, for example the attraction of civil society ideas to Chinese intellectuals in the generation before the 1911 Revolution, such as Liang Qichao; see Don C. Price, 'From Civil Society to Party Government', in Joshua A. Fogel and Peter G. Zarrow (eds), *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890–1920* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 142–64.
- 4 This is also true for modern Britain, which has often wrongly been seen as an anti-statist tradition in contrast to continental ideas. See now Jose Harris, 'From Richard Hooker to Harold Laski: Changing Perceptions of Civil Society in British Political Thought, Late Sixteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries', in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 13–37.
- 5 See R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, Societies, Associations', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750–1950, Vol. III: Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1991); Thomas Nipperdey, 'Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert', in Thomas Nipperdey, *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976); Frank Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2nd edn 2003); Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord (eds), *Civil Society Before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, *Die Politik der Geselligkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); M.C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Daniel Roche, *Le Siècle des Lumières en Province: Académies et Académiciens Provinciaux, 1680–1789* (Paris: Mouton, 1978); R.D. Brown, 'The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760–1820', in *Journal of American History*, 61 (1974), pp. 29–51; J. Bradley, 'Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia', in *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), pp. 1094–123.
- 6 For different approaches, see Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (1939), Eng. trans. by Edmund Jephcott, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell,

- 1978–82); Jorge Ardití, *A Genealogy of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For violence and toleration, see Dominique Colas, *Civil Society and Fanaticism: Conjoined Histories*, trans. by Amy Jacobs (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997); John A. Hall, 'Reflections on the Making of Civility in Society', in Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society*; and also now Sven Reichardt, 'Gewalt' in Dieter Gosewinkel, Dieter Rucht, Wolfgang van den Daele, and Jürgen Kocka (eds), *Zivilgesellschaft – national und transnational* (WZB-Jahrbuch 2003: edition sigma, 2003), pp. 61–81.
- 7 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1994); Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
 - 8 TBC in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
 - 9 This view is that of the US constitution, and more generally of Madison regarding political parties in Federalist no. 10.
 - 10 See Mary Catherine Moran, '"The Commerce of the Sexes": Gender and the Social Sphere in Scottish Enlightenment Accounts of Civil Society', in Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, pp. 61–84.
 - 11 John Hall, *Ernest Gellner*, ch. 5, forthcoming.
 - 12 See also S. Zubaida, 'Is There a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam', in *Economy and Society*, 24 (1995); Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).
 - 13 See also Shalini Randeria, 'Kastensolidarität als Modus zivilgesellschaftlicher Bindungen?', in Gosewinkel, *Zivilgesellschaft*, pp. 223–43.
 - 14 For this Anglican tradition, see also the notes in Frank Trentmann, 'The Problem with Civil Society: Or Putting Modern European History Back into Contemporary Debate', in Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor, David Lewis and Hakan Seckinelgin (eds), *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2004).
 - 15 John Dunn, 'The contemporary political significance of John Locke's conception of civil society', in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Kilnani (eds), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 39–57.
 - 16 Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Part Four, ch. 7, p. 343. For the changing assessment of Britain as a model of commercial development and political power, see now Gareth Stedman Jones, 'National bankruptcy and social revolution: European observers on Britain, 1813–1844', in Patrick O'Brien and Donald Winch (eds), *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688–1914* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 61–92, and Richard Whatmore, 'The Politics of Political Economy in France from Rousseau to Constant', in Mark Bevir and Frank Trentmann (eds), *Markets in Historical Contexts: Ideas and Politics in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 46–69.
 - 17 For the luxury debates, see Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

- 18 Whether we should think about this in terms of a 'consumer revolution' or the birth of global consumerism is subject to debate: Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1992); Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Peter Stearns, *Consumerism in World History* (2002); Frank Trentmann, 'Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 39, 3 (2004) pp. 373–401; John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (eds), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives* (London and New York: Berg, forthcoming).
- 19 Jose G. Merquior, *Western Marxism* (London: Paladin, 1986).
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- 22 Colas, *Civil Society and Fanaticism*, Ch. 3.
- 23 The way in which the project of civil society has involved acts of the transformation of the natural environment, and the way in which civil society was naturalized in turn, is a subject that deserves more attention; suggestive is Michael Redclift, *The Frontier Environment and Social Order: The Letters of Francis Codd from Upper Canada* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000).
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- 26 See also Jack Goody, 'Civil society in Extra-European Perspective', in Kaviraj and Kilnani (eds), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, pp. 149–64.
- 27 For Italy, see Adrian Lyttelton, 'Liberalism and Civil Society in Italy: From Hegemony to Mediation', in Bermeo and Nord (eds), *Civil Society Before Democracy*, pp. 61–81.
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