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tive forms. She also ignores the fact that his later works abound in the pathetic fallacy, engulfing and obscuring external reality in personal emotion. This imbalance is evident in some of Ruskin's sketches of the 1870s, which Corradini mentions in passing. She explains Ruskin's etymologizing and its contemporary analogues, but apparently accepts his assumption that words have natural origins and that a word's "original" meaning is the true one. Her analysis might have benefited from Derrida's "White Mythology", among other works. While Corradini notes that Ruskin's ideal of adjectival accuracy influenced the Decadents, who abandoned his moralism, she might have mentioned that his aesthetic, combining dynamism and stasis, anticipates Vorticism. Ezra Pound shares Ruskin's desire to harmonize fact and insight and to promote international literary standards through close reading.

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Liberalism and Democracy

By Norberto Bobbio.

Translated by Martin Ryle and Kate Soper. New York: Verso, 1990.

Though Bobbio says that "liberalism and democracy have never been radically antithetical" (73), the bulk of this text, rightly concerns the border warfare that has raged and ever will rage between the partisans of the

individual (liberals) and those of society (democrats). Beginning in the ancient world where individual rights were essentially unknown, Bobbio traces, in a bare ninety pages and seventeen chapters, the encounters of society with those who defend the right of the individual against the weight of society. His text covers, among other things, Hobbes, Locke, and natural rights theory, Kant's hostility to state paternalism, the uneasiness of Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill about the tyranny of the majority, the complications arising out of the encounter of socialism and democracy, as well as the problems raised by the appearance of the popular and democratic authoritarian state.

The modern version of the conflict between the individual (liberalism) and society (democracy) may be seen in the impossibility of reconciling the contradictory ideals displayed in the 1789 political slogan: *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*. The problem of reconciling liberty—with its inherent recognition of the right of each person to rise to his/her own chosen level (and equality) with its demand that before the race begins, everyone must be brought to the same level—is the prime meridian across which stare Rousseau, Mazzini, socialism and other leveling forces on the one side, and Montesquieu, Cavour, de Tocqueville, and defenders of the individual on the other. How could one ever come to an agreement that everything practical had been done for equality and that the starting pistol could then be fired? Worse, how could one ever come to an agreement that everything had been done to

bring the many to the starting gate, if some *still* persisted in choosing ludicrous life goals: mere wealth for one and going on the bum for another?

But the struggle between the liberal and the democrat was not always over economics. It can be traced back to the determination to stand out from the crowd, the *moral* right to be different that is symbolized in the clash of Socrates and Athens. As noted by de Tocqueville, and later, Weber, Kafka, and perhaps Foucault, the question was and still remains: will the *demos*—because of its size and its suspicion of inequality, difference, and quality—overwhelm liberty with its suspicion of the many, of homogeneity, and the organizational man. The liberal asks: “Will the world be so homogenized by the time the race starts that no one will be interested in, or have the moral resources to be, different?” The democrat asks: “Do the community and its traditions not have *some* rights against the odd, disruptive, menacing—and unanswerable—‘why’ of the pest and the eccentric?”

In this sense, the conflict pits the democrat’s faith that the many *can* be brought to share the interests of the few against the liberal’s suspicion that a state capable of such an achievement could only be an *Ethical State* like that of Gentile. In nineteenth-century Italy, this debate between liberalism and democracy was played out, as Bobbio notes, in the struggle between the ideals of Cavour on the one hand and Mazzini on the other. For the liberal Cavour, the question was primarily one of limiting the state and defending the right of the individual to pursue

interests outside the state, which the majority might find objectionable. For the republican Mazzini, the issue was how the educational role of the state to shape its citizens could be fulfilled by a minimalist state. As Bobbio notes, the issue became a drama in real life when Mazzini seized power in Rome in 1848 and had to confront the liberal French Foreign Minister, de Tocqueville, whose hostility “sealed the fate of the Roman republic” (71).

Though Bobbio does not note it, it was this same confrontation between liberalism and democracy that was to plague the Italian state right into the Giolittian period and beyond. Indeed, the question became all the more complicated when Giolitti, the heir of Cavour’s liberal state, found that he had to defend liberty and its merely procedural rules against a majority *hostile* to liberty and controlled by the Black International or the Red. How does one play by the rules and defend liberty *against* an illiberal population? It is a question one suspects President Yeltsin will soon have to answer again.

Since the rise of socialism, Marxism, and other mass political movements, but especially since the industrial revolution transformed the globe, the debate between liberalism and democracy has tended (recently in the works of Hayek and Nozick, for example) to center on a defense of the minimal state to protect economic, property, and acquisitive rights of the few. In other words, the conflict between the one and the few against the many has lost its Socratic flavor and has focused on the right of the few to consume. The question that

Bobbio raises—and as he notes, it was a question raised earlier in the debate between Einaudi and Croce—is to what extent is this *economic* right essential to the *moral* right of liberalism's defense against democracy? This is no easy question: If a person has decided that wealth is the good that he or she above all else wishes to pursue, what moral right does the puritan have to say this is wrong? Inasmuch as the many poor will *always* resent the few that are rich, how is one to distinguish legitimate moral resentment from the Nietzschean *ressentiment* of the low-minded?

This dilemma is only apparently made easier by the fact that today wealth is as powerful a threat to liberty as the masses ever were; for today wealth can pave the globe, buy elections, or procure nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons for entire nations of fundamentalist kamikazes. In such a world, it becomes plain that liberalism *and* democracy require regulation. But by whom?

Bobbio's answer is that the two regimes—liberalism and democracy—must learn to accommodate each other and become tense allies. To such a complex question, one should not expect an answer any more definite, though one wishes Bobbio had spent more time on the necessity of the *debate* between liberalism and democracy rather than on explaining the various forms of that debate. After all, what will the world's fate be if ever an evil, hypnotic, and wealthy liberal *does* wed the elusive *demos*? To put the issue in classical terms, liberty requires both Socrates and Aristophanes, the

philosopher *and* the city. For only by recognizing that theory *and* practice, philosophy *and* rhetoric each have their claims and that liberty cannot survive the domination of either one or the other, can we understand the importance of the *dialogue* and the *conflict* between liberalism and democracy.

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Il Sublime: Teorie estetiche nell'Inghilterra del Settecento

By Samuel H. Monk.

Translated by Rachele Garattini.

Introduction by Giuseppe Sertoli.

Milan: Marietti, 1991.

Samuel Holt Monk (1902-1981) published *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* in 1935 when interest in the subject was at its lowest ebb in two hundred years. Academic scholarship paid little attention to the sublime, and no modern school of poetry or criticism had found any use for it. Nor did Monk succeed in resuscitating the concept, though when a revival did happen—in the 1960s—his study was republished and honored as a trailblazer. This Italian translation of a classic work in the "history of ideas" is a testimony to its continuing value.

Monk's special virtue was to trace the concept of the Longinian sublime from its humble beginnings as a side issue in neoclassicism to its thunder-