

Review Article

French Democracy between Totalitarianism and Solidarity: Pierre Rosanvallon and Revisionist Historiography*

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INTRODUCTION

No book has affected the study of modern French history in the last twenty-five years more than François Furet's *Penser la Révolution française* (translated as *Interpreting the French Revolution*).¹ Furet's interpretation of the French Revolution and French history more generally, and the revisionism it inspired, are by now well known. This essay interprets the intellectual career of Pierre Rosanvallon—one of Furet's most interesting students, recently honored by election to the Collège de France, his nation's most prestigious academic institution—as an attempt to test the flexibility of Furet's paradigm for understanding French history and its amenability to new ends. Rosanvallon's work responds to the most obvious limitation of Furet's project, both interpretive and political: its ambivalence about the democratic project itself. The question Rosanvallon's exercise prompts, however, is just how fundamental a break with Furet's model is required to write a history of democracy that corrects for what seems to be an uncertainty about the viability of democracy, especially about its extension. This essay argues that Rosanvallon's very attempt to operate within Furet's framework in the name of a more democratic vision unwittingly demonstrates some of the interpretive limitations of the premises

* This essay is a review of Pierre Rosanvallon's career, marking the completion of his trilogy on the history of French democracy: *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992, 2001), 490 pp., € 29.80 (original), 640 pp., € 13.50 (reprint); *Le peuple introuvable: Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998, 2002), 379 pp., € 29.20 (original), 491 pp., € 8.00 (reprint); and *La démocratie inachevée: Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000, 2003), 440 pp., € 28.20 (original), € 8.90 (reprint). Citations are to the original editions. The authors would like to thank Julian Bourg, Warren Breckman, Vince Cannon, Aaron Freundsuh, Carla Hesse, Dick Howard, Martin Jay, Rebecca Manley, Isser Woloch, and the anonymous readers for the *Journal of Modern History* for their many helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay.

¹ François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris, 1978); François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, 1981). For admiring treatment of Furet's achievement, see Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven, Conn., 1993), pt. 3; and Tony Judt, "François Furet (1927–1997)," *New York Review of Books* 44 (Nov. 6, 1997): 41–42.

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they share in studying the history of modern politics. Thus, Rosanvallon's historical work is best read, against his own intentions, as accumulating anomalies destined to wreck, rather than reform, the interpretive paradigm for the history of French democracy—and for thinking about democracy as a whole—that Furet originally introduced.

Rosanvallon's oeuvre has received scant attention in the Anglo-American world: only his work on the contemporary welfare state, *The New Social Question*, has been translated into English, in Princeton University Press's series New French Thought; and the lead volume of that series, which attempts to shape the reception of recent French thought in the English-speaking world (and not simply to transmit it), does not meaningfully feature Rosanvallon's work.² Study of Rosanvallon's intellectual program, however, makes clear the radical democratic impulse that animates some versions of what has become known as French "neoliberalism"—what makes certain of its strands distinctive rather than simply constituting a return to the Anglo-American world of its own exported goods. To this end, this essay begins by briefly explicating Rosanvallon's career biographically, beginning with the May 1968 radicalization of his youth and his subsequent political quest in the 1970s to give the post-1968 radical impulse both intellectual and institutional shape. Rosanvallon's itinerary, even when only partially explored, casts considerable light on current debates about French cultural and intellectual life since 1968, especially the decisive and formative years of the 1970s. Rosanvallon fits neither of the conventional narratives about post-1968 intellectual politics: neither the dominant view of a slow maturation and embrace of market liberalism that 1968 is thought to have fostered nor the increasingly popular counternarrative demonizing ex-leftists who, over the course of the 1970s, rejected their earlier anticapitalist and anticolonialist politics in the name of a conformist liberalism.³ Instead, a brief study of Rosanvallon's career shows that the animating intention of his work—an intention with still unsurpassed relevance—began as and remains the pursuit of a vision of liberal politics more open to the modern democratic impulse. It is this goal that animates his entire historical project, from *Le moment Guizot*, his groundbreaking and reputation-making thesis on François Guizot and the post-Napoleonic school of the Doctrinaires, to his recently completed trilogy on the history of French democracy.

This essay focuses on Rosanvallon's ongoing attempt to formulate a robustly democratic version of liberal politics from within what has long seemed to many to be a historiographical paradigm constitutionally ambivalent about the viability

² Rosanvallon's *La nouvelle question sociale: Repenser l'État-providence* (Paris, 1995) is translated in New French Thought, the Princeton University Press series directed by Mark Lilla and Thomas Pavel: Pierre Rosanvallon, *The New Social Question: Rethinking the Welfare State*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton, N.J., 2000). The inaugural volume of the series is Mark Lilla, ed., *New French Thought: Political Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J., 1994). For a recent overview of the New French Thought series with important attention to its political agenda, see Martin Jay, "Lafayette's Children: The American Reception of French Liberalism," *SubStance* 31 (2002): 9–26.

³ The most famous argument for the dominant view is Gilles Lipovetsky, "May '68, or the Rise of Transpolitical Individualism," in Lilla, ed.; a good example of the counternarrative is Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago, 2002).

of democracy itself. In *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Furet famously and provocatively ascribed the causes of the Terror to the ideology of democracy. In his analysis, the voluntaristic appeal to popular sovereignty, rooted in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* and passed from actor to revolutionary actor as the sole coin of legitimacy, inexorably led to the furies of the Terror. After pointing to "the one notion that made Robespierre's language the prophecy of a new era: that democratic politics had come to decide the fate of individuals and peoples," in the next breath Furet charged "democratic politics" with the innate propensity of violently "break[ing] its enemies' resistance."⁴ Establishing the "new god of a fictitious community," the Revolution reached a compelled finale in the Terror, since Maximilien Robespierre's "metaphysics was . . . not a parenthesis . . . but a type of public authority that the revolutionary phenomenon alone made possible and logical."⁵ Furthermore, Furet argued, the French Revolution planted the seeds of twentieth-century totalitarianism. "Today the Gulag forces us to rethink the Terror," he wrote, "precisely because the two undertakings are seen as identical."⁶

Furet's sense of the political consequences of this argument, however, seemed to vary over time. Often Furet invidiously contrasted Anglo-American and French traditions according to a logic of norm and deviation: Anglo-American "liberal" democracy mastered "pure" democracy and thus avoided the violent excesses of the French Revolution.⁷ In response to the point that American democracy had also been founded—indeed, re-founded—in an extraordinary appeal to the constitutive power of "the people," Furet followed Alexis de Tocqueville in explaining the Americans' healthy development by the fact that they faced a blank slate (rather than an Old Regime) at their founding.⁸ According to Furet's narrative, it was only in the 1870s that French positivists found a form of elitist democracy "close enough" to Anglo-American liberalism finally to expunge the threat of terror (even if intellectuals were not fully cured until his own generation's difficult maturation). But this rhetoric of health and pathology proved to be only one of the modes of Furetian discourse. Other times, and more pessimistically, Furet rooted his rejection of the French Revolution in a more general skepticism about democracy, even in its more moderate forms. Indeed, Furet allowed, the threat of democratic renewal eventually appeared even in that country that had done the most to master it. "At the end of the twentieth century," Furet wrote in his final work, "the critique of democracy in the name of democracy is no less obsessive in the United States than

⁴ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, pp. 26–27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12; translation modified. In this, Furet's interpretation bears deep similarities to Jacob Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London, 1952). This narrative has recently been revived with the new end point of "Muslim totalitarianism" in Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York, 2003).

⁷ As a number of commentators have noted, this comparison invokes an implausible version of English and American history. For a classic statement, see Isser Woloch, "On the Latent Illiberalism of the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 95 (Dec. 1990): 1452–70, esp. 1460.

⁸ See, e.g., François Furet, "L'idée française de la Révolution," *Le Débat* 96 (Sept.–Oct. 1997): 13–32; rpt. as François Furet, *La Révolution en débat*, ed. Mona Ozouf (Paris, 1999), chap. 3.

in France or elsewhere in Europe. Far from the American version of consensual equality's having informed the Europeans, it seems that the French revolutionaries' obsession with equality seems to have taken over American society.⁹ Aware that the impulse to democratization would survive even his own disastrous century and withering attack, Furet nonetheless prescribed no lasting way for democracy to avoid its original shipwreck in terror and totalitarianism. Furet's unhesitating normative judgment that "the French Revolution is over" left the difficult legacy of determining how and why democracy could genuinely stabilize and whether French history has shown the failure of one "voluntaristic" kind of democratic self-rule or the dangers of democracy in all possible forms. In Furet's work not just revolutionary passion but also democratic optimism find themselves faced with "normalization." A politically motivated intervention, Furet's impact on French and Western political thought has often been effusively praised; but as time passes, it is important to assess the possible limitations of Furet's achievement for thinking about democracy and its French history.

Rosanvallon's formidable corpus offers an ideal vantage point from which to take up this question: his strenuous effort to reorient Furet's revisionist paradigm is not only interesting in itself but also provides a test case of the flexibility and future of that paradigm. Accordingly, after an exploration of Rosanvallon's formation as a historian in part 1 of this essay, part 2 will turn to an analysis of Rosanvallon's historical scholarship. A main goal of this essay is to summarize his retelling of the history of French democracy in order to make it more accessible to Anglo-American scholarship. To highlight its relation to Furet's achievement, the discussion is organized around the two major renovations of Furet's approach that Rosanvallon attempts: first, his extension of Furet's pathogenic interpretation of democratic "voluntarism" to liberal "rationalism" so that they are presented as political accomplices rather than genuine alternatives; second, his search for cures for the pathologies of these twin modern ideologies—cures that, we will argue, have difficulty succeeding because of the all-encompassing lethality of the original diagnosis. Of course, Rosanvallon's original, democratizing intention outlives the difficulties of his performance. But if the intention is to survive, further efforts may have to begin elsewhere than in a historical theory that understands democracy as a pathology waiting to happen.

I. FROM MILITANT TO HISTORIAN

In a recent interview, Rosanvallon recalls that an academic life had by no means been foreordained for him: "I could have become a union leader; politics is what the future seemed to have in store."¹⁰ That Rosanvallon changed paths to one that led him to the summit of French academic life is the result both of the intellectual

⁹ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago, 1999), p. 10.

¹⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins de traverse de la pensée du politique en France," *Raisons Politiques* 1 (Feb.–Apr. 2001): 50.

and institutional politics of the 1970s and of several decisive personal and intellectual encounters, symbolized by the three mentors whom he acknowledged in the *Leçon inaugurale* he gave when he began his tenure at the Collège de France: Paul Vignaux, Claude Lefort, and François Furet.

Born in 1948 and thus a charter member of the generation of 1968, Rosanvallon began his career in the orbit of the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT), the leading French trade union after the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT).¹¹ While studying economics at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (the business school among the *grandes écoles* of the French educational system), Rosanvallon became involved in projects of the militant left, presiding over the CFDT's Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne in his youth.¹² He then began his professional career as the CFDT's economic counselor (1969–73) and later became the founding editor of the organization's journal *CFDT-Aujourd'hui* (1973–77). Rosanvallon's early affiliation with this solidaristic but noncommunist movement is crucial for understanding his trajectory up to the present day.

His work in the CFDT seems, for a start, to have opened Rosanvallon to the possibility of uniting intellectual and practical concerns, or, as he recently put it, of reaching “the point where the distinction between knowledge and action vanishes.”¹³ In his *Leçon inaugurale*, Rosanvallon praised Vignaux, the well-known medievalist and CFDT notable, for having shown a young militant that “a life dedicated to the rigorous understanding of the world fully participates in creating the conditions for changing it”—a lesson, he said, that led “in completely the opposite direction from the itinerary of a large part of the 1968 generation.”¹⁴ More, though, than sparking his interest in making the world open to reflection (which it assuredly did), Rosanvallon's experience in the CFDT sensitized him to the contributions, both historical and potential, of syndicalism to French democratic practice—an awareness, as we shall see, that fundamentally informed his historical scholarship. The ideals that the CFDT championed in the years after 1968 were more than proposals for democratizing the economy. For Rosanvallon, they amounted to a renovation in thinking about democracy itself.

¹¹ The CFDT had originated from the Catholic left, with intellectual roots in the religious corporatism of pre–World War II European social thought, beginning as the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens in 1919 and eventually developing through a period of laicizing “evolution” in the mid-1960s, when it took its new name and secular mission. See, e.g., Frank Georgi, *L'invention de la CFDT, 1957–1970: Syndicalisme, catholicisme, et politique dans la France de l'expansion*, with a preface by Antoine Prost (Paris, 1995).

¹² In a recent informative interview (Pierre Rosanvallon, “Témoignage,” *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques* 2 [1995]: 361–76), Rosanvallon noted that he did not finish any of his school years at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales thanks to student strikes and, climactically, the May 1968 events. “Luckily,” he commented ironically, “I read on my own!” (p. 375). This interview was part of a forum on the intellectual politics of the 1970s that included Rosanvallon, Rony Brauman, and Alain Touraine.

¹³ Pierre Rosanvallon, “Towards a Philosophical History of the Political,” in *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge, 2002), p. 199.

¹⁴ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Chaire d'histoire moderne et contemporaine du politique: Leçon inaugurale faite le jeudi 28 mars 2002* (Paris, 2002), p. 7. The *leçon* has been reprinted as *Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique* (Paris, 2003); citations here are to the earlier version.

Dubbed the “other” or “second” left by its members and by sympathetic historians, the CFDT—led, beginning in 1971, by Edmond Maire, whom Rosanvallon advised on economic matters in the years following the staggering events of May 1968—quickly adopted the antihierarchical political ideal of *autogestion* (self-management) into its post-1968 platform.¹⁵ As a word and concept, *autogestion* had originated in the 1960s as a reference to the Yugoslav practice of worker-elected management of industry.¹⁶ Only after 1968, however, did it gain widespread ascendancy on the left, and Rosanvallon quickly made himself one of the most important theorists of this libertarian and pluralist form of left-wing radicalism. “I more or less became the CFDT’s official ideologue,” he recently recalled.¹⁷ While *autogestion*—an elusive buzzword of the French left in the 1970s—included worker self-management, it appeared to almost everyone to represent a new foundational principle for organizing society as a whole, one that would break with hierarchy and decentralize authority in all sectors of life. In *L’âge de l’autogestion*, Rosanvallon’s 1976 interpretation of the ideal, he ventured a clarification and programmatic statement of what the new word and the movements swirling around it should come to mean.¹⁸ He admitted that the fashionable neologism so far meant little, but he promised that even more than portending the democratization of the workplace, the principle of self-management would break through to an entirely new conception of the democratic way of life. A self-managed society would adopt a democratic experimentalism in all sectors—though, no doubt reflecting the CFDT’s specific priorities, Rosanvallon made the democratization of the economy the major focus of his book.¹⁹

The popularity of *autogestion* is understandable only against the background of May 1968, which gave birth to a host of new social movements striving to burst

¹⁵ Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *La deuxième gauche: Histoire intellectuelle et politique de la CFDT*, new ed. (Paris, 1984).

¹⁶ Albert Meister, *Socialisme et l’autogestion: L’expérience yougoslave* (Paris, 1964); cf. Pierre Rosanvallon, “Théorie et pratique de l’autogestion yougoslave,” *CFDT-Aujourd’hui* 5 (Jan.–Feb. 1974): 49–72 (“La Yougoslavie semble ainsi s’orienter vers ce qu’on pourrait appeler une *société libérale de type nouveau*” [p. 71]). As part of his CFDT duties, Rosanvallon took several trips to Yugoslavia and investigated other models for incarnating the *autogestion* ideal, such as Israeli kibbutzim (Rosanvallon, “Témoignage,” p. 364). Anglo-American theorists interested in more democratic and participatory visions of the left (such as early twentieth-century guild socialism) likewise turned to the Yugoslav experience at this moment; see, e.g., Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge, 1976), chap. 5.

¹⁷ Rosanvallon, “Témoignage,” p. 362.

¹⁸ Pierre Rosanvallon, *L’âge de l’autogestion, ou la politique au poste de commandement* (Paris, 1976), revisited in Pierre Rosanvallon, “Mais où est donc passée l’autogestion,” *Passé Présent* 4 (1984): 186–95; “Formation et désintégration de la galaxie ‘auto,’” in *L’auto-organisation: De la physique au politique*, ed. Paul Dumouchel and Jean-Pierre Dupuy (Paris, 1983); and *La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 385–87. Rosanvallon’s first book, published under a pseudonym, and other early writings offered more traditional syndicalist analyses; see, e.g., Pierre Ranval [Pierre Rosanvallon], *Hierarchie des salaires et lutte de classes* (Paris, 1972); “La revendication de salaire dans les conflits,” *CFDT-Aujourd’hui* 1 (May–June 1973): 17–28; “Capitalisme et conditions de travail,” *CFDT-Aujourd’hui* 2 (July–Aug. 1973): 68–77; and many others in *CFDT-Aujourd’hui*.

¹⁹ Rosanvallon, *L’âge de l’autogestion*, chap. 4 and pt. 2.

the boundaries of traditional left-wing politics and priorities. As Rosanvallon recently recalled,

People were very far from restricting their thinking to the topic of how to manage firms. . . . [*Autogestion*] became the *mot de passe* of the 1970s . . . and involved the emergence of a new conception of democracy. On three principal levels. First, it implied the refusal and contestation of all centralized and hierarchical systems and in this sense suggested the *generalized extension* of democratic procedures to the governance of all of the different spheres of social life. It also motivated the search for a way of transcending the procedural limits of traditional representative democracy. Finally, it corresponded to a new perception of the relation between public and private life, “self-management” looking as if it were the corollary, at once legitimate and necessary, of more specifically institutional reforms. . . . People began speaking, in a general manner, of the self-management of everyday life [*autogestion du quotidien*]. (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 386–87)²⁰

Not surprisingly, the breadth and depth of this new ideal posed what one could call the major intellectual and political problem of the 1970s in France: how to square the new ideals with the existing practices of political life, especially the traditional parties of the left. As the existing left and center-left parties began to appropriate the banner of *autogestion* as their own, intellectuals activated by 1968 also searched for ways to transform existing political movements from within and make them conform to the new ideals.

This search took place in many political contexts, and the newly constituted Parti Socialiste (PS) came to be among the most important and consequential sites of debate, one in which Rosanvallon soon became embroiled. Briefly put, the PS became the site of a massive power struggle between what Rosanvallon and others understood to be the “two cultures of the left,” embodied by the two contenders for party leadership, Michel Rocard and François Mitterrand, but conceptualized more generally as a stark choice between the emergent antihierarchical vision of politics and the hierarchical, even “totalitarian,” politics of the traditional left (epitomized by Stalinism and imputed to the Parti Communiste Français [PCF]). Aggravated by a left-wing alliance intended to enable the cooperation necessary to win power (which eventually succeeded with Mitterrand’s electoral victory in 1981), this dispute had wide-ranging consequences in intellectual life. Rosanvallon did more than take sides in this dispute—he served as one of the major thinkers and defenders of the *autogestionnaire*, antihierarchical alternative that Rocard represented in his bid for PS leadership.

It was in this atmosphere that Rosanvallon and many others on the left began to present totalitarianism as the chief threat of modern politics. It is important to emphasize here that despite the fundamental importance of this political context,

²⁰ Rosanvallon adds: “Some did not hesitate to advocate the extension of this ideal to the police and the army!” See also the Nov. 1977 issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, which covered a forum, in which Rosanvallon participated, on social experimentation, entitled “Vivre à gauche” (Living on the left); cf. Rosanvallon, “La gauche et le changement social,” *Faire* 20 (June 1977): 17–18.

and for all its relation to the interfactional disputes of the time, the political theory of this period should not be reduced to ideological apology for the more purely political aspects of the struggle for party dominance.²¹ The battle allowed hitherto marginal thinkers such as Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis to come to the fore as their long-standing opposition to communist politics gained new relevance. For this reason, as the political theorist Dick Howard has argued in a recent book, the attack in the mid-1970s on totalitarianism allowed for the germination of a new and necessary kind of thinking about the nature of democracy in France, one with considerable implications for politics to this day. This left-wing form of antitotalitarianism gave rise to a different but still radical left that properly abandoned the eschatological, violent, and bureaucratic tendencies of traditional leftist ideology in the name of democracy and pluralism as well as justice and equality.²²

It is an early encounter with Lefort that seems to have led Rosanvallon to connect the pluralism and experimentalism of the vague *autogestionnaire* ideal with the emerging critique of totalitarianism.²³ A student of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and editor of his posthumous writings, Lefort had long attempted to turn the left away from communism, beginning with the movement he founded and the journal he edited collaboratively with Castoriadis in the late 1940s and 1950s, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Lefort emerged from comparative obscurity in the 1970s as the pioneer of a long overdue need for the critique of communism, a reputation confirmed by the publication of his enthusiastic interpretation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*.²⁴ Lefort sparked for Rosanvallon, as for a number of thinkers, the conviction that inherited Marxist theory lacked the resources necessary for the kind of critique of hierarchy and defense of pluralism and experimentation that leftist politics after 1968 seemed to demand. Lefort's

²¹ Compare here Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left: The Anti-Totalitarian Moment of the 1970s in French Intellectual Politics* (New York, 2004). *Faire*, the journal for which Rosanvallon most frequently wrote in the mid-1970s, likewise played an important role in this conjuncture: an intellectual organ of the PS during the period of the so-called *Assises du socialisme*, it allowed Rosanvallon, along with other CFDT intellectuals, to join the PS in hopes of infusing it with their antecedent *autogestionnaire* ideals or at least guarding against PCF dominance in the left alliance. See François Kraus, "Les Assises du socialisme, ou l'échec d'une tentative de renouveau d'un parti," *Les notes de la Fondation Jean Jaurès* 31 (July 2002). For Rosanvallon's major contribution to Rocardian theory and the thesis that there were two cultures of the left, see Pierre Rosanvallon and Patrick Viveret, *Pour une nouvelle culture politique* (Paris, 1977); on this book, cf. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 37–42.

²² Dick Howard, *The Specter of Democracy* (New York, 2002). As Howard acknowledges, however, the critique of totalitarianism paved the way for a variety of different political sequels, some of which lead to a complacent neoliberalism while others may not.

²³ Rosanvallon recently recalled (in "Sur quelques chemins" [n. 10 above], p. 50) that he met Claude Lefort as well as Cornelius Castoriadis in the immediate post-1968 years as he solicited their contributions for his CFDT journal.

²⁴ See Claude Lefort, *Un homme en trop: Réflexions sur "L'archipel du Goulag"* (Paris, 1976). See Rosanvallon's review of this book in *Faire* 12 (Oct. 1976): 41–42; as well as his "Les avatars de l'idéalisme," *Faire* 3 (Dec. 1975): 37–41, an essay on André Glucksmann's book *La cuisinière et le mangeur d'hommes: Essai sur les rapports entre l'État, le marxisme, et les camps de concentration* (Paris, 1975), Glucksmann's reading of Solzhenitsyn.

narrative of modernity, generated through reflection on the deep-seated origins of totalitarianism, suggested that totalitarianism emerged through the extirpation of the political as such. In his thesis, supervised by Raymond Aron, Lefort had fastened on Machiavelli as insisting on the inevitability of conflict, a tacit criticism of the Marxist tradition for hoping, in the name of postpolitical unity, to transcend division.²⁵ Rosanvallon read Lefort's thesis as early as 1972 and reacted favorably to Lefort's attempt "to consider the question of political emancipation from the point of view of the 'realist' theorists of domination (Machiavelli, [Étienne de] La Boétie, [Vilfredo] Pareto) [rather than via] Marx, for whom domination is above all economic domination, from which political domination is simply a derivative."²⁶ As Lefort put the matter in an interview conducted by an avid Rosanvallon for the journal *Faire* in 1978, Machiavelli seemed worthy of attention as "Marx's 'other' . . . since he put power at the center of his thought."²⁷ Following Lefort's critique of Marxism's blind spot, Rosanvallon argued that *autogestion* demanded "the rehabilitation of the political" and therefore a rejection of the blind alleys of utopia and technocracy, both of which hoped to transcend politics altogether. Lefort always wrote in the name of democracy, but he insisted that totalitarianism be understood as a political formation that emerged from democratic rule, a self-destructive version of the modern quest for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Rosanvallon's desire to "rehabilitate the political" has endured as a central theme throughout his career, down to the title of his chair at the Collège de France,²⁸ and it prompted the most theoretically interesting prospect of his work in the 1970s—the thesis that *autogestion* could be conceptualized as "a new form of political liberalism" entirely separate from economic liberalism. In Rosanvallon's account, political liberalism had correctly placed limits on the state and responded to the need for pluralistic flexibility but had "never solved the problem of adapting itself to the technological and industrial changes that began to occur" and had thus remained frozen in the eighteenth century. For this reason, in the nineteenth century it "became mismatched to society, and could not transcend the limits of the question of public and individual liberties for which Benjamin Constant became the

²⁵ Claude Lefort, *Le travail de l'œuvre Machiavel* (Paris, 1972).

²⁶ Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins," p. 50. La Boétie's tract reappeared in 1976 in a collective edition with commentary by Lefort and others; see Étienne de La Boétie, *Le discours de la servitude volontaire* (Paris, 1976).

²⁷ Rosanvallon and Patrick Viveret, "Débat avec . . . Claude Lefort," *Faire* 30 (Apr. 1978): 53. Pierre Clastres, defender of "society against the state," also cut an important figure at this moment; see Pierre Clastres, *La société contre l'État: Recherches d'anthropologie politique* (Paris, 1974); and Samuel Moyn, "Of Savagery and Civil Society: Pierre Clastres and the Transformation of French Political Thought," *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Apr. 2004).

²⁸ His chair (established in 2002) is entitled "Chaire d'histoire moderne et contemporaine du politique." In his inaugural lecture, Rosanvallon defined *le politique*, or "the political" (a term that originates from debate within Weimar Germany and is contrasted in French with *la politique*, or "politics"), as "a mode of existence of life in common as well as a form of collective action. . . . To speak of 'the political'—as opposed to 'politics'—is to speak of power and law, state and nation, equality and justice, identity and difference, citizenship and civility, in short of everything that makes up a polity beyond the immediate field of partisan conflict for power, governmental conflict from day to day, and the ordinary activity of institutions" (Rosanvallon, *Chaire d'histoire moderne et contemporaine du politique* [n. 14 above], p. 11).

ardent spokesman.” “It is up to the present age,” he wrote, “to discover political forms well-adapted to a complex and developed society.” Thus the theory of *autogestion* would save elements of political liberalism from their original entanglement with the defense of individual property and “bring Locke up to date.” But it would also correct political liberalism by ensuring that liberalism did not restrict itself to the negative task of precluding the state from predatory intervention in society without also pioneering more positive means of creating a vibrant and pluralistic civil society. As Rosanvallon concluded, while *autogestion* “inherits from Marxism the critique of bourgeois society and from liberalism the principle of reducing the state’s power and making civil society sovereign, it goes beyond both.”²⁹ Of course, *autogestion*, like the “second left” as a whole, promised far more than it ever delivered—as Rosanvallon would later come to admit. But it is decisive for understanding Rosanvallon’s later historical scholarship, especially his history of democracy, to realize that he began his intellectual career with the impulse to develop a new, democratic kind of liberalism.

During these years, Rosanvallon made the acquaintance of the final and professionally most important of the three mentors whom he acknowledged in his recent inaugural lecture: François Furet. “The encounter with Furet,” Rosanvallon recently recalled, “was a very important catalyst. . . . After he was elected president of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in 1977, François Furet started a small and informal group to reflect on political philosophy. . . . What made this group special is that it linked together two different generations. There was the generation of François Furet, Claude Lefort, Cornelius Castoradis, Krzysztof Pomian, but there were also, from the very beginning, Marcel Gauchet, Bernard Manin, Pierre Manent, and myself.”³⁰ This informal seminar became the nucleus of what has been called in the United States “New French Thought.” Rosanvallon, thanks to Furet’s patronage, soon arrived at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and began work on his thesis. Within the EHESS, Furet founded the Institut Raymond Aron in 1985, which has since become the major organizational nexus for French neoliberalism in political thought and historical study and which Rosanvallon has directed since the early 1990s.³¹ It was also during the later 1970s that Furet consolidated his striking and influential reinterpretation of the French revolution. In an important article on the genesis and context of Furet’s

²⁹ Rosanvallon, *L’âge de l’autogestion* (n. 18 above), chap. 2, pp. 41, 43–44, 48. Elsewhere, he went so far as to claim that “to Stalinism, *autogestionnaire* socialism is the only positive alternative” (Pierre Rosanvallon, “Les analyses du stalinisme,” *CFDT-Aujourd’hui* 21 [Sept.–Oct. 1976]: 61–89). In a later autopsy on *autogestion*, Rosanvallon wrote that it “allowed Tocqueville and Locke to become part of the socialist pantheon—no mean feat” (Pierre Rosanvallon, “Autogestion [Dictionnaire d’une époque],” *Le Débat* 50 [May–Aug. 1988]: 158).

³⁰ Rosanvallon, “Sur quelques chemins,” pp. 51–52.

³¹ The Institut Raymond Aron subsequently became the Centre de Recherches Politiques Raymond Aron. The main organ of this movement has been the journal *Le Débat*, edited by Furet’s talented disciple Marcel Gauchet, who trained under Lefort and published one of the most important antitotalitarian texts of the mid-1970s, “L’expérience totalitaire et la pensée de la politique,” *Esprit* 44 (July–Aug. 1976): 3–28. On recent French enthusiasm for political theory, see the useful article by Jeremy Jennings, “The Return of the Political? New French Journals in the History of Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 18 (1997): 148–56.

Interpreting the French Revolution, Michael Scott Christofferson has demonstrated what many had long suspected: that this brilliant but exasperating work projected onto the canvas of French history a fashionable critique of “totalitarianism” that not only helped Furet overcome the ideological adventures of his own communist past but also resonated with the goal of intellectuals of the independent left—such as Lefort and Rosanvallon—to define a new and postcommunist vision of radical politics. This conjuncture helps to explain the surprising and counterintuitive fact that French historiography, under Furet’s influence, came to adopt a *Sonderweg* obsessed with the nation’s exceptionalism at just the same time that the *Sonderweg* had begun to falter in the German historiography that originally gave rise to the term.³² In Furet’s work, a pathological vision of democracy takes center stage, providing (whatever the author’s intentions) an easy stepping-stone to the thesis that the aim of modern politics needs to be a liberal ordering of society that chastens the necessarily democratic foundations of modern legitimacy in light of the support those foundations easily provide to totalitarian and terroristic forms of rule.

It is certainly true that the intellectuals that Furet grouped around him in these years, as Rosanvallon recently recalled, had “an absolutely central point in common: to reflect on the problem of totalitarianism and the problem of the political more generally. . . . And while we came from different perspectives, we also shared the feeling of an urgent task—which seemed decisive to everyone—of reappropriating the classics of political philosophy.” But from the beginning, the intellectuals associated with New French Thought and French neoliberalism were not all committed to a single project. In particular, not all were willing to renounce the essential, democratizing aspiration of the left in European history. “Contrary to what many thought, we were very diverse,” Rosanvallon recently argued. “Some, like myself, were attempting an intellectual reconstruction of the left, while others, like Pierre Manent, were classical liberals. . . . Manent says at the end of one of his books on democracy that ‘one must love democracy, but only moderately.’ But Castoriadis, Lefort, and I were hardly of that view.”³³ The common rejection of totalitarianism, in other words, provided a broad paradigm for creative differentiation from Furet’s highly focused rejection of revolutionary terrorism and what he saw as its sequels in modern history, and it is within this elongated paradigm that Rosanvallon inscribed his own historical scholarship. Rosanvallon shared most with Lefort and Castoriadis, also professors at EHESS, beginning in 1976 and 1980, respectively, and kept his distance from Pierre Manent, on the relative right (Manent is perhaps best known for his introduction of Leo Strauss’s political thought to the French scene).³⁴

³² Michael Scott Christofferson, “An Antitotalitarian History of the French Revolution: François Furet’s *Penser la Révolution française* in the Intellectual Politics of the Late 1970s,” *French Historical Studies* 22 (1999): 557–611. The challenges to the German *Sonderweg* thesis came from left and right: on the left, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin, 1980); on the right, Thomas Nipperdey, “Wehlers ‘Kaiserreich’: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung,” in *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1976).

³³ Rosanvallon, “Sur quelques chemins” (n. 10 above), pp. 52–53.

³⁴ For a rich discussion of Castoriadis, Lefort, and Gauchet (at EHESS since 1990), with em-

In his own early work, Rosanvallon followed Furet's general belief in the omnipresence of the totalitarian threat as well as Furet's retrojection and elevation of this danger as the treacherous essence of French democracy. Nevertheless, in the name of his original democratizing aspiration, Rosanvallon hoped to avoid the reduction of democracy to terror and to find a way to think about institutionalizing it in some new form. From the beginning, Rosanvallon, like Lefort, his other mentor, rejected Furet's attempt to make purgation of revolution and terror from politics the exclusive and self-sufficient focus of modern political theory and practice.³⁵ In what follows, the question we pose to Rosanvallon's historical oeuvre (as opposed to his policy writings and activities)³⁶ of the last two decades is whether this rejection could survive and prosper alongside his larger affiliation with Furet's negativistic position.

To correct for the limitations of Furet's historiographical approach, of course, Rosanvallon first had to become a historian. He did so in the aftermath of a political failure, faced with an intellectual quandary that amply prepared him to respond to Furet's historical work. Rosanvallon spent the middle years of the 1970s as a member of the PS, fully engaged in the polemical and practical battle for supremacy in the newly unified left. But events within the PS marginalized the *autogestionnaire* movement, as Rocard, whom Rosanvallon supported in this period (for example, by serving as a speechwriter), lost out to Mitterrand in a climactic struggle. Mitterrand, more willing to accept PCF participation in the left-wing coalition in the 1970s, assumed the French presidency in 1981, and Rosanvallon quit the PS, confirming his decision to become more of an analyst and less of an actor.³⁷ Rosanvallon concluded that behind the "tactical" failure of Rocard and the *autogestionnaire* movement in the years of critique of totalitarianism lay a theoretical failure—the failure to transcend negative opposition to communism and hierarchy and to offer a more detailed and positive vision of politics. "The second left's intellectual capital remained too weak and did not suffice," Rosanvallon recently acknowledged. "Its positive contribution, beyond the criticism it offered, never became developed enough."³⁸ For a thinker who in the 1970s always demanded

phasis on the way they have conceptualized the religious past, see Warren Breckman, "Democracy between Disenchantment and Political Theology: French Post-Marxism and the Return of Religion," *New German Critique*, no. 92 (Spring–Summer 2004).

³⁵ See Claude Lefort, "Penser la révolution dans la Révolution française," *Annales E.S.C.* 35 (Mar.–Apr. 1980): 334–53 (available in English in Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey [Minneapolis, 1988], chap. 5).

³⁶ The most important of these activities was the Fondation Saint-Simon, on which Furet and Rosanvallon collaborated from 1982 to 1997, and over which Rosanvallon then presided until he closed it in 1999. More recently, he has inaugurated a new "think tank" called La République des Idées. Rosanvallon's policy writings otherwise unmentioned in the following have occurred in two stages: one reacting to the stagflation and economic exhaustion of the 1970s, the other to the bubble and yawning inequality of the late 1980s and 1990s. For the first phase, see Pierre Rosanvallon, *La crise de l'État-providence* (Paris, 1981), and *Misère de l'économie* (Paris, 1983). For the second, see Rosanvallon, *La nouvelle question sociale* (n. 2 above), and, with the economist Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Le nouvel âge des inégalités* (Paris, 1996).

³⁷ Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins," p. 60.

³⁸ Rosanvallon, "Témoignage" (n. 12 above), pp. 366–67.

that the second left transcend the criticism of communism—indeed, claimed this step as its central contribution—this admission is striking and crucial. Moreover, this failure provided Rosanvallon a future project to complete, one that emerged slowly over the years of the late 1970s as he became more associated with academic life and that continues to inform his scholarship today. If Furet's *Interpreting the French Revolution* epitomized the critique of totalitarianism in the 1970s, it is because of the extent to which it rooted totalitarianism in the founding circumstances of the nation and left no self-evident democratic alternative to terror in its history, especially not in the egalitarian radicalism of the revolutionary period. For those, like Rosanvallon, who wanted the critique of totalitarianism to be a stepping-stone to or an aspect of a larger vision of egalitarian democracy, Furet's historical argument left much more work to be done. By 1977, Rosanvallon later remembered, he had already "formulated the program of . . . writing a new and comprehensive intellectual history of French democracy and of beginning a more general theoretical reflection on democracy."³⁹ The quandaries of the present motivated a return to the past, as the militant became, *faute de mieux*, a historian.

The shape of Rosanvallon's project began to emerge clearly with *Le capitalisme utopique*, his first work of historical scholarship, published in 1979. This book illustrates both his debt to Furet and his intention to transcend this same mentor through a novel intellectual strategy that would mark all of his work on French democracy. In the introduction to the first edition of *Le capitalisme utopique*, Rosanvallon began by acknowledging that "the recognition of the totalitarian phenomenon has burst the framework of our political thought, causing our deepest convictions to falter and obliging us to stop imagining the future as we have customarily envisioned it. It is now no longer possible to retreat and to believe, like the poet, that it is enough to reply to each collapse of evidence with a salvo of the future."⁴⁰ To this rejection of totalitarianism then commonplace in French thought, Rosanvallon added a new task: "immense work needs to be done now in the definition of positive alternatives in order to keep our ambition to transform society from being expunged along with our illusions."⁴¹ This next step, Rosanvallon declared, involved the extension of the critique of totalitarianism to the specter of totalitarianism present within the history of liberalism itself. "To rest content with a radical criticism of Marx seems to me both insufficient and misleading," he continued. "In making Marx the single and definitive culprit of every-

³⁹ Ibid., 365–66.

⁴⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique: Critique de l'idéologie économique* (Paris, 1979), p. 5; Rosanvallon alluded here to the memorable line by the postwar French poet René Char: "A chaque effondrement des preuves / le poète répond par une salve d'avenir." This book has been reprinted twice, each time with a different title and a different preface. In addition, the original conclusion has been dropped from both subsequent editions; see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le libéralisme économique: Histoire de l'idée de marché* (Paris, 1989); and, most recently, with the old title and the new subtitle, as *Le capitalisme utopique: Histoire de l'idée de marché* (Paris, 1999). The latter contains a new preface, entitled "Le marché et les trois utopies libérales." Unless noted otherwise, citations here are to the original (1979) edition.

⁴¹ Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique*, p. 5. Rosanvallon specifically noted his allegiance to Lefort's critique of totalitarianism.

thing objectionable in modern politics, one too easily exculpates all of modernity; one risks the superficiality of forgetting that capitalism is another kind of delusion in the modern world.” For this reason, Rosanvallon dedicated his book to making clear the protototalitarian desire for monistic homogeneity and harmonious transparency he saw to be latent in eighteenth-century liberal visions of the market. In Rosanvallon’s eyes, “the liberal economic utopia of the eighteenth century and the socialist political utopia of the nineteenth century turn out to be the two equal and opposite faces of the same representation of society.”⁴² Rather than rejecting the critique of totalitarianism, then, Rosanvallon attempted to extend it and to root it deeply in the origins of liberalism itself (and not just democracy). As he put it elsewhere in the text, “All of utopian liberalism’s intellectual foundations open much more brutal paths. The refusal of the political, the utopia of a transparent society, and the criticism of autonomous intermediary social structures: everything is in place for . . . a totalitarian society.”⁴³ Understanding this dark side of liberal utopianism, he argued, would deepen contemporary understanding of the “reversal of democracy into totalitarianism.”⁴⁴ As a result, announced Rosanvallon, “It is perhaps modernity itself that it is now necessary to interrogate and to bring before the bar.”⁴⁵ Reason and will, rationalism and voluntarism, economic harmony and political unity: each pair emerged in Rosanvallon’s account as two faces of the selfsame pathology.

Rosanvallon made this reading work by a heavy reliance on, and a political reinterpretation of, the French anthropologist Louis Dumont’s outline of the historical origins and distinctive shape of modernity. In various accounts of Indian society meant to help isolate the novelty of the modern West, Dumont offered a strict and stark contrast between holist and individualist societies, stressing the contingency and rarity of the latter against the prevalence of the former in human history, and marked the passage from hierarchy to equality—holism to individualism—as the major turning point in Western (and human) history.⁴⁶ For Dumont, only Christianity made this transition possible, since it alone among human cultural traditions had invented individualism, with modernity then finishing this process and bringing individualism “into the world.”⁴⁷ Discovered by his countrymen *en*

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁴⁶ See, esp., Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus: Essai sur le système des castes* (Paris, 1967). In this line of thinking, Dumont revived—perhaps earlier than anyone else—Tocqueville’s thought in France; see Nur Yalman, “De Tocqueville in India: An Essay on the Caste System,” *Man* 4 (Mar. 1969): 123–31. In a book arguing for the Western contribution to the theory and practice of caste, Nicholas Dirks remarks in a long discussion of Dumont that he “resurrected colonial categories and arguments at a time when the West mistook their overdetermined reality for an explanation of the East’s failure, and colonialism was either forgotten or consigned to Raj nostalgia” (Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* [Princeton, N.J., 2001], pp. 54–59, quotation at p. 57).

⁴⁷ See Louis Dumont, “The Modern Conception of the Individual: Notes on Its Genesis,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* [The Hague] 8 (1965): 13–61; this essay appeared in France as “La conception moderne de l’individu: Notes sur sa genèse, en relation avec les conceptions de

plein antitotalitarisme, Dumont also explained that the illiberal political regimes of the twentieth century were futile but violent attempts at reversion to totalistic holism, rebellions against (but still within) the modern individualistic universe.⁴⁸ Rosanvallon welcomed this view and would, like Furet, adopt it straightforwardly into his narrative.⁴⁹ Most especially, Rosanvallon followed Dumont's perception that, contrary to appearances, Marx's thought, though apparently holistic, counted as a form of radical individualism, a transformation within the Western formation rather than an alternative to it.

In his first work of history, Rosanvallon appropriated Dumont's analysis as part of his endeavor to understand the field of options at play in modern societies.⁵⁰ He located the birth of liberal economics in a far larger narrative of the rise of counterpolitical thought in the early modern period, economic liberalism now emerging in tandem with the revolutionary and voluntaristic counterpolitical vision that Furet made so prominent in *Interpreting the French Revolution*. For Rosanvallon, a unimistic contractualism had been only one line of response, through Hobbes and culminating in Rousseau, to the disorderly threat of human passions and conflicts that Machiavelli had introduced to political philosophy. Moreover, the strictly political solution to Machiavellian disorder is one that, by the Enlightenment, seemed increasingly unworkable. The "economic ideology," Rosanvallon argued, arose as a counterpolitical vision to the core, intending to harmonize human passions where voluntaristic contractualism had failed. For this reason, Adam Smith emerged as the major anti-Machiavellian of modern thought, his contribution far more in the liquidation of politics via economics than in the establishment of a nascent discipline: "In transposing Machiavelli onto the terrain of natural right in the state of nature, Hobbes believed he had already mastered the vexing question of social division on which Machiavelli insisted. The economic ideology that arose in the eighteenth century, in erasing the distinction between civil society and the state of nature which Hobbes required in order to exorcise Machiavelli, definitively severed the connection with the author of *The Prince*. It is in this sense that the economic

la politique et de l'État, à partir du treizième siècle," *Esprit*, n.s., 14 (Feb. 1978): 18–54 (this entire issue of *Esprit* is dedicated to Dumont's thought). See also, Louis Dumont, "La genèse chrétienne de l'individualisme moderne: Une vue modifiée de nos origines," *Le Débat* 15 (Sept.–Oct. 1981): 124–46. These and other essays by Dumont were later gathered as *Essais sur l'individualisme: Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne* (Paris, 1983).

⁴⁸ See Dumont's perfectly timed text *Homo aequalis*, vol. 1, *Genèse et épanouissement de l'idéologie économique* (Paris, 1977); published slightly earlier in English as *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago, 1977)—this book began as Dumont's Christian Gauss Lectures at Princeton University in 1973.

⁴⁹ François Furet, "L'enfance de l'individu," *Le Nouvel Observateur* 660 (July 10, 1977): 54–55; and Pierre Rosanvallon, "Louis Dumont, le sacre de l'individu," *Libération* (Nov. 17, 1983). For Rosanvallon, Dumont's study of other cultures had allowed him to see the all-pervasive force of individualism even in "totalitarians" apparently opposed to it, showing that "individualism and statism work as a pair." Dumont's "Indian detour," Rosanvallon concluded, "brings us in the final analysis to our current, most pressing concerns" (Rosanvallon, "Louis Dumont, le sacre de l'individu," rpt. in *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto* 22 [1984]: 151).

⁵⁰ See Marcel Gauchet, "De l'avènement de l'individu à la découverte de la société," *Annales E.S.C.* 34 (May–June 1979): 451–63, for a contemporary commentary on the theoretical relationship between Dumont's and Rosanvallon's works.

ideology, as a philosophy of radical emancipation, appears to be the summit of modernity, in all of its blindness.”⁵¹ In this vein, Rosanvallon noted that by marginalizing Smith, Albert Hirschman’s celebrated thesis in *The Passions and the Interests* that economic interests were called on to “tame,” “countervail,” or “harness” the passions of political division somewhat understated the radicalism of Smith’s “economic ideology.”⁵² The economic forum of commerce did not simply counteract political passions; it transmuted them, suppressing diversity in the name of harmony no less than contractualist voluntarism would. “The decisive turning point,” Rosanvallon commented, “resided in the economic comprehension of politics, and of all social life. For Smith, the economy *in itself* resolves . . . the political question.”⁵³ For this reason, Smith fulfilled the deepest aim of the tradition of contractual will formation precisely by parting ways with it and shifting it to the terrain of market relations. Crucially, in spite of his intention to craft a new form of liberalism, Rosanvallon viewed the legacy of eighteenth-century liberal utopianism as also including nineteenth-century political liberalism, in which democracy was seen to epitomize disorder: “Generally, it is into the political realm that the eighteenth-century economic ideals were transferred. The utopia of the extinction of the political thereby came into its classic form. . . . If the bourgeoisie could claim only with great difficulty that it had brought universal harmony into being, it sought at least to make its own the notion of an end of politics and conflicts *hic et nunc*. . . . When Guizot wrote *On Democracy in France* (1849), he began by affirming that ‘today chaos is hidden in the guise of one word: democracy.’” Thus, the harmonious utopia of Smith was extended by the political liberals of the nineteenth century. “The arithmetic of the passions, the harmony of the interests, universal fraternity: the same representation of man and society is at work in the economy of the eighteenth and the polity of the nineteenth centuries. It is in this sense that the economic ideology is at the heart of modernity.”⁵⁴ As in Dumont’s

⁵¹ Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique*, p. 61.

⁵² Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J., 1977).

⁵³ Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique*, pp. 60–61. For Rosanvallon, the primary manifestation of this ideology in France was the Physiocrats, whom he described as “*radicalizing to the extreme* the reversal of the relationships between the economy and the polity, to the point of entirely suppressing the concept of politics itself” (p. 50; emphasis in original).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 225, 226. In “Le marché et les trois utopies libérales,” the preface to the 1999 edition of *Le capitalisme utopique*, Rosanvallon restated his argument that political liberalism can continue in the same antipolitical vein as economic liberalism. He describes political liberalism as also a “utopia” but one “of a rule of law that could serve as a second substitute for the political order of conflict and of negotiation. It constitutes the other side of *the utopia of regulation* that underlies the modern concept of the market.” He furthermore writes of a single utopian liberal “culture” that makes “the *depersonalization of the world* the condition of progress and of liberty” and that “permits speaking of liberalism in the singular. Among Locke’s *Letters on Toleration*, Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*, and Benjamin Constant’s *Principles of Politics* a single project of emancipation is at work” (*Le capitalisme utopique* [1999 ed.], pp. ix–x). Rosanvallon also devoted a chapter of his book (originally his thesis), *Le moment Guizot*, to “the order of reason” in Guizot’s thought. By contrast, Gauchet suggested, as early as 1980 in an implicit restriction of the significance of Rosanvallon’s argument, that the priority of political liberalism over economic liberalism allowed the rejection of the fiction of economic

work, Rosanvallon's revisionist account culminated in the suggestion that Karl Marx had been, on some profound level, a follower of Smith since Marx never left the liberal, individualist horizon Smith had introduced—he merely substituted natural harmony among men for Smith's natural harmony among interests. Marx's essentially harmonious and transparent society after the leap to communism, presupposing the violent suppression of disunity and difference, turned out to be Smithian to the core.⁵⁵

Rosanvallon's arguments in *Le capitalisme utopique* illuminate the chain of intellectual associations he forged at this decisive moment of his transition from militant to historian. While one should not reduce *Le capitalisme utopique* to the politics of a particular moment, it clearly served a political end in its time, a fact Rosanvallon would gladly accept in light of his methodological insistence throughout his career on the promise of a present-minded (if not presentist) historiography.⁵⁶ Evidently, Rosanvallon's account in 1979 of *both* voluntarism and rationalism as latently totalitarian (because they both quashed the political) stems directly from his engagement with Lefort as well as with Furet. But it does so in a highly interesting and, arguably, still negative way. It clears the political ground of an apparent alternative to voluntaristic democracy—economic liberalism and even some forms of political liberalism—without explaining what positive vision of politics might respond to the difficulties inherent in both. In this regard, Rosan-

harmony without the rejection of political liberalism; see Marcel Gauchet, "Benjamin Constant: L'illusion lucide du libéralisme," in *De la liberté chez les modernes: Ecrits politiques*, by Benjamin Constant, ed. Marcel Gauchet (Paris, 1980), pp. 64–66.

⁵⁵ See Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique*, chap. 8.

⁵⁶ Although a discussion of Rosanvallon's historical methodology is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that Rosanvallon shares in the recent French critique of Quentin Skinner for having, in his early work, reduced the past to an irrelevancy as if antiquarianism were the only alternative to the belief in perennial issues in philosophy. Skinner "wished, or was obliged," Rosanvallon concludes, "to limit his role to that of a Cambridge professor," foreclosing the prospect that the historian's work can enjoy a communion with present quandaries and even contribute to their solution (Rosanvallon, cited in Jeremy Jennings, "'Le retour des émigrés'? The Study of the History of Political Ideas in Contemporary France," in Castiglione and Hampsher-Monk, eds. [n. 13 above], pp. 226–27). Such accusations, which are understandable in light of some statements in Skinner's early methodological writings, have been multiplied in recent years on the French scene: see Yves-Charles Zarka, "L'interprétation entre passé et présent," *Le Débat* 96 (Sept. 1997): 108–14; and Quentin Skinner, "Les concepts et l'histoire," *Le Débat* 96 (Sept.–Oct. 1997): 115–21. That Skinner has himself recently attempted to avoid his early "antiquarianism" is suggested by his own recent inaugural lecture, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998). For Rosanvallon's methodology, see Rosanvallon, "Towards a Philosophical History of the Political" (n. 13 above), which is an enriched version of Pierre Rosanvallon, "Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique (note du travail)," *Revue de synthèse* 1–2 (1996): 93–105. Rosanvallon's previous methodological comments include "Faire l'histoire du politique: Entretien avec Pierre Rosanvallon," *Esprit* 209 (Feb. 1995): 25–42; and "Le politique," in *Une École pour les sciences sociales: De la VIe section à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, ed. Jacques Revel and Nathan Wachtel (Paris, 1996). Rosanvallon, along with some EHESS colleagues, also founded a journal of political thought called *La Pensée politique*, which ran for a few years in the mid-1990s; for his contribution to the premier issue, see Pierre Rosanvallon, "Histoire du mot 'démocratie' à l'époque moderne," *La Pensée politique* 1 (Apr. 1993): 11–29; this essay has been translated as "The History of the Word 'Democracy' in France," trans. Philip J. Costopoulos, *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (Oct. 1995): 140–54.

vallon's first historical venture retrojects the quandary of the second left into the very origins of modernity. In a sense, *Le capitalisme utopique* attempts to rob liberalism of legitimacy on the same grounds on which the critique of totalitarianism had invalidated voluntarist democracy. But in extending the negative verdict to rationalist liberalism, it remained, like the second left, negativistic, clearer about what it is against than about what it is for. And it avoided one potential cure for modernity that Furet often endorsed—liberalism—only by worsening the original disease.

In this manner, Rosanvallon both accepted the premises of the critique of totalitarianism and attempted to broaden and alter its target. His gambit demonstrates his belief in the centrality of the critique of totalitarianism and in its amenability to a variety of different intellectual outcomes and political ends. The critique of totalitarianism was so fundamental—and the specter of totalitarianism loomed so large—that it could unveil the latent pathologies of liberal capitalism just as it had exposed those of democratic voluntarism. Taken to its full analytical and political conclusions, it undermined the fiction of a fully harmonious market capitalism just as it had already successfully smashed the delusions of statist communism. With the repudiation of the two equated extremes, Rosanvallon intended to suggest some reconciliation of individualism with solidarity, market and state, as the only hope for a free society after the discredited errors of capitalism and communism alike. In his conclusion to *Le capitalisme utopique*, Rosanvallon accordingly rejected the illusion that the rule of law and the rights of man provide a sufficient content for liberalism and spoke of “a political theory simultaneously realistic and revolutionary” as “a project critical to the future of democracy.”⁵⁷ That such a surprising program could emerge from the critique of totalitarianism, it bears insisting, worked only by rooting the disease deep in modernity itself. Moreover, it found a way to hope about modern politics only by compounding, rather than marginalizing, the terror Furet had associated with it.

Rosanvallon, like other “neoliberal” intellectuals at the time, presented his project with great confidence. In an important article published at just this moment in an early issue of *Le Débat*, Rosanvallon, participating in a forum on the vacuum that was left in French intellectual life by Jean-Paul Sartre's death, argued that the time had come for a definitive break with the Marxism that had hitherto provided the theoretical underpinnings of the French left.⁵⁸ Boldly likening his revival of Locke and Tocqueville to the medieval recovery of the Aristotelian corpus, Rosanvallon repeated his themes from the debates of the 1970s—the departure from totalitarianism, the renewal of democracy, surpassing the alternative between statism and privatism.⁵⁹ His brash suggestion to “forget the old fashions,” however,

⁵⁷ Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique*, p. 230.

⁵⁸ Pierre Rosanvallon, “Oublier les modes,” *Le Débat* 4 (Sept. 1980): 80: “It has seemed increasingly more productive to many, including myself, to move directly beyond Marxism, in order to save time.”

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81. Rosanvallon's exaggerated sense of the theoretical importance of “classic” (i.e., nineteenth-century) texts is what led him to his work on Guizot, which he undertook as part of the larger enterprise—in Rosanvallon's words, “a program of rehabilitating the classics and of rereading the tradition”—carried out at the time by those associated with the Centre Raymond Aron (Rosanvallon, “Sur quelques chemins” [n. 10 above], pp. 53–54). Compare Furet's call for

concealed the difficulty of the intellectual enterprise he had set himself. Rosanvallon's triangulation, put differently, posed but did not resolve the fundamental problem of just how to imagine a modern society committed to freedom and equality that would avoid the temptation of totalitarian unity that Rosanvallon read in the theoretical origins of both liberalism and democracy. As he testified in 2000, this intellectual quandary compelled him to enter "a long period of intellectual correction [*un grand cycle de rattrapage intellectuel*] . . . from which I am only now emerging."⁶⁰ The question posed in what follows is whether Rosanvallon's subsequent turn to French history succeeded in providing the proper terrain for the completion of his daring but difficult enterprise of discovering sources in the past for political solidarity compatible with the need for social pluralism—sources that would allow the polity to avoid a complacent neoliberal sequel to the dangerous totalitarianism of the past. In other words, it asks whether Rosanvallon's history of democracy in France was able to fulfill the unrealized intention of the second left.

II. DEMOCRACY IN FRANCE

Rosanvallon's recently completed trilogy on the history of democracy in France extended his political project to an ambitious assessment of French history from 1789 to the present. It makes clear his devotion to liberal democracy as the telos of modern politics, while also highlighting the pathologies to which both liberalism and democracy in his view are prone. The goal throughout, in light of these pathologies, is to pursue a form of liberal democracy that can inoculate itself against its own potential diseases. He owes this paradigm for understanding the past to Furet, but he attempts to renovate it substantially. Just as his argument in *Le capitalisme utopique* placed voluntarist democracy and rationalist liberalism on the same prototalitarian footing, Rosanvallon's presentation of the history of democracy in France extends Furet's pathogenic analysis of the French past, especially the French Revolution and its legacy, to include an indictment of rationalist liberalism as well as of political voluntarism.⁶¹ In so doing, Rosanvallon's historical

"the return to the good authors of the nineteenth century" in the first issue of *Le Débat*: François Furet, "Éditorial: Le XIXe siècle et l'intelligence du politique," *Le Débat* 1 (May 1980): 125. For similar statements, see Gauchet's revival of Benjamin Constant the same year: "Benjamin Constant," esp. pp. 19–23. In addition to penning his thesis on Guizot, Rosanvallon also prepared an edition of a previously unknown piece of Guizot—"De la souveraineté," written between 1821 and 1823—that he discovered in the National Archives in Paris: it appears as an appendix in François Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'Empire romain jusqu'à la Révolution française; suivie de Philosophie politique de la souveraineté*, ed. Pierre Rosanvallon (Paris, 1985).

⁶⁰ Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins," pp. 54–55.

⁶¹ Or, as he recently put it, "The fundamental contradiction in French political culture: the encounter between political rationalism and popular sovereignty" (Pierre Rosanvallon, "Political Rationalism and Democracy in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28 [Nov. 2002]: 687). Although Rosanvallon has disavowed an overt connection between his work in the "history of political ideas in the classical sense of the term" (referring to *Le capitalisme utopique* and *Le moment Guizot*) and his trilogy on democracy in France, this review will show the important relationship between these works (Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins," p. 55).

scholarship rejects the neoliberal alternative that Furet's paradigm implicitly champions. For Rosanvallon, the "normalization" of French democracy would require the surpassing of both rationalist liberalism and political voluntarism. Furthermore, while for Furet the normalization of French democracy occurred by way of a compromise among France's elites during the consolidation of the Third Republic in the 1870s, Rosanvallon views normalization as having occurred through extra-parliamentary developments in what he dubs the "silent revolution" of the 1890s. The pages that follow focus on these two features of Rosanvallon's history of democracy in France in order to assess the fecundity of his attempt to revise Furet's revisionism from within.

Rosanvallon's history of French democracy is organized around the conceptual tension between liberalism and democracy, which he plots as a fundamental "duality" internal to the advent of "political modernity." It is "internal" because both liberalism and democracy stem from "the modern idea of emancipation," which, as he put it in his recent *Leçon inaugurale*, "refers to a desire for individual autonomy (with law as the privileged vector) at the same time as to a project of participation in the exercise of social power (that therefore puts politics in the place of authority [*qui met la politique au poste du commandement*])."⁶² Each volume of his trilogy plots in relation to this duality a particular aspect of what Rosanvallon calls the "triple experience" of democracy in France: the experience of individualism and political equality, the empowerment of the collective, and the reconciliation of the sovereignty of the people to representative government.⁶³

Rosanvallon's conviction, inspired by Dumont, that the advent of the individual is the single most distinctive characteristic of modernity as a whole led Rosanvallon to narrate the French experience of individualism and political equality in volume 1 of his trilogy, *Le sacre du citoyen*. He analyzes this broad theme through the lens of the historical emergence of universal suffrage in France, which he locates in the "history of a double transition: from simple consent to self-government, on the one hand; from the people figured as a body to the autonomous individual, on the other. This history is exemplary in the sense that it is at the heart of the double movement of secularization (the self-institution of the political and of the social) and of individualization (the advent of the individual as organizing category of the social) that accompanies the advent of modernity" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 34). Suffrage acquires the decisive place it holds in Rosanvallon's historical vision because it is the political and legal codification of the phenomenon that, following Dumont, he considers the defining feature of modernity. The "sacre de l'individu" that Rosanvallon praised Dumont for uncovering led naturally to the project of Rosanvallon's own *Le sacre du citoyen*.

Volume 2, *Le peuple introuvable*, examines the empowerment of the collective, or the problem of politically embodying the people. The theoretical inspiration

⁶² Rosanvallon, *Chaire d'histoire moderne et contemporaine du politique* (n. 14 above), p. 13 (for an almost identical formulation, see *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 22). Note that the bracketed phrase from the original French is the subtitle of Rosanvallon's early book *L'âge de l'autogestion* (n. 18 above)—suggesting the long-term continuity in his career.

⁶³ Rosanvallon, "Sur quelques chemins," pp. 57–58.

behind *Le peuple introuvable* is Lefort, who posed the problem of the embodiment of political power in democracy.⁶⁴ According to Rosanvallon, this problem arises from the fact that “the contradiction between the nature of democratic society (the society without bodies) and the presuppositions of democratic politics (the constitution of a represented fictive person) leads to a permanent search for identity that cannot be satisfied” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 18). This ongoing crisis of representation, he asserts, is unavoidable because representation is founded on a “*necessary fiction*. This fiction is in effect a condition for being able to integrate the full diversity of the social into the unity of the political body” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 41 n. 1). Rosanvallon thus considered the problem of imagining the people, which Furet had called the inevitable cause of revolutionary terror, to be a permanent undertaking. In modern democracies there is, for Rosanvallon, an enduring and unavoidable duality between the politically unified “one” and the social “many,” and the history of democracy in France was conceptually destined to oscillate between a singular embodiment of the general will and the plural embodiments of particular wills, without achieving a reconciliation.

The third lens through which Rosanvallon examines democracy in France is the problem of reconciling the sovereignty of the people to representative government, which forms the subject of *La démocratie inachevée*. Following the American and French Revolutions, he explains, a fundamental divide emerged between understanding the representative system as “a simple *technical artifice* resulting from a purely practical constraint (organizing power in a society of large size)” and understanding it as “a *positive philosophical vision* with its own virtues [and] as an original and specific political form.” Significantly, “these two approaches are contradictory insofar as representative government is understood, in the first case, as an *equivalent* to democracy, while it constitutes, in the second, a *surpassing* of democracy” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 12). In Rosanvallon’s telling, though, this difference did not resolve into two opposed alternatives but led into a conceptual confusion, one that stemmed from a deeper confusion about the notion of sovereignty: Is the sovereignty of the people always active, or is it exercised only in extraordinary circumstances? Is it an active principle or, rather, a form of authorization? The history of democracy in France, for Rosanvallon, has been marked by a failure to clarify these conceptual questions.

Doubling the French Pathology

The French Revolution stands for Rosanvallon as the founding pathological moment whose legacy democracy in France has had to overcome. Thus, it receives serious treatment in each volume of his trilogy. As he tells it, 1789 inaugurated both a democratic and a liberal revolution in France. All modern liberal democ-

⁶⁴ Lefort had politicized the theme of the body (it had figured prominently in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology), a theme then elaborated in a celebrated article by Marcel Gauchet, “Des deux corps du roi au pouvoir sans corps: Christianisme et politique I et II,” *Le Débat* 14 (July–Aug. 1981): 133–57; 15 (Sept.–Oct. 1981): 147–68. According to this view, democratic societies face like none before the problem of embodying power because they have lost the mortal body of the king and always face the “totalitarian” temptation of fictive unity.

racies must undergo democratic and liberal revolutions, he argues, and France's "exceptionalism" can be explained in no small part by these two revolutions' simultaneous occurrence there in 1789.⁶⁵ From that moment on, France was condemned to oscillate "between the power of the street and a rationalist and aristocratic liberalism" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 171).

Rosanvallon's analysis of the Revolution in his trilogy follows from his argument in *Le capitalisme utopique* that both political voluntarism and rationalist liberalism are potentially protototalitarian—that both are poisoned sources for modern democracy. Historiographically, he follows and amends Furet's famous interpretation of the Revolution and the Terror, which reduced the drive to terror to political voluntarism, or what Keith Michael Baker has dubbed the "discourse of political will."⁶⁶ While Rosanvallon largely follows Furet's analysis of the Terror itself, he breaks with Furet by implicating rationalist liberalism in the Revolution's full set of pathologies. Whereas Furet, in his portraits both of the Terror and of a longer-term "Revolutionary France," blames voluntarist democracy and its periodic reemergence in the nineteenth century for the failure of French political culture to "normalize," Rosanvallon seeks to indict as well the rationalist liberal alternative. Rosanvallon's is thus a very different model from that offered by Furet and his most orthodox followers in that it implicitly rejects neoliberalism as a superior alternative to democratic voluntarism. Historically, both were damaged goods in their pure forms.

In Rosanvallon's narrative of the Revolution, the competing paradigms of voluntarist democracy and rationalist liberalism came into conflict with each other virtually from day one. One of the most important sites of this conflict was the fundamental but explosive question of who would be included as a citizen and who would not. Would the citizenry be defined in radically democratic terms, or, following the most prominent eighteenth-century reformers, would it be limited to an enlightened elite?⁶⁷ He begins with an attempt to explain the revolutionaries' startling proclamation of near universal male suffrage in August 1792 and in the Constitution of 1793—and thus the triumph of democratic voluntarism over elitist, rationalist liberalism. Following closely in the footsteps of Furet, Rosanvallon first analyzes what he calls the "imperative of inclusion" and attributes the drive to two principal developments: the transfer of sovereignty from the king to the people,

⁶⁵ On Rosanvallon's account, there are three major moments in the emergence of the modern Western state: the moment of political secularization (from which follows the sovereign state), the liberal moment, and the democratic moment. "French specificity," he argues, resulted from an early moment of political secularization following the wars of religion in France, and a late liberal moment that occurred simultaneously with the democratic moment during the French Revolution. England is offered as the example of a nation in which these revolutions occurred separately (Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'État en France de 1789 à nos jours* [Paris, 1990], pp. 98, 125, 272–75).

⁶⁶ See Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (n. 1 above); and Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁶⁷ Rosanvallon describes the two-tier voting systems established in the Constitutions of 1791 and 1795 and the lists of "notables" in the Constitution of 1800 as attempts to fuse popular sovereignty and elite rule (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 184–95).

and a new representation of society in 1789 that integrated “the people” en bloc. The former created a regime of politically equal individuals because there was a “collective entry into sovereignty” (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 59). That is, the people as a single entity reoccupied the absolutist power as an undifferentiated collective subject, each member of which possessed that power equally. The new representation of society in 1789 resulted from the preeminent role played by the attack on privilege in the Revolution’s early days—because the Old Regime had been based on exclusion and differentiation, the new one would include everyone on equal terms—and likewise demanded that everyone possess an equal share in the newly acquired sovereignty. As a result of these two factors, suffrage and elections were envisioned as acts of participation in sovereignty rather than as an “English”-style representation of interests, a fateful step that would indelibly mark French history. French specificity, Rosanvallon writes in the closing pages of *Le sacre du citoyen*, proceeded directly from the Revolution’s conception of “suffrage-as-belonging.” French specificity “is based on the certainty that the general interest, inasmuch as it embodies the ‘truth’ of society, cannot be deduced from particular interests. . . . The right to vote in France does not therefore proceed from the construction of the general interest: it is essentially akin to a symbolics of social belonging and to a form of the collective reappropriation of the ancient royal power” (p. 452).⁶⁸ The revolutionaries, however, did not at first establish universal suffrage, a fact that might seem to speak against Rosanvallon’s conceptually determined historical narrative. Rosanvallon ascribes the relative conservatism of suffrage law at the beginning of the Revolution, notably, the categories of “active” and “passive” citizens, to what he calls “anthropological” conservatism, or elitist and exclusionary ideas about just who was considered “autonomous” or “independent” (pp. 41–42). But events conspired to radicalize the definition of citizenship beyond at least some of the boundaries fixed by the revolutionaries’ limited anthropological horizons (transients and domestics were still denied the franchise). Scores of citizen-soldiers and national guardsmen originally designated as passive citizens were manifestly active in defending the nation and, as a result, were subsequently included in revisions to voting requirements enacted in 1792 and 1793 (pp. 91–101).

The temporary dominance of voluntarism in the Revolution did not prevent at least one figure from realizing, and attempting (like Rosanvallon himself later) to think through, France’s ultimate need to avoid the pitfalls of both voluntarism and rationalism. This figure is Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas de Caritat, the Marquis de Condorcet. In *Le sacre du citoyen*, Rosanvallon provides a rich discussion of Condorcet’s search for formal voting procedures to reduce “the tension between liberalism and democracy” (p. 175). Condorcet is presented here as something of a precursor to Guizot, as posing similar, fundamental questions about the relation-

⁶⁸ Rosanvallon argues that before the Revolution there was no idea of the people as collective sovereign and that the idea of the sovereignty of the people employed in France against absolutism following the Wars of Religion by Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, Claude Joly, Pierre Jurieu, and François Hotman was closer to the medieval notion of consent or authorization than to the modern concept of self-government (ibid., pp. 22–30).

ship between democracy and rationalist liberalism (although, to be sure, Condorcet's procedural solution was infinitely less hostile to democracy than the restrictive voting requirements Guizot later advocated). Why did Condorcet's attempts fail? Here Rosanvallon again turns to the Furetian answer: because of the voluntarist basis of the revolutionary social contract, because will proved to be stronger than rationalism at this stage of the Revolution. As "circumstances"—Rosanvallon is not clear here if he means the war, although his choice of this term of art does not seem accidental and would represent a significant gesture away from Furet's interpretation and toward the *thèse de circonstances*—pushed the relationship between friend and enemy to the center of France's politics, the Montagnards and Robespierre "substituted" virtue for reason and claimed that virtue inheres naturally in the people and need only be left to emerge of its own accord. Thus, writes Rosanvallon, "the coincidence of number and reason that Condorcet was trying to find through scholarly procedures spontaneously resulted, for the Montagnards, from the free expression of the virtuous people" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 176–77). For Rosanvallon, in what amounts to a Furetian interpretation of the Terror, this substitution of virtue for reason—and the presumed isomorphism between virtue and the general will—perpetuated and accelerated a dynamic by which the people could define itself only by defining its enemies, and by pursuing them. After Thermidor, France's elites rejected the gesture toward democracy made by Condorcet and instead turned to exclusionary ideas of capacity to check voluntarist democracy, setting France on its path toward Guizot and the Doctrinaires.⁶⁹ Thus, after the explosion of terroristic democracy in the Revolution, the elites of subsequent regimes sought to check the people through restrictive suffrage laws in the name of political rationalism. And they typically did so through the appeal to elites as a necessary liberal counterbalance to democratic empowerment of the people.

Rosanvallon's analysis of voluntarism and rationalism as modernity's twin pathologies, and of their secret collusion in demanding the homogeneity of a post-political society, is perhaps the most determinative in regard to the problem of political embodiment. With the advent of the people as the single, undifferentiated sovereign in the Revolution, the question naturally arose of just how the people, with all its sociological complexity and differentiation, would be politically embodied. Would it be a singular body? Or an ensemble of different individuals and groups? In the Revolution, Rosanvallon argues, clearly adopting one of Furet's fundamental claims about the period from 1789 to 1793, a radical disjuncture arose between the political and the social. The people was established as a singular

⁶⁹ For Rosanvallon, the Thermidorians' ideas about capacity were anticipated by the Physiocrat Paul Pierre Le Mercier de la Rivière's *L'heureuse nation* of 1792, a text that he marks as charting a new course: "Le Mercier de la Rivière thus paves the way for the *citoyen capacitaire* of the nineteenth century. The idea will begin to form in the policies of the Year III, when certain *conventionnels* propose to subordinate the right to vote to the ability to read and write; it will continue to develop in the Year VIII, when Roederer and Sieyès will want to put in place lists of notables. But it will find its true expression only under the Restoration, when Guizot and the Doctrinaires forge the theory of the *citoyen capacitaire*, consistent with the basic requisites of French political rationalism" (*ibid.*, p. 180).

political subject, “a *people-principle*. . . Principle and promise at once, it symbolizes the constitution of society in a bloc by the presence of its name alone and serves to universalize the national entity. It reflects the true nature of the social bond: it refers to a political proposition before it is a sociological fact” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 31). The people, however, was a sociological fact that proved to be far less unitary than the fiction of the people-principle implied. A tension naturally resulted, one that caused great violence in the Revolution and went on to structure the history of democracy in France. This fundamental conflict between the people as a legitimating principle and the people as a social reality is in part, we will see, what led Rosanvallon to turn to Guizot to rethink democratic politics in the present.

As Rosanvallon tells it, the specific historical genesis of this problem in the Revolution stemmed from the predicament that “the passage from a society of corporations to a society of individuals renders society less representable” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 31). The society of equal and qualitatively fungible individuals, represented solely as a singular bloc transcending the myriad particularities and complex differentiation of civil society, led to an abstract and homogeneous notion of the people that, in turn, could be realized only by pitting political voluntarism against sociological reality. In their common hostility to intermediate or “partial” associations, rationalist individualism and voluntarist holism conspired, and the result was radical antipluralism. In pointing to the passage from a society of corporations to one of individuals as a fundamental cause of the Revolution’s antipluralism, Rosanvallon’s normative and historical projects intersect in a revealing fashion. For Rosanvallon, intermediary bodies play an essential role in representing a society of individuals, in halting an overly abstract, and thus antipluralist and potentially terroristic, figuration of the people. The Revolution, however, “declared war against intermediary bodies” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 201), and, he adds elsewhere, “the origins of one very specific trait of French political culture is located there.”⁷⁰ Rosanvallon thus assigns great historical significance to the crushing of intermediary bodies carried out under the two successive sets of Le Chapelier laws.⁷¹ In the Revolution, for Rosanvallon, the social was never able to escape the violent distortions of political voluntarism (a collectivist voluntarism in covert cooperation with individualist rationalism). As a result, viewed through the lens of political embodiment in *Le peuple introuvable*, the Revolution represents all but pure pathology.

The French Revolution poisoned the well of French democracy for Rosanvallon in a third way as well, in the difficult confrontation of the sovereignty of the people and representative government. From 1789 on, he explains, there was conceptual

⁷⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, “Corporations et corps intermédiaires,” *Le Débat* 57 (Nov–Dec. 1989): 191.

⁷¹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 190–91; *Le peuple introuvable*, p. 249; *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 202; and *L’État en France*, pp. 95–96. This is, of course, a Tocquevillian consideration, hence Rosanvallon’s long-term search in Tocqueville’s tracks for intermediate bodies or partial associations that can functionally replace the lost feudal orders and thus avoid the stark contrast between individual and society. See, e.g., Rosanvallon, “Corporations et corps intermédiaires,” pp. 190–94, and see n. 104 below on syndicalism.

confusion over just what sovereignty and democracy were to mean in the new France, and the Revolution, in his story, traveled from *démocratie représentée* to *démocratie représentative* to terror and dictatorship. In 1790–91, the ideal of *démocratie représentée*—that is, democracy enacted through representatives who were to remain tied to the people—prevailed. Three principal means were proposed to achieve this ideal: surveillance of the representatives by the people, sanction of laws by the people through a referendum-like process, and what Rosanvallon calls the separation of the “constitutive moment” from “ordinary governance” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 43–52).⁷² The fall of the monarchy in the summer of 1792 provoked a new crisis and a whole new round of reflection on the nature of popular sovereignty; in the resultant constitutional discussion of 1793, the term “representative democracy” assumed a central place. Here, Rosanvallon once again pays great attention to Condorcet’s thinking, highlighting his proposed constitution. “Condorcet’s objective,” Rosanvallon explains, “was to design a form of representative government that did not lead to limiting or restraining the sovereignty of the people” but would instead “pluraliz[e] the modalities for the exercise of the sovereignty of the people in order to transform the relationship of democracy to representative government into a positive-sum game” (pp. 59–60). Condorcet sought to institutionalize social complexity and plural modes of representation, which “enables interpreting liberalism in a new way, as a form of democracy, paving the way for a *complex sovereignty*. He outlines a sort of ‘liberal Rousseauism,’ the diversity of temporalities of democracy and the plurality of modes of expression becoming the double condition of a more active sovereignty” (pp. 60–61). For Condorcet, in the end, the general will does not exist anterior to political activity, nor does it come into existence through representation as in the thought of Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, but it results from “a continuous process of interaction and of reflection between the people and the representatives” (p. 62).⁷³

Condorcet figures here as proposing the Revolution’s tragically missed opportunity, as his plan was rejected due to the persistence of monistic ideas about sovereignty. Rosanvallon’s argument on this issue is extremely interesting because

⁷² This last option was outlined most clearly by Jacques-Pierre Brissot in 1791, and Rosanvallon provides a fascinating discussion of Brissot’s political thought. “Brissot,” argues Rosanvallon, “redefines the framework of the revolutionary problem. He ceases to understand it in purely procedural terms (the forms of direct intervention by the people counterbalancing the representative ‘detour’) and resituates it in a general economy of political time. *Ordinary politics* (legislative and executive) for him works as delegated sovereignty, while *extraordinary politics* (constitutional) is more directly based on popular will. . . . In this pioneering way, Brissot points to the importance of the relationship between political power and time” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 48–49). Rosanvallon adds that Brissot “thus paves the way for theories of democracy that have been described, two centuries later, as ‘dualist,’” referring to Bruce Ackerman’s celebrated *We the People*, 2 vols. (so far) (Cambridge, Mass., 1991–).

⁷³ Rosanvallon’s description of Condorcet’s ideas here echoes his own recent normative hope to develop a “complex” or “pluralized” notion of sovereignty in which popular will would be expressed and represented in a range of socially grounded forms so that “democracy can . . . be fully and absolutely liberal” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 404, 408). Compare Rosanvallon’s *Chaire d’histoire moderne et contemporaine du politique* (n. 14 above), which lays out his plans for future scholarship.

he asserts that both under the Terror and during Thermidor sovereignty was “confiscated,” albeit in drastically different ways. The Montagnards established the people as the sole site of sovereignty, but then reduced the people to a moral principle that only Robespierre himself could embody. Rosanvallon quotes Furet’s view that Robespierre “mythically reconciled direct democracy and the representative principle” in his own person.⁷⁴ The Thermidorians also usurped sovereignty, but they did so through an openly elitist regime, “by small groups of notables proclaiming themselves guardians of rights and of property.” For Rosanvallon, the Terror and Thermidor stand in the historical record as the two poles of terroristic democracy and elitist liberalism, “two moments that thereby constitute two nascent figures of French political pathology” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 66). Rosanvallon’s discussion here highlights his revision of the Furet paradigm, as Furet had described Thermidor as the return of social interests on the French scene and thus a temporary normalization of political discourse after the hallucinatory politics of 1789–94. In Rosanvallon’s account, Thermidor instead established the opposite and equally dangerous extreme of French political life: elitist, rationalist liberalism.

Taken as a whole, Rosanvallon’s interpretation of the Revolution defines the revolutionary experience as fatally marked by the pathologies of both democratic voluntarism and rationalist liberalism. On the one hand, Rosanvallon follows the Furetian interpretation of the Revolution as seeking to impose a unitary political will on the heterogeneous social body. But, on the other hand, Rosanvallon also mobilizes his argument from *Le capitalisme utopique* to extend Furet’s pathogenic reading of the Revolution to include rationalist liberalism as also latently antipolitical. In this, there is a clear continuation of Rosanvallon’s attempt to extend the antitotalitarian paradigm of Furet’s *Interpreting the French Revolution*. That is not to say, however, that for Rosanvallon there were no alternative forms of thinking the political during the Revolution. Rosanvallon sees Condorcet in particular as a vital resource for a creative rethinking of the relationship between liberalism and democracy. Nonetheless, democracy and liberalism remained at loggerheads in the Revolution, and France was condemned to a tortuous path through the nineteenth century. Rosanvallon’s final analysis in *La démocratie inachevée* of the Thermidorian moment encapsulates his broader stance: “The Thermidorians remained prisoners of this contradiction between two universes, democratic and liberal[;] because they failed to think through the problem, they proved to be incapable of surpassing this contradiction” (p. 91).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, p. 86, quoted in Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 79.

⁷⁵ Before France embarked on its nineteenth-century road of radicalizations, however, Napoléon Bonaparte was to attempt a reconciliation of democracy and rationalism—what Rosanvallon has called the “first organized form that the relationship between the Government of Reason and the sovereignty of the people would take” (“Political Rationalism and Democracy in France” [n. 61 above], p. 697). Rosanvallon insists, pace Constant and Guizot, that Bonapartism was not a “vulgar pathology of popular sovereignty” but an “alloy of administrative rationalism and of popular legitimization . . . perfectly coherent with the ideals of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. [Bonapartism] offers in its way an answer to the tension between *le nombre* and *la raison*” and needs to be understood as “a stage in the history of French democracy” (*Le sacre du citoyen*,

The Thermidorians' inability to surpass the "contradiction" between democracy and liberalism and their decision to concentrate sovereignty in the hands of a small elite were repeated in the two post-Napoleonic constitutional monarchies, to which Rosanvallon devotes great attention in his oeuvre. He first explored the time period in his thesis, *Le moment Guizot*, later penned a study of the constitutions of 1814 and 1830 entitled *La monarchie impossible*, and then assigned Guizot and the Doctrinaires pivotal importance in his trilogy. The period 1814–48 represents, in Rosanvallon's story, the triumph of elitist, rationalist liberalism over political voluntarism before the latter's explosive return in 1848. Historiographically, Rosanvallon aims to recover the two post-Napoleonic monarchies as a fundamental antecedent of the early Third Republic and its quasi-official positivism.⁷⁶ This feature of Rosanvallon's thought amounts to another revision of Furet, who never assigned such weight to the two post-Napoleonic monarchies and found few antecedents for the "normalization" of Third Republic positivism in earlier French history.⁷⁷ Moreover, Rosanvallon portrays Guizot as a vital forerunner to his own political-philosophical project of rethinking "the relationship between liberalism and democracy." Guizot and the Doctrinaires, Rosanvallon argues, were the first to perceive that democracy is both the sole basis of and the principal threat to the new, post-Revolution world.⁷⁸ That is, they accepted that there was no turning the historical clock back to before 1789 while simultaneously refusing to oppose 1789 and 1793 as discrete phenomena in order to save "the revolution in the Revolution." Rather, they sought to understand the relationship between 1789 and 1793 as one internal to democracy (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 96). Rosanvallon thus concluded *Le moment Guizot* with the statement that today we should "take a [d]etour by way of Guizot. . . . A detour from which we will come back better than we were to our own tasks and not lazily avoid them."⁷⁹

According to Rosanvallon, Guizot—whom Rosanvallon called both the Marx and the Gramsci of the bourgeoisie⁸⁰—had posed the right questions even if he gave the wrong answers. It is for this crucial reason that Rosanvallon hoped to resurrect Guizot's thought. Guizot, like Benjamin Constant, Auguste Comte, and

pp. 203–4). See also the discussion in n. 92 below of the "Caesarism" of Louis-Napoléon and the Second Empire.

⁷⁶ See, esp., Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (n. 54 above), pp. 358–59; and *La monarchie impossible: Les Chartes de 1814 et de 1830* (Paris, 1994), pp. 9, 11.

⁷⁷ Furet pointed to Auguste Comte as an important intellectual precursor to Third Republic positivism but not as effecting a political program; see François Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770–1880*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford, 1988).

⁷⁸ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, pp. 13, 80. Gauchet claimed this same postrevolutionary insight for Constant in 1980; see Gauchet, "Benjamin Constant" (n. 54 above), pp. 11–30. Lefort reports that in his EHESS seminar he signaled the interest of Guizot and also the limits of the image of Guizot as a reactionary and that, soon after, Rosanvallon proposed Guizot as the topic of his thesis; Claude Lefort, interview by Samuel Moyn, New York City, Apr. 10, 2003.

⁷⁹ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, p. 376.

⁸⁰ Rosanvallon, "Le Gramsci de la bourgeoisie," introduction to *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*, by Guizot (n. 59 above); cf. Rosanvallon's entry in *Dictionnaire des oeuvres politiques*, ed. François Châtelet, Olivier Duhamel, and Evelyne Pisier (Paris, 1986), s.v. "Guizot: *Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition* (1821)."

other French liberals in the early nineteenth century, staked his liberalism in opposition to voluntarist political constructivism, which he took to be the philosophical progenitor of the Terror. As a result, he challenged “the democratic utopia of a society in which wills by themselves would be able to express and construct a being-together.” He sought to “think the political against Rousseau,”⁸¹ to “imagine the constitution of the social bond without recourse to the notion of the contract and without returning to an organic representation of the social.”⁸² The alternative foundation for politics to which Guizot and the Doctrinaires turned was “social power,” a somewhat vague notion stemming from Guizot’s conviction that “*the political is grounded in the general system of social needs.*” Such an antivoluntarist grounding allowed the legislative process for Guizot to be limited, in Rosanvallon’s words, to “recording and translating a given social and moral state: it creates nothing that does not already exist.”⁸³ However, the decisive historical fact about modern “social power,” Guizot realized just as Tocqueville did much more famously some years later, was that it is an inevitably and inexorably democratic power.⁸⁴

To anchor politics in “social power,” Guizot and the Doctrinaires unfortunately looked to the sovereignty of a reason beyond human volition, one to be discovered by the political and intellectual elite. In so doing, Guizot continued and amplified the French tradition of rationalist liberalism—only, for Guizot, reason would finally overcome the tension between democracy and liberalism rather than simply check the former in the name of the latter (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 231). However, Guizot’s apotheosis of reason entailed the rejection not only of the idea that sovereignty resides in the people but also of the notion of the individual as a bearer of rights or as possessing the liberty that results from autonomy. The Doctrinaires’ idea of the sovereignty of reason “is liberal in that it denounces all forms of despotism and denies any power the right to call itself truly sovereign, but, for all that, it concedes nothing to the intrinsic rights of the individual.”⁸⁵ Rosanvallon of course rejects Guizot’s hyperrationalist solution, but he strives to retain Guizot’s postvoluntarist question.

Guizot’s and the Doctrinaires’ idea of the rule of reason necessitated a drastically reformulated concept of representation. They rejected the interest-based representation of the Anglo-American scene and “conceived representative government before all else as a dynamic social operator.” They thus sought to establish “representation” as a form of political communication between society and government in which, Guizot wrote, “society is continuously disclosed both to its government and to itself, and the government to itself and to society.” Representative government would become, in Rosanvallon’s words, “the context in which a society works

⁸¹ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, pp. 44–45; cf. *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 96.

⁸² Rosanvallon, “Le Gramsci de la bourgeoisie,” p. 15.

⁸³ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, pp. 42–46; emphasis in original.

⁸⁴ Rosanvallon writes that Guizot and the Doctrinaires anticipated Tocqueville on a range of important issues such as the inexorable historical advance of democratic societies. See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 99, and *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 119.

⁸⁵ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, p. 91; exactly the same wording can be found at *Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 232, and *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 102.

on itself and produces its identity and its unity.”⁸⁶ Clearly, this is far from any accepted or intuitive meaning of the word “representation.” It reprises, however, Condorcet’s ideas about representation as “a continuous process of interaction and of reflection between the people and the representatives” and anticipates Rosanvallon’s own normative pronouncements (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 62).⁸⁷

Guizot’s alternative political architecture remained impossible to sustain, however, without the institutionalization of the exclusionary idea of capacity. In the end, “capacity” provides the key both to Guizot’s political system and to Rosanvallon’s own rejection of a return to, rather than a detour through, Guizot. For Guizot, the “faculty to act according to reason” was the most important political qualification, and capacity-based citizenship thus became the only way to insure the rule of reason effectively.⁸⁸ Voting, in turn, was envisioned as the fulfillment of this function rather than the acting out of a right. The end result of Guizot’s capacity-based system was the formation of a natural aristocracy that would fuse France’s democratic and aristocratic traditions and resolve the contradictions that had until then riven French history. In other words, it would end the Revolution. Rosanvallon argues that this false solution led to a version of conservatism that sought to end the cycle of revolutions and achieve a sort of historical stasis.⁸⁹

Rosanvallon’s rejection of a “return” to Guizot, however important Guizot is in Rosanvallon’s thought, did not stem only from Guizot’s implausible appeal to objective reason and his exclusionary idea of capacity. In addition, the elderly Guizot abandoned what Rosanvallon bizarrely labels the “moral neutrality” of his original conservative ideal and became the reactionary later remembered by the French and European left (immortalized, not least, in the *Communist Manifesto*’s opening lines). His desire to subsume the historical fact of democratic social power under the enlightened direction of a political elite ultimately became, as Rosanvallon puts it, a “trivially reactionary platitude” that killed politics no less fully than did monistic voluntarism.⁹⁰ But, for Rosanvallon, Guizot’s subtle reflections on the projects left after the 1790s nonetheless pioneered the framework in which French history would have to proceed. Guizot at least attempted to think through the pathologies of democracy and liberalism, even if his cure erred too far in the direction of the latter. In this sense, it is plausible to view Rosanvallon’s image of Guizot as one side of Rosanvallon’s fundamental dilemma: a pioneer (in a sense

⁸⁶ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (n. 54 above), pp. 102, 55, 57; Guizot (from *Archives philosophiques, politiques, et littéraires* 2, no. 7 [Jan. 1818]: 257), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ See n. 73 above.

⁸⁸ Guizot (from “Elections,” in *Encyclopédie progressive* [1826]; rpt. in *Discours académiques* [Paris, 1861], p. 385), quoted in Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, p. 95.

⁸⁹ Rosanvallon, *ibid.*, pp. 109, 114, 278.

⁹⁰ Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, pp. 304–5. Interestingly, Rosanvallon sets up Auguste Blanqui as something of a parallel to Guizot, although from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Blanqui also hated democracy but, in his case, because of a valorization of insurrectionary action. For Blanqui and the Blanquists, in Rosanvallon’s view, insurrection “is at once a *political and social form*, wholly positive in itself, and a *moral posture*, which makes good on the modern imperative of freedom” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 130–31). Blanqui, for Rosanvallon, follows a long line of such celebrations of action as the romanticization of the barricades and even the Marquis de Sade (*ibid.*, pp. 131–32).

like Furet) warding off voluntarist constructivism whose response to the terror of democracy leaves the problem of how to avoid liberal rationalism and elitism.

As Rosanvallon's narrative of French history continues, the antidemocratic liberalism of Guizot and the Doctrinaires generated an equal and opposite reaction: illiberal democracy. For Rosanvallon, the Revolution of 1848 inaugurated a long moment of illiberal democracy that continued through the Second Empire. His analysis of political discourse in 1848 in *Le sacre du citoyen* appears under the heading "Le sacrement de l'unité sociale" and focuses on what he describes as a utopian desire to achieve social unity through universal suffrage. For Rosanvallon, far from being an exception in the history of democracy in France, "the months of March and April 1848 reveal some of its deepest traits," notably, its fundamental "illiberalism" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 286, 288). Simply put, 1848 for Rosanvallon is a repetition of Jacobin antipluralist voluntaristic monism. He writes, in tones reminiscent of his own and Furet's descriptions of Jacobinism, that in 1848 "all dispute is perceived as a menace to social unity. . . . Pluralism is unthinkable." The "utopian republic" of 1848 "expressed . . . one of the most profound traits of French political culture: the aspiration to unity and consensus in the political transfiguration of social ties" (pp. 292, 294).

Rosanvallon takes up the reaction of the left to the disappointment of 1848 in *La démocratie inachevée* and provides an informative discussion of the suddenly widespread calls for direct democracy. This current of thought, centered around Victor Considérant, Alexandre-Auguste Ledru-Rollin, and Maurice Rittinghausen, blamed the failure of the Second Republic on the institution of representative government. Only direct democracy, they felt, could fulfill the ideals of 1848 and "offer the promise of a renaissance of the republican idea and the accomplishment of the imperative of modern politics" (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 162). Rosanvallon's story here takes an interesting twist: the democratic voluntarism underpinning these calls for direct democracy transformed into a version of antipolitical rationalism. "The absolutization of the vote culminates in the abolition of the political," Rosanvallon claims, and it thereby signaled the "reversal of democracy against itself" (p. 179). This "French ideology of simple power . . . takes root in an implicit philosophy of the natural harmony of interests" and thus reprises the law-centered utopian rationalism that Rosanvallon described in *Le capitalisme utopique* (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 173–74). Charles-Bernard Renouvier, Rosanvallon provocatively claims, was "only a sort of Adam Smith of the extreme left, . . . surprisingly close to a Thomas Paine and a William Godwin, . . . [who] believed in a possible natural harmony of interests" (p. 176).⁹¹ In sum, the most radical democrats of 1848 turned voluntarist democracy on its head and transubstantiated democracy into antipolitical utopianism, thereby passing from one form of protototalitarianism to another. Rosanvallon's dismissal of the Revolution of 1848 is thus complete: it is latently totalitarian in all its dimensions.⁹²

⁹¹ In *Le capitalisme utopique* (n. 40 above), Rosanvallon has a section on Paine and Godwin as utopian liberals who advocated the end of politics (pp. 143–44).

⁹² Rosanvallon argues that the illiberal democracy of 1848 extended, in political-philosophical terms, through the "Caesarism" of Louis-Napoléon and the Second Empire. In *La démocratie*

Rosanvallon's attempt to ensure that the rejection of voluntarist democracy in Furet's work does not simply lead to an endorsement by default of liberal rationalism thus did not proceed by a thorough critique of the equation of voluntarism and totalitarianism. Instead, it proceeded by extension, by suggesting that liberal rationalism is just as bad. The historiographical consequences of this maneuver are immense. It not only kept Furet's critique of totalitarianism from leading by default to neoliberalism; it also both worsened the political challenge of modernity *tout court* and exacerbated a constitutional anomaly within the revisionist paradigm. It worsened its logic of norm and deviation. The political challenge posed by Rosanvallon—posed in an even more challenging way than it is in Furet's work—is how liberalism and democracy can be brought together to avoid the totalitarian potential latent in both. In Rosanvallon's hands, the historical anomaly remains “ending the Revolution”—not just the hypertrophy of the will that Furet had sketched but also the solvent of reason that threatened to dissolve politics even further.

“Ending the Revolution”: The Problem of Normalization

In 1871, France joined Switzerland, Andorra, and San Marino as the only republics in Europe. For Rosanvallon, as for Furet, the advent of the Third Republic and its consolidation signaled the Revolution's “coming into port” and the end of “the theater of the exceptional in France” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 228).⁹³ Only for Rosanvallon, in an important revision of Furet's interpretation of the Third Republic's institutions as “almost totally in conformity with the republican tradition,” the Third Republic in fact owed much more to Guizot and the Doctrinaires and to the tradition of elitist rationalism (pp. 228–29).⁹⁴ Rosanvallon parts further with Furet in painting the “positivist” solution of the Third Republic's founders as a *failed* normalization of French democracy. Rather than overcoming the long-term crisis of French politics torn between reason and will, the “founding fathers” of the Third Republic (Rosanvallon uses the expression repeatedly) only reformulated that problem without overcoming it. Rosanvallon's break with Furet on this score ties Furet's version of French normalization to a tradition that Rosanvallon has repeatedly presented as being just as discredited as democratic voluntarism. Instead, Rosanvallon locates normalization in a radically different historical

inachevée, he argues that Caesarism needs to be understood as “a pathology internal to the democratic idea” that resulted in “a unanimistic vision of the political.” Rosanvallon hedges his description somewhat and also claims that Caesarism introduced “an essential rupture in the heritage of revolutionary political culture. . . . [Caesarism's] typically ‘Jacobin’ accents should not . . . conceal Caesarism's second dimension: the affirmation of the need to ‘found a civil order’ that is more autonomous” (pp. 220, 201, 204). Rosanvallon's claims about the Second Empire's permitting the emergence of a new civil order squares with the recent scholarship of Sudhir Hazareesingh (whom he cites) and Philip Nord (whom he does not cite); see Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton, N.J., 1998), and Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

⁹³ “Coming into port” is the phrase with which Furet ended his *Revolutionary France, 1770–1880* (n. 77 above).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 536–37.

scene, in a series of extraparliamentary developments he dubs “the silent revolution of the 1890s.” From a more general perspective, however, the problem of normalization emerges here as Rosanvallon’s primary concern precisely because of the degree to which his historiographical paradigm up to this point has presented deviancy as the specter haunting French history. What is remarkable in Rosanvallon’s treatment of the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century is just how far he views normalization as having occurred, just how fundamental a rupture he envisions having taken place. And yet it is even more remarkable how, in spite of Rosanvallon’s interest in recovering precedents for pluralism and healthier visions of democracy in the past, his portrayal of twentieth-century France amounts to a diagnosis that France suffers from a disease for which there is no cure. Democracy’s pathologies constantly return despite the best efforts of past actors and present historians to leave it behind.

For Rosanvallon, following Odile Rudelle, the early Third Republic (until circa 1889) was an “absolute Republic,” that is, an uncompromising, parliamentary regime based on indirect government and, in Rudelle’s words, “more an heir to the *ancien régime* than a practitioner of liberalism.”⁹⁵ For Rosanvallon, though, it was an “impossible absolute Republic”—it was impossible, that is, that it could have remained “absolute.”⁹⁶ The founders’ republic, in his view, was transformed through a series of extraparliamentary developments beginning in the 1890s. “Against the usual view of the Third Republic as a regime whose basic traits persisted over the long term,” he writes, “it is necessary to insist on the novelties that occurred in this history. The Constitution remained the same, but the spirit of the institutions and the political practices changed significantly between the 1870s and the 1920s” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 249–50). This “silent revolution,” as Rosanvallon names it, overcame the long-term crisis of French democracy and produced what he calls, to take the different terms employed in the three books of the trilogy, a “democracy of belonging (*démocratie d’appartenance*),” “an equilibrated democracy (*démocratie d’équilibre*),” and a “moderate democracy (*démocratie moyenne*).”⁹⁷ For Rosanvallon, the elitist but impossible absolute republic, anticipated by Guizot but realized by the “founding fathers,” did not “end the Revolution” until it had been transformed through democratization from below.

Rosanvallon describes the founding fathers’ vision of the Third Republic as a representative government with an elective aristocracy that claimed its sovereignty from “the nation” rather than “the people.” As we have stated above, he locates their ideas within the long tradition of antidemocratic French rationalism and stresses the parallels between their political-philosophical vision and that of the Physiocrats and especially Guizot (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 343–45; *La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 227–41).⁹⁸ The “positivist generation” is thus presented as the in-

⁹⁵ Odile Rudelle, *La République absolue: Aux origines de l’instabilité constitutionnelle de la France républicaine, 1870–1889* (Paris, 1982), p. 289. See Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 229.

⁹⁶ “The Impossible Absolute Republic” is the title (our translation) of chapter 6 of *La démocratie inachevée*.

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 249.

⁹⁸ Rosanvallon seeks here to revise the traditional genealogy of Third Republic positivism.

heritor of Guizot's failed reconciliation of liberalism and democracy, or elitist rationalism and popular sovereignty. In Rosanvallon's account, the founders accepted universal manhood suffrage as an irresistible and unavoidable historical fact, but they failed to respond to it in plausible philosophical terms (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 238, 306; *Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 331–38).⁹⁹ The founders were so determined to establish the republic as conservative and as divorced from the legacy of 1848 and the Commune, he argues, that at the very moment in which universal suffrage was seen to furnish the republic's legitimacy, there was deep skepticism about democracy and the republic was imagined "above universal suffrage" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 346). Although formally more democratic, the Third Republic began where Guizot ended.

The founders' simultaneous endorsement and rejection of democracy was to be reconciled in education and the Third Republic's program of moral and civic instruction—what Rosanvallon refers to as "demopedic fervor," which he sees embodied in Jean Macé and the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement. With the passage on October 22, 1882, of the Ferry law guaranteeing free and universal education, "demopedia was juridically instituted" and an apparent turning point in the history of French democracy was achieved (*Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 369). For Rosanvallon, however, the founders' positivist valorization of education as a panacea for the aporias of democracy only belied, rather than resolved, their equivocal stance toward democracy, confirming further their status as the intellectual inheritors of the Physiocrats and the Doctrinaires. The Third Republic's educational regime, Rosanvallon claims, aimed to create a caste of elites that would be "the equivalent of a compensatory power and regulator of universal suffrage"—that is, a counterbalance to the demos (p. 381). Put differently, the formation of *capacité* was institutionalized in 1882 in order to surmount the legacy of 1848 and 1871. The attitudes of the positivist republicans represented more a return to Guizot than an overcoming of his pioneering but problematic legacy.

French democracy was ultimately "normalized," however, by a series of extra-parliamentary developments that managed to accomplish exactly what had eluded all earlier political elites: a synthesis, albeit an imperfect one, of liberalism and democracy that avoided the totalitarian tendencies of both. In *Le peuple introuvable* and in *La démocratie inachevée*, Rosanvallon describes in great detail "a silent revolution in the political system"—in ideas about politics and in political practices—that lasted from approximately 1880 to 1920 but that centered on the 1890s, which he dubs "le moment 1890" (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 105; *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 245). Fundamentally, and revealingly, the "silent revolution" that Rosanvallon depicts as normalizing democracy in France turned on the expansion

Claude Nicolet, e.g., in his influential *L'idée républicaine en France (1789–1924): Essai d'histoire critique* (Paris, 1982), does not treat the Physiocrats and devotes only two pages to the two post-Napoleonic monarchies, in which he does not mention Guizot. See the discussion of *Le moment Guizot* keyed to nn. 78–90 above.

⁹⁹ Reformist gradualism, in Rosanvallon's account, was not an option in the wake of "the accident of 1848," which had condemned France to oscillate between radical democracy and reaction. English-style reformism was furthermore rendered impossible by "French specificity"—that suffrage was conceived in abstract and universal terms (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 331–34).

of neocorporatist forms and institutions that went beyond the orthodoxies of both rationalist liberalism and voluntarist democracy. Rosanvallon's "silent revolution" marks a fundamental rupture in French political history, one no less significant—indeed, perhaps more significant—than the traditional milestones of the French Revolution, the Revolution of 1848, and the founding of the Third Republic.

In *Le peuple introuvable*, Rosanvallon identifies the key epistemological innovation of this "silent revolution" as the acknowledgment that society has to be understood as a conglomeration of social categories to be represented as such rather than as incidents of a monistic unity. That is, in Rosanvallon's (following Furet's) universe of norm and deviation, the French finally became more "English." For Rosanvallon, however, the modern democratic and individualist society does not admit of a priori social differentiation that can then be reflected politically. For this reason, "modern society," as he puts it, "becomes representable only if it is interpreted and classified in *invented categories*" (pp. 104–5; emphasis added). Rosanvallon examines closely the different methods employed to achieve this aim, such as the representation of professions, the advent of political parties, and the use of proportional elections, and he claims that in "le moment 1890," "the hour of a new approach to representation, founded on the recognition and expression of the groups structuring society, thus rang throughout society. The inherited rigidities of revolutionary political culture were, for the first time, put aside" (pp. 112–13). A key site registering this paradigm shift was the rise of the social sciences as a discipline attempting to understand society as a diverse set of exactly such "categories." Rosanvallon points to the interest in medieval corporatism within the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century as further evidence of the newfound interest in the representation of groups. No figure is more important here than Émile Durkheim, who "perfectly incarnates, at the end of the century, this search for a reinvention of the older notion of intermediary bodies" as well as the larger rupture in the idea of representation (p. 134).¹⁰⁰ Rosanvallon's analysis here ably historicizes epistemological and political developments in relation to one another while evoking, once again, his own normative commitments.

The full force of the "silent revolution" becomes apparent when Rosanvallon, in some of the most important pages in his entire oeuvre, narrates the emergence of modern intermediary bodies such as political parties and trade unions in *Le peuple introuvable*. For Rosanvallon, in both theoretical and historical terms, such bodies fulfill a necessary role in modern democracies, namely, the mediation of the relationship between the social and the political as well as that between the individual and the demos. Their advent in France in the 1890s thus marks a fundamental break with "French exceptionalism," with "the old Jacobin suspicions toward intermediary bodies" (p. 167). Moreover, Rosanvallon takes this aspect of the "silent revolution" to stand as a rebuke to any conceptually overdetermined accounts of the French past. "The standard indictment of Jacobinism," he warns,

¹⁰⁰ Rosanvallon also points to a "rupture in the method of considering political questions" and cites the veritable explosion of studies about political parties in the work of James Bryce, Robert Michels, Moisey Ostrogorski, and others at the turn of the century (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 245–46).

in a compelling and crucial passage, “should not cause us to forget that the rigidity of principles was often silently erased before practical requirements. In the shadow of the dominant history, which stresses the persistence of the illiberal temptation tied to the apotheosis of the sovereignty of the people and which underlines French exceptionalism, another more hidden history allows itself to be seen: that of the everyday advances of representative government, bringing the French case more in line with the other great democracies” (p. 168). During “le moment 1890,” “a veritable *general economy* of representation was progressively established, changing the original revolutionary model into one that made room for complexity and pluralism” (p. 169). The “end of the French exception,” which Rosanvallon along with Furet once traced to the critique of totalitarianism of the 1970s and 1980s because of its effect on intellectuals and their categories, is now considered to have occurred in a sweeping yet silent revolution in practices almost a century earlier.¹⁰¹

The advent of political parties, Rosanvallon argues, enabled no less important a development than the rationalization and institutionalization of pluralism in French democracy. “The modern party,” he explains, “[is] a profoundly original *social form* at the crossroads of a double tension: that between the individual and the collective, on the one hand, the given and the constructed, on the other. . . . Parties allow the differences inherent in a society of individuals to be embodied and given shape. . . . The system of parties offers a kind of *rationalized pluralism*. . . . In the democracy of parties, there is thus an attempt to invent a modern pluralism, a pluralism founded on complex identities” (*Le peuple introuvable*, pp. 182–83, 187). The emergence of political parties and “complex pluralism” was underpinned by “the return to a more organic vision of the social, beginning in the 1880s, [which] contributed powerfully to rendering acceptable and imaginable a pluralist vision of the political system. The diversity of parties can be comprehended, in this case, . . . as stemming directly from the complexity of the social structure” (p. 178; cf. pp. 173–75, 186, 190).¹⁰² Rosanvallon also notes important

¹⁰¹ See François Furet, Jacques Julliard, and Pierre Rosanvallon, *La République du centre: Fin de l'exception française* (Paris, 1988).

¹⁰² Here it is worth noting a fundamental shift from his comments on political parties in the 1970s. Originally, in light of conflicts within the PS and in the name of pluralism, Rosanvallon had drawn attention to the late nineteenth-century critique of the oligarchic tendencies of political parties; see Pierre Rosanvallon, “Avancer avec Michels,” *Faire* 17 (Mar. 1977): 31–34; “Trois textes pour un débat” (introducing criticism from Michels, Ostrogorski, and Max Weber of professional politicians), *Faire* 35 (Sept. 1978): 55–57; and “Connaissez-vous Ostrogorski?” *Faire* 50 (Dec. 1979): 23–26. The last article was reprinted as the introduction to the republication of the 1902 edition of Moisei Ostrogorski, *La démocratie et les partis politiques*, ed. and intro. Pierre Rosanvallon (Paris, 1979). But in *La démocratie inachevée*, while remaining attentive to the oligarchical effect of party politics, Rosanvallon calls it an unavoidable, paradoxical feature of democracy itself: even as the “democratic” elements grow, so do the “oligarchic” ones. Elsewhere he has written that “today . . . it is no longer possible to reflect on the future of political parties from the perspective of a utopia of concord and consensus or from that of a technical resolution of [the conflicts in] parliamentary government and mass democracy. For this reason, the political party has become so important because it is at the heart of the problem of reorganizing democracy and of what one could call the democratic deficit of contemporary societies” (Rosanvallon, preface to the French translation of *Introduction à l'histoire des partis politiques*, by Paolo Pombeni, trans. Isabelle Richet [Paris, 1992], p. xvi). See also Pierre Rosanvallon, “Partis et factions,” in *Dictionnaire de philosophie politique*, ed. Philippe Raynaud and Stéphane Rials (Paris, 1996).

conjunctural factors such as the stabilization of the republic, which allowed political opposition to be seen as nonthreatening, and the political polarization of the Dreyfus affair. But, in the final balance, he ties the historical emergence of political parties and thus of institutionalized pluralism in France to the arrival of an organic apprehension of the social, demonstrating once again just how deeply his history of French democracy is tied to his normative political-philosophical commitments.

The second major force, alongside political parties, that Rosanvallon identifies in the “silent revolution” is the emergence of syndicalism following the legalization of unions in 1884. The rise of syndicalism had begun in the 1860s with the emergence of workers’ candidates in the 1863 legislative elections, the end of the ban on syndicalism in 1864, and the publication of the *Manifeste des soixante* in 1864, which Rosanvallon views as signaling a fundamental rupture with “the universalist political culture resulting from the French Revolution” because it embodied a “particular” interest rather than the abstract general interest (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 72). Moreover, for Rosanvallon, syndicalism also made the important creative contribution of questioning extant models of political representation and offering the alternative idea of “representativity.” While conceptually and juridically imprecise, syndicalist “representativity” was “the artifice that makes possible” the affirmation of the corporatist identity of social groups and the establishment of syndicates as their legal representation “while leaving unbroached the question whether the syndicate is, in the technical sense of the term, the representative or the organ of the workers’ group” (p. 251). This syndicalist revision came about by way of an attack on democracy as “*démocratisme*”—as individualist and incapable of representing the real interests of French workers. Furthermore, it arose from a suspicion that representative government as practiced in France was creating a class of professional politicians apart from the masses, a critique directed as much against the socialists as against the more centrist republicans (pp. 222–27). French socialists, Rosanvallon relates in *Le sacre du citoyen*, had become during this time the leading apostles of universal suffrage in France, making “the advent of the pure individual-voter the condition of the realization of the democratic ideal . . . [and of] the transformation of the republic into socialism” (p. 387).¹⁰³ The syndicalist movement challenged the socialists on exactly this ground, with syndicalist theoreticians such as Georges Sorel and Hubert Lagardelle reviling socialist party machinations. “At the very moment when socialists drew closer to the republican ideal,” Rosanvallon explains, “syndicalism wanted to offer an alternative perspective to those disillusioned with universal suffrage, radicalizing, in a certain way, the aspiration to worker separatism of the 1860s” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 221).¹⁰⁴ For this reason, Rosanvallon views “representativity” as

¹⁰³ It is important to note that the socialist love affair with universal suffrage did not last; by the early 1900s the socialist left, and then later the PCF, in a reprise of the republican left following the disappointment of 1848, placed the future revolution “above universal suffrage” (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 389–90); cf. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La question syndicale: Histoire et avenir d’une forme sociale* (Paris, 1988), pp. 214–36, suggesting that syndicalism must finally make peace with electoral democracy.

¹⁰⁴ For Rosanvallon, this moment carries longer-term historical significance as “the foundational distrust of socialist parties in French syndicalism finds its source” in the founding attacks launched by Sorel and Lagardelle (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 223).

having played a vital role in the establishment of an “equilibrated democracy” at the turn of the century, a contribution too easily lost in the syndicalist tradition’s reputation for extraparliamentary and often violent action. For Rosanvallon, the syndicalist claim to a separate social voice, by “the sole fact of its existence,” consecrated “a new mode of social representation” that vitally contributed to “the progressive construction of an equilibrated democracy” (p. 253).¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the particular form of the syndicalist contribution to pluralism is criticized by Rosanvallon for having been a backward-looking, even rearguard action. Unfortunately, the group identity claimed by syndicalists began with “a social given and not a political construction. . . . One can speak in this way of a sort of return to an *essentialist* conception of representation” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 231). This claim betrayed what Rosanvallon sees as the modern need for elective rather than enforced social identity. In his analysis of syndicalist essentialism, Rosanvallon draws out a connection between the syndicalist project and the writings of Guizot that illustrates both Rosanvallon’s normative project and how he knits together in his own thought a disparate set of resources from French history: “Revolutionary syndicalism paradoxically takes up reactionary criticisms of universal suffrage. It often only repeats, in giving them ‘left’ content, the prejudices against the power of *le nombre* developed many times by Guizot or Royer-Collard at the beginning of the nineteenth century and by Taine and Renan some decades later” (p. 232). But the leftist reinvention of Guizot’s perspective did nothing to correct its democratic deficit. As Rosanvallon explains, “The substantialist vision of democracy tends, in the final reckoning, to revive archaic approaches to the social . . . [and] leads to a veritable negation of democracy” (pp. 232, 235). While syndicalism’s advent “powerfully contributed to counterbalancing the foundational sociological deficit of the French political model” (p. 257), and thus figures in his story as a key break with the Jacobin idea that political will can create the social, it nonetheless did so only at the high price of a regressive political approach that takes social reality as a given that politics should then passively reflect.¹⁰⁶

Another major development of “the silent revolution” that Rosanvallon heralds as a challenge to the monistic political imagination inherited from the Revolution is the birth of “a consultative administration” and what Rosanvallon views as the

¹⁰⁵ See also the similar analysis offered in Rosanvallon, *La question syndicale*, pp. 97–118.

¹⁰⁶ Rosanvallon’s interest in the contributions and limits of turn-of-the-century syndicalism is not surprising in light of his biography. The question left for syndicalism by its originary advent, Rosanvallon has continued to argue in his recent programmatic work on the subject, is how it can reinvent the victory for pluralistic representation that it achieved in its early years without risking, as it did in its original articulation, a reversion to a superannuated conception of the social. Rosanvallon concluded his book on syndicalism by recommending that syndicalism now “clarify its relationship to the democratic idea,” suggesting that it move from “representation” to “implication”—he defined this transition, somewhat vaguely, as a replacement of “a culture of mobilization” with one of “management,” not in a spirit of “conquest of society” but rather of “participation in the movement of democracy itself” (*ibid.*, p. 194; and see pp. 249–58 [“L’enjeu démocratique”] and 183–95 [“D’une sociologie à une politique de solidarité”]). Rosanvallon credited the CFDT as “the organization that has contributed most to the renovation of forms of representation” (p. 254).

establishment of a form of corporatist state during the interwar period. Rosanvallon dates the emergence of the “consultative administration”—he takes the term from the institutionalist legal thinker Maurice Hauriou—to the creation in 1891 of the Conseil Supérieur du Travail, whose advent symbolized the silent revolution’s “discreet rupture with the abstract universalism of 1789” and the “much broader movement of redefining the relations between state and civil society at the end of the nineteenth century” (*Le peuple introuvable*, pp. 257, 261). The consultative administration symbolized a “modest” state seeking multiple modes of representation between state and society, a development that recalls Rosanvallon’s descriptions of Condorcet’s and Guizot’s ideas of representation and that Rosanvallon narrates as a crucial break with “the old conception of an Omniscient State, at once guarantor and guide of the general interest hanging over society” (p. 262). The First World War greatly accelerated this process and thrust issues of economic competence into the nation’s political life to the point that, in 1916, a state economic council was proposed in order to give a political role to economic experts. In 1925, the Economic National Council (CNE) was created, and by 1934 Paul Ramadier was pointing to its abundant representative capacity and calling for it to become (in Rosanvallon’s words) “the genuine social site of the debate between different opinions and of the search for the general interest” (p. 275). In this vision, corporatist representation would complement parliamentary representation and, as Rosanvallon sees it, the increasingly consultative administration did in fact lead to something like a corporatist state between the two world wars, one that he takes pains to dissociate from Vichy’s later, full-blown corporatism—thus saving corporatism from guilt by association.¹⁰⁷ Rosanvallon’s interest in the pluralization of channels of representation between society and state in these developments is reminiscent not only of Condorcet’s and Guizot’s ideas about representation as a form of communication between state and society but also of Rosanvallon’s own programmatic proposals.

A last central feature of the “silent revolution” was the emergence of the welfare state amid calls for “an industrial democracy,” which Rosanvallon views as marking the full emergence of economic issues into political discourse, the extension of the idea of emancipation onto “economic terrain.” “The turn is fundamental. . . . Envisaging the management of economic issues in terms elaborated in the political domain was completely foreign to the revolutionary political culture” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 339). This politicization of economic issues took various forms. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, for example, had wanted to “reimagine the political system on the model of the workshop,” while Jean Jaurès and Jules Guesde saw the achievement of socialism as a natural extension of the republican ideal (pp. 341–43). The specific call for an “industrial democracy” did not take off until after the Great War and was centered around the CGT’s demands for economic rights before radicalizing into Maxime Leroy’s demand for a democracy of producers rather than citizens (p. 353). At the same time, Rosanvallon has written

¹⁰⁷ Rosanvallon argues that interwar corporatism, understood as a complement to parliamentary rule, is “profoundly different” from the corporatism that Vichy made “a global alternative” to democracy (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 276).

elsewhere, the CGT during the 1920s and 1930s called for a program of nationalization, which Rosanvallon interpreted as the rationalization of the economy along social-republican lines. Nationalization thus “translates the social-republican political culture onto the economic plane. . . . The idea of industrialized nationalization undertakes a *recovery* of two essential questions: that of the establishment of a rational economy and that of how the general interest will be formed and expressed.”¹⁰⁸ The end result of these demands, in Rosanvallon’s narrative, was “a new economy of the political in the 1920s” (p. 354).¹⁰⁹

Thanks to this amalgamation of extraparliamentary democratizing forces, the revolutionary crucible was finally broken, the threats of rationalism and voluntarism finally mastered.¹¹⁰ The details of Rosanvallon’s account of the “silent revolution” add up to the larger endeavor of turning Furet’s way of thinking about the history of democracy—and the version of normalization that this paradigm proposes to secure society against the totalitarian impulse—in new and more democratic directions. The historiographical payoff of Rosanvallon’s extended treatment of this multifaceted “silent revolution” is his resituation of the numerous extraparliamentary developments he narrates in the long-term narrative of French history, assigning them an entirely new meaning as the crucial forces in the normalization of French democracy. In Rosanvallon’s view, only the permanent agenda of French history to break the revolutionary mold—confronted by Condorcet, limned by Guizot after the Revolution, but only truly begun in the “silent revolutions” of the Third Republic—explains the significance for the theory and practice of democracy of these seemingly disparate historical events. While Rosanvallon’s account breaks in detail with Furet, it is still a narrative of the French *Sonderweg* and its—at least partial—cure.

The Return of Pathology and the Need for Democracy

In spite of the silent revolution, Rosanvallon’s story does not have a happy ending. His surprisingly brief account of the twentieth century is devoted, startlingly, to the arguments that France managed to avoid totalitarianism throughout the interwar era but then, after the threat of actual totalitarianism waned, proceeded to lose whatever immunity it had acquired to the founding pathologies of modernity. As Rosanvallon’s narrative comes to conclusion in the years of his own life, the effects of the historiographical paradigm he adopted on the democratic hopes he originally sought to sustain within it become particularly clear.

Rosanvallon’s interpretation of totalitarianism is highly indebted to the writings of Hannah Arendt and especially Claude Lefort, in which totalitarianism is defined

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Rosanvallon, “L’idée de nationalisation dans la culture politique française,” *Le Débat* 17 (Dec. 1981): 10. Rosanvallon sees this program continued in postwar *planification* and in Mitterrand’s 1981 nationalizations (ibid., passim, esp. p. 14).

¹⁰⁹ A more detailed analysis of the emergence of the welfare state is given in Rosanvallon, *L’État en France* (n. 65 above), pp. 184–95.

¹¹⁰ Other aspects of the “silent revolution” that Rosanvallon details in *La démocratie inachevée* and *Le peuple introuvable* are what he calls “the silent revolution of the mandate,” the “second birth of public opinion,” “the question of the referendum,” and the growth in modes of “deciphering” society through gathering information and statistical analysis.

by both Nazism and Leninism-Stalinism; Rosanvallon presents both as pathologies or perversions of democracy, and thus as internal to it (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 365–66).¹¹¹ Rosanvallon's principal concern in this section of his trilogy, however, is to explain how France and French democracy resisted totalitarianism. His discussion takes the form of a tacit challenge to recent historiographical currents that insist on the susceptibility of the home of the rights of man to totalitarianism, and he exonerates France from the charge that it had always been too weak a polity to avoid succumbing to mid-century illiberalism.¹¹² Rosanvallon identifies three principal causes of this resistance. First, the silent revolution of the 1890s opened important avenues through which dissatisfaction could be expressed without threatening the parliamentary system itself. More fundamentally, it broke with the revolutionary heritage, which, Rosanvallon hints, might otherwise have facilitated the adoption of the totalitarian menace. In the wake of the silent revolution, he writes, "The enlargement of the public space and the forms of political expression . . . contributed to blunt a good number of criticisms directed against the parliamentary system. . . . This was an unstable and highly imperfect framework but one that nonetheless allowed the surpassing of the old and fatal alternative between resigned consent to the inertia of a closed order and the illusions of completely starting over. The principal merit of this regime is, in this respect, to have allowed the linkage of parliamentarism and democracy for the first time in French history" (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 357–58).

Second, Rosanvallon insists more ironically on a *particularité française* that inured the country to the totalitarian virus: its indigenous illiberalism. Paradoxically, France's illiberal tradition "contributed in an essential way to the equilibrium of the French political model. It allowed republican political culture to play on two fields at once. Republican political culture reassures the right by its democratic moderation, while it remains in connivance with the left by its illiberalism. The length of the Third Republic is not unconnected to this distinctive political alloy" (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 364). Rosanvallon's analysis here shows the extent to which normalization in his eyes remained incomplete. "Republican monism" may have allowed France to resist the deeper illiberalism of totalitarianism, but it also showed once again for Rosanvallon that illiberalism is always lurking in France's shadows.

Finally, Rosanvallon points to the international environment as the third factor

¹¹¹ Rosanvallon offers an analysis of totalitarianism in *La démocratie inachevée*, where he devotes eleven pages to these two "abysses of the twentieth century" (pp. 365–76). His discussion of the Soviet Union is considerably fuller than that of Nazi Germany, which he explicates, save one reference to Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* in a footnote, solely through the writings of Carl Schmitt. For Rosanvallon, "the oeuvre of Carl Schmitt offers here a convenient point of observation on the conceptual genesis of this second pathology of democracy" (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 372).

¹¹² In response to the contemporary historiography of fascism as represented most prominently by Zeev Sternhell, which evaluates the penetration of fascism in France based exclusively on the study of intellectuals, Rosanvallon properly observes that "left to itself, the history of ideas can be misleading," for "the image of an interwar period dominated by totalitarian regimes and totalitarian thinking corresponds to only one part of reality" (*ibid.*, pp. 377–78).

that saved France from the totalitarian threat. After the Great War, the international triumphalism regarding “democratic civilization” made people in France feel secure in their *démocratie moyenne*, which increasingly defined itself in opposition to the growing totalitarian menace. This “negative” democracy found its intellectual mouthpieces in Hans Kelsen, Karl Popper, and Joseph Schumpeter in the 1930s and 1940s, each of whom theorized democracy as “a purely procedural vision of political legitimation” (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 380). Between the wars, Rosanvallon argues, democracy ceased to designate a sovereign people and came to mean nothing more than “the inverse of dictatorship” and, paradoxically, “a regime protective of liberties” (p. 380). “Negative democracy” thus saved France from totalitarianism.

As a leftist, one hoping to remain in communion with the *autogestion* ideal of his youth, Rosanvallon of course cannot rest content with negative democracy, in spite of its role in erecting a guardrail against a French totalitarianism. Rosanvallon offers a political and theoretical critique of negative democracy: it is not democratic enough. He rejects the apparent reconciliation of liberalism and democracy offered in these figures’ “realist theories” as “flat, Churchillian democracy” and insists that democracy retain the aspiration to empowerment (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 364–65). Furthermore, Rosanvallon argues that the resolution of the conflicts pervading the history of democracy, particularly the emancipatory pressure it places on liberalism, had to be lived out and discovered practically rather than theoretically defined away as the clarification of a liberal baseline. “Would the conception of a negative democracy finally close all of the debating and groping?” Rosanvallon therefore asks. “Would it allow the democratic idea to enter finally into the peaceful waters of the liberal port?” His answer is direct and resolute: no. For even once a “lucid caution before the abysses that line the way [of politics] with utopias and easy ways out” became internalized to the democratic ideal, thanks to the negative conception of democracy, “the desire of men and women to be masters of their own fate kept returning.” In an explicit rejection of his colleague Pierre Manent’s Straussian vision, Rosanvallon reports that postwar history amply shows why “it has always been impossible to rest content in the thought that ‘loving democracy requires loving it within limits.’”¹¹³ Consequently, the interwar and postwar liberal rejection of totalitarianism could never provide the complete formula for democracy (pp. 383–84).

Yet Rosanvallon’s theoretical assumptions provide no clear way of defining the historical origins of his own democratizing wish—and arguing on its behalf today—except as a final return of modernity’s pathologies, as if the advancement of liberal democracy were always to be seen as synonymous with curing it. Though voluntarism and rationalism were largely discredited by history, the modern individualism that led to both outlived the solution that the turn of the century pioneered. On Rosanvallon’s account, France continued to search in the tracks and live on the legacy of the moderate or equilibrated democracy that persisted “hardly upset from the interwar period.” For this reason, Rosanvallon freely affirms, cov-

¹¹³ Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie* (Paris, 1982), p. 181, quoted in *La démocratie inachevée*, p. 384; cf. n. 33 above.

ering the period after World War II in one page, that “there is nothing *intellectually* notable to report about these years.” The statesmen and technocrats of the period merely updated the consultative state and planning bureaucracy and touched up a paradigm that had not yet fallen (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 384–85). In these years, France’s normalization remained incomplete, with “revolutionary monism . . . always waiting in the shadows, ready to return and make the weight of its founding role felt” (*Le peuple introuvable*, pp. 311, 313).¹¹⁴ Moreover, even France’s acquired immunity to pathology began, as time passed, to give way. In French postwar *planification*, he suggests, “finally reposed the hope of overcoming the limits of traditional politics.” This bureaucratic and technocratic solution went far beyond industrial planning, for it “was intended to bring about the double utopia of a rational government and a renewed form of representation,” thus squaring the inherited French circle of reason and will through the agency of enlightened and public-minded bureaucracy. *Planification*, a solution made impossible by the events of 1968 and the origins of a new and participatory vision of democracy, represented at once the fulfillment and the obsolescence of the equilibrated or moderate democracy (pp. 320–21). Though challenged in *l’âge de l’autogestion*, the French exception survived until the end of the 1970s in part because self-management—Rosanvallon admits in hindsight—never discovered a means of instrumentalizing and articulating institutionally the alternative it championed. It took the crisis of the 1980s, rather than the utopias of the late 1960s and 1970s, to upset the stopgap equilibrium for good (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 387–89). “The contemporary malaise,” Rosanvallon avers, “must be understood in this light as a result of the erosion since the 1970s and 1980s of this equilibrated democracy” (*Le peuple introuvable*, p. 21).

The contemporary return of pathology is above all a recrudescence of the very individualism that for Rosanvallon defines modernity itself. To be sure, for Rosanvallon, democracy understood as a voluntaristic triumph of the will stands discredited: “It is above all a *metaphysics of the will* that has fallen away at the end of the twentieth century,” Rosanvallon concludes.

It is now quite simply impossible to continue to think about democracy on the theologopolitical basis on which it has always implicitly proceeded. It is not for certain that “all concepts of political theory are secularized theological concepts,” as Carl Schmitt maintained. But as far as the general will is concerned, it is. The *Social Contract* well understood the new power of men as a laicized form of God’s power, called like the original to create a people. And it supposed that this will could not take form unless society assumed the shape of a unified body and a personalizable totality. It is this view that has now been discredited. . . . It is now necessary to conceptualize [the sovereignty of the people] in radically desacralized terms, in a break with the earlier,

¹¹⁴ While he is careful to reject the reductive vision of “an eternal and undifferentiated French Jacobinism,” Rosanvallon explains the postwar refusal to conceive of parties as the best means to embody democracy as the effect of this persistent monism. In effect, Rosanvallon never broke with Furet’s own metaphor of voluntarism as alcoholism: once an addict, always one (Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* [n. 1 above], p. 70).

demiurgic imaginary that always nourished the democratic project. (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 396–97)

But the collapse of democracy understood as voluntarism is leading today, Rosanvallon argues, to the collapse of the democratic impulse in all possible forms—a cure no better than the disease for which it was discovered. In his most recent book-length effort at programmatic theory, *The New Social Question*, Rosanvallon argues that the excessive progress of individualization in the contemporary West has endangered any thought of the collective good, the death of totalitarianism having so far implied the death of solidarity. The progress of social individualization remains, for Rosanvallon, still following Dumont, the central theme of both modern and recent history.¹¹⁵ Only now it has superseded its promise as a bulwark against totalitarianism and emerged as a major, if not the major, threat. In contrast to Furet, who regretted that America had begun to sacrifice its liberal victory over democratic terrorism, Rosanvallon rejects the United States as having sacrificed democracy itself, since it is now “shaped by radical individualism and the figure of the victim,” which has led it to become “an assembly of quasi nations satisfied to establish a simple *modus vivendi*.”¹¹⁶ Rosanvallon warns that these developments should tempt no one to “renounce the project of making human history (or, at least, of mastering it)” (*La démocratie inachevée*, pp. 396–97). It is an error, he insists, to respond to the obsolescence of the will by accepting a minimal or negative definition of democracy. The contemporary revitalization of democracy, rather, must begin with the question of how to rethink society after the violent destruction of totalitarian unity and the individualizing disintegration of the stop-gap and ramshackle equilibrium that served France as it temporized through the

¹¹⁵ The overall weight Rosanvallon assigns to the long-term, inexorable advance of individualization is demonstrated in the section of *Le sacre du citoyen* in which Rosanvallon discusses the conditions that led to the late enfranchisement of French women, who were not allowed to vote until 1944. Appealing to Dumont to suggest that “political equality marks the definitive entry into the world of individuals,” a “point of no return,” Rosanvallon rejects traditional explanations for the timing of women’s enfranchisement in France and suggests that it must relate “to the philosophical and political foundations of [the French model of] the right of suffrage” (pp. 14, 395). The reason for the tardiness of women’s enfranchisement is not, for Rosanvallon, either the force of Catholicism (other Catholic nations granted to women the right to vote far earlier) or the republican fear, in the guise of the French Senate, of women’s conservatism (republicans in other nations overcame the same fear) (pp. 393–95). The true explanation for the late date of 1944, in Rosanvallon’s account, is the long-term difficulty of understanding women as individuals. For Rosanvallon, “the victories of English or American suffragettes, for example, . . . fit with the dominant logic in their countries of interest representation and required no philosophical rupture” (pp. 404–5). The enfranchisement of women in France thus took place not through the slow inclusion of another group but through a gestalt switch whereby women were reclassified as individuals; cf. Rosanvallon, “L’histoire du vote des femmes: Réflexion sur la spécificité française,” in *Femmes et histoire: Colloque, la Sorbonne, 13–14 novembre 1992*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Paris, 1993).

¹¹⁶ Rosanvallon, *The New Social Question* (n. 2 above), pp. 36–37. The evolution of John Rawls’s work from an emphasis on justice to an emphasis on toleration is seen by Rosanvallon as indicative of a larger turn away from solidarity on the American scene.

twentieth century. Solidarity without totalitarianism, partially and briefly achieved in the past, is what those interested in democracy must now long for and seek out.

CONCLUSION

Pierre Rosanvallon's accomplishment as a historian is among the most important and impressive of recent decades. Our emphasis here has been on the way in which Rosanvallon's early career shaped the history of French democracy he tells. But one might suggest, more evaluatively, some limits to that vision. Rosanvallon's continuing hope for democratic solidarity, born of his early career, came to be excessively defined by the rejection of the totalitarianism to which, for biographical, political, and conceptual reasons, he linked it. In this regard, it is interesting to note a major shift within Rosanvallon's trilogy that seems to illustrate his own perception of a need to return to the 1970s' quest for solidarity as the limits of the emphasis on totalitarianism have become apparent. The two concluding volumes of his trilogy, published, respectively, in 1998 and 2000, arguably mark an important transformation in Rosanvallon's thought, a belated return to his point of departure in the 1970s and, specifically, to the insistence on democratic empowerment that so strongly informed his writings on *autogestion*. It is no coincidence that *La démocratie inachevée*, the final volume of his trilogy, is the one most directly concerned with democratic empowerment, while volume 1 is the most preoccupied with "French exceptionalism." Indeed, in *Le sacre du citoyen* the comparison with the English interest-based path is rarely absent, and Rosanvallon suggests that French democracy did not fully mature until the Fifth Republic or even "the end of the 1970s" (*Le sacre du citoyen*, pp. 390, 455).

But in the succeeding volumes, there is a change afoot, signaling a more fundamental strain against Furet's paradigm. Rosanvallon highlights the silent revolution of the 1890s and after as the key moment for both the normalization of democracy in France and the end of French exceptionalism, and furthermore as the first real positive historical resource offered by French history for rethinking democracy in the present.¹¹⁷ With only moderate hyperbole, one could say that it is only halfway through volume 2 of his trilogy that, for the first time in the three volumes, Rosanvallon notes a successful deviation from France's *Sonderweg*; until then, everything is trapped in French exceptionalism (or, in the case of Guizot and other nineteenth-century liberals who posed the right questions, a wish for "normality" that went unfulfilled). It is thus fair to read Rosanvallon's more recent volumes as an attempt to return to his original concerns and to break with the obsession with pathology that characterizes his middle works. Quite significantly, before their publication Rosanvallon predicted that only with the final two volumes of his trilogy would "the kind of continuity that stretches between what I wrote in the 1970s and my current work become clear."¹¹⁸ Whether he followed a trajectory

¹¹⁷ As discussed above, Condorcet and, to a lesser extent, Brissot are exceptions to this absence. Both, of course, were killed in the Revolution.

¹¹⁸ Rosanvallon, "Témoignage" (n. 12 above), p. 376.

deliberately intended from the beginning or one constructed after the fact, Rosanvallon's recent work clearly returns to his early animating concerns.¹¹⁹

But is Rosanvallon's turn (or return) too little and too late to save his narrative from its entanglements with the problem of curing rather than the problem of advancing democracy? Does Furet's paradigm have to be entirely surpassed before a return to the democratic past in the name of its future is possible? The question, in light of the difficulty of principle that Furet's totalitarian theory of democracy leaves behind—namely, the omnipresence of threat and the seeming impossibility of normalization—is whether a more promising story of democratization in modern times would have to begin with a different theory of democracy, according to which it is not pathological from the beginning and to the core.

It is therefore worth asking: Does the democratic past as Rosanvallon reconstructed it cast meaningful light on its possible futures? Or, to put it differently, would a different history provide more meaningful light? It is these questions, in the final analysis, that have to be raised in response to Rosanvallon's endeavor, especially if one takes his work on its own terms. Rosanvallon's historical survey of French democracy, it seems clear, is ultimately better at explaining why some potential historical resources should be excluded than it is at establishing which of those that remain should be revived. His history of democracy in France amounts to the discovery of three grand imperatives. There is, perhaps above all, the remembrance of the terroristic potential in democracy and therefore of the liberal moderation it must internalize. Second, there is the recognition that rationalist liberalism is the obverse and secret ally of voluntarism, with the consequence that the rejection of "pure" democracy must not erect in its place a perpetual-motion machine that expunges conflict from social life through the alignment of interests. Finally, between these two extremes, there is Rosanvallon's insistence on the pursuit of democratization now that it has stalled, rather than the acceptance of a flat "negative democracy" that has been inherited. But these three imperatives define democracy only negatively. They mark the borders beyond which liberal democracy should not err, but they fail to chart a clear path through the remaining territory. While it is clear that Rosanvallon values citizen activism, especially in its corporate forms—and it was just this kind of activism that lay behind the silent revolution of the 1890s, in which he puts so much stock—any positive program in his work is, at best, rather vaguely limned. In this manner, Rosanvallon has devoted the vast bulk of his effort to defining the possible *dérives* of liberal democracy rather than to searching for alternative resources. For an endeavor dedicated to democratizing liberal democracy, there is surprisingly little effort to mine French history for alternative constitutional arrangements more friendly to democracy; no search in the annals of the past for different ways of organizing and

¹¹⁹ In this regard, it is telling that Gauchet, the most important defender of the Furetian orthodoxy, has recently insisted, in apparent reference to Rosanvallon, on the continued exceptionalism of French political culture, writing that the late nineteenth-century "liberalization of the Republic, the advent of an autonomous civil sphere based on free association," with civil society, political parties, and trade unions, in fact "conspired" to "nourish the cult" of Rousseauian voluntarism, "the collective power in the state," and "the absolute eminence of public control" (Marcel Gauchet, *La religion dans la démocratie: Parcours de la laïcité* [Paris, 1998, 2001], pp. 61–62).

managing the workplace that would make it a more genuine embodiment of democratic ideals; no discovery in French history of alternative, more democratic modes of living out everyday life and existing in common with others than those that have prevailed in recent times. Given his own stated allegiance to revitalizing contemporary democracy, and given his prodigious historiographical production, this absence is striking and, in some respects, amounts to the denial of history as anything more than a “negative” enterprise.

In light of these observations, it is pertinent to ask if Rosanvallon’s historical work solved, or repeated, the quandary of the second left. It is worth wondering whether Rosanvallon’s turn to history overcame the constitutional defect that he himself identified in the second left: its failure to supplement its negative program with a more positive vision. In the hands of François Furet, the critique of totalitarianism was extended back in time to a critique of the French Revolution, which Furet made out to carry within itself the seeds of all future totalitarianisms. This interpretive paradigm may have proved as paralyzing for Rosanvallon as it has been enabling. It may so far have precluded Rosanvallon from finding a way beyond that critique toward a more positive vision of democracy and thus toward his own stated goals. Longing for a positive content for democracy, yet disabled by the primarily negative identity of the second left, which was always much more certain of what it was against than of what it ought to be for, Rosanvallon may remain too close to where he began. In this regard, Rosanvallon’s choice of Guizot’s thought as the point by which liberal democrats should today take a detour is instructive. Rosanvallon was originally attracted to Guizot’s perception that no return to prerevolutionary ways existed and that a new, internal regulation of democracy had to be found. Yet a turn to such a patently antidemocratic theorist for the renewal of democracy seems a choice with limited potential. Here, it is fair to view Rosanvallon’s attention to Guizot as overdetermined by the critique of totalitarianism and attention to the pathologies of democracy and as underinformed by his commitment to democratic revitalization.¹²⁰ In the same vein, while Rosanvallon struggled against Furet’s enabling paradigm for the history of French democracy, attempting to turn it in new directions from within, one may legitimately wonder whether Rosanvallon in the end found himself hobbled in the pursuit of his most cherished ends by the very starting point he adopted—whether his rejection of totalitarianism made the solidarity for which he longed too elusive and dangerous ever to be more than a distant and heuristic ideal. It is illuminating, in this regard, that while he came to deny—against Furet—that a “totalitarian” underside seemed the most remarkable fact about French politics in the twentieth century, Rosanvallon never turned his back on Furet’s retrojection of this threat

¹²⁰ Indeed, the growing appreciation of some of the costs of the antitotalitarian coalition that brought together such different political aspirations is undoubtedly one factor in its recent dissolution in the *affaire* touched off by Daniel Lindenberg (and apparently instigated by Rosanvallon himself); see Daniel Lindenberg, *Le rappel à l’ordre: Enquête sur les nouveaux réactionnaires* (Paris, 2002), published in *La République des Idées*, a series edited by Rosanvallon. See also Jean Birnbaum and Nicolas Weill, “Ce livre qui brouille les familles intellectuelles,” *Le Monde* (Nov. 21, 2002) and Birnbaum’s interview with Rosanvallon, “Il faut refaire le bagage d’idées de la démocratie française,” *Le Monde* (Nov. 21, 2002).

deep into French democratic history and into the nature of democracy itself. Consequently, the French Revolution remained all but pure pathology in Rosanvallon's trilogy and permanently under the sign of a taboo, essentially off-limits in his attempt to mine the past in search of present alternatives. More important, Rosanvallon often writes as if the Revolution contaminated subsequent French history to the point that there was no way out of the maze.

Rosanvallon's unusually sweeping and provocative historical synthesis stands as an invaluable source for historians of modern France and modern democracy. It is not inappropriate to judge it, however, in light of Rosanvallon's insistence that the point of studying the past is to examine it for signs of the future—in this case, the future of democracy. "If the *âge de l'autogestion* could pass, a time of renewed democratic exigency has nevertheless persisted," Rosanvallon wrote in 2000, stressing the endurance of the solidaristic vision of his early career beyond the collapse of the vehicle it originally took (*La démocratie inachevée*, p. 416). Has Rosanvallon's historical enterprise given reason to hope for the satisfaction of this exigent need? It would seem, especially in light of Rosanvallon's own insistence that democratic theory not content itself with a baseline, in the manner of "negative democracy," that the answer to this question so far must be, on the whole, negative. Rosanvallon's project of elaborating a robustly democratic liberal democracy persists. To judge Rosanvallon against so stringent a criterion is, of course, to hold him to an impossibly high standard, but it is his own criterion. Most important, then, Rosanvallon's intention outlives his performance. All future interventions on the history of French democracy will have to take his formidable oeuvre as their starting point. But they will also have to keep in mind the difficulties to which his daring attempt to revise Furet's revisionism, to revive democracy on the basis of its thorough critique, led him in his narrative of French democracy. Most of all, then, Rosanvallon's project raises the question of whether it is fruitful or futile to revise revisionism, and whether, in the name of democracy, the exaggerated fear of democracy has to be permanently left behind.