

his role in the rivalry with Lloyd George in the early 1920s. Jenkins does, however, rightly conclude that the major blame for the bitterness which has reverberated among Liberals since rests with Asquith's lieutenants, McKenna, Runciman and Vivian Phillips, rather than with the former PM himself.

One of the most interesting points of the biography is that which deals with Asquith's social activities as Prime Minister. His relaxed cycle of country house visits, frequent letters to women correspondents and disinterest in the media contrasts vividly with the frenetic activity of late twentieth century ministers.

However, Asquith did not come from a wealthy background and although seen as "the last of the Romans" was very much a self made man. Born in Yorkshire, he was brought up in London from an early age. Following a classical education at Balliol with a competent, but not outstanding career as a barrister, he was elected for East Fife and then appointed Home Secretary in Gladstone's last government and Rosebery's brief administration. Jenkins focuses on his period as Prime Minister as the most effective testimony to Asquith's greatness. Confronted by horrendous problems - the suffragettes' campaign of violence, industrial unrest, Ulster and the House of Lords (all identified by Dangerfield in *The Strange Death of Liberal England*) - it is Asquith's effective and fundamentally Liberal use of power which makes him of interest to contemporary Liberal Democrats. Although traditionally Asquith has been linked with the Liberal right due to his support for the Boer War, Jenkins correctly places him in the Liberal mainstream. He contrasts Asquith's pre-eminence over both the last 100% Liberal Cabinet and the 1915-16 period (when, despite an ostensible coalition, the Tory ministers were confined to junior posts), with Lloyd George's key dependence on the loyalty of the Conservative Party during the 1916-22 period.

To conclude, *Asquith*, despite its age, is a masterful and well written biography of one of the greatest Liberal figures of the century. Most significantly, Jenkins displays a Liberal politician who was essentially a man of government, who was always faithful to liberal and humane ideals and to fastidious standards of political behaviour. As such it both entertains and sheds instructive light on what it is like to be a Liberal in power.

What is Liberal Democracy? The Importance of History

by James Lund

In what way does the Liberal inheritance of the Liberal Democrats prevent the party from developing its inescapably political identity in a way that will win wider, more sustained electoral support? The answer is, I think, that that inheritance is not a democratic one, and yet it remains a powerful influence on the presuppositions and style of the party in actuality, contradicting what impression its current, professed policies make.

The inheritance is a powerful one. The Liberal party came into existence and first forged its identity in the second half of the nineteenth century when the greatness of Great Britain had only just begun to come into question, and then only in the economic sphere. The former smoking room and dining room of the splendidly refurbished National Liberal Club, founded in 1884, with their full length portraits of, *inter alia*, Gladstone in early middle age and Lloyd George recall the days when the Liberal party itself was a great political power, a coalition of the landed Whig aristocracy and members of the middle classes, drawn from the worlds of finance, commerce, industry and professions. The terms of that coalition were the continuance of oligarchical government in the name of the crown in return for free trade, reform of major institutions to render them more efficient and open to meritocratic competition, an enlargement of the franchise, and, latterly, important but very limited measures of social reform.

This was not a democratic party. Although in 1885 Joseph Chamberlain might say that "*government of the people by the people ... has at last been effectively secured by the two measures which together constitute the great achievement of Mr Gladstone's administration*", this opinion is very questionable. It took the Reform Bills of 1918 and 1925 to establish adult suffrage for both men and women. Before the Act of 1918, with its variety of franchises for adult men and married women over 30, between 40 and 45 per cent of the Edwardian adult male population was excluded from the electorate. The exclusion levels were particularly high in the industrial towns and great cities, so that the 1918 Act almost doubled the adult male enfranchisement in the latter areas. By that time the party was split and in decline, never having faced a democratic electorate as a major party with power. There has also been some question as to how far the New Liberalism, which gave rise to social reform from 1906 to 1914, was ever fully accepted in principle by the party as a whole.

All this was a long time ago, it may very rightly be said, and Liberal Democrat policy today appears to give the lie to the claim that the party holds back from democracy in its actual approach to politics as distinct from its formal professions of what it will do if elected.

Yet my doubts on this score are fuelled by a pamphlet which has appeared recently, namely Geoffrey Thomas' *Liberal Democracy: the Radical Tradition*, which claims to set out the philosophy of the party, and in doing so draws principally on Kant, who died in 1804, and John Stuart Mill, who died in 1873. More recent figures, notably T. H. Green, who died in 1882, also figure, as do John Rawls and Dorothy Emmett among living philosophers; but the tradition presented by Thomas, who remarks in passing that we should not regard it "*as something self-contained, an independent kingdom of the past*" draws heavily on late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century philosophy.

Such a presentation suggests to me that there is an important element in the party that is too much grounded still in the tradition of the days of the old Liberal party in its greatness. Certainly in the radical tradition as Geoffrey Thomas presents it, there is a major philosophical inadequacy of great political importance. What is fundamental in any political philosophy that professes to be a philosophy of democratically conducted

politics, and not a philosophy of monarchical, clerical or oligarchical government, is the question of what is proposed in respect of what we are to think of ourselves as human beings, who can share a mode of being which manifestly comprehends the inhuman as well as the human, both in the actual relations we have with one another and in what we think reflectively about ourselves.

Mr Thomas' account of the radical tradition of liberal democracy is grounded in what he has to say first and foremost concerning the principle of respect for persons. He identifies persons primarily with acts of choice which give actual expressions for "wants and preferences, wishes, tastes, beliefs and so forth", which define our personal interests. Respect for persons requires, Thomas maintains, acceptance, valuation and expectation of such choices in others and a disposition not to interfere with them and indeed to assist in their fulfilment.

What this quite fails to make clear is the way in which Kant conceived human beings philosophically. He did so in terms of a twofold mode of being, a pure mind related to a purely material body: that is, in terms of two systematic abstractions from the actuality of our experience of one another as living organisms, capable through our transactions with one another of developing, or *failing to develop*, active, expressive and reflective powers. Democratic purpose in political life requires that we and the governments we elect think in such human terms and not in terms of the systematic abstraction of the mainstream philosophical tradition in the modern age, represented by Kant, who would allow nothing ethical to human affections. 'Citizens' one moment, the 'workforce' the next.

(to be concluded)

Radicalism and the Risorgimento

Book Review
by Terry Cowley

Denis Mack Smith: *Mazzini*
(Yale University Press, 1994)

After Garibaldi, Mazzini is one of my favourite radicals of the 19th century in Europe; and this book confirms his importance as a revolutionary and political figure. Denis Mack Smith's thorough, clear, well researched biography provides us with a scholarly work that will retain an importance for many years to come. This work is essential not only for the historian, but for the general political engagé.

Some of the intriguing facts about our hero include his love of black cigars; that he lived in Fulham; read the works of Goethe, Byron, Shelley, and practically everybody else most avidly. He also just loved books.

This biography examines in some depth his relationships with Garibaldi and Cavour. In the history of Italy where corruptions and cynicism have been bywords in politics, it is

refreshing always to discover and rediscover a man like Mazzini, with such integrity, honesty, and a mind that was able to think far beyond expediency. He also had a great capacity for friendship, and counted among his English friends such personages as the Carlyles, John Morley, Dickens, Swinburne and Gladstone. In this study Cavour's general pseudo-Machiavellism becomes shabby as does his spite and envy. Also the spite and nastiness of so-called Moderates and Liberals who after reunification branded Mazzini as a terrorist, and banned him from living in Italy till only a few months before his death.

The irony was that Mazzini was - in the true sense - a moderate, a Liberal reformer, a social conciliator and a progressive thinker - with honesty, unlike many of his political contemporaries who were moderate in name, but conservative in deed, untrusting, and afraid of the Italian people. Garibaldi's shabby treatment of Mazzini is appalling and almost paranoiac in its obsessiveness, and certainly dents the halo of the secular saint of the Risorgimento. An excellent book - buy it, read it, digest it and see how many of its truths and observations apply to the political rag-bag known as the Liberal Democrats.

This book review first appeared in the magazine Liberator and is reprinted with their kind permission.

Reformulating Liberalism

Book Review
by Stewart Rayment

L.T.Hobhouse (edited by James Meadowcroft):
Liberalism and Other Writings
(Cambridge, 1994)

Collini, following De Ruggiero (reprint please) calls Hobhouse's Liberalism "timeless", "a classic", "the best twentieth century statement of Liberal ideas" and "one of the constitutive works of the canon". Quite so. Thus we are indebted to Cambridge University Press for making this work available again. Yet De Ruggiero was writing in 1927 of a book penned in 1911, and Collini in 1979. Does Hobhouse's Liberalism really hold for the end of the Twentieth Century, still more the Twenty First?

It is not sufficient for a magazine like *Liberator* which would see itself in the intellectual tradition of Hobhouse to answer "Yes". Most of Hobhouse's other writing, with the possible exception of *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* (a handy one for laying into those Marxists), is largely forgotten. However the claims made for Liberalism at the start of this review stand. First, following John Stuart Mill, Hobhouse wrote in an everyday language; his thoughts are accessible to all.

Second, and this is a factor in his books generally, Hobhouse wrote from a philosophical standpoint. His journalism, much of the writing of his colleagues, J.A.Hobson, the Hammonds, down to Keynes, Beveridge, Grimond and Michael