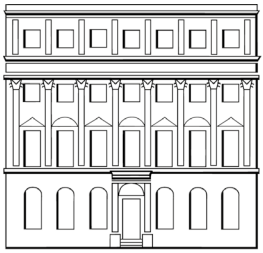
Review Article: Democracy in Germany. Way of Life, Path to (Auto)Westernization, and Global Political Phenomenon

STIBBE, Matthew <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7269-8183>



German Historical Institute London

German Historical Institute London Bulletin

REVIEW ARTICLE

Democracy in Germany: Way of Life, Path to (Auto)Westernization, and Global Political Phenomenon
by Matthew Stibbe

German Historical Institute London Bulletin
Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Nov. 2021), 57–71

ISSN 0269-8552

REVIEW ARTICLES

DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY: WAY OF LIFE, PATH TO (AUTO)WESTERNIZATION, AND GLOBAL POLITICAL PHENOMENON

MATTHEW STIBBE

TILL VAN RAHDEN, *Demokratie: Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2019), 196 pp. ISBN 978 3 593 51134 4. €24.95
MARTIN CONWAY, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 376 pp. ISBN 978 0 691 20348 5, $35.00/£30.00
HEDWIG RICHTER, *Demokratie. Eine deutsche Affäre: Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2020), 400 pp. ISBN 978 3 406 75479 1. €26.95

I

In his debut novel *The Last Man in Europe*, Dennis Glover pictures an encounter between the English writer George Orwell, by then acutely unwell with tuberculosis, and the chest surgeon Bruce Dick, 'a thickset Scotsman in his mid-forties'. It is January 1948 and the setting is the Hairmyres Hospital in Lanarkshire, near Glasgow:

> In his day Dick must have resembled a boxer, but his muscles had now begun their inevitable gravitational descent, like a tightly packed sack of potatoes shaken about in a bouncing cart. He had heard somewhere the man was a Catholic and had fought with the Francoists in Spain, but he couldn't be certain that was true. Anyway, even if he had been a fascist at some stage, there was something about him that was appealing: a gruff pragmatism mixed with an obvious independence

> of mind that suggested one could have a decent conversation with him, as long as one wasn't on the operating table.[1]

This imagined account is worth citing not only because it makes for good historical fiction. It also encapsulates much of what Till van Rahden, author of the first of three books under review here, means when he talks of the need to understand democracy in its post-1945 (West) German, European, and international forms not as a means of legitimizing authority, but as a *Lebensform* or 'way of life'. Later in the novel, Orwell tells Dick that the book he is currently writing concerns 'democracy, a full belly, the freedom to think and say as you like, the laws of logic, the countryside, the right to love others and not to live alone but in a family . . . human things'.[2] For the author of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the anti-totalitarian spirit meant more than just opposition to extremism. It demanded room to breathe, a culture of genuine debate rather than posturing, and a disciplined focus on the concrete and the real.

Like Orwell, van Rahden understands democracy as something more rooted in manners (*moeurs*) than in institutions, forms of governance, and organized political movements. This was an insight already developed by Enlightenment thinkers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but became more significant against the violent background of the 1930s and 1940s. Manners must be cultivated—that is, they have to be propagated in tangible ways—but they do not require a common set of morals or political principles. Instead, what matters is how differences of opinion are handled, whether these differences concern private morals, questions of public policy, or conflicting material interests.

As van Rahden argues, post-1945 West Germany offers a good case study of how democracies rebuilt themselves 'in the shadow of violence' (p. 46; all translations by reviewer). The Bonn Republic's famed political stability under Adenauer and his successors was more than just a matter of subduing political passions and investing more authority in the office of Federal Chancellor. Rather, van Rahden demonstrates how new ideas about gender, family, and community in the late 1950s and early 1960s helped to give solid form and content to what was otherwise the 'hollow' (*inhaltsleer*) approach to democracy identified by many

[1] Dennis Glover, *The Last Man in Europe: A Novel* (Carlton, Vic., 2017), 212.
[2] Ibid. 219–20.

anti-Nazis returning from exile to the FRG. Over time, he argues, and in a quiet, unceremonious way, West German citizens (unknowingly) seized upon the academic and SPD politician Carlo Schmid's later definition of democracy as 'the window into humanizing the state' (p. 38). The book provides an in-depth look at two compelling examples of this.

The first is the legal ruling made by the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe in July 1959 which declared clauses 1628 and 1629 of the June 1957 *Gesetz über die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau auf dem Gebiet des bürgerlichen Rechts* (Law on Equal Rights for Men and Women in Civil Law) to be incompatible with the principles of equality laid down in the 1949 Basic Law. These two clauses gave the father the final say over how a child should be educated, and the right to act as the child's sole legal guardian in criminal and civil proceedings. By upholding equality of status for mothers, the Court ended the centuries-old privileging of patriarchal rights in family decision-making and upheld the constitutional rights of all citizens in face of an unjust piece of government legislation. Significantly, the ruling was made by Erna Scheffler, appointed in 1951 as the only female Constitutional Justice alongside fifteen men.

One interpretation of this decision is that it demonstrates the importance of the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Yet van Rahden also finds significance in the widespread societal support for Scheffler's ruling, including among men of all shades of opinion, conservative women, and even lay Catholic organizations. The Deutscher Juristinnenbund (German Association of Women Lawyers), which took the case to the Constitutional Court, won the argument not only because the 1957 law violated constitutional rights laid down in the Basic Law, but because of growing acceptance in West German society that democracy, as a way of life, had to begin in the home. Equality was now reconciled with respect for gender difference in a way that quietly broke with both the conservative teachings of the Church and the Nazis' stark privileging of fatherhood over motherhood in the interests of race purity.[3]

[3] On the Nazi 'cult of fatherhood and masculinity' as one of the cornerstones of the 'escalation of racism' in the 1930s and early 1940s see Gisela Bock, 'Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism', in Joan Wallach Scott (ed.), *Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1996), 267–90, at 281.

The second case van Rahden examines is the decision made in the 1960s by the local council in the Hessian city of Offenbach to build an indoor swimming pool for low-price use by all members of the community. Like public libraries, he argues, public swimming baths are an important space for the cultivation of democracy as a *Lebensform*. Quoting from a 1932 newspaper article by the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, he notes that citizens, when swimming together, spontaneously encounter each other as social equals deserving of mutual respect for their humanity, dignity, and health needs. In 1992, however, the swimming pool was sold to private contractors, who decided that the city's needs were better served through its conversion into a hotel-cum-restaurant catering to different gastronomic tastes (and different-sized pockets). An amenity that had once strengthened the community now served more abstract principles like economic efficiency (*Leistung*) and consumer choice, both of which—when imposed upon a late twentieth and early twenty-first century urban landscape—end in spatial separation, loss of civic-mindedness (*Bürgersinn*), and a turn to the kind of identity politics that can divide families and neighbourhoods as well as entire societies.

What are the broader implications of van Rahden's findings? First, he shows that the main threat to democracy lies in the growing 'infirmity of public spaces' (p. 136), a trend which began in the 1980s and 1990s and continues into the present. Supporters of civic renewal now have to operate in a communal environment racked by three decades of privatization and forced acclimatization to the rules of the market, and thus progressively less suited to the promotion of 'democratic spaces' ('demokratische Erfahrungsräume'; pp. 139–40). Van Rahden contrasts this with the widespread societal rejection of the argument made by some Marxist radicals in 1968 that the family was 'the workshop of capitalist ideology' (p. 116). Here, the experience of the 1959 Constitutional Court ruling, together with shifts towards redefining the modern, nuclear family as a space where citizens could develop freely, equally, and with a respect for difference, made such left-authoritarian ideas appear incompatible with post-war understandings of democracy as a way of life.

Second, van Rahden's findings lead him to rethink the conventional periodization of recent German history. In particular, he questions the

idea of a '"second founding" of the Federal Republic in the late 1960s and early 1970s' (p. 103), arguing instead that West Germany was already moving away from authoritarian-restorative family policies and towards greater democratic experimentation from the mid 1950s onwards. This is an important corrective to those, like Dagmar Herzog, who have emphasized the overriding cultural and sexual conservatism of the Adenauer era and its immediate aftermath.[4] On the other hand, van Rahden also suggests that Germany remained a post-war society, living with the trauma of violence and genocide, until well into the 1990s. Possibly he has in mind Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's famous justification of German participation in the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 with the memorable phrase 'Never Again Auschwitz!' This marked the Federal Republic's transformation into a 'normal' democracy which now felt able to let go of the old mantra 'Never Again War!' in the greater interest of genocide prevention and deterrence.

Van Rahden does not directly reference Fischer's speech. But like it or not, it was only by engaging in a self-willed act of violence within the unique historical circumstances of a humanitarian mission sponsored by a centre-left 'Red–Green' Federal government that Germany finally, albeit controversially and perhaps only partially, escaped the shadow of the Second World War.[5] Up until that point, democracy as a way of life and an international good had been considered by most Germans to be incompatible with asymmetrical bombing offensives conducted from the skies. This was a national viewpoint derived from concrete historical experiences of Germany's 'crisis years' from 1942 to 1948,[6] but also a mid to late twentieth-century political sensibility that was given enduring literary expression in Orwell's

[4] See Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, 2005).

[5] On the wider background to Fischer's March 1999 speech to the Green Party conference in Bielefeld justifying German involvement in the Kosovo campaign—a move which he also described in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in April 1999 as marking not war but a defensive battle for 'human rights, freedom, and democracy'—see Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2014), 1220–31.

[6] Elizabeth D. Heineman, 'The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's "Crisis Years" and West German National Identity', *American Historical Review*, 101/2 (1996), 354–95.

Nineteen Eighty-Four. For this reason, 1999—the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Federal Republic—also deserves greater recognition in contemporary history and the history of mentalities as the end of the German post-war era and the beginning of something new: the post-post-war era.

II

Moving on, the fictitious but historically based dialogue between Orwell and his surgeon in Glover's *The Last Man in Europe* also has a bearing on the second book under review, Martin Conway's account of democracy in Western Europe from 1945 to 1968. At one point, their conversation goes as follows:

> 'They tell me you were in Spain, Mr Dick, on Franco's side.'
> 'I was younger then.'
> 'How do you feel about it *now*?'
> 'Well, I never thought it would lead to Hitler and the war we've just had, if that's what you mean. I did it for Catholic reasons, you see, not political ones. Anyway, I was a doctor. I didn't go to kill anyone.'
> 'I did, with a grenade. Are you still? Catholic, I mean?'
> 'Not as much. The war! Are you still a socialist?'
> 'More so. Although in a different way. I'm less naive too . . .'[7]

Conway's book seeks to rewrite the history of Western Europe in the first two and a half decades after the Second World War as an underrated age of democratization. Democracy was not invented during this period, but it reached a new 'level of maturity' (p. 269) and critical self-awareness in response to the ideological extremes of the 1920s and 1930s and the violence of Hitler's New Order across the Continent in the early 1940s. Three ingredients went into this surprise renaissance of democracy: 'economic prosperity' for families and individuals; trust generated by 'effective governmental action'; and 'social compromise', particularly between former political enemies in the Catholic, liberal, and social democratic camps (p. 1).

[7] Glover, *The Last Man*, 219.

In Conway's own words, once the armed struggle of different anti-fascist resistance groups ended in liberation from Axis occupation in 1943–45, 'democracy . . . became less a matter of victory or defeat than a process of continuous negotiation' and 'incremental normalization' (pp. 11, 37). Post-war Western European politicians sought not only to repair the past, but to build a new tomorrow—albeit gradually and cautiously rather than in the great leaps forward advocated by Stalin and the 'little Stalins' on the opposite side of the Iron Curtain. Overall, regime change happened in only two West-aligned European countries between 1945 and 1968: France in 1958 and Greece in 1967. Otherwise, democracy went hand in hand with state-led but popularly acclaimed stabilization.

Conway has relatively little to say about the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974, but devotes a great deal of attention to de Gaulle. He casts the French general as a political pragmatist, reminding readers of his words in August 1944 when he issued a decree in Paris proclaiming the 're-establishment of republican legality' ('le rétablissement de la légalité républicaine', p. 37). What happened in May 1958 was based on a similar approach: formal constitutional structures were altered to shift power from Parliament to the Presidency, but without changing the pluralist ethos of post-war French democracy or its roots in compromise between rival political movements. De Gaulle acted to create the Fifth Republic during a state of emergency in which the polarizing effects of the Algerian conflict threatened to enter the domestic political arena and generate civil war. But in the end, French democracy—including the 'familiar rituals of republicanism' (p. 75)— survived the crisis of 1958, just as it withstood further crises in 1961 (in Algeria) and 1968 (at home).

Conway's other great interest in the book is in the centre-right, Christian democratic parties of the post-war era, which, with one or two exceptions, dominated coalition governments at national level across Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. But here his arguments are less convincing. For one thing, his preoccupation with explaining de Gaulle's actions in 1958 means that he misses an opportunity to discuss the lesser known origins of the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Acts) in West Germany. Although only passed by the Bundestag after much heated controversy in May 1968 under the specific historical

circumstances of the grand coalition government, the planning for these emergency laws started in the 1950s during a period of Christian Democrat ascendency. Furthermore, when the laws were eventually passed through the co-option of the Social Democrats, they did undermine trust, at least initially, in the authority of the state and its commitment to pluralism.[8] This in spite of the fact that—as so often in the consensus-driven Western Europe of the late 1950s and 1960s—the two biggest parties had 'agreed to agree'.[9]

Equally unconvincing is Conway's argument that Christian Democrat-oriented intellectuals helped to build an embryonic Continental identity that delimited itself as much from British and American political models as it did from Soviet-style communism. The ethos of compromise and coalition-building, for instance, supposedly drew attention to the 'differentness of British democracy', which was rooted in the 'Westminster model' of adversarial politics (pp. 23, 80). But this seems to be a rather trivial point when set against the enormous contribution that British and American political theorists and public intellectuals made to European-wide understandings of the twentieth-century 'authoritarian impulse' and how to oppose it. Here one could refer not only to Orwell, but also to a diverse group of thinkers who had fled Continental Europe in the 1930s and early 1940s, including Hannah Arendt, Ernst Fraenkel, Erich Fromm, Arthur Koestler, Raphael Lemkin, Karl Popper, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno (to name but a few).

Admittedly, Conway mentions nearly all these figures, but does so rather fleetingly. At the beginning of the book he foregrounds the French political philosopher Raymond Aron (who himself spent time in Germany in the early 1930s and London in the early 1940s) and pays particular attention to a speech he made in West Berlin in June 1960 at a conference of the (CIA-funded) Congress for Cultural Freedom. Yet the optimism that Aron expressed in this address was based on his belief in a growing convergence between Western Europe and other parts of 'the West' since 1945, including 'some of

[8] Martin Diebel, *'Die Stunde der Exekutive': Das Bundesinnenministerium und die Notstandsgesetze 1949–1968* (Göttingen, 2019).

[9] Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends* (London, 2020), 120.

the new[ly independent] states of Asia and Africa, the United States, Australia and New Zealand'. All of them now at least had the potential to enter the exalted group of *démocraties stabilisées* (democracies rendered secure through a strong claim to popular legitimacy, the marginalization of extremist parties, and a track record of effective governance), even if some still fell short in practice. The auspicious advance of democracy, he argued, meant that an analysis of political institutions based on the 'old states of Europe' alone 'would from this time forth be incomplete' ('serait désormais fragmentaire').[10]

Given all this, Conway is on much safer ground when he defines Western Europe in the 1960s not as a distinct region enjoying its own particular 'democratic age', but as a transnational space and meeting point which, through fifteen years of internal and cross-border migration, civic engagement, and cultural exchange, was slowly becoming many different democratic worlds shrunk into one. This was a process that relied as much on virtual or long-distance encounters as on face-to-face, local, or community ones, although the latter were important. More than anything else it reflected the growing—and internationalizing—impact of the 'direct media of film and television' on political and social life (p. 280).

Alongside France, the Benelux countries, and Scandinavia, West Germany was one of the major Continental European centres of this long-term trend towards democratization, political stabilization, and unity through diversity, having been influenced profoundly by it, but also increasingly contributing to it.[11] Examples might include the lively debates and intelligent compromises that preceded the passing of the *Notstandsgesetze* in May 1968 and the politically astute decision *not* to apply these laws in the face of the exceptional challenge posed by domestic terrorism in the 1970s. Both developments, it goes without saying, took place in the shadow of 1945 and the important social, cultural, and political changes that had taken place since then, both in the FRG and globally.

[10] Raymond Aron, 'Les institutions politiques de l'occident dans le monde du XXe siècle', in id. and François Bondy (eds.), *La démocratie à l'épreuve du XXe siècle: Colloques de Berlin* (Paris, 1960), 11–42, at 12.

[11] As also shown by, among others, Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge, 2013).

III

In Conway's reading of the twentieth century, the year 1989 stands out as far more exceptional than 1945—a brief moment in time when the triumph of liberal democracy ceased to be cast in national, regional, and period-specific ways and appeared to be global, universal, and even permanent. He is right in the sense that 1989 itself now belongs to history rather than to a 'continuous present'. As Anne Applebaum has also argued in her recent book on the 'angry politics' of the years 2015–18, the sudden rise of illiberal strongman regimes and political movements in parts of Eastern Europe do not represent a 'hangover from 1989' or a 'regional failure to grapple with the legacy of the [authoritarian, non-democratic] past'.[12] Rather, it is something that has 'arisen more recently' and is present in 'some parts of the Western world' too.[13] By contrast, the European Union's survival of a number of intense political storms—from the worldwide financial crash of 2007–8 through to the refugee and migrant crisis of 2015–16, the long-drawn-out negotiations with the UK over the terms of Brexit, and the global pandemic of 2020–21—seems to indicate that the 'hangover' from the twentieth century is still very present on the Continent today, especially among those countries directly affected by the Second World War.

Where does this leave Germany and the legacy of 1945 and 1989 for its development as a democratic nation, particularly against the background of the growing threat of right-wing extremism at home and internationally? Hedwig Richter provides a rather different answer to that offered in what is now the standard account by Heinrich August Winkler.[14] In her view, for over two hundred years Germany has played an active part in the 'benchmark project that is democracy', helping to drive it forward 'in tandem with modernity and notions of human dignity' (p. 10). The German nation did not need to walk a long, circuitous road before it came to embrace Western ideals wholeheartedly in the late twentieth century; rather, in the modern

[12] Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*, 55, 108.
[13] Ibid. 58.
[14] Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2000); appearing in English as *Germany: The Long Road West*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2006–7).

era, democracy was—with the obvious and important exception of the years 1933–45—a 'German affair' as well as a global one.

One of Richter's central themes is the importance of educational, health, and social reforms—promoted largely by elites in Germany and elsewhere since 1800—over violent revolution. Reform, she argues, was the typical way in which elites 'educated themselves' to become good citizens and democrats (p. 44). By contrast, violent revolutions remained 'the exception' (p. 34). Indeed, like Simon Schama writing on late eighteenth-century France, Richter sees the shocking events of 1789–94 (and later, of 1848–49 in Central Europe, 1871 in Paris, and 1917–20 in Russia and Germany) as anomalous 'interruption[s]' to progress and modernity rather than as a 'catalyst' to a better world.[15]

For Richter, this view of Germany's self-generated and globally interconnected path to democracy is instructive because it draws our attention to previously overlooked moments of reform, including the period around the year 1900. However, it might equally be argued that she relies on too narrow a conception of revolutions. In her account, these are typically blood-spattered and overbearing events, disrespectful of the bodily autonomy and individual worth of all and inimical to women's rights in particular. Marie Juchacz, the first elected woman deputy to address the Weimar National Assembly on 19 February 1919 and a member of the SPD (not, as Richter mistakenly claims, the USPD; p. 196), understood things differently. True, she was careful in her speech to assert that the November Revolution was now over and that a welcome return to normality had been sealed by the convening of the National Assembly and the re-establishment of the separation of powers between executive, legislature, and law courts. But she was equally at pains to stress that the granting of female suffrage, by decree of the Council of People's Deputies on 12 November 1918, was the correction of a long-standing natural injustice against women.

To Juchacz, in other words, the German Revolution of 1918–19 was indeed exceptional in national terms. However, this was not because it broke with the reformist impulses of 1900. Rather, it was

[15] Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), 184.

because it brought about something that was self-evidently in line with the essential—that is, non-negotiable—requirements of democratic citizenship that a century or more of well-intentioned and influential advocates in Prussia and other German states had failed absolutely and on all levels to achieve: namely, equality of voting rights for both sexes. Of course, Richter is right that a revolution was not needed to create a social state in Germany; elements of this were already in place in the Bismarckian and Wilhelmine eras, to the benefit of (non-enfranchised) women as well as wage-earning men. However, to quote the radical Dutch Patriot draft manifesto from 1785, the *Leids Ontwerp*, 'the Sovereign is none other than the vote of the people'.[16] And without the vote, women were not truly equal as citizens.

A second of Richter's themes is the significance of understandings of the body to the development of democracy. A body that is respected as human is also entitled to be free and autonomous—not only in the negative sense of not being enslaved, tortured, made vulnerable to specific kinds of socially discriminatory punishments ('ständisch differenzierte Strafen', p. 75), or threatened with arbitrary detention, but in the positive sense of enjoying the right to health, happiness, personal security, and parity of (self-)esteem. We can see continuities here from the year 1800 onwards, including the contributions of German physicians such as August Hirsch (1817–94) and Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901) to international sanitary protection work, and of the Berlin-based sex reformers Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) and Helene Stöcker (1869–1943) to the field of minority rights and the protection of single mothers. All the above campaigners helped pave the way for the founding principles of the World Health Organization, which came into force in April 1948:

> Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
> The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

[16] Ibid. 249.

> The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.
> The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.[17]

More recently, we can find echoes of these principles in Angela Merkel's New Year's Eve address to the German nation as Federal Chancellor on 31 December 2020. Here she noted that a hitherto unknown virus had invaded 'our' bodies and hit the core of what it means to be human: close contact with others, the ability to hug, and the right to celebrate and mourn together. Those who spread stories that the virus does not exist, she continued, were not only telling lies but were adding to the pain felt by fellow citizens who had lost loved ones or who were dealing with the physical and mental impact of Covid-related illness. Above all, she added, conspiracy theorists are dangerous cynics who lack the kind of fellow-feeling (*Mitmenschlichkeit*) necessary for Germany and the rest of the world to get through the pandemic together. Later in her address she noted with pride that scientists from sixty different nations had worked on developing the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine as a German–American co-production, led in the FRG by a firm co-founded in Mainz by the German–Turkish husband-and-wife team Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci. For her, this was proof that 'progress stems from the common strength to be found in diversity'.[18]

Richter's main point is the remarkable resilience of democracy, especially given the 'catastrophic starting point' for its renewal in 1945 (p. 252). Like Merkel, she also celebrates democracy's ability since 1945 to develop in harmony as a German and international phenomenon, and to offset rising inequalities of income and wealth at the domestic and global levels since the 1970s through social reforms and respect for bodily integrity. But is its survival really

[17] Constitution of the World Health Organization, adopted 1946, effective from 1948, at [https://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf], accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

[18] 'Neujahrsansprache der Bundeskanzlerin', 31 Dec. 2020, at [https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/mediathek/videos/merkel-neujahrsansprache-2020-1833774], accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

guaranteed in the twenty-first century? How can it protect itself against the populist appeal of conspiracy theories that undermine trust in voting systems or permit ridicule of 'experts' and elected politicians? How can it confront the anger that is more easily assuaged through reference to the machinations of 'evil' foreign powers than to the role of accident or human complexity? How can it combat terrorism and political extremism, deadly viruses spread by human contact, the illegal trafficking of migrants and would-be asylum-seekers, or the climate crisis without impinging on the right 'to secure and govern our own bodies' as autonomous actors (p. 322)? And is there any more that it can do to offset what Applebaum describes as the 'jangling, dissonant sound of modern politics'—the cacophony of different voices 'all shouting at the same time' which, in the age of social and digital media, has so 'unnerved that part of the population that prefers unity and homogeneity'.[19]

To triumph, democracy must be bodily in the sense that it founds its abstract claims to justice, equality, and solidarity on the tangible basis of respect for difference and diversity. Here Richter is absolutely right. But it must be more than that: a way of life rooted in the desire to join people together through the cultivation of mutual recognition and bonds of trust. It is about creating spaces and filling them with educational, health, and social care opportunities for all, not just about establishing constitutional lines that cannot be crossed and individual freedoms that ought not to be restricted (except during exceptional, state-of-emergency situations). In this sense, 1945 was just a beginning—and we still have a long and fragile path to follow.

[19] Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*, 117, 187.

MATTHEW STIBBE is Professor of Modern European History at Sheffield Hallam University. His most recent publications include *Civilian Internment during the First World War: A European and Global History, 1914–1920* (2019); and (with André Keil), 'Ein Laboratorium des Ausnahmezustands: Schutzhaft während des Ersten Weltkriegs und in den Anfangsjahren der Weimarer Republik—Preußen und Bayern 1914 bis 1923', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 68/4 (2020), 535–73. He is currently working on a historiographical study of the German Revolution of 1918–19 for Manchester University Press, and on a journal special issue examining state-of-emergency regimes in Europe and beyond during the First World War era.