

The respect for authority, the presumption in favor of those who have won intellectual reputation, is within reasonable limits, both prudent and becoming. But it should not be carried too far, and there are some things especially as to which it behooves us all to use our own judgment and to maintain free minds. For not only does the history of the world show that undue deference to authority has been the potent agency through which errors have been enthroned and superstitions perpetuated, but there are regions of thought in which the largest powers and the greatest acquirements cannot guard against aberrations or assure deeper insight. [Henry George]³⁰⁶

CHAPTER 9

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND POWER

DISTURBING THE STATUS QUO

European history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is often referred to as the *Age of Reason* because of the explosion of interest that occurred in science and philosophy. Emerging population centers provided eclectic new environments conducive to investigative and contemplative thought. At the same time, socio-political institutions

experienced dramatic changes as villages grew into cities and feudal manors were consolidated by monarchs into nation-states. The division of labor accelerated, the technologies of wealth production advanced and the quantity and quality of wealth made available to those who dominated the socio-political hierarchy rapidly expanded. Moreover, the abandonment of communitarian principles controlling access to nature resulted in a rapid concentration of ownership into the hands of a few.

Great landed estates, worked by tenant farmers, yielded a sufficient income to their (generally aristocratic) owners to support an expanding commerce in luxuries and patronage of the arts and sciences. These same landholders also increasingly made use of mercenaries to defend and expand their territory as well as extract tribute from the merchants whose commerce stretched from the Mediterranean ports into the hinterland of Eurasia. Yet, as historian Eric Wolf records, the merchants still managed to thrive and prosper:

What was not consumed by producers or tribute takers might be taken to market and exchanged for surplus products elsewhere, allowing the merchants to feed off the price differentials obtained in the carrying trade.³⁰⁷

Perhaps what is even more significant, and too often ignored, is that these "*tributary surpluses continued to be the mainstay of a class of overlords, together with their retainues and servants,*" as well as "*the sinews of the state*"³⁰⁸ until well into the nineteenth century. Early on, the landed extracted sufficient quantities from those who actually labored to invest in all manner of speculations. Successful merchants, in turn, acquired landed estates at home and invested in land speculations abroad. With the formation of the first joint stock companies came the forefather of the modern *agrarian and industrial-landlords*, the financial success of whom often depended as much on monopolistic licenses granted by the State (of which titleholdings in nature is one form) as on

entrepreneurial skill. The embryo of change that stimulated and was stimulated by the intellectual and cultural legacy we call the Renaissance was, then, very directly a result of a socio-political structure built on privilege and exploitation. The accomplishments of those who made the Renaissance were nevertheless extraordinary.

EXPERIMENTAL GROUNDWORK

Renaissance scholars such as Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) ignited a new era of learning built on the works of Latin and Greek authors of antiquity. Petrarch and Poggio Bracciolini scoured the dusty archives of Europe's churches to save the works of Cicero, Virgil and others from destruction. Close examination of these ancient works revealed views of human beings, the earth and the universe, generally, fundamentally different from those adhered to for a thousand years. An opportunity was in this way opened for dissent and attack on conventional wisdom; in the very reading and discussion of the works of antiquity orthodoxy was at risk of being challenged.

Although one ought to champion the open and objective pursuit of knowledge, not all historians look at the resurrection of ancient Latin as entirely positive. John Rolfe, for example, argues that the cultural development of individual European groups suffered for many generations after ancient Latin emerged as the language of scholarship. The evolution of Latin itself as a dynamic spoken language was thwarted by a desire to return to ancient purity. In Rolfe's view, "*its natural development was checked and in the hands of the humanists it became for the first time a 'dead language'*."³⁰⁹

On the whole, however, the use of ancient Latin as a cross-cultural language fostered the development of a remarkably *transnational* intellectual community. Individuals throughout Eurasia studied the ancient texts and gradually began to question not only the orthodoxy of

their own time but the conclusions of the masters themselves when they conflicted with observations or reason. The established Church, its power over the living bound up in revealed truth and religious doctrine, was certain to experience tentative and then more direct challenges. While asserting the depth of their own faith, the Renaissance intellectuals found increasingly difficult the reconciliation of observation or reasoned conclusions with religious orthodoxy. Thus, over time, the power of knowledge gained by force of reason eroded the protective wall that fear and superstition had built to support the Church as an institution.

Intellectual dissent within the established Church also arose, however, after the papal court was brought to Avignon in 1305 by the French pope, Clement V. A number of intellectuals ostracized for their philosophical writings and somewhat heretical views at this time gathered at the court of the emperor of the Holy Roman empire. One of the more important individuals in this group was the Franciscan friar, William of Ockham (a native of England), who became outspoken in his doubt that *Universals* (i.e., the perfect models of all that was found on earth) occupied heaven. Even more threatening to the accepted orthodoxy was Ockham's resort to reason as the basis for concluding that only what our senses tell us exists can be said to exist. Ockham's reliance on sense perception as necessary to understanding put him at odds with Thomas Aquinas, who had sought to prove the existence of God by reason alone. In fact, Ockham went so far as to challenge the notion that our powers of reason were capable of recognizing perfection in the abstract, arguing that the idea of the *good* could be understood based only on what *is*, as willed by god and not subject to any abstractions.

Ockham's own conclusions were far from scientifically derived. Yet he was in the vanguard of transnational intellectuals destined to influence both the spiritual and socio-political development of Eurasian societies. More than anywhere else, this process began in the

coastal regions of the northeastern Italian peninsula. Here were the city-states that served as the crossroads between feudal Europe, the Turkish empire, and the Moorish held territory in northern Africa.

The commerce that brought the Renaissance to Italy also had unforeseen consequences. A maritime economy generated a wider distribution of wealth than did subsistence agriculture. Commerce also depended on a literate citizenry; and, education, in turn, resulted in more independent thinking. An expanding merchant class set the tone by promoting education in the art of *rhetoric* and in the use of Latin as a model for the drafting of correspondence and contracts. A general interest in the classics among the educated followed, out of which grew the *Humanist* movement. Humanist leaders promoted liberal education in the arts of moral philosophy and rhetoric. Petrarch and Boccaccio arose in this fashion as the dominant personalities of fourteenth century Humanism. Their followers dedicated themselves to the establishment of new libraries to house recovered Latin and Greek manuscripts and of schools to spread this knowledge.

Even before the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 (which signaled the final collapse of the Byzantine empire), Greek scholars brought to Italy virtually the entire recorded contribution of Greek antiquity. As the Greek manuscripts were translated into Latin and then into the modern European dialects, the essence of Greek social and political thought found a receptive audience. The scientific works of Aristotle and Averroes, among others, provided the base upon which knowledge could once again grow by means of observation, experimentation and skeptical reasoning.

DECLINE OF THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES

The Renaissance spread slowly through the feudally-dominated regions of central and northern Europe. Among those who brought

Renaissance ideas and new knowledge to the north and helped to accelerate the process of *modernization* was Leonardo da Vinci. The very fact that Leonardo left Florence to enter the employ of Lodovico Sforza in Milan is, as noted by Bronowski and Mazlish, indicative of the changes taking place within the Italian city-states:

Florence under the Medici was a city of tradition. Here was the classical Renaissance: the beautiful libraries, the Greek and Roman texts in manuscript, the Platonic Academy set up earlier by Cosimo de' Medici. It was graceful, literary, and derivative; its golden dream was of the past.

This first form of the Renaissance was now changing to another, and Leonardo personifies the transition. It is the transition from a classical to a popular, from an idealistic to an empirical Renaissance; from a worship of past humanism to a fierce belief in the human present.³¹⁰

The changes proved remarkably swift. By the final years of Leonardo's life, the European intellectual community was already transnational, with Latin as its common language. Others were beginning to make important contributions to this community. For example, Thomas More's work *Utopia* (1516), raised important questions about human nature and called for the return to a communitarian socio-political structure. He condemned, as a great injustice, the enclosure of the commons that set so many of his countrymen adrift; more holistically, he sought a new societal form rid of the greed and avarice he attributed to the pursuit of gold. Only three years before, Niccolo Machiavelli had presented to his contemporaries in *The Prince* (1513) his analysis of how rulers had historically gained and held socio-political power.

The individual considered by many modern scholars to be the supreme transnational figure of the Renaissance era was the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). His life's work revolved around the process of acquiring knowledge, and he found guidance not

from the mandates of self-appointed rulers but from the fundamental teachings of Christianity. In the marriage of Church and State, Erasmus recognized an unholy institutional alliance. expressed his disillusionment in *The Praise of Folly* (1509):

Our popes, cardinals, and bishops for some time now have earnestly copied the state and practice of princes, and come near to beating them at their own game. ...

And so it comes about...that scarcely any kind of men live more softly or less oppressed with care; believing that they are amply acceptable to Christ if with a mystical and almost theatrical finery, with ceremonies, and with those titles of Beatitude and Reverence and Holiness, along with blessing and cursing, they perform the office of bishops. To work miracles is primitive and old-fashioned, hardly suited to our times; to instruct the people is irksome; to interpret the Holy Scriptures is pedantry; to pray is otiose; to shed tears is distressing and womanish; to live in poverty is sordid; to be beaten in war is dishonorable and less than worthy of one who will hardly admit kings, however great, to kiss his sacred foot; and finally, to die is unpleasant, to die on the cross a disgrace. ...³¹¹

Bronowski and Mazlish conclude of Erasmus that "*his mind was cosmopolitan, and it dominated intellectual Europe in his age.*"³¹² What, perhaps, brought to Erasmus so much attention was the widespread availability of his writings. After the invention of moveable type in the middle of the fifteenth century, the spread of knowledge and the sharing of different views could not be restrained. A rising tide of unrest, a questioning of authority and conventional wisdom were being carried by the printed word to the far corners of Eurasia.

Socio-political changes, stimulated by practical advances in the application of science to the production of wealth, had a far more mixed result on the general population. The widespread privatization of control over land permitted commercial scale agriculture to replace subsistence farming; in the process, however, the amount of land dedicated to food crops was greatly reduced and the potential for

famine in times of bad weather or other natural disasters significantly increased. Displaced peasants migrated to the cities to compete for scarce employment opportunities in the textile factories, where urban life provided a harsh refuge for the landless. Technological advances in weaponry were put to destructive use by Europe's princes and kings in wars of consolidation, so that vast quantities of resources and large numbers of men were consumed. As war debts mounted, taxes on peasant farmers and the urban poor were increased again and again.

A succession of Spanish monarchs beginning with Ferdinand of Aragon waged almost continuous war against the Moslems in the Mediterranean and violently suppressed Protestant uprisings in the Netherlands. The Hapsburgs of central Europe served as a buffer between the Christian states of Europe and the Islamic empire of the Ottoman Turks. Long before the sixteenth century, however, the Islamic peoples had become captured by a rigid orthodoxy that prevented innovation or experimentation. There was to be no Renaissance within the Islamic world, no major contributions made to the transnational intellectual community. European intellectuals on the other hand absorbed without prejudice what the non-Christian world had to offer, as noted by historian Herrlee Creel:

The knowledge of Chinese thought and institutions that the Jesuits sent back to Europe in their letters also influenced Europeans like Leibniz, Voltaire, Quesnay, Oliver Goldsmith, and a host of others. We should not exaggerate the role of Chinese thought in the development of such equalitarian ideas as were given concrete form in the French Revolution, but there is no question that it did play a role, if only as a catalyst.³¹³

Although the Jesuits were acting as a filter for what new knowledge other peoples had to offer for European consumption, they were less than successful in their missionary efforts to spread Christianity in the East. In an effort to finally obtain results, in the early sixteenth century

they embarked on the first serious efforts to study the culture and religious beliefs of those who lived beyond Europe. In India, father Roberto de Nobile devoted many years to the study of the ancient Hindu texts with an eye toward “*reconcil[ing] on a high plane the Brahmanistic and Christian philosophies.*”³¹⁴ At Goa, on the western coast of India, the Jesuits founded St. Paul’s College, where they initiated the teaching of Indian culture, languages and religious beliefs. After Portuguese traders in the 1550’s successfully established a base at Macao, an island in the South China Sea at the mouth of the Chu Kiang River, Italian Jesuits brought European science and mathematics to receptive Chinese intellectuals. Another Jesuit, father Francis Xavier, was permitted by feudal lords to introduce Christian doctrine into western Japan. By such measures the Jesuits worked systematically to bring Western ideas—religious, socio-political and scientific—to the far corners of the globe. Eighty years in advance of John Locke, the Jesuit Francisco Suarez would write:

Mankind, however divided into various peoples and kingdoms, has always a certain unity not only of species but also, as it were, political and moral, which is shown by the natural rule of love and compassion that extends to all, even to strangers of whatever nation. Consequently, though any single state, kingdom, or republic may seem to be a perfect society, complete and coherent in itself, nevertheless each one of these is in some way a member of the universal human society. None of these communities singly is so self-sufficient that it can dispense with the support of others, which it requires sometimes for its material advantage, sometimes out of moral necessity.³¹⁵

The writings of Suarez and other Spanish intellectuals greatly facilitated the formulation of international law. Building on the Spanish foundation, the Dutch jurist, Hugo de Groot (1583-1645), who is generally referred to as Grotius, argued in *The Law of War and Peace* for a rule of law in international affairs³¹⁶ to govern the division of interests

among European states clashing in India, Asia, Africa and the Americas. At this juncture the Holy See elevated the conflict by granting to Spain and Portugal joint monopoly over expansion into the non-Christian world.

Suarez, Grotius and other transnationals may have had access to translations of such Islamic works as that of Ahmed ibn Muhammad's *History of the Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain*, which is described by Will and Ariel Durant as "an account not merely of politics and war, but of morals, law, women, music, literature, and medicine..."³¹⁷ Many European traders and ecclesiastics lived within the Islamic state. Yet, the territorial ambitions of the Ottoman Turks and the various European states assured that war and not peaceful commerce (in ideas or goods) would dominate relations.

Although the Ottoman Turks had ambitions of actually conquering all of Europe, they reached an accord with the Holy Roman empire in the 1560's that brought considerable tribute to their ruler, Selim II. The Turks then attacked Arabia and the island of Cyprus, where tens of thousands of the indigenous population were slaughtered. An expedition of Spanish and Italian troops engaged the Turks in a decisive sea battle in 1571; dissention among the Christian forces and an alliance forged between the French (fearful of Spanish power) and the Turks allowed the Turks enough time to rebuild their navy and continue to thwart Spanish ambitions in the Mediterranean. A balance of power was emerging that prevented any one state from establishing itself as a hegemonic empire over Europe and the eastern Mediterranean peoples. At the same time, this balance fed the ambitions of generation after generation of princes.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES AT THE PERIPHERY

A million Danes, ruled by a small but powerful nobility, reigned over a vast empire in the north that stretched westward across Norway to

Iceland and Greenland. Among them arose one of the most respected pioneers in astronomy and transnational thought, Tycho Brahe (1546-1601). Their elected king, Christian IV, built the city of Copenhagen into a major center of commerce, studied Latin and the sciences and brought much of the Renaissance influence to Denmark. Yet, his ambition to unite all of Scandinavia under his rule resulted in the eventual loss of territory to the Swedes and the reduction of Denmark to the rank of a peripheral European state.

By the late sixteenth century, the Swedes, for their part, had become thoroughly converted from Catholicism to the Lutheran doctrine. Religious and territorial disputes eventually led to war with Poland, whose Catholic ruler, Sigismund, was the son of John III of Sweden. When John III died in 1592, Sigismund became claimant to the Swedish throne. He was determined to restore Catholicism as the state religion of Sweden, and in 1598 he landed in Sweden at the head of a sizable army. Sigismund was eventually defeated, deposed and forced to return to Poland. Under the new young king, Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedes successfully expanded their territory by gaining control of the Baltic states and the western reaches of Russia.

The Poles remained feudal in their organization and rigidly Catholic in religion. Now, Gustavus Adolphus moved against them and captured most of Prussia. He ordered the Jesuits to leave and installed Lutheranism as the new state religion. His education in the classics instilled in him a great appreciation for learning, however, and his reign was characterized by the establishment of free public schools and the endowment of universities. To pay for his wars of conquest and other public expenditures, a large portion of the Crown's land holdings were sold or given to Swedish nobles. The eventual result of this shift in control over land was a dramatic increase in the amount of tribute charged peasant producers for the privilege of retaining access. Upon his death in battle during the Thirty Years' War, the responsibility of governing Sweden fell to Count Axel Oxenstierna who, as Regent

during the youth of Queen Christina, continued to restructure the administrative agencies of government. Once fully in control of the government, Queen Christina (who had been supremely educated in the classics and modern sciences) oversaw the establishment of an impressive library that attracted scholars from all of Europe. Hugo de Groot (Grotius), Rene Descartes and others became favorites at her court, and Swedish students were sent abroad to gain an understanding of different cultures. Unfortunately, after only eight years as sovereign Christina became weary of her responsibilities and unsatisfied in her prescribed faith. Two years later she abdicated in favor of her cousin, Charles Gustavus, and left her native land forever.

The aggregate effect of what was occurring throughout Eurasia was to enlarge the transnational community of scientists, philosophers and other intellectuals. Protestant nobles sent their children to Jesuit colleges because, despite their Catholic affiliation, they provided the best education available in Europe. In Poland, a Unitarian college was actually founded at Rakow that for the first time brought together individuals of all religious creeds.

To a certain degree, the spread of knowledge was adversely affected by geo-political instability. This was particularly the case in central and eastern Europe. Caught in the middle of advancing and retreating empires the Poles remained diligent in defense of their own borders and culture. To the west were the Protestant princes of Germany; to the east the power of Orthodox Russia; and, to the south the Islamic empire of the Ottoman Turks. In 1610 the Poles and Swedes joined forces against Russia, capturing and holding Moscow and Novgorod for nearly two years. The Russians soon rebelled against domination by a foreign state, and the Poles eventually withdrew from Russia. The primary consequence for the Russian people was the beginning of a new czarist dynasty. In February of 1613, the Romanovs gained power with the accession of Michael Romanov as Czar.

As the sixteenth century was closing, the Ottoman empire was also being challenged, this time from the east. The Persian Shah, Abbas Safavid, built a modernized army with the assistance of two English adventurers (Anthony and Robert Sherley). He defeated the Turks and recovered a large territory stretching to the Euphrates River in the west. At his new capital of Isfahan (now in central Iran), Abbas built a cosmopolitan city and opened relations with the European powers. The empire he created continued for nearly a century after his death in 1629.

INQUIRING MINDS

The rediscovery and critical analysis of the classical works in science and philosophy added to the Renaissance mentality a profound dose of cautious skepticism. Beyond this was a driving desire to uncover the unifying laws that governed the physical universe. Advances in medical science and astronomy appeared in the mid-sixteenth century works of the Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) and the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543). The conquest of southern Italy by the Spaniards in the early sixteenth century virtually assured that any impetus for reformation of the Catholic Church or challenges to orthodox doctrine would come from the north. The Italian city-states gradually became battlegrounds for Spanish and French armies and their consolidating monarchs. And yet, the socio-political status quo became increasingly attacked from within; improvement in the very arts of warfare, for example, were dependent on those who used the methods of objective investigation, experimentation and speculative thought in the pursuit of understanding.

From deep within central Europe came the strongest reaction to the corruptions of medieval Catholicism. In 1517, the German monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546), proclaimed in his *95 Theses* what

amounted to a populist view of Christianity. This represented a direct challenge to Rome and institutional authority. Although excommunicated in 1521 for his heresy, Luther and his supporters were at the helm of a movement galvanized within the German provinces (particularly in Saxony, where Frederick III protected Luther as much for his German nationalism as out of sympathy for his reforms). Salvation, argued Luther, rested on faith in God alone and could not be purchased by *indulgences* or even good deeds. Arguing further that the Bible was the only authoritative source of God's will, Luther made the word of God readily accessible to the literate by translating the Bible into German.

An important but *unforeseen consequence* of an expanded reading of the Bible was the rebellion by German peasants against the oppression they experienced under the manorial system. The peasants referred to parts of the Bible to support their actions against a system condemned by God's words, eliciting from Luther a response that showed him to be little more than a defender of privilege and far less a Christian than was Erasmus:

There should be no serfs, because Christ has freed us all! What is that we hear? That is to make Christian freedom wholly bodily. Did not Abraham and the other patriarchs and prophets have serfs? Read what St. Paul says of servants, who in all times have been serfs. So this article is straight against the gospel, and moreover is robbery, since each man would take his person from his lord to whom its belongs.³¹⁸

He went on to call for the ruthless suppression of any rebellion, defending the established socio-political order without question. This is one clear example of how Lutheranism served the material interests of northern European princes, who after conversion justified on religious grounds the confiscation of the landed property of Roman Catholics. Declaring their independence from both Rome and the Holy Roman empire, these Lutheran princes became known generally as *Protestants*.

By the time of Luther's death in 1546, nearly half the population of the Holy Roman empire adhered to his teachings. Others, equally as concerned with the need for socio-political reform as with a cleansing of the Church, made their presence felt elsewhere throughout Europe. Zurich became a center of Protestant agitation when the humanist priest and follower of Erasmus, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), established a new theological school and undertook his own translation of the Bible. Switzerland also harbored the French heretic John Calvin (1509-1564), who fled from Paris in 1533 to finally settle in Geneva and preach his doctrine of predestination and a strict moral code of behavior. Catholics killed Zwingli in the war that eventually engulfed much of Switzerland in the 1530s, but Calvin's influence was more widespread and lasting. By the time of Calvin's death in 1564, his followers numbered nearly a million in France, with large numbers of converts in Scotland, England, the Netherlands and other parts of Europe.

In the three decades between the deaths of Zwingli and Calvin, war also erupted between Catholic and Lutheran factions in the German states. The Hapsburgs in alliance with Bavaria and other Catholic German states sought to re-impose the authority of Rome on the northern and eastern states, which prompted the formation of a defensive league of Lutherans in Saxony. They were defeated by the Catholics (with the aid of Spanish troops) in 1546 but eventually negotiated a settlement that allowed each German state to choose its own religion.

Many Catholics recognized the need for reform within the Church but looked upon the teachings of Luther and Calvin as heresy. The internal movement for reform was confirmed by the Council of Trent, convened in 1545 under the direction of Pope Paul III. The College of Cardinals was strengthened by the addition of devout and scholarly priests from all over Europe. Ironically, the Society of Jesus was founded in Spain by the former knight, Ignatius Loyola. And, with papal approval these Jesuits opened schools throughout Europe and

embarked on the missionary work among non-Christians that has characterized their order ever since.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the tradition of objective investigation in the physical sciences was already well-established. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), a German student of the Dutch astronomer Tycho Brahe, corrected the inconsistencies of the Copernican system and discovered the three fundamental laws of planetary motion. The revolutionary nature of Kepler's work cannot be overstated; Bertrand Russell writes of Kepler:

The substitution of ellipses for circles involved the abandonment of the aesthetic bias which had governed astronomy ever since Pythagoras. The circle was a perfect figure, and the celestial orbs were perfect bodies—originally gods, and even in Plato and Aristotle closely related to gods. It seemed obvious that a perfect body must move in a perfect figure. Moreover, since the heavenly bodies move freely, without being pushed or pulled, their motion must be "natural." Now it was easy to suppose that there is something "natural" about a circle, but not about an ellipse. Thus many deep-seated prejudices had to be discarded before Kepler's first law could be accepted. No ancient, not even Aristarchus of Samos, had anticipated such an hypothesis.³¹⁹

In Venice, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) revolutionized the contemporary understanding of physics and, as a result, the operation of the earth's solar system. His observations and calculations were presented to the world in his *Dialogue on the Two Principal World Systems* (1632). Working in service to the Duke of Tuscany, his investigations into the laws of motion also had practical application and led to advances in the military arts. Living within the grasp of the Holy See, however, Galileo suffered the wrath of individuals very much afraid that any challenge to conventional wisdom would also challenge their power and position. In 1633 he was publicly condemned by the Inquisition for maintaining the earth was in motion. Neither the Inquisition nor other interests whose power rested on conventional

wisdom were, however, able to subdue Galileo's quest for knowledge or that of his contemporaries. In 1615 Galileo wrote in a letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany:

[I]n the discussion of natural problems, we ought not to begin at the authority of places of scripture, but at sensible experiments and necessary demonstrations. ...Nature, being inexorable and immutable, and never passing the bounds of the laws assigned her, ...I conceive that, concerning natural effects, that which either sensible experience sets before our eyes, or necessary demonstrations do prove unto us, ought not, upon any account, to be called into question, much less condemned upon the testimony of texts of scripture, which may, under their words, couch senses seemingly contrary thereto. ...³²⁰

Galileo was in the vanguard of transnationals who sought to use science as a means of coming closer to philosophical truths. Their investigations made clear that the advocacy of false doctrines (i.e., doctrines inconsistent with the operation of the physical universe) were destructive of faith in the existence of a rational world. Over the centuries, as scientists consciously sought to separate the discovery of knowledge from the moral responsibility for how knowledge is used, the scientifically-oriented community became ever more isolated from its socio-political environments. In 1967, Harvard University professor (and President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science), Donald Price, described what he sensed had become a very dangerous *scientific estate*. Relating this primarily to his experience in the United States, he described the gradual displacement of science as an intellectual pursuit by what amounted to a socio-political institution:

Jefferson and Franklin were politicians as well as scientists, and were interested not merely for its intellectual aspects, nor even for its material benefits, but also for the liberating effect it would have on the politics of all nations. A little after their time,

American scientists quit taking part in politics, and scientific institutions came to be thought of as something apart from, if not in opposition to, the political and constitutional system. ...³²¹

The idea of monotheism was a major step away from the belief that specific human purposes were promoted by particular gods, and toward the idea that there was a coherent system of order in the universe....³²²

Indeed it is clear that science alone, without the intellectual checks and balances provided by other intellectual disciplines, will not fortify a political system against this temptation to use power to force men to be free. And it is equally clear that science and theology alike are unable to define with authority the ends of public policy. Though science has given mankind greater certainty of knowledge, it has gained that certainty by renouncing the concern for purpose that must remain at the heart of politics and administration—in both their practice and their theory.³²³

Similar concerns brought the socio-political philosopher Ayn Rand to deliver the following warning:

Philosophy is a necessity for a rational being: philosophy is the foundation of science, the organizer of man's mind, the integrator of his knowledge, the programmer of his subconscious, the selector of his values. To set philosophy against reason, i.e., against man's power of cognition, to turn philosophy into an apologist for and a protector of superstition—is such a crime against humanity that no modern atrocities can equal it: it is the cause of modern atrocities.³²⁴

What history makes clear is that knowledge is power but more often than not contributes to an accelerated concentration of power within an already existing socio-political hierarchy. At the time of the Renaissance, however, the transnationals universally looked upon knowledge as a liberating force. The most aggressive attacks on superstition were, in fact, yet to come but were certainly just over the horizon.

Scientific knowledge directly resulted in the development of new technologies, improved means of communication and ocean travel. People were on the move, feudal arrangements were falling apart, merchant banking brought new innovations in credit financing, and insurance; global partnerships forged ahead outside of the mercantilist policies of sovereign States. If the premise is valid that the Renaissance represented a high point of cooperative endeavors immediately prior to the destructive era of Eurasian empire-building, then a valuable lesson is presented to us as we contemplate our own circumstance and future. This, in fact, is the primary message of Kirkpatrick Sale's work, *Human Scale*, in which he writes, "*when the Middle Ages blossomed into the Renaissance, Europe was still a land of small cities, its burst of creativity taking place among very limited populations.*"³²⁵

A somewhat different perspective, equally revealing, is that provided by Arnold Toynbee on the nature of "*capital cities*" in their unique role to the machinery of the State:

A capital does not export ordinary manufactured goods that will be marketable in the capital's economic hinterland. A capital's characteristic manufactures are luxury goods produced for a privileged elite: the ruler, the members of his court, and his military and civil officials—with priority for those among them whose place of service is the capital itself. So far from thinking of these costly luxury goods as being a possible source of profit for the privy purse or for the public revenue, the ruler and his courtiers are apt to regard them as being tokens of honour whose prestige-value would decline if they were to be distributed prodigally, and still more if the Court were to be so vulgar-minded as to put them on the market.³²⁶

Toynbee's remarks are made in a tone that suggests a universal principle, a testament to behavior that is consistent across space and over time. And, to be sure, the historical and contemporary examples of this tendency are readily available and apparent. As the Renaissance was overtaken by the process of feudal estates becoming unified nation-

states, conflict came to dominate relations between groups of differing ethnic identities, religious affiliation and socio-political position; despite all this strife, however, the transnational community continued to blossom. This is, perhaps, a reason for optimism that the quest to establish just socio-political arrangements and institutions—to live within the constraints of *cooperative individualism*—is within the realm of the possible.

A TURN TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL

By the middle of the sixteenth century, John Calvin's influence in France reached the point where the French Protestants (now identified by the term *Huguenots*) were in a position to challenge Catholic civil authority as well as religious supremacy. In addition to the Huguenot challenge, peasants in the provinces of Normandy and Languedoc revolted against the heavy burden of taxation imposed on them by Henry II. Similar dissatisfactions brought France's relatively small merchant class and many nobles into the Huguenot camp. In the civil war that erupted, the Huguenots at first clamored for an end to absolute rule, but this turned out to be mere rhetoric as evidenced by the desertion of many nobles after Henry III (last in the Valois line) agreed to recognize the Protestant prince Henry of Navarre as his successor.

Nationalists in both the Catholic and Huguenot camps called for an end to civil war and a renewed commitment to defend the monarchy as the only viable central authority. A number of writers came to the defense of the monarchy, the most prominent of whom was Jean Bodin (1530-1596), a legal theorist and member of France's states-general. He was a strong proponent of religious toleration but eventually became reconciled to the need for force in order to restore order and preserve the State, which he defined as "*a lawful government of many families and of what is common to them, together with a supreme sovereignty.*"³²⁷ The

justification for a supreme authority is to prevent contradictions and disorder from consuming the State. In fact, argues Bodin, "*the presence of sovereignty is the chief property which distinguishes a state from other organizations or societies. ...*"³²⁸

Bodin was chief among those socio-political philosophers who believed in supreme authority as being in accord with *natural law* and, therefore, inherently just and demanding of our ascent, provided the ruler governs in accordance with God's will. By acting always to uphold just principles the ruler achieve actual sovereignty. This led Bodin to write that a sovereign king:

... obeys the laws of nature—that is, he governs his subjects and guides their actions in accordance with natural justice, which he sees and recognizes clearly and distinctly, like the brilliance of the sun....³²⁹

In a legitimate, or royal, monarchy, the subjects are obedient to their prince's laws, while he in turn obeys the laws of nature. In this kind of monarchy the subjects enjoy their natural liberty and the possession of their property.³³⁰

When these circumstances exist, says Bodin, the rule of law is *de facto* (i.e., effectively) in operation. With equal ease and inconsistency of logic, Bodin defends the sovereignty of a king who rules unjustly and without regard for God's law. He cannot bring himself to reach the conclusion dictated by reason; namely, that merely to reign *de jure* (i.e., by right granted under positive law) is not the same as to rule in accord with just principles. His sense of history and his quest to uncover the keys to an orderly and (on the surface) peaceful society prevent him from following his own arguments to their logical conclusions. For, as he reminds his readers, "*If citizens all insist on being equal and having equal rights and privileges, how many disturbances and civil wars we will see...*"³³¹

In his time and place, Bodin would have been centuries ahead of his contemporaries had he seen that in sanctioning privilege, whether

widely or narrowly held, the root cause of rebellion, chaos and repeated tyranny is manifested. To end privilege is to end the underlying reasons for civil unrest.

Bodin died in 1596 and, therefore, did not have an opportunity to assess the contributions of the new French king. Large numbers of Huguenots had already left France to escape persecution, so upon succeeding to the throne, Henry of Navarre issued an edict that made religious toleration a policy of the State. As Henry IV, the new king went on to rebuild and expand France's infrastructure. Unfortunately for the long-term development of French socio-political institutions, this was achieved at the cost of not allowing the French people to freely adapt their feudal structure to maximize the potential for commercial enterprise. The French landed aristocracy continued to claim an extraordinary share of material wealth to support their extravagance, and succeeding monarchs would do likewise—as well as to maintain a large, standing army and an offensive naval force. As for the two emerging rivals to French hegemony—England and Holland—they benefited by having a greater balance of power between landed and commercial interests on the one hand and adventurous monarchies on the other. Not that the English and Dutch did not also build strong military capabilities. The mercantilist system required considerable military support; but in England and Holland these forces were directed toward the securing of markets and profits and (to a larger extent than either France, Spain or the German princes) in territories occupied by people incapable of effective resistance.

Economic historian Alexander Gray described these arrangements, the system of *mercantilism*, as “*the economic equivalent of Machiavelli and Bodin.*”³³² By this he meant that mercantilist policies advanced what were accepted by those who possessed material wealth and political power as the nationalist interests of the State. In effect, the interests of the State and those who by means of ability or privileged position exerted influence were one and the same. As Gray and more

recent historians have pointed out, the mercantilist state lacked theoretical architects and master planners. The breakdown of feudalism had merely coincided with technological advances and the Age of Discovery to fashion a synergism distinct in character within each European state, dependent in part on the degree to which economic and political nationalism ran parallel with one another. And, in large measure, the nationalists viewed their external opportunities to accumulate wealth (and power) as what economist Lester Thurow has popularized in recent years as a *zero sum game*.

Success at warfare generally proved to be the deciding factor in the scramble for resources and territory. Some insight into the underlying dynamics are provided by Immanuel Wallerstein:

[N]ot all absolute monarchies were strong states and not all strong states were absolute monarchies. The key element is how strong the state was and not how absolute the form of government was. Of course we must explain the form, and we will then notice that in the seventeenth century the *strongest* states were those which dominated *economically*; the United Provinces were in first place, England was second, and France was only in third place. The English Revolution strengthened the English state, while the assertion by Louis XIV, *l'Etat c'est moi*, was a sign of the relative weakness of the state.³³³

What we also find is that the actions of individuals or groups who pursued mercantilist policies were inherently monopolistic and consistent with the State as a source of privilege. In the eighteenth century, the French school of political economists (i.e., the Physiocrats), as well as Adam Smith in Britain, argued in response that in the long run such actions were self-destructive. This was a value judgment based on reason.

Without getting too specific, they condemned any socio-political arrangements or institutions that restricted production or exchange of wealth. They saw in the market an objective means to determine the

value of one's labor and the products of one's labor. The market could not operate efficiently, however, where the State sanctioned monopoly privilege for some at the expense of others. Privilege translated into coercion, an injustice against which various political economists and other reformers have fought against with increasing outspokenness from the eighteenth century on. During the twentieth century there was no more determined advocate of the market system than Ludwig von Mises, who writes:

[T]he idea of the common weal in the sense of a harmony of the interests of all members of society is a modern idea and...owes its origin precisely to the teachings of the Classical economists. Older generations believed that there is an irreconcilable conflict of interests among men and among groups of men. The gain of one is invariably the damage of others; no man profits but by the loss of others. We may call this tenet the Montaigne dogma because in modern times it was first expounded by [Michel de] Montaigne. It was the essence of the teachings of Mercantilism and the main target of the Classical economists' critique of Mercantilism, to which they opposed their doctrine of the harmony of the rightly understood or long-run interests of all members of a market society.³³⁴

Interestingly, the value judgments reached by Adam Smith were not based on a consistent application of principle. His attacks on Mercantilist policies as the enemy of general prosperity might be direct and penetrating; and, he chastised kings and governments of all types for imposing their will to alter the natural tendencies of individuals to produce wealth. But, Smith expressed no desire to dismantle the institution of the monarchy and was willing to acknowledge Henry IV as one of those rare rulers in history whose enlightened administration left his successor with an ample treasury and a well-ordered state,³³⁵ a circumstance quickly dissipated by the empire-building adventures of those who followed. What he saw as integral to "*natural liberty*" was that

the sovereign effectively carry out specific but essentially self-evident duties:

[F]irst, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and, thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain; because the profit could never repay the expence to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society.³³⁶

His writing contains no attack on monarchy as inherently unjust, or on aristocracy, for that matter. As a lecturer on moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, he expressed support for the separation of powers that characterized British government yet challenged statements by Locke and others who suggested the existence of a social contract, writing:

You were not consulted whether you should be born in [a given society] or not. And how can you get out of it? Most people know no other language nor country, are poor, and obliged to stay not far from the place where they were born, to labour for a subsistence. They cannot therefore be said to have given a consent to a contract, though they may have the strongest sense of obedience.³³⁷

Forced to live within the constraints of such a social contract, one cannot but wonder that an even greater number of Europeans than is recorded did not abandon the Old World for the Americas. As Smith himself observed:

Every colonist gets more land than he can possibly cultivate. He has no rent, and scarce any taxes to pay. No landlord shares with him in its produce, and the share of the sovereign is commonly but a trifle. He has every motive to render as great as possible a produce, which is thus to be almost entirely his own.³³⁸

The distance between Bodin and Smith is considerable on many points of principle and pragmatism, but even Smith was not ready to become a decisive voice for a restructuring of the socio-political order. The European intellectual of the sixteenth century remained, far more than those of Smith's generation, convinced of the need for sovereign power in the hands of a monarch; order and security, above individual liberty, provided a sense of place in an otherwise chaotic world system. Henry IV had, in fact, come to the throne of France under conditions of great civil strife—and only after victories secured against Catholic armies buttressed by Spanish soldiers, arms and finances. Henry's actions then revealed his commitment to Protestantism was subordinate to his greater desire to construct a unified and powerful French state. To secure the peace and promote French nationalism, Henry consented to adopt the religion of the majority, declaring to all, “[t]hose who unswervingly follow their conscience are of my religion, and I am of the religion of all who are brave and good.”³³⁹

His would be a reign of reconciliation and toleration. And, as Arnold Toynbee concluded, the lesson of history is, that “[r]ulers who have adopted the religion favoured by the most numerous, or at any rate the most vigorous, section of their subjects have generally prospered, whether actuated by religious sincerity or by political cynicism....”³⁴⁰ Although nominally converted to Catholicism and espousing religious toleration, Henry was forced to take action against one group—the Jesuits—whose fanaticism implicated them in plots against his life. Henry ordered them out of France in 1595; and, three years later issued the Edict of Nantes, securing what Pope Clement VIII denounced as “*liberty of conscience*” for all French citizens and equal protection under the laws

of the State. Henry then spent the next fifteen years working to rebuild the French economy and infrastructure using methods that concentrated even more power in the central State at the expense of individual initiative and market dynamics.

Under the direction of Henry's long-time supporter, Maximilien de Bethune (the Baron of Rosny and Duke of Sully), the royal Council of Finance was turned into an efficient revenue-raising agency of the State. Will and Ariel Durant describe how Bethune was able to accomplish the unification of the provinces into a true nation-state:

[Bethune] was everywhere, supervised everything, insisted on efficiency, economy, and integrity. He worked through every waking hour, lived austerely in a simple room bearing pictures of Luther and Calvin on the walls. He guarded the interests of his fellow Huguenots. He stabilized the currency, reorganized and disciplined the bureaucracy, and forced thieving officials to disgorge. He reclaimed for the state all property and revenues that had been appropriated by individuals during the wars. He compelled 40,000 tax dodgers to pay their taxes. He had found the national treasury in debt by 296,000,000 livres; he paid off these obligations, balanced the budget, and gathered a surplus of 13,000,000 livres. He protected and encouraged all phases of economic life; built roads and bridges, planned the great canals that were to join the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, the Seine and the Loire; he declared all navigable rivers to be part of the royal domain, forbade obstructions in them, and renewed the flow of goods through the land.³⁴¹

Then, just as France was poised to challenge Spanish power and the Hapsburg empire, Henry IV was assassinated by a fanatic Catholic and Jesuit-sympathizer. France once more fell into a state of disorder. Henry's son and successor to the throne was only eight years old, and his widow—Maria de Medici—had never shared Henry's drive to unify the French people under a strong, central authority. Bethune left the new government, disgusted by the Queen's irresponsible use of the State's treasury. The uneasy tolerance between Catholics and

Protestants broke down, and the Huguenots prepared to defend their territorial and spiritual integrity from Catholic encroachment. Civil war eventually broke out in 1620 but ended two years later—with France effectively divided between Huguenot and Catholic factions.

History next records the deeds of one of France's most aggressive nationalist statesmen, Armand de Richelieu, appointed by Louis XIII to his Council of State and then in 1624, prime minister. As had Henry IV with Bethune, so did Louis XIII delegate to his minister both authority and responsibility. Richelieu acted as supreme liaison between Church and State, systematically subordinating the interests of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to those of the French State. He directed a siege against the Huguenot coastal stronghold of La Rochelle, after which a peaceful settlement was reached reconfirming religious toleration and extending rights of citizenship to all regardless of religious belief. Despite these measures, the quest to permanently secure freedom of conscience drove many French intellectuals—Catholics as well as Huguenots—to Holland.

Although the United Provinces did not gain formal independence from Spain until 1648 under the Peace of Westphalia, the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam became magnets for dissident intellectuals from all parts of Europe. Holland evolved into the most cosmopolitan and tolerant of European states and, for its territorial size and population, arguably the most dynamic and progressive. In 1609 the Bank of Amsterdam was established to promote trade in gold and silver bullion and to create an international standard for coinage in circulation. A large community of Jewish exiles arrived from Portugal and Spain to add to Amsterdam's cosmopolitan nature and financial strength.³⁴² These socio-political conditions brought Bertrand Russell, looking at European states in terms of their influence on the advance of civilization, to conclude:

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Holland in the seventeenth century, as the one country where there was freedom of speculation.³⁴³

Among those who sought refuge in Holland, for example, was the French scientist and philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650). As a Catholic soldier, Descartes served in the army that besieged the Huguenots at La Rochelle. In 1628 he left France and the tensions of the Reformation to seek sanctuary and anonymity in Holland. There he made a prolonged study of animal physiology which brought him to conclude that the human soul was housed in the pineal gland within the brain. His first philosophical work, *Discourse on Method*, was published—in French—as a preface to several scientific studies. And, in this brief work, Descartes declared the basic equality in nature of all individuals in “*the faculty of judging aright, and of distinguishing the true from the false. ...*”³⁴⁴ Doubt anything your senses reveal to you that cannot be supported by mathematics or deductive reasoning, Descartes told his contemporaries. He was attacked for expressing his views but continued to write. Eventually, he accepted an invitation from Queen Christina of Sweden to act as her philosophical mentor; this was a voyage that drained his health and cost him his life.

Another intellectual refugee was Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), excommunicated as a Jew yet forced to flee to Holland from the Iberian peninsula to escape the Inquisition. Spinoza lived modestly in Amsterdam, and his most important work, *Ethics*, was not published until after his death.

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

France, not quite a nation yet more than the sum of its still feudal parts, continued on the path of consolidating power within the monarchical state. In this, Richelieu received great support from the

merchants, artisans and peasants—groups who stood to benefit by a diminution in the power of aristocratic and landed interests. In retaliation the feudal lords enlisted the support of Marie de Medici against Richelieu; Louis XIII acted decisively in support of his prime minister, however, and the Queen mother fled to Brussels. The aristocracy then raised an army and marched against Louis XIII but were soundly defeated in September of 1632, after which Richelieu divided France into districts and assigned representatives of the king, called *intendants*, to administer and enforce the laws of the State. France “became a police state...[and]...Richelieu was now, in effect, king of France.”³⁴⁵

Heavy taxation of the French peasantry had been necessary to build a strong royal navy as well as the infrastructure to support the entire military. As a result, conditions in France worsened for the general population. In fact, while thousands died of starvation, Richelieu’s armies fought to expand French territory at the expense of Spain and Austria. In 1636 a large Spanish and Austrian force retaliated; they marched across northern France from the Netherlands, threatening Paris, but were eventually forced to withdraw after a counterattack by Richelieu at the head of an army of Parisian militia. In the end, Richelieu was successful in expanding French borders (most importantly in the east, with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine) but at the price of nearly bankrupting those who actually produced the material wealth of the French people. Another, more constructive aspect of his legacy was his establishment of the *Academie Francaise* as France’s premier scientific institution.

Richelieu died in December of 1642. Five months later Louis XIII was dead as well. The central state they constructed survived to impose heavy taxation, military adventurism and the suppression of individual liberty on its citizens. Across the channel in Britain the monarchical system was under siege; a growing merchant class and the landed in Parliament fought with significant success to further curtail the

prerogatives of the sovereign and effect a balance of power backed by the rhetoric if not the reality of democracy.

Empiricists And Rationalists / Bacon And Hobbes

The most renowned English philosopher of the period, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), spent a considerable period of time on the continent between 1610 and 1637, first as tutor to the son of William Cavendish (the Earl of Devonshire) and later as a member of Europe's transnational intellectual community. Upon his return to England he completed his first serious socio-political work, *Elements of Law* (1640), which offered a *rationalistic* justification for an undivided sovereignty that did not depend on divine right. He was attacked by both the Royalist and anti-Royalist factions during the civil war and (with some reason) fled to Paris to escape possible imprisonment. There, he became tutor to the exiled Charles Stuart (the Prince of Wales and future Charles II).

Hobbes was greatly influenced by Descartes, Galileo and William Harvey,³⁴⁶ each of whom he became friends with during his residence in Europe. As a result of his contact with these and other transnationals on the European continent, he rejected the *empiricism* of Francis Bacon and other English scientists, arguing that in philosophical matters the ability to reason is of primary importance. His own socio-political philosophy emerged in two works: *The Citizen* (1642) and *Leviathan* (1651). Hobbes accepts as a first principle (the empirically-demonstrated and rationalistically self-evident conclusion) that we are all equal in our humanness. There can be no other conclusion, argues Hobbes:

Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of the body and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and

man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend as well as he.³⁴⁷

If all individuals are essentially equal, no individual has a greater claim to privilege than any other (assuming, of course, that any claim to privilege is just). Yet, each individual desires ever more privilege and, thereby, power because “*he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.*”³⁴⁸

As his methodology Hobbes effectively applied objective reasoning to everyday experience. He knew from history and from his own times that conflict, intrigue and betrayal ruled—particularly in affairs of state. This brought him to conclude that human behavior derived from two fundamental motivations: fear and self-interest.

In this sense, human behavior is beyond the scope of *natural law* as we generally think of such laws of nature. Science ascribes the qualities of natural law to phenomena observed (directly, or by effect, indirectly) to occur in a consistent manner across time and space. To Hobbes, however, a law of nature “*is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or takes away the means of preserving the same and to omit that by which he thinks it may be best preserved.*”³⁴⁹ Thus, the laws of nature put forth by Hobbes are offered as reasoned directives for behavior. Using these as guides, individual actions must be evaluated and either promoted or thwarted based on value judgments as to desirability and acceptability by people living within the constraints of society. Although Hobbes believes that each person has a moral sense of right and wrong (that is, an understanding of natural law), he recognizes that far too many individuals violate natural law in the pursuit of perceived self-interest:

The dispositions of men are naturally such that except they be restrained through fear of some coercive power, every man will distrust each other.³⁵⁰

And so, the vast majority of individuals consent to the rule of government as a strategy for self-preservation and the preservation of family and friends. The tendency of many individuals to exercise criminal license, often calculated based on the prospect of some gain or advantage against the prospect of being caught and penalized. Yet, even as his own people struggled to adopt a limited form of participatory government, Hobbes conditioned the creation of a Commonwealth on the establishment of a covenant under which every citizen gives up the right of self-government. In this Hobbes presents his own version of the contract theory of the State and the basis upon which the sovereign (which is his preference over a council or other consensus-based group) is selected to rule, subject only to the constraints of law. Positive law, embodied in the will of the sovereign, is considered by Hobbes to be inherently just and in no manner subject to critical analysis on the basis of principle. What the sovereign is charged to guarantee is not individual liberty but order and security (of person and property). The alternative is chaos:

Whatsoever...is consequent to a time of war where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building, no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no art; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.³⁵¹

The tendency of the individual to act on behalf self-preservation—and often in an aggressive fashion toward others—is presented by Hobbes as argument for the creation and empowerment of the State.

His own life experiences confirmed to his own satisfaction the desirability of hierarchical socio-political structures; yet, Hobbes does not see that the State eventually and always becomes a primary instrument of tyranny over the individual. The tendency of the sovereign is to always exceed the bounds of coercive authority necessary to secure and protect the peace.

If human behavior is what justifies the creation of the State and elevation of one individual to sovereign rule, then the result should be a decided improvement in the well-being of most citizens. On this point, Hobbes is challenged with great effectiveness by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903):

Were people's characters in Hobbes's day really so bad as to warrant his assumption that none would perform their covenants in the absence of a coercive power and threatened penalties? ...Merely noting, however, that this unwarranted assumption vitiates Hobbes's argument for State-authority, and accepting both his premises and conclusion, we have to observe two significant implications. One is that State-authority as thus derived, is a means to an end, and has no validity save as subserving that end: if the end is not subserved, the authority, by the hypothesis, does not exist. The other is that the end for which the authority exists, as thus specified, is the enforcement of justice—the maintenance of equitable relations. The reasoning yields no warrant for other coercion over citizens than that which is required for preventing direct aggressions, and those indirect aggressions constituted by breaches of contract; to which, if we add protection against external enemies, the entire function implied by Hobbes's derivation of sovereign authority is comprehended.³⁵²

How, asks Spencer, does the consolidation of ever more coercive power in the hands of a sovereign (or a few) reduce the natural level of fear and distrust individuals have for one another or make the individual feel more secure? Hobbes's own experience suggested that the individualistic thirst for power brought only chaos and disorder, a breakdown in the socio-political fabric that only a sovereign power

could control. A generation earlier, Francis Bacon provided Elizabeth I with a keen insight that suggested the limits beyond which a sovereign must not venture if the peace is to be preserved:

Kings had need beware how they side themselves, and make themselves as of a faction or party; for leagues within the state are ever pernicious to monarchies; for they raise an obligation paramount to obligation of sovereignty, and make the king *like one of us*, as was to be seen in the League of France. When factions are carried too high and too violently, it is a sign of weakness in princes, and much to the prejudice both of their authority and business.³⁵³

Elizabeth was not listening. Bacon, who had studied law at Gray's Inn after a disillusioning stay at Cambridge University, was not yet an important voice in English politics. After Cambridge, he spent three years in the service of Elizabeth's ambassador to the French court, Sir Amias Paulet but returned in 1579 upon news of his father's death. Left without a sizable inheritance, Bacon moved on to Gray's Inn and to the work that would become his life passion—the philosophical justification of *the law* and the State. Catherine Drinker Bowen, in a biography of Bacon, places him squarely in the camp of those who sought to justify and protect the status quo:

There were in England two great streams of law, pointing toward two philosophies of government. By inclination or by rearing a man turned to one or the other. First, the common law, which bore the Gothic signature, claiming as its inheritance trial by jury and the "freedoms" of Anglo-Saxon parliaments (perhaps more myth than truth). The Tudor philosophy on the other hand magnified the sovereign, relied on a strong central authority and believed in it. It was to this newer side that Francis Bacon belonged, both by inheritance from his father and by his own disposition. ...From first to last, Bacon showed what seemed an inborn reverence for authority and paternalism in government...³⁵⁴

As a Member of Parliament from 1584 on, Bacon resorted to the pen to exhort his sovereign to follow a middle path in the religious conflict that continuously threatened English unity and the fledgling British empire. Yet, even Bacon was to learn only by his mistakes. In the 1590s he would attach himself to Robert Devereux (the second Earl of Essex) after being rebuffed by his own uncle, William Cecil (Lord Burghley). His great aspiration was to establish a new kind of university, one that supported the physical sciences with an openness characterized by experimentation and hypothesis. Bacon understood that knowledge was not merely power but often a threat to entrenched power; yet, the importance he gave to the quest for understanding rivaled his staunch defense of the socio-political status quo. In the essay *Of Studies* *Error! Bookmark not defined.* He wrote:

Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.³⁵⁵

Even the patronage of Devereux could not gain for Bacon a position of any power while Elizabeth was queen. Bacon's own outspokenness ruined his chances for an appointment as Attorney General, when he stood in opposition to a revenue bill submitted to Parliament by his uncle. By 1596, Bacon was actually pleading with Elizabeth on Devereaux's behalf, then sitting in judgment of him as a member of the Queen's Counsel.

Already, Bacon's interest moved from the everyday affairs of state to the theoretical. In 1593 he urged on Parliament the task of clarifying and annotating British law. His own contribution to this effort appeared as *Maxims of the Law* (published posthumously but which was widely circulated in manuscript form). After Elizabeth's death and the ascension of James Stuart to the throne of England, Bacon received

a small annual pension and began work on a book, the *Advancement of Learning*, in which he argued his case for science. As the English aristocracy drifted into separate camps, Bacon assumed the role of defender of the prerogatives of the King and continue in his pursuit to reform the laws of England. Most fundamental of his reforms was that the law must be certain. "*Certainty is so essential to law, that law cannot even be just without it,*" he wrote in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. To assist him in this task he called upon the statesmen of England to join him in this crusade:

The consideration of law reform belongs properly to statesmen, who best understand the condition of civil society, welfare of the people, natural equity, customs of nations, and different forms of government; and who may therefore determine laws by the rules and principles both of natural equity and policy.³⁵⁶

Bacon could have no inclination that his challenge would be taken up a century and a half later by a small group of civic leaders seeking to build a new form of civil society on a foundation of "*natural equity*" and just law. The intellectual leadership of that endeavor included the gentleman farmer, Thomas Jefferson. In 1778 Jefferson introduced a bill in the Virginia Assembly that brought him together with George Wythe (under whom he had studied the law for five years) to accomplish what remained impossible in the England of Bacon and his successors. Their reforms not only removed *entail* and *primogeniture*—aristocratic remnants of European feudalism—as impediments to a widely-held land tenure, they introduced guarantees for freedom of speech and of the press. In 1816, Jefferson would reflect on the changes he and others had wrought:

The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen in his person and property, and in their management. Try by this, as a tally, every provision of our Constitution and see if it hangs directly on the will of the people. ...It

has been thought that the people are not competent electors of judges *learned in the law*. But I do not know that this is true, and if doubtful, we should follow principle.³⁵⁷

In the Britain contemporary to Jefferson's era, Adam Smith could not bring himself to question the constitution (i.e., the structure) of the government, and limited himself to an attack on policies. Even as Jefferson's countrymen looked to ancient rights guaranteed under the common law of England to sanction their rebellion, Smith could bring himself to go no farther than to suggest to his fellow citizens that they think hard on their own circumstance:

[I]n times of public discontent, faction, and disorder...it often requires, perhaps, the highest effort of political wisdom to determine when a real patriot ought to support and endeavor to re-establish the authority of the old system, and when we ought to give way to the more daring, but often dangerous, spirit of innovation.³⁵⁸

Jefferson found his inspiration from Bacon, Locke and Newton—three shining lights of intellectual objectivity whose influence remained strong into the mid-eighteenth century. Yet, as Catherine Drinker Bowen reflects on Bacon, "*Sir Francis's imagination far outran his times.*"³⁵⁹ Impeached and convicted of corruption by his enemies in Parliament, Bacon was ousted from his position as Lord Chancellor. The philosopher Fulton Anderson nonetheless suggests that Bacon's statesmanship is unsurpassed and his impact on history enormous:

The courts and the constitution [of England] were to be preserved in a continuity through great trials and hazards by one man and one man alone, Francis Bacon. In this regard he became for a period the chief axial officer of the kingdom. He managed, without ill-deserving, to keep the constitution intact ...to maintain the law and liberty of subjects, and to preserve "the King's honor," through wise, skillful, and just resorts.³⁶⁰

Macaulay would later write of Bacon that “no man in that age, or indeed during the century and a half which followed, was better acquainted ...with the philosophy of law.”³⁶¹ The publication of his work *Novum Organum* in 1620 brought him to the attention of Europe’s transnational intellectual community, and during his last years he was visited by scholars from the continent eager to forge a bond. He became the architect of a new approach to scientific reasoning that combined the rationalistic with the empirical—what Will and Ariel Durant suggest was “the first clear call for an Age of Reason...giving the empirical key to Hobbes and Locke and Mill and Spencer.”³⁶² Bacon, quoted by the Durants, writes:

Man, being the servant, the interpreter of Nature, can do and understand so much, and so much only, as he had observed, in fact or in thought, of the course of Nature; beyond this he neither knows anything nor can do anything ...Human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the course is not known, the effect cannot be produced. Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed.³⁶³

Largely forgotten today, Bacon’s contribution was recognized clearly and acknowledged by Macaulay:

No book ever made so great a revolution in the mode of thinking, overthrew so many prejudices, introduced so many new opinions. Yet no book was ever written in a less contentious spirit. ...But what we most admire is the vast capacity of that intellect which, without effort, takes in at once all the domains of science, all the past, the present, and the future, all the errors of two thousand years, all the encouraging signs of the passing times, all the bright hopes of the coming age.³⁶⁴

Bacon’s downfall was symbolic of the long period of turmoil that was to characterize England’s final break with feudalism. From this point on, the people of Britain would be subjected to a new socio-political structure built not on any principles but out of the successful pursuit of

vested interests by two overlapping groups: aristocratic rent-seekers and commercial agriculturalists, on the one hand, and the *agrarian and industrial-landlords* whose power often arose in the commercial ports but spread to the rural interior. Their attack on the monarchy had, as the previous chapter detailed, accelerated during the reign of James I, who was unyielding in his belief that he ruled by divine right and resisted the sharing of power with anyone. Although even Bacon rejected the principle of divine right, he nonetheless defended the prerogatives of his sovereign against the attacks of Sir Edward Coke and other leaders in the Parliamentary faction.

James died in 1625 and Bacon soon thereafter. He had been an unrelenting defender of the status quo, yet stood in the vanguard of scientific thinkers. His blindness where socio-political justice was concerned brought an attack by Sir Walter Raleigh, when Bacon suggested that taxation should fall equally on the poor and the rich—to which Raleigh challenged, “*Call you this [an equal yoke] when a poor man pays as much as a rich?*”³⁶⁵ Despite these shortcomings, historian John Lord would join Macaulay in the nineteenth century, praising Bacon as one of the *beacon lights of history*:

Who has ever done more to instruct the world,—to enable men to rise not in fortune merely, but in virtue and patriotism, in those things which are of themselves the only reward? ...He was a moral philosopher, like Socrates. He even soared into the realm of supposititious truth, like Plato. He observed Nature, like Aristotle. He took away the syllogism from Thomas Aquinas,—not to throw contempt on metaphysical inquiry or dialectical reasoning, but to arrive by a better method at the knowledge of first principles; which once established, he allowed deductions to be drawn from them, leading to other truths as certainly as induction itself.³⁶⁶

When England finally recovered from the religious and political turmoil that dominated events over the next thirty-five years, the memory of Bacon’s contribution stimulated the scientific revolution

that socio-political upheaval and religious intolerance had delayed. The Jesuits continued their commitment to providing formal educational opportunities to as many people as possible on the continent. Even Bacon had recognized the general superiority of their efforts. Outside of the Jesuit institutions, however, a strong conservatism remained. The Spanish, dominated by an orthodox, medieval and dark faith as well as an authoritarian monarchy, persecuted or forced into exile nearly all of their most creative and enlightened citizens. In 1609 the remaining population of Moorish descendants—some 400,000 successful farmers and craftsmen—were forcibly removed to Africa; two-thirds died of starvation or were executed by Moslems because of their Christian faith. The same mentality in the Netherlands drove thousands from Belgium and into Holland (i.e., the United Provinces) during the wars for Dutch independence. The Dutch cities of Antwerp, Amsterdam and Rotterdam grew into cosmopolitan centers of commerce, education and culture. The growth of Amsterdam after the end of the seventeenth century is described by Lewis Mumford:

[A] chamber of assurance was set up in 1602, a new bourse in 1608, and a lending bank in 1614. Population more than quadrupled between 1567, when it was about 30,000, and 1630, when it was around 115,000.³⁶⁷

Refugees from all over Europe found their way to the Dutch universities. This society, built on commercial enterprise and pluralism, produced the physicist and astronomer Christian Huygens (1629-1695) and the socio-political philosopher Dirck Coornhert, whose work *The Art of Well-Living* presented a basis for ethical and moral behavior independent of religious doctrine. The French scholar Joseph Scaliger came to Holland in 1590 to assume the chair in classical scholarship at the University of Leiden, attracting others in his wake. Holland, alone among the Eurasian societies attained the remarkable achievement of

almost total literacy among its citizens; elsewhere, the rate of literacy seldom surpassed twenty percent.

Throughout much of the seventeenth century, Europe's transnationals left their native universities, where religious persecution impeded their work; they found "*refuge in private academies*" where they could proceed "*uncensored*."³⁶⁸ For the established authorities, a very real threat to much that had been held as sacred seemed to be growing among these transnational thinkers. "*Those who studied the new ideas honestly*," observed historian Maurice Ashley, "*believed that their acceptance could lead to atheism: the earth had shrunk and men were at the mercy of mechanical laws*."³⁶⁹ Descartes came eventually to hold this view, recognizing that the key to knowledge was in the discovery and application of the laws of nature. What emerged more slowly was an appreciation that human behavior, while still limited by the constraints nature imposed, was not subject to absolute control; people possessed a considerable degree of free will and could appropriately or illogically apply reason before acting. Thus, above the level of automatic bodily functions, the natural laws directing human behavior had to be understood as *laws of tendency*. Even Bacon acknowledged this to be the case, writing:

Neither is there only a habit of goodness directed by right reason, but there is in some men, even in nature, a disposition towards it; as, on the other side, there is a natural malignity, for there be that in their nature do not affect the good of others.³⁷⁰

Neither Bacon nor Hobbes developed a cogent theory of human behavior based on natural law; even Locke provides only a speculative history of the human condition in a state of nature and how our behavior changed with the development of society. We must await the appearance of Henry George in the late nineteenth century to find a fully developed scientific presentation of these scattered observations and insights. History and observation brought George to conclude:

As this power, which we call reason, rises in man, nature withdraws the light of instinct and leaves him to his own devices—to rise or fall, to soar above the brute or to sink lower. ...The ability to fall, no less than the ability to rise—the very failures and mistakes and perversities of man—show his place and powers.³⁷¹

The primary difference between George and so many of his predecessors is best explained by two factors: almost without exception, the religious beliefs of the seventeenth and eighteenth century transnationals were sufficiently strong to impose limits on the conclusions they drew from observation and reason; secondly, they were unsuccessful in achieving an appropriate integration of empiricism and speculative thought. Nevertheless, the influence of these earlier writers on the course of intellectual history was profound; their individual forays against orthodoxy with which they disagreed legitimized skepticism and set the stage for more radical departures by the colonial subjects of Britain living in North America.

Bacon's influence survived within the Royal Society of London, chartered by Charles II in 1662. Members of the Royal Society conducted experiments and debated scientific theory—among themselves and with their contemporaries on the continent. Robert Hooke (1635-1703), a skilled mathematician and prolific inventor, became the Royal Society's first secretary; later, Isaac Newton (1642-1727) served as president. Not only was the collaboration of these scientists and inventors important to the course of events, the record of their work reached others in a systematic fashion that accelerated the pace of change. As Bronowski and Mazlish write:

The publication of scientific work, as the natural way to make it known to others, was an invention of the seventeenth century. It begins with correspondence, first between scientists, and then between scientists and a few men who became, as it were, clearinghouses for scientific information.³⁷²

Civilization was taking a dramatic leap into the unknown. When scientists began to describe in minute detail their individual experiments, such investigations could be replicated by anyone able to read the language and become familiar with the underlying principles. We are instructed by the fact that long before ever giving much thought to socio-political philosophy, Hobbes demonstrated a keen interest in science, befriending Galileo Galilei and Descartes, and eventually developing his own axiomatic and materialistic theory of knowledge. He was already fifty years of age when John Locke was born in 1632.

Changing Of The Guard

From his earliest years as a student at Westminster and then at Oxford, John Locke developed a keen interest in science. More slowly did he come to an attitude of toleration for the differences in political and religious beliefs held by others. The interest by intellectuals and activists in Britain in what we now think of as human rights was resurrected after the death of Oliver Cromwell. Edward Bagshawe, an early associate of Locke, played an important role by reopening the dialogue that called for reform of socio-political institutions; eventually, Locke became convinced that Bagshawe's attacks on the monarchy and entrenched privilege were just and added his own voice. Locke then had the not altogether good fortune of becoming the confidant of Anthony Ashley Cooper (the first Earl of Shaftesbury), one of the strongest voices in Britain for freedom of conscience and against the imposition of a State religion. Those who gathered around Cooper found themselves disparagingly called *Whigs*; in response, they attacked those who defended the status quo as *Tories*. As Winston Churchill observed, as such labels often do, these words ironically became terms of endearment and recognition:

[T]he names Whig and Tory not only stuck, but became cherished and vaunted by those upon whom they were fastened. They gradually entered into the whole life of the nation, and represented in successive forms its main temperamental types.³⁷³

In 1681 Cooper was indicted by Charles II for attempting to stir rebellion. Although quite ill, he fled to the safety of Holland. Locke had just returned to England in 1679 after four years in France, but his close association with Cooper threatened his own freedom, and he too left for Holland.

The subject that first attracted Locke's serious attention was not the just basis for civil government; rather, discussions with a small circle of friends resulted in a work on epistemology. His writing began while in residence at Cooper's London home, and by 1690—after a period of twenty years—his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was finished. A modern edition of this work, extensively annotated by Alexander Fraser, begins with the following assessment:

Few books in the literature of philosophy have so widely represented the spirit of the age and country in which they appeared, or have so influenced opinion afterwards, ...The art of education, political thought, theology, and philosophy, especially in Britain, France, and America, long bore the stamp of the *Essay*, or of reaction against it, to an extent that is not explained by the comprehensiveness of Locke's thought, or by the force of his genius.³⁷⁴

During Locke's years of formal education and independent study, he was profoundly influenced by Descartes and the French philosopher's analysis of our capacity to discover truth. Yet Locke's primary concern was to uncover knowledge that suggested solutions to moral, ethical and practical problems. Well before his *Essay* appeared, he stated in succinct fashion his epistemology:

Knowledge...depends upon right and true ideas: opinion upon history and matter of fact.³⁷⁵

In the same passage, he also states his belief in the existence of moral principles by which an individual or a society might be measured as just or unjust:

And it is true that it is every one's duty to be just, whether there be any such thing as a just man in the world or no.³⁷⁶

Locke's instinctive attitude of toleration toward the religious beliefs and practices of others was fostered in Holland by his friendship with theologian Philip von Limborch and his contributions to the periodical *Bibliothèque Universelle*. Three months after the ascendancy of William of Orange to the English throne, Locke was able to return to England, campaign on behalf of free expression and religious toleration and begin in earnest his tenure as a dominant force among the world's *men of ideas*.

The *Essay* was warmly and positively reviewed by William Molyneux (of Trinity College in Dublin), whose input was instrumental in Locke's decisions to revise and expand the work over three additional editions. French and Latin editions followed. Orthodox theologians accused Locke of atheism because of his unconventional attitudes toward religious practice and challenge to the doctrine that truth could only be revealed in faith. In the search for understanding, Locke sought "*to lay down, candidly and freely, his own conjectures, concerning a subject lying somewhat in the dark, without any other design than an unbiased inquiry after truth.*"³⁷⁷ Locke is one of the first to write about human behavior as learned rather than evolving out of some innate metaphysical process. Our capacity for understanding, he argues, is also limited by our inaccessibility to the Universe beyond the reach of our senses:

... I shall imagine I have not wholly misemployed myself...if...I can give any account of the ways whereby our understandings come to attain those notions of things we have; and can set down any measures of the certainty of our knowledge; or the grounds of those persuasions which are to be found amongst men, so various, different, and wholly contradictory; and yet...may perhaps have reason to suspect, that either there is no such thing as truth at all, or that mankind hath no sufficient means to attain a certain knowledge.³⁷⁸

He would go further and actually suggest that in some ways the intelligence of certain primates was superior to his own species. However, in his second great written work, *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, Locke sought to describe how the appearance of civilization distanced us from even our closest relatives in the animal world. Even in this work, however, he concludes that in the end our capacity to reason overwhelmingly fails us as a means of directing survival-enhancing behavior:

[W]hen fashion hath once established what folly or craft began, custom makes it sacred, and it will be thought impudence or madness to contradict or question it. He that will impartially survey the nations of the world will find so much of their religions, governments, and manners brought in and continued amongst them by these means that he will have but little reverence for the practices which are in use and credit amongst men, and will have reason to think that the woods and forests, where the irrational, untaught inhabitants keep right by following nature, are fitter to give us rules than cities and palaces, where those that call themselves civil and rational go out of their way by the authority of example.³⁷⁹

This passage appears in the first of the two treatises and represented an extraordinary call for a restructuring of socio-political arrangements and institutions—in accord with what reason dictated. Actions taken without the full application of reason might be an exercise of freedom but were often an exercise of *license* far in excess of true *liberty*. This

application by Locke of his own reasoning powers is, I suggest, his most profound insight into human behavior and the relations between individuals and groups. Henry George would later identify as fundamental the axiom that the most consistent tendency we exhibit in our behavior is to act to satisfy desires with the least exertion; and, throughout the history of civilization, license sanctioned by the State (or by tribal custom, common law or even democratic vote) has been a primary method of achieving advantage at the expense of others. Locke goes on to incorporate this definition of "*natural freedom*" into what amounts to a theory of justice:

[A]ll that share in the same common nature, faculties and powers are in nature equal and ought to partake in the same common rights and privileges, till the manifest appointment of God...can be produced to show any particular person's supremacy, or a man's own consent subjects him to a superior.³⁸⁰

At the same time, Locke concludes that one's liberty is unalienable, that while "*equality of men by nature...be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence; though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession, but where some nobler use than its bare preservation calls for it.*"³⁸¹ Which suggests to Locke the existence of an important underlying principle:

The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions; for men being...all the servants of one sovereign master...and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy another...³⁸²

Justice, then, demands on the one hand the sanctioning and protection of one's right to act when such act falls within the definition of liberty; and, correspondingly, demands the controlling or preventing of acts of license.

In another realm, that of the relations between biological parents, their children and the State, Locke suggests that reason has produced in positive law a recognition that as an incompetent party a child must be properly nurtured until such time as the individual child is deemed competent to be responsible for his or her own actions. In Locke's words:

For children being by the course of nature born weak and unable to provide for themselves, they have by the appointment of God himself...a right to be nourished and maintained by their parents; nay, a right not only to a bare subsistence, but to the conveniences and comforts of life as far as the conditions of their parents can afford it.³⁸³

Based on a parent's responsibility to provide proper nurturing, Locke reasoned that the practice of primogeniture, of the first born son inheriting all to the exclusion of any others, was unjust. Also unjust, therefore, is any claim by a sovereign to have inherited "*dominion*" over a people from one's parent. Positive law is just, according to Locke, the extent to which such laws are in accord with "*the law of nature*." One could make the argument based on what Locke has already stated that government, acting on behalf of the citizenry, has an implied obligation to intervene when parents by choice or circumstance fail to provide children with proper and adequate nurturing. The obvious difficulty is in the application of this principle to individual cases; and, from a modern perspective, the question arises as to whether such decisions are best resolved by administrative agencies or by the courts.

Armed with the principle that written law must accord with the law of nature, Locke proceeds to challenge the very assumptions by which

the possession of power has been justified by those who have long ruled over others:

The great question which in all ages has disturbed mankind, and brought on them the greatest part of those mischiefs which have ruined cities, depopulated countries, and disordered the peace of the world, has been, not whether there be power in the world, nor whence it came, but who should have it.³⁸⁴

The first sustained era of empire-building collapsed, in no small part, because those who gained and held power systematically pillaged such a large portion of the wealth produced by others. Not only have conquerors failed to add value to the production process, the oppression they impose on others dramatically reduces the ability and incentive to produce. Locke and others witnessed how such policies eroded the Portuguese and Spanish empires. Against such oppression, people have, writes Locke, “*withdraw[n] themselves and their obedience from the jurisdiction they were born under...and [set] up new governments in other places;*”³⁸⁵ Locke may have been thinking of the escalating migration of Britain’s own subjected to the Americas. Another aspect of human relations Locke identified as fundamental to just socio-political arrangements was that even within the society of one’s birth, “[a] man...cannot subject himself to the arbitrary power of another”³⁸⁶ when such power conflicts with the law of nature; that is, the law requiring one to act “*for the preservation of himself and the rest of mankind*”³⁸⁷ must be obeyed. For Locke, then, the just relationship between the individual and the State is established first on principle and only secondarily on contract:

For all the power the government has, being only for the good of the society, as it ought not to be arbitrary and at pleasure, so it ought to be exercised by established and promulgated laws; that both the people may know their duty and be safe and secure within the limits of the law; and the rulers too kept within their bounds, and not be

tempted by the power they have in their hands to employ it to such purposes and by such measures as they would not have known, and own not willingly.³⁸⁸

When those who reign exceed this maxim for just government, to an extent and degree that “*the inconvenience is so great that the majority feel it and are weary of it*”³⁸⁹ then the injured are obligated to oppose a tyranny:

Wherever law ends tyranny begins, if the law be transgressed to another’s harm. And whosoever in authority exceeds the power given him by the law, and makes use of the force he has under his command to compass that upon the subject which the law allows not, ceases in that to be a magistrate and, acting without authority, may be opposed as any other man who by force invades the right of another. ...³⁹⁰

Whenever the legislators endeavour to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people who are thereupon absolved from any further obedience, and are left to the common refuge which God hath provided for all men against force and violence.³⁹¹

And, what is this “*common refuge*” to which Locke alludes? Within a few pages he comes to the heart of the matter when making a point about the history of human affairs, observing that “*such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs.*”³⁹² History shows that the masses of people must be pressed very hard and denied much of their inherent human dignity before rising in revolt against entrenched power. Rulers and ruling bodies possessing a reasonable degree of cleverness instinctively recognize the limits beyond which they safely cannot go.

William of Orange—Protestant prince, reigning in accord with Whig principles, and defender of empire against James II and his Catholic Royalist armies in Ireland—tested these limits by taking England to war against the French. Tens of thousands of English soldiers and nearly the

entire reserve of bullion were expended in William's continental adventure. Creation of the Bank of England in 1694 by Charles Montagu (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and—with the involvement of John Locke and others—a new system of coinage, provided William with sufficient credit to carry on the war through 1696. Following the Treaty of Ryswick, the Tory aristocracy of England acted swiftly to reduce the military and the taxes imposed for its support; once again in its history, the British leadership sought refuge behind the promise of isolating the British Isles from continental intrigue. In response, William considered giving up the throne and returning to Holland.

War again erupted after the death of the Spanish monarch, Charles II, raised questions about who would rule Spain. A renewed French threat to Dutch territorial integrity brought another British army—led by John Churchill (the first Duke of Marlborough)—to the continent to resist the French incursion.

Severely injured in a riding accident, William of Orange died in 1702; The queen had already died in 1694 of smallpox. Thus, the crown passed to Mary's sister Anne. Churchill was given command of the English and Dutch allied forces and he defeated a French army poised to invade Holland. In what was perhaps an even more important victory, an English naval expedition destroyed the Spanish treasure fleet anchored at the seaport of Vigo on the northwestern coast of Spain. Bullion captured during this battle replenished the British treasury, and for the next seven years Churchill would lead British and allied armies in a war of attrition against the French. The conflict reached its climax in 1709 when peace talks fell apart over the British demand that Philip V abdicate the Spanish throne.

What had begun as a disjointed, tardy resistance of peoples, Parliaments, and Protestantism to intolerant and aggressive military power had transformed itself gradually and now flagrantly into invasion and subjugation by a victorious coalition.

From this moment France, and to a lesser degree Spain, presented national fronts against foreign inroad and overlordship.³⁹³

The British military force (reinforced by Scots after the joining of the two countries under one King and Parliament in 1707) and their Dutch allies mounted a new campaign that ended with the Battle of Malplaquet, where nearly forty thousand men died. Both sides were nearly bankrupt of men and resources, yet they fought on for another year. Political upheaval in Britain brought control of the government and Parliament into Tory hands, which renewed the hope of Louis XIV that Churchill would be relieved of command over the allied armies. Churchill survived the change in government, and even larger forces were put on the field by each side during 1711. Churchill led the allied armies to significant victories but was undermined by Tories back home who withheld men, supplies and financial resources. The French threw new reserves into the defense of their territory and negotiated a separate peace with the Tory government in England. Although out of government, the Whigs were not powerless; as Queen Anne's health deteriorated and her death neared, they pressed her to appoint Charles Talbot (the Duke of Shrewsbury) Lord Treasurer. With Talbot firmly in control of the Privy Counsel the Whigs ensured that Ernest Augustus (the Elector of Hanover and grandson of James I) and not her Catholic half-brother would succeed to the English throne. Thus, in the summer of 1714, this German prince—who spoke no English and possessed no sympathy or understanding for the domestic politics of Britain—arrived from the continent to become George I of Britain.

The socio-political philosophy of John Locke, adopted by the Whigs in the form of Parliamentary prerogative, had achieved the final triumph over the medieval principle of divine right to succession. With George I on the throne, the day-to-day matters of government also quickly fell to others—for very practical reasons:

The foundation of the Cabinet system was laid when George I, who depended for his throne on the Whigs, and whose linguistic defects prevented his deliberating with ministers, gave up attending meetings of the Council, thus leaving to ministers the initiation of policy and rendering necessary the appointment of a president, who ripened into a Prime Minister.³⁹⁴

Into this position of power came Robert Walpole, Secretary of War in Queen Anne's government and later Chancellor of the Exchequer. His forceful personality and policies were to direct the expansion of the British empire for twenty-one years, until 1742, when he was turned out of office. "*One of the charges against him after his fall,*" writes Winston Churchill, "*was that he had sought to become 'sole and Prime Minister'.*"³⁹⁵

Locke And The Origins Of Social Darwinism

Locke's death in 1704 came during the final stage in the struggle for power between Whig and Tory over the question of whether Britain would be governed under a sovereignty held by the King, shared with Parliament, or displaced by Parliament. Although Locke's works were widely read and responded to, the immediate course of events in Britain was not in any practical sense altered by his writings. His description of the origins of society as one of voluntary association was criticized by David Hume (1711-1776) as inconsistent with history, and numerous other inconsistencies were identified by later critics and analysts. And yet, the direction in which Locke moved the transnational debate over socio-political arrangements and institutions was lasting. He opened wide the range of issues subjected to the application of principle; and, even though he was himself inconsistent in his identification of principle and the conclusions he thereby reached, tradition and vested interest no longer sufficed as an adequate defense for the status quo.

There was, to be sure, considerable disagreement among the transnational intellectuals over matters of scientific importance. Locke and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) joined forces, for example, in a refutation of Descartes' theory of innate (evolving) human understanding. They were followed in the eighteenth century by what Alfred North Whitehead has called "*men of genius, clear-headed and acute,*"

... who applied the seventeenth century group of scientific abstractions to the analysis of the unbounded universe.

For a thousand years Europe had been ~~a~~ prey to intolerant, intolerable visionaries. *redundant?* The common sense of the eighteenth century, its grasp of the obvious facts of human suffering, and of the obvious demands of human nature, acted on the world like a bath of moral cleansing.³⁹⁶ ✓

Early in the twentieth-century century, historian Kingsley Martin argued that the eighteenth-century socio-political writers who followed Locke advanced the cause of participatory government without themselves believing in democracy; that "*in their long battle with an authoritarian church, a feudal aristocracy and an arbitrary government they made a new synthesis.*"³⁹⁷ Many of these men, as did Locke, found refuge and liberty of conscience in Holland. Included among this group of exiles was Locke's contemporary, Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), whose book the *Dictionnaire* was published in 1697 (providing much of the foundation for the later Encyclopaedists), championed the cause of religious toleration. Other French reformers—the Catholic bishop Francois Fenelon (1651-1715), in particular—accused Louis XIV of violating his sacred trust by allowing the French people to be exploited and decimated by war. Huguenot exiles in Holland and England also contributed to a growing unrest by translating Locke into French. Voltaire personally experienced in Britain during the 1720s the dramatic differences between his despotic government and that of the

British people under Walpole (a government that many British radicals condemned as oppressive and arbitrary); Locke's blend of empiricism and speculative thought became the guiding light of Voltaire's own thinking. And, Charles-Louis de Secondat (the Baron de Montesquieu) made a similar sojourn to Britain in 1729, where "[h]e attended both Houses of Parliament, took notes on debates,...studied the theory of British government and was a great admirer of Locke, whom he called the great instructor of mankind."³⁹⁸

In his most important political work, *The Spirit of the Laws*, published in 1748, Secondat expounded the doctrine of separation of powers and raised serious questions of principle. His open admiration for the British system of constitutional monarchy assured that his writing would be suppressed in France. As a socio-political philosopher, he unfortunately failed to see that principles of just law are universal; his is a relativistic philosophy that narrowly defines just socio-political institutions as having a balance and separation of power:

[P]olitical liberty does not consist in an unlimited freedom. ...Liberty is a right of doing whatever the laws permit; and if a citizen could do what they forbid, he would be no longer possessed of liberty, because all his fellow-citizens would have the same power.³⁹⁹

Of these first two generations of enlightened political philosophers, Locke comes closest to a theory of justice built on moral principles. His distinction between acts of liberty and acts of license is not sufficiently developed to guide us with any specificity; yet the distinction is fundamental, a cornerstone of any further development of principle. As subsequent writers carried on Locke's tradition of critical analysis and verification by means of historical investigations, the threat of socio-political upheaval intensified. The beneficiaries of entrenched privilege could hold back truth for only so long. The pursuit of knowledge by so

many individuals eventually yielded insight and understanding that threatened the status quo.

Holland remained a safe harbor for dissenting intellectuals, and within this constantly changing population of exiles from elsewhere in Europe “an elaborate secret organization grew up for the distribution of banned or illegally published works.”⁴⁰⁰ Censorship by the French government of the articles appearing in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia* (1751) evoked criticism from Voltaire, responded to by one of the principal editors, Jean d’Alembert (1717-1783). The State is almost always an enemy of those who seek truth or wish to expose corruptions, privileges and conventional wisdoms for what they are. As Alembert intimated to Voltaire, even under conditions of censorship there are those who are always willing to accept the consequences of saying what they believe:

No doubt we have bad articles in theology and metaphysics, but since we publish by favour, and have theologians for censors, I defy you to make them any better. There are other articles that are less exposed to the daylight, and in them all is repaired. Time will enable people to distinguish what we have thought from what we have said.⁴⁰¹

This collective ferment would eventually reach a critical mass in Eurasia; however, the earliest general application of principle to the socio-political arrangements and institutions of a society would take hold in North America. At the moment of Whig ascendancy in Britain, several generations of British subjects born in or having migrated to North America were living under conditions where a high degree of individual freedom was subjected to a rule of law lightly imposed. In that environment, individuals with keen minds and the experience of freedom saw themselves as part of a new era in human history. In the small library of the *New England Courant*, where Benjamin Franklin learned his first trade, he discovered Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and became “vowed to the cult of Reason and Liberty

...[a]rdently Whig and devoted with all his heart to new ideas.”⁴⁰² Franklin would join the small cadre of practical men of philosophical conviction who pursued a course of action designed, initially, to sanction a century and a half of *salutary neglect* and which eventually resulted in the creation of a federation of independent constitutional republics—some more, some less, democratic and participatory in their design.

To what extent were moral principles understood and incorporated by these practical philosophers into the system of positive law established, eventually, under written constitutions? History reveals that expediency and vested interest prevented the full application of principle. John Adams, for one, understood the nature of power and the role privilege played in the oppression of British citizens. Adams took as his own the views of English philosopher James Harrington that “[w]hen civil liberty is entire it includes liberty of conscience,” and “when liberty of conscience is entire it includes civil liberty.”⁴⁰³ Essential to civil liberty, however, was an equality of opportunity in landed property that privilege retained in positive law would sabotage. Referring to Harrington, Adams wrote in a letter to James Sullivan in May of 1776:

Harrington has shown that power always follows property. This I believe to be as infallible a maxim in politics, as that action and reaction are equal, in mechanics. Nay, I believe we may advance one step farther, and affirm that the balance of power in a society, accompanies the balance of property in land. The only possible way, then, of preserving the balance of power on the side of equal liberty and public virtue, is to make the acquisition of land easy to every member of society; to make a division of the land into small quantities, so that the multitude may be possessed of land estates. If the multitude is possessed of the balance of real estate, the multitude will have the balance of power, and in that case the multitude will take care of the liberty, virtue, and interest of the multitude, in all acts of government.⁴⁰⁴

Widespread land ownership would buy time but not virtue, the quality Adams found most essential yet wanting in the character of people generally. "*There must be a positive passion for the public good,*" he wrote, "*or there can be no republican government, nor any real liberty.*"⁴⁰⁵ In the face of an immediate threat to their freedom, the European-Americans had resolved to break themselves of Old World controls. And, although Adams championed the cause not merely of freedom but of liberty, he looked upon the events absorbing his energies with apprehension. For, as he wrote:

I have seen all my life such selfishness and littleness even in New England, that I sometimes tremble to think that, although we are engaged in the best cause that ever employed the human heart, yet the prospect of success is doubtful not for want of power or of wisdom but of virtue.⁴⁰⁶

With or without virtue to guide them, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Tom Paine and others would apply lessons learned from both experience and their transnational mentors to the very difficult task of establishing a democratic-republic where none had stood before.