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# THE LEFT AND EDMUND BURKE

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## I

From the publication of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* to the most recent of Russell Kirk's compendia of conservative wisdom, Burke has served as inspiration to the right.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the last forty years have seen an industry thrive in America making Burke's life and thought relevant to the conservative perspective from the Cold War to the War on Poverty. He is, and always has been, for the Right "a thinker of intense, of special, contemporary relevance."<sup>2</sup> Much less clear, however, has been Burke's standing with the Left. What one, in fact, finds here is neither uniform rejection nor instant disdain. Most liberals and radicals have, to be sure, cursed and dismissed him out of hand for some 200 years, yet there have always been those on the Left fascinated by Burke.

Whether it be a need for advocates of change to come to terms with their own lingering traditionalism, or whether it be the combative need to meet head on this most brilliant of the status quo's defenders, generations of writers on the Left have been attracted to and preoccupied with Burke. And these have not been minor figures. William Godwin of Burke's own day, numerous eminent Victorian apologists for progress and reform, and twentieth-century Marxists such as Laski and Macpherson have all found Burke of intense and special relevance. His significance for them has varied. For some, concern with Burke allows an expression of personal conviction, for others turning to Burke provides unique insights into politics or patterns of ideological history. Whatever, it is clear the Left has read Burke, too, and read him thoroughly.

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## II

Burke's contemporaries on the Left were generally enraged by the *Reflections*. Their reactions capture what would be the dominant response from liberals and radicals to this day. While George III commended the *Reflections* as "a good book, a very good book," one which "every gentleman ought to read," and *The Times* saw it as "a welcome antidote to all those dark insidious minds" that wanted to level British institutions, the Left rushed to their pens to answer what one of their number later described as "the very sinfulness of sin."<sup>3</sup> Robert Bage, radical novelist, mocked the very passage in the *Reflections* that so moved Burke's defenders. The knight-errant becomes modern man striking blows at the chains of chivalry and at such as Burke who glory in that servitude:

Ten thousand pens must start from their inkstands, to punish the man who dares attempt to restore the empire of prejudice and passion. The age of chivalry, heaven be praised, is gone. The age of truth and reason has commenced, and will advance to maturity in spite of cant and bishops. Law – active, invincible, avenging law, is here the knight-errant that redresses wrongs, protects damsels, and punishes the base miscreants who oppress them . . . . All this is happily changed. Philosophy and commerce have transformed that *generous loyalty to rank*, into attachment to peace, to law, to the general happiness of mankind; that *proud submission and dignified obedience* into an unassuming consciousness of natural equality; and that *subordination of the heart* into an honest veneration of superior talents, conjoined with superior benevolence.<sup>4</sup>

Another dark insidious mind responding to Burke's *Reflections* was Joseph Priestley. He, too, dealt metaphor for metaphor. His concern was Burke's discussion of clothes and the drapery of life that cover naked, shivering man. Priestley replied with the characteristic radical metaphor of a new day dawning:

Cherish them [prejudices], then, sir, as much as you please. Prejudice and error is only a mist, which the sun, which has now risen, will effectively disperse. Keep them about you as tight as the countryman in the fable did his cloak; the same sun without any more violence than the warmth of his beams, will compel you to throw it aside, unless you chose to sweat under it, and bear the ridicule of all your cooler and less encumbered companions.<sup>5</sup>

Among the radicals who had self-consciously put aside all cloaks of mist and mystery was Bentham who was not above using, against Burke's *Reflections*, the same exaggerated near hysterical rhetoric that was

Burke's trademark. Bentham described Burke as "blinded by his rage, in this his frantic exclamation, wrung from him by the unquenched thirst for lucre—this mad man, than whom none perhaps was ever more mischievous—this incendiary."<sup>6</sup>

Two of the most famous radical replies to Burke's *Reflections* emphasized the same theme—Burke's disregard for the historic suffering of common people in his preoccupation with the brutality of revolutionary justice. Paine, in his *Rights of Man*, sees Burke venerating power and "all the governments in the world, while the victims who suffer under them, whether sold into slavery, or tortured out of existence, are wholly forgotten."<sup>7</sup> But it was Mary Wollstonecraft who best captured this common radical response to Burke.

Misery to reach your heart I perceive, must have its caps and bells; your tears are reserved, very naturally considering your character, for the declamation of the theater, or for the downfall of queens, whose rank throws a graceful veil over vices that degrade humanity; but the distress of many industrious mothers whose helpmates have been torn from them, and the hungry cry of the helpless babes, were vulgar sorrows that could not move your commiseration, though they might extort an alms.<sup>8</sup>

William Godwin is another story. This final member of the great radical triumvirate of the 1790s, was much more sympathetic to Burke than Wollstonecraft or Paine. In this most thoroughgoing radical of the revolutionary period, whose *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* envisioned a root and branch transformation of the social and political landscape in the name of individualistic anarchism, we find a surprising and moving appreciation of Burke. Godwin heard of Burke's death when his *Enquiry* was in the press for its third edition. To a passage critical of "advocates of aristocracy" and "dupes of prejudice" Godwin added in 1797 a footnote on Burke "who was principally in the author's mind while he penned the preceding sentences," in the first edition of 1793. The note goes far beyond charity for the dead in undercutting the critical thrust of the text in its praise for Burke, "the inferior of no man that ever adorned the face of the earth." He was, according to Godwin, among very few equals "in the long record of human genius." Godwin proceeded to praise Burke's "subtlety of discriminations," and his "sagacity and profoundness of judgement." Particularly worthy of note was Burke's "boundless wealth of imagination," his images and metaphors, his sensitive and moving excursions into the realm of feelings.

While it is true that Burke was misled "as to things entitled to our deference and admiration," and while he sacrificed independence to wealth and expense, Godwin notes that

no impartial man can recall Burke to his mind without confessing the grandeurs and integrity of his feelings of morality, and being convinced that he was eminently both the patriot and the philanthropist.<sup>9</sup>

There is more at work here than passing appreciation of an intellectual and literary giant, albeit a misguided one. Burke had, indeed, greatly influenced Godwin's own intellectual and political development in the 1790s. This influence was, in fact, partly responsible for Godwin's retreat from the uncompromising radicalism of the 1793 edition. There were subtle changes in the various editions of *Political Justice*, most critically in Godwin's softening the strident and abstract rationalism of the first edition. This is indicated in small but by no means trivial changes. The discussion, for example, about the moral choice between rescuing from a fire the distinguished Fenelon or his valet, who might be "my brother, my father," was posed in the first edition as a choice between Fenelon and his chambermaid, who might be "my wife or mother." Other changes indicate a general softening on the issue of marriage. It is still criticized, but in the second edition more specifically in terms of the then current aristocratic practice of arranged marriages. There is some evidence that Godwin's greater receptivity to the realm of feeling in the second and third editions reflects his several happy and tender years with Mary Wollstonecraft. But there is just as much reason to attribute the concern to Burke's influence. All his radical critics had maligned Burke for too much emphasis on the realm of feeling, yet in a diary note written shortly after his footnote on Burke, Godwin refers to plans for a new book, the purpose of which was

to correct certain errors in the early part of my *Political Justice*. The part to which I allude is essentially defective in the circumstances of not yielding a proper attention to the empire of feeling.<sup>10</sup>

In his later writings, Godwin would, indeed, abandon much of the Enlightenment rationalism of his *Political Justice* and enter the empire of feeling. His novels would applaud marriage and domestic affections. In one, the critical message is contained in a passage that reads much

like Godwin's own earlier critics. "You think too highly of the human mind in the abstract, to be able to consider with patience man as he is."<sup>11</sup> His later writings contain unabashed appreciations of feudalism and the age of chivalry as well as instinctive religious awe before a mysterious universe. Shattered is the rationalism of 1793 in a diary note of 1819 where Godwin proclaims his soul full of the bursting with the mystery of the universe. Like Burke cherishing "untaught feelings" and "old prejudices," Godwin adds, "and I love it the better for its mysteriousness. It is too wonderful for me, it is past finding out. This is what I call religion."<sup>12</sup> But Burke's influence was already vividly apparent in 1795. In that year Godwin turned on his radical friend Thelwall and the politics of the English reformers. Who can deny the impact of Burke as Godwin describes the fragility and complexity of society and government?

He that deliberately views the machine of human society, will even in his speculations approach it with awe. He will recollect with alarm, that in this scene "fools rush in, where angels fear to tread." The fabric that we contemplate is sort of a fairy edifice, and though it consists of innumerable parts, and hides its head among the clouds, the hand of a child almost, if suffered with neglect, may shake it into ruins.<sup>13</sup>

It would take several decades for Godwin to pay full credit to Burke, for it is really this dreaded enemy of Paine and Wollstonecraft who breathes through Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth of England* written in the late 1820s. He gives no credit to Burke but the ideas are clearly derivative.

Man, and generations of men, are not links broken off from the great chain of being: they are not like some of the inferior sorts of animals, having no opportunity of intercourse with those that went before them, and indebted for their systems of action only to their internal constitution and the laws of the universe, and not to imitation. Generations of men are linked and dovetailed into each other. Our modes of thinking, our predilections and aversions, our systems of judging, our habits of life, our courage or our cowardice, our elevation or our meanness, are in a great degree regulated by those of our immediate ancestors . . . . Though generations are evanescent and fugitive, nations are, in a certain limited sense of the word, immortal [III, 16-17].

Government is founded in opinion, and the sentiments and prejudices of a greater or smaller portion of its subjects form its basis . . . . Opinion depends very much upon prescription. So much as our forefathers believed, the creed, religious or political, which they have handed down to us, we are inclined to entertain [III, 515].

Opinion is an arbitrary sovereign in human affairs; and time is that which most of all fastens theories, systems, institutions and tastes upon the favour of mankind [III, 117].

The government of a nation . . . is a complicated science, with difficulty mastered in theory, and with difficulty reduced to practice. It is comparatively easy for the philosopher in his closet to invent imaginary schemes of policy, and to shew how mankind if they were without passions and without prejudices, might best be united in the form of a political community. But, unfortunately, men in all ages are the creatures of passions . . . And, in each particular age men have aspirations and prejudices, sometimes of one sort, and sometimes of another, rendering them very unlike the pieces on a chess-board, which the skillful practitioner moves this way and that, without its being necessary to take into his estimate the materials of which they are made, and adapting his proceedings to their internal modifications [IV, 579–580].

### III

In the nineteenth century, Englishmen on the Right found Burke useful, as would later generations. George Croly, an Anglican minister active in anti-Chartist circles, edited Burke in 1840 in order, he wrote, “to compile an anti-revolutionary manual.” Burke was the genius in the 1790s behind “the forces that preserved society as it was,” and his words could do that again against the new menace.<sup>14</sup> Croly is an exception, however. The nineteenth century had little of Burke as prophet of reaction. He was perceived, on the contrary, as an exemplar of the school that dominated Victorian thought, utilitarian liberalism. This was in no small part due to the efforts of Burke’s great nineteenth-century biographer, John Morley. Morley was a liberal and a positivist, schooled like John Stuart Mill in the writings of Comte. His two biographies of Burke rooted him in the liberal cause, emphasizing his years of opposition to the Crown and especially his role in the American Revolution, “that part of his history about the majestic and noble wisdom of which there can be least dispute.” On the French Revolution there was indeed dispute. Morley avoided the problem by leaving the verdict to history, “to our grandchildren.” What attracted Morley to Burke was his conviction that Burke’s political philosophy was at bottom Benthamite utilitarianism. It seemed this way to Morley because Burke had rejected natural rights and other abstract and absolute principles. His every utterance praised expedience and prudence at the expense of rigid adherence to ultimate values. Was not the essence of utilitarianism, Morley asked, “expedience as the criterion of morals?” Had not Burke in 1774 “prescribed the creed of utility” when the king



and his ministers, neglecting circumstances, were lost in a “hazy medium of abstract and universally applicable ideas?” The Burkean opposition, Morley wrote, was prompted “by the standard of convenience, of the interest of the greatest number, of utility and expedience.” This was Burke’s message throughout his career, Morley insisted. Avoid “the supernaturally illumined lamp” in morals and politics and look to “the available tests of public convenience and practical justice,” which is to say, expediency. If Burke were alive in his day, Morley suggests, he would ridicule those who “reason downwards from high sounding ideas of Right, Sovereignty, Property and so forth.” He would reject all values “absurdly supposed to be ultimate, eternal entities.” Burke was much closer to the real principles of the French Revolution, than even he realized, according to Morley. For what it had done was to make “conformity to general utility” the principal criterion of good government. And this was, after all, Burke’s own attitude. Morley considered himself “a Burkean and a Benthamite”; good positivist that he was, so was his ideal. It was of “Burke’s utilitarian liberalism” he wrote, and which he praised.<sup>15</sup>

Henry Buckle’s *The History of Civilization in England*, written just before Morley’s life of Burke, had already elevated Burke into the pantheon of positivist gods. He had denied the validity of general principles in politics, talked of the happiness of the people at large, attacked metaphysical and abstract rights while insisting on prudence, expediency, and utility. Buckle described Burke’s politics as “purely empirical,” eschewing a search for truth and speculative principles and holding instead to “large views of general expediency.”<sup>16</sup> For Sir Leslie Stephen, Burke was also to be read as primarily a utilitarian, with perhaps some occasional excursions into absolutist, nonrelativist rhetoric. But these were aberrations. Stephen has no problem in snugly fitting Burke into the Victorian utilitarian consensus. Nor did William Lecky, for that matter, in his magisterial eight-volume *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, which appeared in 1887. Lecky wrote that Burke’s politics “were based on expediency” and “defended by purely utilitarian arguments.” Indeed, according to Lecky, the utilitarian perspective had “been rarely stated more skillfully than by Burke.”<sup>17</sup>

These Victorian liberals, who wrote of Burke as in their camp, were no less outspoken in their praise for him. It was in fact partly because of his alleged utilitarian affinities that they were so effusive. Burke’s political skepticism and its ostensible rejection of a realm of eternal verities seemed amazingly compatible with their own skeptical and



positivist inclinations. They considered utility, expediency, and prudential calculation to be the heart of politics, and so it was that they saw in Burke a kindred spirit. While they had little taste for the gorgeous excesses of his prose, he was for them the theorist par excellence of political wisdom. Lecky wrote of Burke's writings that "the time may come when they will be no longer read. The time will never come in which men would not grow wiser by reading them." Buckle described Burke as "one of the greatest men, and, Bacon alone excepted, the greatest thinker who ever devoted himself to English politics." But of all these Victorian liberals, none paid higher tribute to Burke than his biographer Morley. Burke is for him the model for all would be participants in public life. It is to him that one looks for guidance in the affairs of State. Not surprisingly, Morley's peroration occurs in a discussion of Burke's speeches and writings on America.

They compose the most perfect manual in our literature, or in any literature, for one who approaches the study of public affairs, whether for knowledge or for practice. They are an example without fault of all the qualities which the critic, whether a theorist or an actor, of great political situations should strive by night and by day to possess . . . . If ever, in the fulness of time, and surely the fates of men and literature cannot have it otherwise, Burke becomes one of the half-dozen names of established and universal currency in education and in common books, rising above the waywardness of literary caprice or intellectual fashions, as Shakespeare and Milton and Bacon rise above it, it will be the mastery, the elevation, the wisdom, of these far-shining discourses in which the world will in an especial degree recognize the combination of sovereign gifts with beneficent uses.<sup>18</sup>

What happened to Burke at the hands of the Victorian liberals is of crucial importance. It represents the first and most important step in the embourgeoisment of Burke, his capture by the bourgeoisie, and his enlistment to further their cause and their interests. His aristocratic biases as displayed in his writings on France and India are pushed to the side and writings on America are pushed front and center. More important than this, however, was the realization that his empiricism, and his skepticism when severed from his "unfortunate" predilection for aristocracy, could serve the new status quo in which the bourgeoisie dominate. The age of chivalry was, indeed, dead and buried. The powers that be were now the triumphant bourgeoisie who had already themselves turned their backs on the French Revolution and the politics of upheaval. The romance of Jacobinism was appropriate only for the assertive and struggling bourgeoisie seeking to find its place in the sun. It might not

even be necessary then to overlook Burke's writings on the French Revolution. For it would come to pass that bourgeois liberals could find wisdom in this very tirade against their earlier struggle. It was, after all, a plea for order, for stability, for submissive obedience to the powers that be, those powers themselves committed to "reform." The existing order was now the bourgeois order and it had to be defended against the abstract and speculative schemes of new restless and insidious minds, those of tampering anarchists and socialists, utopian and Marxist.

#### IV

That an American president of the twentieth century should have read Burke is itself surprising, but even more surprising is for him to have written that "his every sentence was stamped in the colors of his extraordinary imagination. The movement takes your breath and quickens your pulse. The glow and power of the matter rejuvenates your faculties." To be sure, it is not really that surprising that Woodrow Wilson, the professor of government enamored of English parliamentary politics, would gravitate so naturally to the pull of this House of Commons man. But it is the passion of Wilson's attraction that is so striking and which seems to bespeak some deeper response that Burke struck in the conservative Presbyterian within the liberal Wilson. For Wilson, Burke was the embodiment of racial wisdom, the instinctive common sense and practical soul of the Anglo-Saxon. An interaction with Burke was emotionally and physically stimulating. "Does not your blood stir at these passages?" he asks the reader. Like the liberal scholars writing on Burke in England, Wilson was struck by Burke's "concrete mind." His disdain for "abstract speculation" and for "system" appealed to him, as did Burke's "practical" approach and his preference for "expediency." Unlike them, however, Wilson was not afraid to meet the French Revolution head on, and to shout Amen to Burke's crusade against Jacobinism. We are a long way from an earlier president's response to the *Reflections*, which to Jefferson were "evidence of the rottenness of his mind." "The things he hated are truly hateful," Wilson wrote of Burke. "He hated the French Revolutionary philosophy and deemed it unfit for free men, and that philosophy is in fact radically evil and corrupting."<sup>19</sup> That this liberal president could be so taken by Burke is additional evidence of the general historical process by which Burke was possessed and used

by the triumphant bourgeoisie, a process of course intensified in the United States where the bourgeoisie lacked even an aristocratic enemy to overthrow. The bourgeoisie were no longer frightened off by Burke; indeed, some of their spokesmen were quite taken by his potential for serving their interests.

Much more surprising without doubt than Wilson's reading of Burke was Harold Laski's. By no stretch of the imagination a spokesman for the bourgeoisie, the Marxist Laski delivered a moving appreciation of Burke in 1947 to the Historical Society of Trinity College, Dublin, founded two centuries earlier by Burke. Laski's praise of Burke is all the more fascinating given the historical irony at work here, for during the 1930s and 1940s the greatest English critic of Burke was its leading Tory scholar, Sir Lewis Namier! Namier and his disciples have since 1929 been, in fact, the most outspoken detractors of Burke since Thomas Paine, but for very different reasons, of course. The burden of Namierite scholarship has been to correct the Whig conception of eighteenth-century history, with its scenario of the villain George III set against the virtuous House of Commons. Standing very much in the way of Namierite revisionism is Burke and the picture of George III that he had circulated from the late 1760s in the Wilkes crisis, through the American crisis in the 1770s, into the economical reform of the 1780s, and finally with his outspoken views on the king's insanity during the Regency. Wrote Namier:

What I have never been able to find is the man [George III] arrogating power to himself, the ambitious schemer out to dominate, the intriguer dealing in an underhand fashion with his ministers; in short, any evidence for the stories circulated about him by very clever and eloquent contemporaries.<sup>20</sup>

Namier saw Burke as the particular clever contemporary who authored the legend that George III was out to destroy the Constitution. Burke's version of George's double cabinet was a fiction, according to Namier. Equally misguided was his notion of the "king's friends" and the "ascendency" of the Earl of Bute. These were the products solely of Burke's "fertile, disordered, and malignant imagination," Namier argued.<sup>21</sup> But the Namierite attack on Burke is even more fundamental than this, for at bottom it insists that he is guilty of hypocrisy and cant. Namierism is itself a profoundly positivist indictment of the role of ideas and ideals in eighteenth-century politics. To understand the structure

of politics one looks not at what Bolingbroke or Burke wrote, not at party pamphlets and manifestos, but at connections and configurations of interests. Men were not moved by ideas or ideals but by interests. Politics was a game played by shifting connections of “ins” and “outs” who wove idea structures around these basic facts of political life. The ideas were meaningless, mere rationalizations for the position then held. What the Namierites are saying, then, is that Burke’s writings and ideas are mere cant, high-sounding principles that were laid over the base opposition of the outs. It is this much broader and more basic assumption about politics that informs the Namierite indictment of Burke as a weaver of legends. His ideals are seen as hypocritical cloaks thrown over the material and personal interests of faction and connection. According to Namier, then, Burke was consumed with “blatant egocentricity.” He was “self-righteous,” “hardly a reliable witness,” and a “party politician with a minority mind.” His political writings are filled with “arrant nonsense written with much self-assurance,” informed and distorted by a “blinding rage.” The Namierites cavalierly brush aside the writings of Burke, so treasured by the generations.

Burke’s writings admired beyond measure and most copiously quoted for nearly two hundred years, stand as a magnificent facade between the man and his readers . . . . When the trend of his perceptions is examined, he is frequently found to be a poor observer, only in distant touch with reality, and apt to substitute for it figments of his own imagination, which grow and harden and finish by dominating both him and widening rings of men whom he influenced.<sup>22</sup>

How very different the Marxist Laski reads on Burke than the Tory Namier! For Laski, Burke’s thought is “permeated by a power of compassion and a fund of common sense both of which are beyond all praise.” His capacity of mind gave “forth a radiant light.” He is for Laski “a lovable, not less than a remarkable man.” Unlike Namier, Laski can find “no atom of malice in his (Burke’s) disposition . . . he never gave way to envy or jealousy. He was never petty minded.” In short, “with all his faults, he was in every sense of the word, a very great man.”<sup>23</sup>

Those faults did not escape Laski. He criticized Burke’s “astonishing reverence for the great families of his time,” men who, according to Laski, were unfit to hold a candle to Burke. He describes Burke’s fear of change as amounting “at times, to something it is difficult not to

call hysteria.” He questions his “angry distrust of reason,” his “faith in the need for order,” his “harsh view of the common man.” All this notwithstanding, Laski sounds much like the American postwar Right in his conviction “that Burke lives on as though he was still a contemporary of ours with thoughts relevant to every aspect of our time.”<sup>24</sup> Laski’s sense of what makes Burke relevant in 1947 is, however, quite different from a Russell Kirk or a Ross Hoffman. In the very years of the Labour Government’s granting independence to India, Laski applauds Burke as one of Britain’s earliest and most articulate foes of colonialism. His instinctive defense of tradition enabled Burke to see the inherent injustice of Western imperialism. The Socialist Left applauds the traditionalist Right as they both condemn the barbarism and brutality of the bourgeois age.

Burke saw beyond his own age to a view of colonial policy, the significance of which we are only just beginning to apply . . . He saw clearly the moral vice of predatory imperialism, and he stood by his principles in the face of obloquy, indifference and neglect. He made a lonely and impressive protest against the hypocrisy of those who think that the superior abilities of the white man justify a policy towards the native races of oppression and rapacity and corruption as long as profits can be extorted from their misery.<sup>25</sup>

**It is not simply this that Laski celebrates in Burke. Burke is also offered as a model of the proper relationship of theory and practice in politics, of thought and action. His is an example of those with “an important decision to make” being required to think, being forced “to make the particular serve the general” and the immediate the eternal. “No political philosopher of the British tradition had quite the same power of provoking men to thought.” On the other hand, Burke sees “philosophy teaching by example,” his man of thought and reflection lives in the real world of “the cabinet room or the legislative assembly.” As such, he is a political theorist who is not a “systems-maker,” who eschews “a systematic philosophy of politics” and an obsession with “rigorous logic.”<sup>26</sup> One almost senses Laski’s conviction that Burke’s delicate balancing act provides a model for the thoughtful activists on the British Left suddenly thrust into power and responsibility in Atlee’s government. Ideology and eternal principles have their place but so do compromise, prudence, and common sense. Laski concludes his address to the students of the Historical Society of Trinity College with praise for Burke that unmistakably links him to this later age of theory and practice.**

In his own epoch, I do not think that anyone, save perhaps Chatham, can compete with him in energy of mind; none certainly in the combination of energy of mind with the power of profound reflection. He was often wrong; he was often prejudiced; he was sometimes carried away by those gusts of passion which not seldom mark, as they did in him, the weakness of a noble nature. Your founder at any rate devoted all his immense capacity to the single purpose of improving the condition of mankind. That was his major ambition; it is notable in how large a degree he achieved it. *Nil tetigit quod non ornavit* can be said of him as of few figures in the combined history of our two nations for the two centuries that have elapsed since he wrote down the minutes of your meetings. May what he did be an example and an inspiration to those who follow him along the difficult road he had the courage to tread.<sup>27</sup>

## V

If Laski's appreciation of Burke is in part shaped by his own sense of affinity with this earlier indictment of the soulless bourgeois age of sophisters, calculators, and economists, then his successor as the leading Marxist political theorist, C. B. Macpherson, has radically turned the tables.<sup>28</sup> He even goes the nineteenth-century liberals, who draped the aristocratic Burke with bourgeois clothes, one better. The Burke that fascinates Macpherson is really, in his own sake, a laissez-faire liberal, and here lies a tale which needs be told.

What most of those who regard C. B. Macpherson as principally an interpreter of the liberal tradition fail to realize is that for over two decades he has been equally preoccupied in better understanding the conservative tradition. From his article on Burke in 1959 to his most recent book on Burke in 1980, Macpherson has paralleled his preoccupation with liberal possessive individualism by equally provocative speculation on the hierarchical and traditional worldview of Edmund Burke.<sup>29</sup>

Macpherson's Burke is a tour de force of revisionist iconoclasm. He turns Burke on his head. From the defender of the old order, of the "age of chivalry," against the age of liberal-capitalism, the age of sophisters, calculators, and economists, Burke is transformed into an apologist for market society. From the leadership of that great triumvirate of antimoderns that included DeMaistre and Bonald, Macpherson's Burke becomes a descendant of Locke, a disciple of Smith, and a direct link to Spencer. He is, in short, a theorist of possessive indi-



vidualism, four square in the liberal tradition. How does Macpherson pull off this slight of hand?

It is done in two stages. The first, and less surprising step, involves emphasizing Burke's writings on political economy. Macpherson is not alone in this, but few have so insistently been preoccupied with Burke's bourgeois assumptions about human nature and the polity.<sup>30</sup> Long before his polemical writings of the 1790s, Burke gave clues to his liberal capitalist vision of society. Macpherson notes that as early as Burke's *Tract on the Popery Laws* (probably drafted in 1761), he insisted that the function of civil society was the secure enjoyment of property and the encouragement of industry. Moreover, in that same fragment he approved of, indeed praised, "the desire of acquisition," and "laudable avarice." Even in Burke's famous 1780 *Speech on Economical Reform*, Macpherson sees, as have others, common sense bourgeois assumptions at work and, as he puts it, "Burke's perception of the extent to which the market had become the determinant of all values, and his acceptance of an assumption which justified a policy of *laissez faire*."<sup>31</sup>

It is in the 1790s, however, that Burke's full-blown bourgeois political economy emerges, and while it is, of course, partially a response to the French Revolution, it is seen by Macpherson just as much a response to "the spectre of Speenhamland."<sup>32</sup> The crucial text, Burke's *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, was written in 1795, the same year the Justices of the Peace in Speenhamland, Berkshire (not far, Macpherson reminds us, from Burke's own six-hundred-acre estate in Buckinghamshire) were responding to large-scale economic distress by giving supplementary wages to laborers in sums related to the size of their families and the cost of bread. Burke's response to this resurgent paternalist reflex of an older moral economy is a lyrical hymn to the free market. Such government intervention would interfere with the natural laws of the competitive market and stop the flow of self-regulating enterprise, he writes. As Macpherson notes, Burke understood perfectly well the dynamics of the capitalist economy. He lectured Pitt lest he be tempted to interfere in the market place to remedy the famine caused by the war. "Labour," he wrote, "is a commodity like every other, and rises or falls according to the demand. This is the nature of things." If a man cannot support his family, Burke asked, "ought it not to be raised by authority?" No, he answered. To do this would be a grave error, "a blundering interposition." Labor was subject to its own laws. The state should not regulate it. So, too, for the entrepreneur. "The producer should be permitted and even expected, to look to all possible profit which without



fraud or violence he can make; to turn plenty or scarcity to the best advantage he can." What must be resisted above all else is the mistaken belief "that it is within the competence of government . . . to supply to the poor those necessaries which it has pleased the Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them."<sup>33</sup>

This is, as Macpherson notes, the creed of Adam Smith. Indeed, he quotes Smith's reported assessment that Burke "was the only man, who without communication, thought on these topics exactly as he did."<sup>34</sup> Government intervention, Burke wrote, would be an act "breaking the laws of commerce which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God." For Macpherson, then, "the central assumption of his (Burke's) political economy is strikingly like Adam Smith's invisible hand, though Burke's assumption is more obtrusively theological." He quotes Burke to this effect.

The benign and wise Disposer of all things . . . obliges men, whether they will or not, in persuing their own selfish interests, to connect the general good with their own individual success.<sup>35</sup>

The case seems well made in this the first stage of Macpherson's transformation of Burke, who reads in his *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity* like any future bourgeois capitalist schooled in the principles of Manchester and the Protestant ethic. Like Smith and those later Victorian manufactures, Burke saw the capitalist order fueled by the desire for accumulation. Avarice and the love of money were essential for progress and improvement. They were the sources of prosperity. To make this point, Macpherson cites that wonderful passage from Burke's *Letter on a Regicide Peace* (also from 1795) which is quintessential bourgeois Burke.

Monied men ought to be allowed to set a value on their money; if they did not, there could be no monied men. This desire of accumulation, is a principle without which the means of their service to the state could not exist. The love of lucre, though sometimes carried to a ridiculous, sometimes to a vicious excess is the grand cause of prosperity to all states. In this natural, this reasonable, this powerful, this prolific principle . . . it is for the statesman to employ it as he finds it, with all its concomitant excellence, with all its imperfections on its head. It is his part, in this case, as it is in all other cases, where he is to make use of the general energies of nature, to take them as he finds them.<sup>36</sup>

This is all well and good, but what of Burke as we know and (some) love him? Where in Macpherson's reading is Burke the defender of pre-

judice and prescription? Where is Burke the apologist for the "great families, hereditary trusts, fortunes . . . the great Oaks that shade a country and perpetuate . . . benefits from Generation to Generation?" Where is Burke the champion of clerical and royal mystery, of all "the decent drapery of life" that covers "our shivering natures" with myth and superstition? Where is Burke, the advocate of "proud submission," of "dignified obedience?" Where is the Burke who preaches that we all "love the little platoon we belong to in society," in which God has placed us? In short, what does Macpherson do with traditional Burke, the theorist of hierarchical society?<sup>37</sup>

It is in answering these questions that Macpherson makes his breathtaking move to the second stage in his transformation of Burke from conservative to liberal. There is no ambivalence in Burke, as I have argued elsewhere, according to Macpherson. There is not even a "Burke problem," as others have suggested.<sup>38</sup> For Macpherson, "there is nothing surprising or inconsistent in Burke's championing at the same time the traditional English hierarchical society and the capitalist market economy. He believed in both, and believed that the latter needed the former."<sup>39</sup> It is this last point that is crucial. The heart of Macpherson's reading of Burke is that the theory of hierarchy and status from the political theory with its premise of necessary subordination is joined to the market vision of his political economy. Burke thus becomes the principal theorist of the emerging capitalist order. Capitalism requires the unquestioned subordination of wage laborers to their employing betters, and it is all in Burke. The capitalist market requires a "chain of subordination." Capitalist accumulation requires, according to Macpherson, "a submissive wage-earning class." "It is," he notes, "possible only if the body of the people accept a subordination which generally shortchanges them."<sup>40</sup> Wage earners in a capitalist market must see that their inferior position is natural and customary, set, in fact, by God. Macpherson seals his reinterpretation with a marvelous passage from the *Reflections* that links the apparent discordant themes of capital accumulation, subordination, and resignation.

To be enabled to acquire, the people, without being servile, must be tractable and obedient. The magistrate must have his reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They must respect that property of which they cannot partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavor, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Of

this consolation, whoever deprives them, deadens their industry, and strikes at the root of all acquisition as of all conservation. He that does this is the cruel oppressor.<sup>41</sup>

Macpherson's master stroke in the minting of Burke as liberal is his insistence that for Burke "capitalism and the traditional order were the same." The traditional hierarchical social and political world in England had for a century, according to Macpherson, been a capitalist order. Property laws and political institutions congenial to capitalism had been in place since the Glorious Revolution while the traditional hierarchical order had for equally long been reshaped by "capitalist behavior and capitalist morality."<sup>42</sup> Burke merely provided market society with the theoretical statement of what it already had — the sanction of tradition, customs, and habit.

What does one do with this startling rereading of Burke? One first marvels at its audacity and its originality. At the hands of Macpherson, Burke's defense of the status quo, privilege, and deference provide exactly what the liberal order needed, a theory of class subordination. Keeping to one's rank and assigned place defines the hierarchical supremacy of owners and entrepreneurs over upstart laborers who might lack respect for their capitalist betters. The intimations and suggestive potential for hierarchical thought within liberalism itself that Macpherson had earlier found in Chapter 5 of Locke's *Second Treatise* or in the passages on women and workers in Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity* are now realized full blown in Burke's writings.<sup>43</sup> For this we are forever in Macpherson's debt. With his *Burke* he completes his uniquely insightful reading of liberalism as an ideology of two faces. One face is avowedly progressive, pushing aside an older order of repression, mystery, and corporatism. Yet even at its origin, liberalism had another face, attitudes of class supremacy and status differential that announced its own regressive and exploitive historical role. One is hard put to find anyone who has captured this contradictory essence of liberalism better than Macpherson. And it is with his *Burke* that the final dimensions of this contribution emerge.

This, it seems to me, is the principal response to Macpherson's rereading of Burke. It concludes and rounds out what has been a masterful effort to demystify liberal theory, to render clear its class basis in all its starkness, in short, to show its two faces. Recognizing its place in the full sweep of Macpherson's creative scholarship ought not, however, to preempt all questioning of his Burke, and it is to some

misgivings I now wish to turn. These misgivings are offered by one fundamentally sympathetic to a reading of Burke that emphasizes his bourgeois inclinations, but who would also insist that closer attention to the historical dynamics of eighteenth century Britain render a Burke perhaps less unequivocally an apologist for Manchester, the machine, and masters than Macpherson offers us.

There are, first, some specific textual problems. It is true that Burke often describes the state in liberal terms that read as if they were glosses on Locke. No where is this clearer than in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*:

Let government protect and encourage industry, secure property, repress violence, and discountenance fraud, it is all that they have to do. In other respects, the less they meddle in these affairs the better; the rest is in the hands of our Master and theirs.<sup>44</sup>

One is struck how similar this vision of the state is to that of Burke's great liberal antagonist, Paine, who wrote,

Every man wishes to pursue his occupation, and to enjoy the fruits of his labours, and the produce of his property in peace and safety, and with it the least possible expense. When these things are accomplished, all the objects for which government ought to be established are answered.<sup>45</sup>

But alongside this liberal vision of the state is the Burke who, more than any one else in his age, devastatingly ridiculed the voluntarism inherent in the bourgeois Lockean state. We cannot lightly dismiss the Burke who also pleaded that:

The state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, while Burke defends "the love of lucre" as "the grand cause of prosperity to all states," we cannot lightly dismiss the Burke who warned Parliament:

Let us not turn out everything, the love of our country, our honour, our virtue, our religion, and our security to traffic — and estimate them by the scale of pecuniary or commercial reckoning. The nation that goes to that calculation destroys itself.<sup>47</sup>

While there is much to justify seeing Burke as the theoretical defender of a hierarchical society that binds labor by chains of subordination to a proud and worthy ruling middle class, we cannot lightly dismiss Burke's repeated assaults on that very middle class as itself the principal enemy of the hierarchical principle. The middle-class dissenters in England and the Jacobin in France were, according to Burke, pretentious and ambitious men "impatient of the place which settled society prescribes to them." In his private letters of 1791, Burke insisted that the cause of the Jacobin was neither the elimination of the monarchy nor an all-out assault on property. It was simply "to root out that thing called the *Aristocrate* or nobleman and Gentleman." In doing this "the middle classes," Burke wrote, were striking at the very foundations of hierarchy, were seeking "to reverse the order of Providence." In seeking to free themselves "from the force and influence of the grandees," all hierarchy lay shattered. "The chain of subordination was broken in its most important link."<sup>48</sup>

We cannot, in short, lightly dismiss aristocratic Burke. We cannot totally read out of his life and writings that part of him that longed for the age of chivalry destroyed by "the middle classes." It is in Burke's very real ambivalence to the historical role of the bourgeoisie that I think lies the clue to the larger more general problem in Macpherson's reading of Burke. Put in a nutshell, it is that Macpherson sees the eighteenth century in too simplified a class perspective. He describes the period as characterized by two conflicting interests, the "ruling class" and the "working class." As for the "ruling class," its ideology is captured in "Burke's bourgeois-aristocratic prejudices."<sup>49</sup> This analysis does injustice to the complexities of class in the eighteenth century. It ignores the very real tensions between not simply two but three classes, a traditional ruling class, an articulate radical bourgeois class, and a much larger lower order. In Burke's era, the peculiar role of that bourgeois class was to indeed be a middle, devoting a good deal, indeed most, of its energies to an assault on the class above it.

Macpherson is here committing the same error that E. P. Thompson committed. Indeed, it is Thompson's reading of the period that seems to inform Macpherson's. In the course of his writings, Thompson is relatively uninterested in describing the emergence and vital significance of a middle-class radicalism in late eighteenth-century England. Thompson, too, tends to see England in the eighteenth century characterized by what he labels "essential polarities." He writes of the "poor" and the "great," the "popular" and the "polite," the "plebs" and the "patri-

cians." Occasionally he equates this with nonpropertied or lower class and upper class. There is little discussion in Thompson's work of a third group, a middle class of propertied who saw themselves as by no means allied with the great, the polite, or the patrician. Thompson is preoccupied with "the polarization of antagonistic interests and the corresponding dialectic of culture." It is in light of this that his splendid resurrection of working-class and popular ideology is to be read. It is there that Thompson finds "resistance to the ruling ideas and institutions of society."<sup>50</sup> The direct, turbulent actions of the popular crowd were where hegemonic control was challenged.

But there were in the last half of the eighteenth century antagonistic interests and conflicting ideologies that require more than the dichotomy of plebian and patrician. A self-conscious third group asserted its interests as quite different from the ruling aristocracy and gentry at the same time it sought eagerly to differentiate itself from what it considered the less virtuous poor beneath it. This middle-class ideology articulated by Burke's hated dissenter foes, Price and Priestley, more passionately repudiated "the ruling ideas and institutions of society" in Burke's age than any nascent working-class ideology did.<sup>51</sup> To overlook this, as Thompson and Macpherson seem to do, is to deprive the bourgeoisie of their radical and progressive historical moment. In turn, this would deny the defenders of the old order their own particular historic moment in opposition to the usurping bourgeoisie.

To describe the traditional ruling class, as Macpherson does, as capitalist for the one-hundred years between the Whig revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution is, I would suggest, to collapse its opposition to the liberal capitalist order much too soon. To suggest that conservatism in the eighteenth century was really liberalism is not to recognize the existence and legitimacy of a critique of early capitalism from any source other than the Left. It denies that conservatives like Bolingbroke or Burke could have been genuinely committed to an anti-liberal position. On the contrary, an autonomous repudiation of capitalism from the Right makes very good historical sense, inasmuch as it is the traditional elites who lose out most definitively at the birth of the new order.<sup>52</sup>

To see Burke as a possessive individualist because he defends property is not to recognize that at this critical moment of transition in Western thought one can defend property and still be a critic of the bourgeois state, just as Rousseau could be a critic of the Lockean state and market

society while still believing in private property. In short, to insist that Burke is not a traditionalist, not a conservative on any level other than simply as an apologist for bourgeois capitalism is to overlook the very real tension and gulf between him and the self-proclaimed bearers of capitalist, liberal ideology of his age, the Prices and the Priestleys whom he despised and who despised him. To write this off as a mere factional split between two branches of the ruling elite is to fly in the face of the real hatred and fury felt by the traditional elites toward the upstart middle class and vice versa. Is it mere squabbling among the ruling classes that prompted a Wellington to write, "The revolution is made; that is to say that power is transferred from one class of society, the gentlemen of England, professing the faith of the Church of England, to another class of society, the shopkeepers, being dissenters from the Church."<sup>53</sup>

To transform Burke's praise of the "chain of subordination" into a liberal defense of capitalist class structure is to deny the historic moment when the capitalist class saw its identity as, in fact, involving a repudiation of hierarchy and subordination decreed by divine ascription. Among its spokesmen, Joel Barlow, the American entrepreneur who spent the 1790s in England and France pursuing profits and radical politics, could claim in his *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe* (1792), that there was only "one genuine feudal claim" which the aristocracy passed on to their children, "which extends to every drop of noble blood. It is the claim of idleness." The great assumed they would be provided for by government, the army, the navy, and the church. "To put his hand to the plough or his foot into a countinghouse would disgrace an illustrious line of ancestors."<sup>54</sup> The fundamental sin of the privileged order was their violation of what Thomas Cooper, against whom Burke made a famous attack in 1793, called the "principle of talent." Government required "talents and abilities," which were not assigned at birth, but which manifested themselves in personal merit and achievement. While the privileged ruled the state,

The business of the nation is actually done by those who owe nothing to their ancestors, but have raised themselves into situations which the idleness and ignorance of the titled orders incapacitate them from filling.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, Cooper, the radical Manchester industrialist, argued that the privileged who acquired their control of politics and the social order



by dint of birth had no motive to industry or hard work. Everything they needed or wanted was theirs from their station in life. "Take away these inducements by giving them in advance, and you stop the growth of abilities and knowledge and you nip wisdom and virtue in the bud." Public virtue does not flow from the sated ranks of the privileged, but from "insatiable ambition," and as a "reward for extraordinary talents or great exertions." The aristocracy by their monopoly of public offices blocked the virtuous citizen from the rightful fruits of his industry. Cooper's rhetoric is vintage bourgeois radicalism. It is hard to write it off as "ruling class" rhetoric.

The privileged orders are not required to earn their envied distinctions. . . . They have no concomitant duties to fulfill in consideration for the privilege they enjoy, their inutility is manifest . . . they are of no avail to any useful purpose in society . . . . It is well known that where business is to be done, it is best done with competition, and always comparatively ill done, by those who are careless of public approbation, because they are independent of public opinion. The privileged orders are unjust also to men of experience and abilities who are deprived in a great measure by the due reward of meritorious attainment.<sup>56</sup>

Among these men in Price's and Priestley's bourgeois circle there emerged a unique middle-class pride that would be expressed as their special mission to fill what was felt to be the void between an ignorant laboring population and a needy and profligate nobility. The special trait of the middle class was its usefulness, its abhorrence of vice or idleness. The middle-class industrialists and intellectuals saw themselves as a people set apart, adrift in a sea of the great and the poor. Their chapels, their clothes, their hard work, and their provincialism set them apart as much as the Test and Corporation Acts did.<sup>57</sup> They responded with a conviction of unabashed superiority and a vigorous embrace of modernity. Nothing would stand in the way of Priestley's middle-class circle in their effort to take over and transform English life. Their mission was to clear away the thick underbrush of outdated and useless institutions, to simplify and reform government, to expose prejudice, mystery, and fiction to the glare of light. In them the crusade of the *philosophes* is joined to the interests of the middle class. Simplicity and the rejection of the arcane the mysterious, the complex becomes their creed; and it is this which Burke ridiculed in his writings of the 1790s. There was, then, a very real historical tension between the two parts of what Macpherson too easily lumps together — "Burke's bourgeois-aristocratic prejudices."

## VI

“Who now reads Burke, who ever reads him through,” we might ask, paraphrasing Burke’s own sarcastic query of Bolingbroke in 1791.<sup>58</sup> We answer, without hesitation, the conservatives and neoconservatives read Burke from cover to cover. But so do writers on the Left. They read him through and they have been for some time. With their readings, his stature looms all the more significant in the history of political thought. Indeed, for Macpherson, Burke becomes the one writer who best understood the theoretical requirements of capitalist society—that it “was still heavily dependent on the acceptance of status. Contract had not replaced status, it was dependent on status.”<sup>59</sup>

I would disagree. Burke’s genius was less in seeing that throughout the eighteenth century, the capitalist market was co-existent with traditional hierarchical society (a formulation with which there are problems) than in sensing that *in the future*, capitalist market society would require internalized status differentiation, that is, “the subordinate class continuing to accept its traditional station in life.” Burke perceived, quiet rightly, that the new “age of sophisters, economists, and calculators” would still require older social ideals, assumptions about social relations whose origin, in fact, lay deep in the mysteries of “the age of chivalry.” He is, then, truly someone who has much to teach the Left.

## NOTES

1. Russell Kirk, *The Portable Conservative Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).
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3. George III is quoted in Sir Philip Magnus, *Edmund Burke* (London, 1939), p. 195; *The Times*, 30 November 1790s; Thomas Cooper, *A Reply to Mr. Burke’s Invective Against Mr. Cooper and Mr. Watt* (London, 1792), p. 7.
4. Robert Bage, *Man As He Is* (London, 1792) Vol. IV, pp. 72–73.
5. Joseph Priestley, *Letters to Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (Birmingham, 1791), p. 112.
6. Quoted in Mary Mack, *Jeremy Bentham* (London, 1962), p. 347.
7. Tom Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. H. Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 71.
8. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Reply to Mr. Burke’s Invective* (London, 1792), pp. 98–99.
9. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. I. Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 788–89.

10. William Godwin, *His Friends and Contemporaries*, ed. L. Kegan Paul (London, 1876) Vol. I, 294.

11. William Godwin, *Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling* (London, 1805) Vol. II, 190; See also *ibid.*, I, 161–62, II, 143, 149, 155, 189, and Godwin's *St. Leon* (London, 1799) I, viii–x, 248, IV, 8, 61.

12. Paul, *William Godwin*, Vol. II, 264. See also Godwin's *Life of Chaucer* (London, 1803) I, 28, 30, 44, 161 and his *History of the Commonwealth of England* (London, 1824) Vol. I, 549–50; II, 120, 126.

13. William Godwin, *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills Concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices and Unlawful Assemblies* (London, 1795), p. 4. For details on Godwin's confrontation with Thelwall and the radicals, see my "On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England," *American Political Science Review* LX66VI (March, 1972).

14. George Croly, *A Memoir of the Political Life of the Rt. Honourable Edmund Burke with Extracts from His Writings* (London, 1840) Vol. I, 145–46.

15. John Morley, *Edmund Burke, A Historical Study* (London, 1867), pp. 123, 150–152, 309–310; *Burke* (London, 1888), 210–11, 215.

16. Henry T. Buckle, *The History of Civilization in England*, ed. J. Robertson (New York: 1904), pp. 259–260, 263.

17. Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* [1876] (New York, 1949), Vol. II, 225–276; William Lecky, *A History of England* (New York, 1891) Vol. V, 476.

18. Lecky, *ibid.* III, 197; Buckle cited in T. W. Copeland, "The Reputation of Edmund Burke," *Journal of British Studies* 2 (1962, p. 83; Morley, *Burke*, pp. 81–82.

19. Woodrow Wilson, *Mere Literature and Other Essays* (Boston, 1896), 107, 128, 141, 155, 158; *The Jefferson Cyclopaedia* (London, 1900), ed. J. P. Foley, Vol. V, 333.

20. Sir Lewis Namier, "King George III, A Study in Personality" in *Crossroads of Power* (New York, 1962), p. 140. The major works of Namier were *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929 and *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London, 1930).

21. Sir Lewis Namier, "Monarchy and the Party System" in *Personalities and Powers* (London, 1955), p. 13.

22. Sir Lewis Namier, "The Character of Burke," *Spectator* (December 19, 1958) "King George III," p. 140. See also Lucy Sutherland, "The City of London in Eighteenth-Century Politics" in *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier* (London, 1956); John Brooke, "Party in the Eighteenth Century" in *Silver Renaissance, Essays in Eighteenth Century English History* (London, 1961); Robert Wolcott, "Sir Lewis Considered—Considered," *Journal of British Studies* (May, 1964).

23. Harold Laski, *Edmund Burke* (Dublin, 1947), 6, 9, 10, 14.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3, 4, 10.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 8, 11.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

28. This attraction to Burke or early conservative thought because it represents in part a critique of capitalist society has characterized, to a certain extent, my own fascination with first Bolingbroke and then Burke. It is not that unusual. Consider, for example, Eugene Genovesi's concern and fascination with George Fitzhugh.

29. C. B. Macpherson, "Edmund Burke," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 53, 3 (June 1959), Section 2; *Burke* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).
30. See, for example, my *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (New York, 1977), Chapter 8, "Bourgeois Burke." See also the excellent discussion in Michael Freeman's *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism* (Chicago, 1980).
31. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, pp. 19–20; 28–29.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
33. Edmund Burke, "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity," in *Edmund Burke, Great Lives Observed*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1974), pp. 84, 84, 87.
34. Smith's alleged remark is noted in Robert Bisset, *Life of Edmund Burke* (London, 1800), Vol. 2, p. 429.
35. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, p. 59.
36. Edmund Burke, "Letters on a Regicide Peace," in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London, 1877-1884), Vol. 5, pp. 312–313.
37. Edmund Burke, *The Correspondences of Edmund Burke* (Chicago and Cambridge, England, 1958-1971), Vol. II, p. 377. Burke to the Duke of Richmond; *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. C. C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 190–191.
38. See, for example, B. T. Wilkins, *The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1969), or Freeman, *Edmund Burke*.
39. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, p. 63.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
41. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 372.
42. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, p. 63.
43. C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 222–229.
44. Edmund Burke, "Letters on a Regicide Peace," p. 321.
45. Tom Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. H. Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 220.
46. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 194–95.
47. *Parliamentary History* 30 (1792-1794), p. 646.
48. Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, p. 259; *The Correspondence*, Vol. 6, p. 451. Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam; *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, pp. 209–211.
49. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, pp. 25, 73.
50. E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7, 4 (Summer 1974), p. 395; "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class," *Social History* 3, 2 (May 1978), pp. 150–151.
51. See my *The Rage of Edmund Burke*, Chapter 1, "Bourgeois Radicalism and the Subversion of the Ancient Regime"; also "Religion and Radicalism: English Political Theory in the Age of Revolution," *Political Theory* 5, 4 (November 1977).
52. See my *Bolingbroke and His Circle* (Cambridge, 1968).
53. Cited in *The Correspondence and Diaries of J. W. Crocker from 1809 to 1830*, ed. L. J. Jennings (London, 1884), Vol. II, 205–06. Wellington to Crocker, 6 March 1833.
54. Joel Barlow, *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe* (London, 1792), p. 22.
55. Thomas Cooper, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective Against Mr. Cooper and Mr. Watt* (London, 1792), p. 16.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 32, 63, 65.

57. The Test and Corporation Acts reserved government and municipal positions for communicants of the Church of England.

58. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 186.

59. C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, p. 69.

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