

U3A

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

Don Fenton

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Political Philosophy in History

This course will investigate systematic political thought through the ages, from its origins in ancient Greece to the modern world. This is a *reading course*, and students will be expected to read sufficient of the works on the reading list to follow the discussions. The course will critically examine the thought of the great philosophers from the viewpoint of the social, economic, and political circumstances which generated the questions which these eminent thinkers attempted to answer, and will attempt to show the relevance of these thinkers to current notions about how we should live our lives.

February – for 12 weeks, + October – for 6 weeks.

Mondays: 2.00pm – 3.30pm

READING LIST

General Reading:

These books are “standard” texts

Sabine, G.H., *A History of Political Theory*.

Raphael, D.D., *Problems of Political Philosophy*.

The following titles are the primary sources for this course, and should have an honoured place on every bookshelf. However, they would be quite expensive to buy all at once. Some may be obtained in local public libraries, often in collections [**ask the librarian, that is what librarians are for!**] many are included in *Encyclopædia Britannica's* series *Great Books of the Western World*, they may also be found in second-hand bookshops and **on the Net**, try googling *Gutenberg Press*, where you can download most of them **free**, and most are available in Penguin.

Plato, *The Republic*.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Cicero, *De Officiis*

St. Augustine, *The City of God*.

St Thomas Aquinas, (any works by or on Aquinas)

Marsiglio (Marsilius) of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*.

Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*.

Locke, J., *Two Treatises on Government*.

Rousseau, J.J., *The Social Contract*.

Discourses.

Bentham, J., (any works by or on Bentham)

Hegel, G.F., *The Philosophy of Right*.

Mill, J.S., *On Liberty*.

Marx, K., *The Communist Manifesto*.

Capital.

INTRODUCTION

Political Philosophy is that branch of Philosophy which concerns itself with difficult, puzzling, but crucial questions about politics which must be answered in order that our society may be successfully governed, questions that cannot be answered by the empirical methods of observation and practice. Questions of Political Philosophy require the application of the methods of Philosophy, and sustained critical thinking, to political problems. Politics is governmental activity and activity directed to supporting, modifying, or changing governmental institutions, policies, and activities. Government is the continuing exercise of regulation over subjects, even when that government is exercised *by* the aforesaid subjects, including the organization of families and small communities.

Generally speaking, there are three ways of looking at the cosmos: (1) a theological perspective which sees humans as a part of the creation of some deity or deities (2) the scientific perspective, which sees humans as a part [a very minor part] of the larger cosmological natural order (3) the humanist perspective, which sees the concerns of theology and science as too abstract for the comprehension of the average person and impractical for application to everyday problems. Political Philosophy then, is a human-centred study of human political behaviour in the past, the present, and in hypothetical futures.

Political philosophy is reflection on the right, or the best possible, kind of political order: it is an application of philosophical thinking to ideas about society and the state: it is an attempt to provide general explanatory laws of political behaviour and institutions. Where science seeks merely to explain, philosophy seeks to explain and justify.

Justification of a particular line of thought may be sought by recourse to empirical matters of fact: is it the case that Western political systems are characterized by general apathy, or democratic participation, or widespread alienation from the means to political decision-making? – or – if Australia is governed by *élite* groups, what is the precise nature and composition of such *élites*? (Who *are* they?) The explication of such matters of fact is science; but the selection and perception of empirical data is a value-laden process: Plato states, as a matter of empirically-observable fact beyond the possibility of

dispute, that: “some people are not fit to be educated”. *Some* people *might* dispute that statement ...

“Education” is a notion that requires definition before it can usefully be employed in discussion: what does one mean by the word (or even the concept) “education”? For some it might mean training in manual skills; for others basic literacy and numeracy; for still others it means fluency in Latin and other ancient languages; to many it means the ability to research data, and to draw logically-sound conclusions from data. Conceptual analysis is necessary to avoid confusion between different senses, usages, and meanings of a word, term, or concept. Plato, in his *Republic*, devotes considerable space to distinguishing between different usages of the concept “justice”. A concept is analysed by specifying and/or defining its elements; it is synthesized by having the logical relationships between it and other concepts shown; and “improved” when a definition is offered which improves clarity and coherence.

The recommendation of some particular meaning for a concept is the prescription of certain values that *should* be applied to actual socio-political arrangements. The evaluation of principles involves discrimination on moral and political grounds between different forms of social life and institutions which involve such principles. Most political philosophers of the past tried to produce a coherent hierarchical system of principles together with a prescription for use.

Since political principles are value-laden, conceptual analysis cannot be politically-neutral; any analysis has concrete moral and political implications: socio-political concepts are a part of socio-political activity. “Individual liberty”, “leadership”, and “political equality” are concepts which are a part of the Australian political system, concepts which to some extent limit and define the activities and decisions of politicians. Part of the problems which have beset the Australian Labor Party since the early 1980’s have stemmed from a perception by the electorate that Labor has abandoned its adherence to concepts and values which the electorate perceives as forming the essence of the Labor Party’s being.

Some socio-political concepts are purely theoretical and do not carry any particular value implications: a legislative assembly is just that – use of the term has no effect on the legislative activity of its members. Other concepts are constitutive, and have both a

theoretical and a practical function: the “average man” with his *mores* is a fluid concept which changes as general social attitudes are perceived to have changed; it is a concept which is in constant need of re-definition in connection with moral judgements, sociological beliefs, and types of relationships: in Law, as in Politics, it is a particularly tricky concept. “Democracy”, strictly speaking, means that the processes of government are carried out by the entire enfranchised citizen body: the concept has been redefined in a variety of ways which allow the word to be used as a description of almost any political system.

But political philosophy is not merely the adaption of principles in order to bring them into line with actual or perceived conditions; some of the political philosophers of the past critically evaluated beliefs, applying a wider philosophical thinking to ideas about society and the state which went beyond current political awareness to a reconstruction of socio-political life. They explored and defined conceptions of political and social organization beyond known experience in a global interpretation of political reality in order to draw attention to the possibilities of human social living according to a particular conception of the fundamental nature of men and women. In deciding on the proper aims and purposes of political society, they set up a political/intellectual model of a socio-political system.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PHILOSOPHY

As we have seen, political philosophy is reflection on the right, or best kind, of political order. This implies a *choice* between different *kinds* of political order. Before the Greek invention of politics, political choice was confined to arguments as to whom should rule within the existing political framework, who should be chief, high priest, king, pharaoh, or emperor, or other officials. The notion that there could be different kinds of political *organization* was unexplored.

The Mycenæan Bronze Age culture of Greece had been a “palace culture”, similar in its essentials to the other palace cultures of the Near East, where the life of the community was closely regulated by the palace bureaucracy. The collapse of the great Bronze Age cultures, c. 1250 B.C.E., for reasons which remain obscure, was followed in the Near

East by Iron Age cultures which were essentially similar in their political organizations. In Greece there was a fresh start.

The archaeological record of Greece shows that the late Bronze Age was characterized by declining populations (fewer settlements) and increased internecine warfare, with no evidence for external invasion.

The evidence for early Iron Age Greece, supported by the Homeric poems, shows us a land of small, isolated, almost self-sufficient communities, cut off from each other by land because of the mountainous terrain. The collapse of the Mycenæan civilization had led to a migration of people from Greece to the coast of Asia Minor (Cretan Mycenæans settled on the Palestinian coast and became the Philistines). The small population left to Greece was adequately supported by the available land: even the slaves portrayed in Homer routinely eat meat. Politically, these early Iron Age communities looked to the *basileis*, the wealthy aristocrats (who alone could afford full armaments) for leadership in peace and war. Law, religion, politics and morality were not distinguished. The primary Greek deities were the natural forces which characterized the environment: *Zeus* was not “the god of the storm” he *was* the storm: there was a direct equivalence of name and thing. Other deities were the mainspring of human action: desire (*Eros*) and love (*Aphrodite*): *Aphrodite* was not “the goddess of love”, she was the sexual act itself. The traditional songs of the community (some of which have come down to us as the Homeric “poems”) were, as well as being entertainment, the community store of “right behaviour”: notions such as “justice” had no abstract formulation; a story would be sung which illustrated an instance of “just” behaviour and contrasted this with an instance of “unjust” behaviour. The wandering bards carried this traditional moral knowledge from community to community, engendering and reinforcing a common religious, political, moral and social culture amongst Greek-speakers. Each community was sufficiently isolated to develop its own localized individual culture within the compass of the wider “Greek” culture. Within the community, the persons who could call on the greatest store of this traditional knowledge (the *basileis*, with their leisure to learn the songs and the elderly, who had experienced a lifetime in which to have not only learned the songs, but also the ways in which the matter could be applied to current questions) were of very high status and functioned as judges in legal matters. Support for the best speaker, in

matters of either political decision-making or legal judgement, was demonstrated by acclamation by the attendant citizen-body. Change came slowly to the ancient world, and people were usually unconscious of the fact that their lives were substantially different from the lives of their forebears: they lived in a “timeless present”.

By about 800 B.C., these relatively comfortable economic circumstances were coming to an end. Populations rose above the carrying-capacity of the land. Marginal hillside land came under the cultivation olive and vine by people who were excluded from the best, wheat-growing, land. Starvation was never very far away even for those who owned the best land. Warfare between communities became endemic, usually with aim of harvesting the enemy’s crops, and the famous Greek heavy infantry (*hoplite*) tactics began to develop: the community as army. The areas in the vicinity of easily-defended locations, where the *basileis* lived, began to become urbanized as the surplus (non land-owning) population looked to the economic and political centres of their communities for a livelihood: the *polis* began to develop. The first (wooden) temples began to appear, as people turned to the gods and new ways of worship in their distress. Overseas trade gained in importance, as the poorer people attempted to barter their surplus wine and oil for grain (or the wherewithal to buy grain). As an adjunct to trade, literacy (in Mycenæan times the monopoly of palace scribes) appeared, as traders and merchants needed to keep track of their accounts. The Greeks adopted the Phœnician script, using some left-over signs to represent vowel sounds, thus inventing the first known true alphabet and enabling, for the first time, the sounds of speech to be represented in writing. In the literature of the period new deities appeared, characteristics of human experience: Persuasion, Wealth, Foresight, Charm, Force, Harmony, etc, and dissatisfaction is expressed with the dominance of the *basileis*. Communities were disrupted by internal conflict. Many of the disruptive surplus male population were sent off to form colonies, and the Black Sea area and *Magna Græcia* (Sicily and South Italy) became populated with hundreds of Greek foundations. Trade between these new communities, between the new communities and the homeland populations, and between the new communities and the indigenous populations, boosted economic activity, enriching some and ruining others. Change was not only rapid, but could be perceived, as the experience of one generation, preserved in writing, could be contrasted with the experience of the next.

Travel had shown that customs and traditions differed between even Greek-speaking communities. The harmony that prevailed in the natural world (season following season in due measure) was not apparent in the community, and tradition had no answers to the problems that beset the *polis*.

In seeking to discover the fundamental nature of the *cosmos*, the philosophers were seeking to discover how the order and harmony that they perceived in the natural world could be replicated in their own communities, in the *poleis*.

Thales of Miletus (in modern Turkey) was active around 585 B.C., and is reported to have asserted that the primary substance of all things was water. The reason for this assertion is not known. However, for the first time (to our knowledge) it is claimed (a) that there is one thing at the basis of all nature (b) that the variety in nature is due to something *in* nature (c) the action of a deity or deities is not called upon to explain the *cosmos*. Thales is also reported to have claimed that a magnet has a soul. The Greeks believed that the soul (*psyche*) causes movement in animate entities. For Thales, if *psyche* causes movement, and if iron moves in response to a magnet, then the magnet, which has caused movement, has *psyche*: the derivation of one statement has rested on another statement: for the first recorded time, a philosophical argument has been advanced.

Other philosophers followed, each trying to improve on the explanations offered by their predecessors, each trying to account at once for the fundamental unity of the *cosmos*, the diversity of natural things, and the order which is to be perceived in the natural world.

At Athens in the time of Thales, Solon, who was not a philosopher but was locally respected as a “wise man”, followed a traditional view of the inherent order of the *cosmos* and of justice as a universal principle by which the cosmic order could be brought to human affairs. Solon perceived the gods, however, not as the sources of human action, but as guarantors of the limits of human conduct. Asserting a difference between what was true and what was claimed to be true, and between what was real and what was claimed to be real, Solon applied his notion of “justice in due measure” to practical politics and formalized a constitution for Athens which was to become the basis for the later Athenian democracy. [N.B. Any decent textbook on Ancient Greece will have a more detailed account of this.]

Nothing is known for certain about the philosophy of Pythagoras, but his followers formed “clubs” – probably a sort of cross between a discussion-group and a political party – in many of the *poleis* of *Magna Graecia* (Sicily and South Italy) which gained and held political power in a number of communities for some time, until toppled (often with a great deal of bloodshed) by opposing factions. The Pythagoreans are thought by some scholars to have been the party of artisans, traders, and middlemen, opposed to both the agriculturally-based aristocracy and the “poor”: they were the “golden mean”.

Xenophanes, traditionally held to have been a student of Pythagoras, asserted the claim of empirical observation as the foundation for knowledge and ridiculed traditional values, claiming that men made gods in their own image, and he emphasized the possibility of the improvement of the state of knowledge, implying the limitations of traditional knowledge: his political thought is unknown. Herakleitos was a supporter of the traditional aristocracy who asserted that the underlying principle of the *cosmos* was *logos* (the word, or reason): every thing has its own set of relationships which stand in other relationships to other things; these relationships (often not obvious) are discoverable by reason: the duality of opposites is a way of expressing such relationships. Dark is incomprehensible without light; justice without injustice: harmony is the expression of relationships between opposing aspects. For Herakleitos, the failure of the “common people” to keep their place was a disruption of the harmony of the natural order.

Parmenides, from Elea in South Italy and traditionally held to have been a pupil of Xenophanes, invented logic, and appears to have enjoined the use of Persuasion (in the sense of reasoned, logical discussion) as a solution to civil conflict; he may well have been a “democrat”. His follower, Empedocles, perceived *Aphrodite*, the sexual act and hence all joining together, as opposed to the disruptive force of *Bia*, violence: *Aphrodite* was the force which held the elements together to form substances.

All these philosophers struggled against the constraints of a language that was not sufficiently developed to easily express the concepts which the thinkers were endeavouring to formulate and communicate. The accepted language of discourse was the traditional language of the songsmiths: the Poem of Parmenides, written in the epic style of Homer is for this reason amongst the most difficult passages in ancient Greek, as

Parmenides attempted to assert the authority of his insights in the language which people associated with wisdom. New developments in the technology of the written word and new attitudes about who could legitimately claim to purvey “expert” opinion were necessary before philosophy could take its place as a practical method for formulating and solving political problems.

THE GREAT DEBATE

What are the rightful aims of man in society? How can we *know* what conduct is moral and ethical – what *is* “right conduct”? These questions were of considerable importance in the classical Greek world, and especially at 5th century B.C. Athens, with its democratic form of government constantly posing new situations where disputes were likely to erupt over the “correct” answer to a problem. In the Homeric world the answers were to be found in myth, in customary usage. But by the 5th century B.C., society and the situations which faced it were no longer Homeric, and the traditional moral framework was not always able to cope. Greek society had changed, and, unusually in the ancient world, it had changed at a sufficient pace for the Greeks to be aware of the changes. A “historical awareness” had evolved, very different to the “timeless present” of the Homeric world. Another question to be answered was: who had the moral authority to give “right” answers to the difficult questions about moral and ethical matters?

The main contenders in the debate were the songsmiths (the poets), the historians, the sophists, and the philosophers.

The songsmiths, in the persons of the dramatists, had the weight of tradition on their side. As in the *Oresteia* of Æschylos, stories from myth were combined with religious interpretation to assert the validity in (alleged) custom of contemporary political policy, in this case the limitation of the powers of the council of the *Æreopagos* to the trying of murder cases. The presentation of a revolutionary change as a return to “traditional” *mores* was to have a long history in political endeavour.

The historians, represented by Herodotos and Thoukydides, attempted to establish norms of “right behaviour” in prose-writing (a new development in the technology of the written word) which drew moral lessons from a cause-and-effect view of human relationships in an historical context.

The Sophists were often teachers, rather than “seekers after truth”. Their subject matter was “how to succeed in public life”: in the heavily-competitive political environment of democratic Athens the *social* need for the warrior skills of a previous age had metamorphosed into the *social* need for political skills. In other words, where once a young man “got on in life”, achieved status in the community, by becoming a successful warrior, now he sought public approval and community status in the political arena. Noting that notions of “right conduct” varied from place to place, and culture to culture, the sophists denied that there *were* any norms of “right behaviour”, *any* universally applicable moral values, and asserted that **moral and ethical values were relative to time and place**. The sophists taught *rhetoric*, the art of persuasion, public speaking, by which success in public life could be assured. Such political success had become the rightful aim of man-in-society. Morals and ethics were perceived by the sophists to be mere convention. The average Athenian did not distinguish between the sophists and the philosophers: many of both were “foreigners”, non-Athenians, who were all a part of a common challenging and questioning intellectual trend.

With Sokrates, the philosophers turned their attention from the study of the physical *cosmos* and applying their conclusions about it by analogy and inference to civil society, to a *direct*, human-centred, examination of moral and ethical matters. Sokrates was an oral teacher who left no writings. Our knowledge of his philosophy is derived from the works of the comedy-writer Aristophanes, the retired general Xenophon, the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, and some fragments of other writers. Where these, often quite disparate, accounts coincide we can reasonably assert such points to be truly Sokratic.

Sokrates was a *hoplite*, a citizen-soldier, whose toughness, courage and calmness in adversity, and powers of endurance were famous in his own time. In private life he was a stonemason. In public life he served on the *boule*, the council which determined the business to be brought before the Assembly, and was its chairman at least once, and probably twice. In this capacity he at one time refused to be intimidated into putting an illegal motion, at some risk to himself. During a short period of non-democratic despotic rule he again refused to take part in an illegal act, and probably only the restoration of the democracy saved his life. He was finally executed by the restored democracy for “impiety” and “corrupting the youth”; that is, for asking too many challenging questions

and encouraging his young friends to do the same. Shortly afterwards the democracy was erecting statues in his honour.

Sokrates admired skill in the practitioners of any art or craft, but he objected to the assumption that skill in one discipline qualified a person to make judgements in another area. He saw no place for the “man-in-the-street” in politics: rule – under the laws – was for those who had expertise in ruling.

Sokrates’ contribution to philosophy is the use of inductive arguments – the progress from the particular to the universal – and the use of general definition. He made heavy use of analogy to make his points. The Socratic method was to collect instances of what all present at a discussion agreed to be, for example, a “pious” act, and examine such instances for the shared quality that made them “pious”, which could be called “piety”. Sokrates made himself unpopular by demanding definitions of supposed “experts”, asking, for example, of poets: “what is poetry?” (Is this the origin of literary criticism?) and demanding, not a list of samples of poems or “poetic” utterances, but a definition which could not be contradicted by an acknowledged poem which did not fit the definition. As few, if any, persons were able to define the area of their expertise in this way, the persons questioned by Sokrates were made to look ridiculous, and their influence (and status) was diminished. Whereas the Sophists made claims, rhetorical assertions, such as: “Justice is a device of the weak to frustrate the stronger”, or “Justice is obedience to the laws”, Sokrates wished people to carefully analyse the duties of life in order to arrive at a clear conception of their meaning, always for a moral end.

Sokrates had no ready-made ethical system – he was attempting to arrive at one – he was a seeker after truth. To explain the difficulty that people had in arriving at precise definitions, the Sophists held that knowledge (as distinct from opinion) was impossible, for there were no stable and indisputable objects to be known. Sokrates insisted that careful reasoning would make known the *true* nature of things. Sokrates demonstrated that a good deal of what was *called* knowledge was not knowledge at all, but he was convinced that knowledge was (in principle) attainable, once the debris of confused opinion was cleared from people’s minds.

PLATO

In the society of 5th century Greece, law, morality culture, ethics, science, politics and religion were relatively undifferentiated: that is, people had not begun to put religion, for example, in a different “box” from, say, law. The classical Greek *polis* was essentially an overgrown agricultural village: even the (probably) largest community, Athens, including its hinterland, Attica, most likely had a population of only about 100,000 people, that is, about 10,000 adult male citizens. The descriptive laws of science were not yet differentiated from the prescriptive laws of morality: both the physical and social orders were perceived as being governed by the same laws: the complexity of phenomena was made intelligible by stressing a central underlying principle. Judgements were regarded as relative: sickness was relative to health; pleasure was relative to pain.

As Greek travellers and traders observed the widely-differing social, moral, and political norms of different societies, the conclusion began to be drawn that the customs, laws, and rules of any society were mere convention, independent of a “natural order”: the sophists maintained that “morality” and “justice” were relative to time and place. The archaic philosophers had searched for an underlying principle of “harmony” and “justice” in the universe: Sokrates re-directed the search from things to mankind; the sophists denied the existence of such central principles. Sokrates’ pupil, Plato, saw change, including social change, as degeneration from the principle, the ideal.

The work of Plato is often regarded as if it were the beginning of Western philosophy, but Plato’s thought is the culmination of an already-long tradition of Greek philosophical thinking: Plato was a synthesizer of the extensive work of his predecessors as well as a startlingly original thinker. Plato’s political theories, as put forward in the *Republic*, were conditioned by the continuing tradition of Greek philosophy which, stressing a central principle of “harmony”, had discovered the apparent certainty of mathematics, methods of structuring arguments, and the beginnings of formal logic. Another influence on Plato’s political thought (and this cannot be overstressed) was the fact that the Greek individual’s means to political decision-making was directly related to that individual’s military usefulness: political-judicial responsibility was conditional on military relevance – and this in a society where the soldier had to provide his own armament, that is, be reasonably well-off. Plato introduces his “Guardians” as soldiers because the military

function and the political function were undifferentiated in his mind: he also asserts, by means of a rather lame analogy, that a good soldier has the essential quality of a philosopher: “a real love of knowledge”.

The archaic Greek philosophers did not distinguish between the descriptive concept of “harmony” or “proportion” and the prescriptive concept of “justice”: the order which existed in nature was (for them) the same principle as moral or political order. For Plato, the central principle underlying ethics was *of the same nature*, whilst not the same, as the central principle underlying mathematics.

Plato explained the nature of principles as “Forms”. Just as students of geometry draw diagrams which are *illustrations only* of mathematical ideas, the absolute figures, about which they are really thinking, so “Beauty”, as portrayed by the arts, is only a vulgar representation of “Absolute Beauty”, the “Form” of Beauty. The Forms are “fixed and immutable realities” which exist in “reason and order”; just as clear vision is dependent on sunlight, so the truth of the Forms – and our knowledge of the Forms – is dependent on the Form of the Good (a concept which led to some early and mediæval Christians, who assimilated the “Form of the Good” to the Christian God, to view Plato as a forerunner of Christ). In the *Republic*, Plato attempts to discover the Form of the State by scientific, logical reasoning: he makes no claim for its existence, or possible existence, in the real world, or the material world: “but in ‘heaven’ ... there is a model of it”.

It is important to note, before we go any further, that **Plato expressed the opinion that philosophy could not be taught**, that philosophy was a “divine spark” which sometimes leapt between persons engaged in rational discussion. If philosophy could not be taught, why did Plato write his *Republic* and his other works? Remember that probably the best refutation of the Theory of Forms is presented by Plato himself, in his *Meno*.

Plato begins his enquiry into the nature of justice by rejecting some of the sophistic definitions of the word. He asserts, through the mouth of Sokrates (remember that Sokrates is here a character in a work written by Plato, not the person himself) that rulers govern in the interest of the ruled; that government is a “professional skill”; and that “justice pays better than injustice”. Plato sets out to define “justice” by isolating its elements in the community and then applying them to the individual person: “the good man must be a good citizen: a good citizen could hardly exist except in a good *polis*; and

it would be idle to discuss what would be good for the man without discussing what would be good for the *polis*". This identification of the individual with the community is suspect on a number of grounds. To put Plato's *Republic* (and his other works) into its appropriate social context, in Plato's Athens, democratic freedom was freedom to *serve* the state, not freedom *from* the state: the *polis* was a kind of extended family in which the individual existed only as a part of the community: there was little or no private life, everything was public, a normal state of affairs in preindustrial societies. Given the relatively small size of the political community, everybody at least *knew of* everybody else, and personal reputation was of great importance. "Justice" is described by Plato as "some relationship" between the various classes of people in the *polis*. For Plato, "Justice" in the community is, in fact, the unity of the community; "Injustice" is disunity, dissention between social classes or political factions. Plato defines Justice in the individual as "keeping to what belongs to one and doing one's own job"; "to mind one's own business": as government is a professional skill, politics is the province of those whose job it is, both by aptitude and training, to govern.

Plato claims the authority for making the difficult decisions about moral and ethical matters for the philosophers: he states that his ideal *polis* cannot be approached in practice unless the rulers *are* philosophers. Plato's ideal *polis* is, in fact, an institution for higher education, for training philosophers. Whilst asserting the equality of opportunity – education, regardless of class or gender, for those who show aptitude – Plato assumes that the education of the generality of the "common people" is impossible, and asserts that there are "men who aren't fit to be educated". Plato's theory of Justice and the political theory of the *Republic* depend upon "the proposition that virtue is knowledge" (implying that there is an objective Good to be known by rational or logical investigation). The rulers of the *polis* must possess natural political ability and be educated to an exact knowledge (knowledge is virtue) of the Form of Justice. Only the philosopher can aspire to such knowledge.

Plato's students were spread all over the Greek world, applying his philosophical approach to the problems of government, and acting as advisors to rulers and statesmen; some even became rulers themselves. The ultimate goal was to be in a position to educate a ruler in Platonic principles from childhood. Plato failed in his attempt to train the future

tyrant (premier? dictator?) of Syracuse. It was left to Plato's student, Aristotle, to succeed in training the philosopher-king, whose name was Alexander the Great.

ARISTOTLE

It is said that "All Western philosophy is merely footnotes to Plato – and Aristotle wrote most of the footnotes". Aristotle was Plato's pupil: their lifetimes overlapped and they shared the experience of the political and social turmoil of the 4th century B.C. in Greece. They had, inevitably, considerable similarities of outlook. But there are striking differences in their surviving works. Plato's works are polished literary masterpieces: the surviving works of Aristotle appear to be "lecture notes" compiled by his students. Plato was an aristocrat (It is said that, had Athens still had kings, Plato's brother would have been the monarch.); Aristotle was middle-class, the son of a physician. Plato was a citizen-soldier of Athens; Aristotle was virtually a stateless person. Aristotle was a practical scientific investigator, an activity in which Plato had no experience and little interest. Aristotle laid stress on the family, the pursuit of wealth and happiness, the importance and value of property, respect for public opinion and taste, and the need to achieve the "best possible" political life. However, they both inherited the same body of philosophical, social and political thought and the same overall culture.

Aristotle rejected Plato's Theory of Forms on the grounds that if the Forms are separate from *things*, then there cannot be any intelligible account of the relationship between Forms and things; nor could the Forms influence things or events in the material world. Whereas for Plato the Form of an object has a separate existence from the object, for Aristotle, matter is the raw material for all things, and within matter the latent Forms are striving to differentiate objects from other objects: the Forms are inherent *in* the object and exist *only* in some type of matter. For Plato, change was degeneration from the ideal, from the abstract Form; for Aristotle, change is the process by which material things acquire their forms. Aristotle had a *teleological* view of the world: for him, change is the realization of potentiality: the nature of a thing is its end (*telos*), or purpose.

According to Aristotle, in order to understand the state, we must understand its origin, its history, and its function. If the end product of change is the nature of an object, then "man is by nature a political animal; it is his nature to live in a *polis*".

For Aristotle there is a hierarchy of ends: the end of bridle-making is a bridle; and the end of saddle-making is a saddle, but both are a part of the subject-matter of horsemanship (which is a *telos*, an end): horsemanship is one of the many techniques (subsidiary ends) whose end is (cavalry) warfare. Warfare, the management of property, the ability to state a case, and *all* the other practical sciences are a part of the subject-matter of politics: “the master-science”. The end, or purpose, of politics, the good for humankind, must include all other ends. There can, however, be no precision in political science because of the variation of opinion about the nature of the Good, morality, etc, so we can only aim for broad, “best possible” conclusions.

The “Good Life” involves “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue”. But what is virtue? Particularly, what is *moral* virtue? Moral virtues, such as courage, justice, generosity, and temperance cannot be taught and are not inborn, but are the result of habit and training. {Aristotle here appears to make a definite distinction between teaching and training, something that many modern educators appear to fail to manage.} The good state induces moral virtue in its citizens. The ruler(s) of a state must have a formula to discover what *moral* virtue *is* if the state is to fulfil its function, its end, its purpose, of providing its citizens with the Good Life. That end is the *mean*. Moral virtue is the mean between two extremes: courage is the mean between rashness and cowardice. Within the state, the middle-class is the mean between the poor and an upper class of either wealth or birth: the “best possible” state has a swollen middle-class and an insignificant number of either wealthy/aristocratic or poor people.

For Aristotle, the state is both a natural phenomenon *and* a product of history, including the History of Political Theory. The state is the highest form of community (above family, village, or town) because it is self-sufficient economically, intellectually, and in human relationships. Humankind, in the full development of human powers, is the end of the state. Aristotle therefore attacked Plato’s unified *polis* on the ground that excessive unity creates a family, not a state of diverse and developed individuals. Aristotle looked, not to the ideal state, but for the “best possible” state. This is the *polis*, which comes closest (in Aristotle’s view) to realizing the potentialities of humans: human potentialities are best realized within the *polis* form of political organization. That is, Aristotle saw the *polis* of his day as, with a little “tweaking”, as the best possible form of political

organization. The *polis* should be large enough to be economically and militarily self-supporting – it should not need to import food or other goods or need to seek military assistance from allied *poleis* – without being too large to govern effectively: it should be possible to address all the citizens at a single assembly.

The “good” aimed at by the good state is the equality of all citizens. Aristotle denied the (political) equality of democracy, based on free birth, and also denied the inequality of oligarchy, based on wealth, in favour of an equality of those who were entitled to exercise deliberative and/or judicial authority, those possessed of both moral and intellectual virtue: these were Aristotle’s citizen class. Women, farmers, artisans, and traders may necessarily be excluded from the citizen class.

During this period, it was usual to characterize Democracy as “rule by the poor”. According to Aristotle, oligarchy and democracy are extremes; the best *polis* is the *mean* between the two, and has a *mixed* constitution. Aristotle distinguished between “right” constitutions which exist for the common good and “deviant” constitutions which exist for the benefit of sectional interests. “Tyranny” is the deviant form of “kingship”. “Oligarchy” is the deviant form of “Aristocracy”. “Democracy” is the deviant form of majority rule. The doctrine of the mean implies that the “best possible” state is governed, not by the wealthy or the poor (who are both disqualified from citizenship), but by a prosperous middle-class who form the majority.

The population of this “best possible” state would have a common blood: those who are spiritual strangers cannot form a common state (common blood implies common cults and common cult practices: common religion). Common nationality should be reinforced by a single system of state-controlled education which trains pupils in the principles of citizenship and reinforces habits of behaviour which aim at the mean. One of the chief habits to be installed is obedience, on the ground that anyone who is to give orders must first learn to take orders.

ST. AUGUSTINE

Stoicism was founded by Zeno, who had been a student at the Platonic Academy at Athens shortly before 300 B.C. Whereas Plato and Aristotle were unable to conceive of a satisfactory political life outside of the framework of the small *polis* community, Stoicism was established at the time of Alexander the Great, when the demands of

universal empires overwhelmed the limited horizons of local communities. Zeno modified Aristotle's notion of things realizing their potentialities, of form being inherent in matter. **He asserted, following Herakleitos and Aristotle, that change is a universal characteristic; Zeno then insisted (after Plato) that there is a universal law , or order, governing the process of change: this he called "Natural Law"; a rational order that can be understood by reason.** The *cosmos* is a moral order; it is religious in the sense that it is laid down by the deity(s), and scientific in the sense that it is comprehensible by reason. The *telos* of man is to conform to the Law of Nature; unhappiness and evil result from living outside the Law of Nature. Virtue results from controlling one's desires by reason. Because all humans are possessed of reason, humanity belongs to a universal society: slave or free, Greek or barbarian, all are equal in the possession of reason; human equality derives directly from Natural Law. Justice derives from conforming to Natural Law. One does, however, owe some responsibility to the laws of one's own particular community, so that there does exist a possibility of tension between Natural Law and man-made law. However, since different political systems exist by virtue of Natural Law, to act in accordance with the social and moral norms of the society as one finds it may not mean that one is acting outside an accord with Natural Law. Stoicism embodied a strong sense of an individual's duty to carry out the tasks to which one's current station in life calls one.

The elements of duty and pragmatism in Stoicism were in strong accordance with Roman sentiment, and Stoicism was to become a generally-accepted characteristic of Roman thought.

Alexander the Great's conquests, and the empires of his successors, had resulted in the founding of Greek communities, that is, Greek cultural enclaves, throughout the Middle East, including the Jewish territories. The Roman conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean had brought the Jews, as well as the Greeks and many other peoples, under Roman rule. The peculiar, monotheistic (and intolerant of other religions) religion of the Jews was divided into a number of more or less antithetic groups. One such group, the Essenes, differed from the more orthodox sects in a number of ways. For one thing, they appear to have accepted the Persian (Zoroastrian) notion of the world as a battleground between "Good" and "Evil" (Jewish monotheism rejected such a notion as "the devil"). The

Essenes were also influenced by elements of Greek, particularly Platonic, philosophy (imbued from the Greek *poleis* which were scattered through Judea and all the Near East) such as the immortality of the soul (not a Jewish concept). The Christians, who appear to have arisen from amongst the Essenes, or at least to have been strongly influenced by them, added the Stoic notion of obedience to the political authorities to their teaching; in the written accounts of Jesus some characteristics of Alexander the Great were assimilated to the Messiah, whilst the story as a whole followed the general outlines of fertility religions common to the region.

Remember that communication was essentially *oral* – even readers, reading texts, sounded the words out loud – and that everybody was familiar with the stories: new information was frequently disseminated by telling a familiar story with the new material added in; or, if you like, saying something new within the framework of an existing story.

In the course of civil unrest and revolt against Roman rule, Jewish Christianity effectively disappeared, leaving Christianity to develop amongst its non-Jewish converts, in the Gentile, multi-cultural environment of the Roman Empire.

St. Augustine of Hippo, in North Africa, was born in 354 A.D., at a time when Christianity was still a minority religion. He stands at once (from a modern point of view) at the end of the ancient world and at the beginning of the mediæval world. Although born to a Christian mother, Augustine became a Manichean (roughly, a Babylonian fusion between Christianity and Zoroastrianism) and pursued a career as a rhetorician. At Milan he came under the influence of the bishop, Ambrose, and converted to Christianity. Coming from the Western Roman Empire, Augustine's education was in Latin, heavily influenced by Cicero and Roman Stoicism. During his intellectual drift towards Christianity, Augustine encountered the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and found a developed and intellectually satisfying philosophy which had reached conclusions that (Augustine thought) were compatible with Christian doctrine. Augustine's Christianity combined the Stoic notions of the Law of Nature, duty, and the State, Platonic philosophy (with its emphasis on the Form of the Good), and the teaching of the Christian scriptures.

One of Augustine's major contributions to human thought is the notion of *linear* history. Whereas previously history had been regarded as a *cyclical* process, for Augustine, history had a beginning, the Creation, and a definite end, the Second Coming

of Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth. Augustine was a Christian humanist, who placed humanity at the summit of creation, with God as *increate*: pagan religions placed the gods, who were both creators *and* created, both in and of the material world, as well as in and of the spiritual world, at the summit of creation. Augustine asserted the value of ethics rather than science, the Platonic over the Aristotelian approach to the Good Life.

The special problems which called forth Augustine's political philosophy were, firstly, the internal dissensions which split the Church and were often accompanied by violence; and, secondly, the increasing success of the (predominantly) Germanic barbarian invasions which culminated in the capture of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 A.D. (C.E.) The latter event was held by pagans to be a punishment visited on the Roman people by the gods for their impiety in turning increasingly towards Christianity and other non-traditional religious systems. Augustine's *City of God (De Civitate Dei)* was written specifically to counter this attitude. Augustine was not a system-builder, like Plato and the later Aquinas; his political thought is merely an aspect of his theology, and is found scattered throughout his work.

Augustine founded his political philosophy on the tradition of man's fall from divine grace: man is sinful from birth: coercive government is ordained by God, and therefore must be obeyed, except when the worship of the orthodox Christian Church is threatened: political dissention, disobedience, and rebellion are sinful. Peace and order, rather than "justice" or "the good life" or some other criteria, are the chief aims of effective government. Government being necessary, this necessity is not lessened even when a particular government lacks moral purity. The pacifism of Christianity applies to individuals and not to the state, which can engage in "righteous", or "just" wars. Christian orthodoxy can rightfully be enforced by the state. This pessimistic humanism was to dominate the political thought of both church and state in Western Europe for several hundreds of years, and is still highly influential.

THOMAS AQUINAS

The thought of Augustine formed much of the intellectual basis of Western Christianity for the next 800 years. This fusion of Roman Stoicism, Christianity, and Greek Platonism held that human conduct is determined by original sin and God's graciousness in mitigating the full consequences of this basic corruption of human nature: sin makes necessary the civil order and coercive government. The thought of Plato and his school was the intellectual framework which encompassed Augustinian Christianity. The effort of Aquinas was a radical re-evaluation of parts of this tradition.

The work of Aristotle had largely been lost to Western Europe, due partially to the closure of the pagan philosophical schools by the Christian authorities in 529 A.D., partly due to the cultural and political gulf which had opened between the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean and the Latin-speaking West, and partially as a result of the conquest of much of the Mediterranean world by the armies of Islam. But Jewish scholars had been wrestling with the implications of Aristotle's vision of reality for some time, and Islamic scholarship was introduced to Aristotelian thought by the Jews; Islam, too, had to come to grips with the Aristotelian system, which explained the *cosmos* and everything in it without recourse to the activities of a divine creator. Western Christianity encountered the thought of Aristotle in the work of Jewish and Islamic scholars, principally in Spain: Aristotle's Greek had been translated into Hebrew, and from Hebrew into Arabic, and from Arabic into Latin, for the use of Western scholars: the process had often garbled the original sense of Aristotle's thought. Knowledge of the Greek language had almost been lost in Western Europe, but Aquinas was able to engage the services of one of the few Western European scholars who knew Greek, William of Moerbeke, to translate Aristotle directly from Greek into Latin (and revise earlier translations). Before 1200 A.D., Western Christianity had been Augustinian; after Aquinas Western Christianity and its secular culture contained a distinct strand of Aristotelianism.

Aristotle had long been held in high regard in the West, but he was known only as a logician. Within this sphere he was regarded as an authority of a status similar to that of Plato or the Church Fathers, and this in an intellectual culture which tended to argue from authority. But when the full scope of Aristotle's work became known, it appeared to

present a total vision of reality, and of man's place within it, which was apparently valid, but different to, the vision held by the Christian faith. That is, an acknowledged and established authority was seen to espouse views which were not in accordance with accepted Christian dogma.

The Aristotelian world view was in radical conflict with the Augustinian world view. For Augustine, the function of government is to mitigate the consequences of original sin: humans are *naturally* sinful: sinful populations make necessary the apparatus of civil order and coercive government; for Aristotle, human behaviour is determined by human nature (which is, in itself, value-free, neither good nor bad), and social order and coercive government, if (and *only* if) the social order and the government are good, are a realization of human potentialities in the search for the Good Life.

The culture-shock engendered by the impact of Aristotelian thought on Western Christianity was of enormous proportions, and Aquinas set out to reconcile Aristotelianism with Christianity. If the Bible and the Church Fathers were right (as faith demanded they should be) and Aristotle was also right (as reason showed he was) then some way had to be found to show that Aristotelianism was not inconsistent with the Christian faith.

Aquinas faced a further problem in the fact that Western European Mediæval society had changed since the days of Augustine, and therefore Christian teaching was not always compatible with the realities of everyday life. For example, the Biblical prohibition on usury, the lending of money at interest, had applied only to relationships between Jews: trade between the many non-Jewish peoples of the Middle East was not affected. Transposed into an almost totally Christian, pan-European society, this prohibition (since it prohibited Christians lending money to each other at interest - stifled finance, without which trade could not flourish – without the presence of a Jewish community, which could (and did) lend money at interest to Gentiles – but the Christian morality of the time did not consider defaulting on loans made [at interest] by Jews to be a dishonest behaviour, a factor which also distorted the free flow of finance. As translated into Mediæval Christian Europe, this prohibition restricted trade and economic development in the Christian community, *which was already hostile to commercial activity*. Put bluntly, the idea that a person could buy a product at one price and sell that

same product at a higher price was regarded as cheating, or theft, and the fact that some people could benefit financially by this process was regarded as morally reprehensible: merchants could be robbed or despoiled with a clear conscience. Aquinas elaborated a new world-view based on the experience of feudal society: and this was a world view which excluded the Jews and other non-Christians. The four outstanding elements of Thomas' world were: feudal society with its habits and manners of government; the Christian civilization of Western Europe; the Christian theory of human life and human nature (that is, creation, man's sinful nature, God's forgiveness and love, and the final hope of redemption); and the discovery of Aristotle's ethical and political writings.

As had often been general in the ancient world, trade also carried an enormous social stigma in Mediæval Europe. Thomas Aquinas had attempted to reconcile the existing conditions of economic life with theological dogma. St. Jerome (one of the Church Fathers) had said: "A rich man is a criminal or the son of a criminal". St. Augustine had feared that trade distracted men from the search for God. Aquinas concluded "that commerce as such ... has something shameful about it ... Nevertheless, profit, which is the point of commerce ... does not carry the notion of anything vicious or contrary to virtue". For Aquinas the problem of usury was the problem of unjust exchange, and he concluded that:

"it is in principle wrong to make a charge for money lent ... (for) when we grant somebody the use by that very fact we grant also the thing ... (nevertheless) minted coins could, for instance, be lent ... as security. A man would in such a case be entitled to make a separate charge for its use."

In this way Thomas Aquinas legitimated trade, profit-taking, and finance for Christians, whilst maintaining the conventional prejudice against a life devoted to matters of commerce: he also gave intellectual justification for the expulsion Jews from many European countries, as by Aquinas, an acknowledged authority on theology, giving religious justification for commercial activities to be followed by Christians, the Jews were no longer essential to Western European commercial life. Thomas' exclusion of non-Christians from his view of European society was to provide the intellectual justification for the various Catholic Inquisitions.

On the State, Aquinas maintained the Augustinian doctrine that the primary derivation of governmental authority is divine sanction, but added the Aristotelian assertion that human authority derives from Natural Law, with custom and popular will as possible secondary derivations. Against Augustine, Aquinas saw politics as being a part of nature. Human nature is, for Aquinas, partly good and partly sinful: the rationality that sinful human nature acquired at the Fall From Grace is to be realized in working out the human condition on a pilgrimage to salvation. Against Augustine, Aquinas held that political society was a realization of rationality, a positive good which could contribute to salvation: “the end [*telos*] of the government of the world is the essential good”. Thomas asserted that monarchy was the best form of government, partly because “a multitude is better governed by one than by several”; because all things seem to be organized in a hierarchy; and because it is right that the superior, the least imperfect, should govern the inferior, the more imperfect: the ruler should guide the subject towards his proper welfare, or to the common good. Against Augustine’s notion of the state as a hospital for the sick, Aquinas took the more optimistic view that the state is an essential embodiment of God’s order. Where a ruler is perceived to be unsuitable, to be a tyrant, the removal of the tyrant should properly be by public authority, not by tyrannicide, for if the community can set up a king, the community can also remove him. This is in direct opposition to Augustine’s position that the political authorities (if Christian) should be obeyed, as a civic duty, and that failure to obey is sinful. However, because of Thomas’ sense of hierarchy, he felt it preferable that in such a case the community should appeal to a higher authority for help, to a (presumably) superior king.

Thomas Aquinas was essentially a theologian, and his economic and political views are a very minor part of his system. Whereas Aristotle had seen politics as “the master science” which embraced all other knowledge, Thomas gave that place to theology. For Aquinas, the truth is revealed in the Catholic Faith, and philosophy is a tool by which what is already known by faith can be demonstrated by reason. Where the various authorities on whose words the Catholic Faith was based appeared to differ, Aquinas endeavoured to reconcile those differences philosophically. Bertrand Russell tartly remarked that: “The finding of arguments for a conclusion given in advance is not philosophy, but special pleading”. This is a little unfair, as Thomas creatively addressed

the serious philosophical problems of his day and, within the constraints of his social and political culture, reached conclusions which were seen by many to be heretical, rather than given in advance. Shortly after the death of Aquinas in 1274 A.D., the bishop of Paris censured him and twenty of his works were condemned; it was not until after his canonization in 1323 that the ban was lifted.

MARSIGLIO OF PADUA

During the Mediæval period two of the important questions which exercised people's minds were, the proper relationship between Church and State, that is, the proper relationship between the papacy and the various monarchs of Christendom; and the contrast between the Catholic priesthood's vow of poverty with the very evident riches of the Church and the luxurious lifestyles of many high churchmen.

The argument about the primacy of either Church or State regarding each other derived from the "rights" which the first Carolingians had exercised over the papacy since the coronation of Charlemagne as the Holy Roman Emperor by Leo 111 in 800 A.D., and the papal authority over all princes asserted by Hildebrand when he instigated the election of popes by the cardinals in 1059 and concentrated all the power of the Church in the pope.

The kings, and especially the Holy Roman Emperor, in addition to their secular authority, possessed considerable spiritual authority, whilst the pope, in addition to the power of the Church, was a territorial magnate with secular powers and pretensions, and ambitions to increase the size of the papal possessions. In Marsiglio's 14th century, the Empire comprised much of western and central Europe (excluding France) and northern Italy, and the King of Germany was elected from amongst the ranks of the German rulers, and *normally* (conventionally? usually?) then crowned Emperor by the pope.

The political powers of the Emperor were theoretically limited to international relations, and the protection of the Empire in both peace and war: the various kingdoms and duchies which comprised the Empire were internally sovereign: it was a *sort* of federation. For political reasons, the papacy worked to prevent the office of Emperor from becoming hereditary (the Church was traditionally opposed to the hereditary principle in rulership) and to limit his political power, sometimes by refusing coronation to an unwelcome candidate. The city-states of northern Italy were legally fiefs of the Empire.

By the late 11th, early 12th centuries, the communes, or city-republics, of northern Italy, such as Marsiglio's Padua, had been developed as self-governing units. The communes were reluctant to allow the Church to go untaxed, and legislated to prevent more property and men (serfs and other committed labour) from passing into (not locally taxable) ecclesiastical hands. The communes claimed military service, labour and taxation from the followers of ecclesiastics, opposed the tithe, and the ecclesiastical and commune courts were rival jurisdictions. The internal political organizations of the communes were inconsistent with external authority, but the communes also contained elements loyal to the authority of the Emperor and elements loyal to the papacy: a constant and continual ground for civil dissention and disorder. The prerequisite for citizenship in the communes was house-ownership: artisans, merchants and financiers, the "commercial classes" were politically dominant, tending to form a more-or-less broad oligarchy, or narrow democracy. By Marsiglio's day, many of the communes, including Padua, had fallen under the rule of various European monarchs, mercenary captains, or the most powerful of their own citizens. In the face of papal territorial ambitions and ecclesiastical interference in their internal affairs, a large proportion of the populations of the communes supported the Emperor against the papacy. Lewis of Bavaria was elected King of Germany in 1314 without papal sanction, and responded to papal opposition by invading Italy, capturing Rome, deposing the pope and setting up an anti-pope to crown him Emperor; prominent amongst his advisors was Marsiglio of Padua.

The wealth of the Church had been the target of a number of popular movements throughout the mediæval period. The various monastic orders had been founded on an ideal of poverty, but gifts, donations and bequests had made them wealthy, just as the priesthood, with its revenues ecclesiastical (tithes etc.) and secular sources possessed the use of vast resources, and lived far better than the majority of the population. Popular movements which enjoined clerical poverty and challenged the authority of the Church were designated "heresies" and stamped out. St. Francis of Assisi and his followers had narrowly escaped this fate. The Franciscan Order, subsequent to the death of St. Francis, had also begun to accumulate property, and wealth: those Franciscans who insisted that the possession of wealth was contrary to their Rule (the "Spiritual Franciscans") and that the accumulation of wealth was, by inference, contrary to the proper conduct of the

Christian Life, tended to take the side of the poor against the rich and were an irritation to the papacy in both political and theological matters, and regularly risked charges of heresy. Whilst the Spiritual Franciscans were rarely democratic in themselves, the popular groups influenced by them often had democratic tendencies.

Marsiglio of Padua was the son of a notary to the University of Padua, and probably commenced his medical studies there before going off to join the military forces of commanders who were hostile to Padua. He returned to his medical studies, was offered clerical positions by the pope in 1316 and 1318, and turned to diplomacy in 1319; at some time he appears to have studied Law at the University of Orleans: he became rector at the University of Paris, a position from which he was forced to flee to the court of Lewis of Bavaria when his authorship of the *Defensor Pacis* became known.

Marsiglio asserted, both in the case of the individual commune and the Empire as a whole, the need for a single political administration super-ordinate to, and encompassing, the Church. **That is, the Church should be under the control of, and a part of, the State.** Western European culture was unified by religion but divided by secular politics: if the Church could be subordinated to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, then it was (so Marsiglio reasoned) possible for the European polities outside the Empire to be brought into the imperial fold. And full European unity was possible.

If the Church, at commune level, could be brought under secular control, the commune would benefit from large increases to commandable manpower, a broadened tax-base, and the removal of a source of internal civil strife. Marsiglio's starting-point was Aristotle's account of the sources of civil strife: he asserted, quite correctly, that Aristotle could not have known the about the problem caused by the political pretensions of an organized religion, of the Church. Marsiglio had experienced the methods of argument used by the northern scholasticism, presenting thesis and antithesis and endeavouring to present a balanced view of the problem, but his point of view, as a medical man, was biological rather than traditionally philosophical. Marsiglio characterized civil order as "tranquillity" (a medical term), a condition of good health, and contrasted this with "intranquility", a condition of disease, a state of civil disorder.

Against Aristotle, Marsiglio perceived the natural to be the primitive, rather than the developed, condition. He therefore repudiated Natural Law as politically irrelevant. Roman Law, based on Natural Law, was therefore dismissed.

Marsiglio was indifferent to *forms* of government, against Aristotle's emphasis on governmental forms. He drew a distinction between the circumstance of governments ruling over involuntary subjects, which is a condition that he regarded as diseased; and the circumstance of governments ruling over voluntary subjects, which is a condition that he characterized as healthy: the most healthy states are ruled by elected governments. For Marsiglio, law is a matter of political prudence, and therefore laws do not have to be either just or rational; rulers must themselves be subject to the laws; Divine Law has nothing to do with human law.

(T)he authority to make or establish the laws ... belongs only to the whole body of the citizens or to the weightier part thereof ... or else to the person or persons to whom the aforesaid whole body has granted this authority.

The above passage is the most contentious aspect of Marsiglio's thought: there is no agreement amongst scholars as to what it means! It appears to be a justification of majoritarian democracy, but does not define a "citizen", so that we do not know what "the whole body of the citizens" means; even more puzzling, what is "the greater part thereof"? Does this refer to the "important" people – nobles, wealthy merchants and the like – or does it mean simple majority opinion? Given Marsiglio's association with the Spiritual Franciscans it *might* mean that law-making is the prerogative of a mass adult franchise, which would have been a very revolutionary notion for the period. Even a *male* adult franchise would have been considered to be almost unthinkable. This formulation can be used to justify either majoritarian democracy or autocracy, and vindicates Marsiglio's support for both the internal governments of the communes and the Holy Roman Emperor's claim to overall rulership. ". Thomas Aquinas had asserted that monarchy was the best form of government, partly because "a multitude is better governed by one than by several". The principle of "Marsiglio's razor" asserts the necessity of minimizing the number of public officials. This principle insists that the

fewer people responsible for ensuring that a task will be performed, the more efficiently the job will be carried out. Ultimately this leads to the conclusion that *overall* rule should be in the hands of a single person. Hereditary monarchy is “natural”, and therefore primitive, so elected monarchy (the Holy Roman Emperor was an *elective* monarch) will operate to yield the best possible ruler. Public order is the task of the ruler(s) and necessitates the exclusive possession of coercive authority. Since only the ruler can have coercive authority, the pope can have no coercive control over the Church, and still less over any secular ruler or government. Previous theorists had either advocated complete papal control or parallel authority between papal and secular rulers: Marsiglio was the first scholar to proclaim the subordination of church to state.

Down the centuries, Marsiglio’s thought – although obscure to later generations – has been influential in discussions of Church-state relationships. Machiavelli took up the notion of the subordination of the church to the state, and Hobbes was also to be influenced by the notion, both directly from Marsiglio’s writings and indirectly from Machiavelli’s work. Modern objections to “the churches interfering in politics” are rooted in Marsiglio’s claim that the Church should confine its activities to spiritual matters. But Democracy also has a claim to have Marsilius included in the list of its many “fathers”.

MACHIAVELLI

The broad-scale political background of Machiavelli’s period was broadly similar to that of Marsiglio’s period, although the larger European states were, by now, much more involved with Italian politics. The communes were more or less constantly under threat of invasion from each other, from the papacy (which was trying to enlarge its territorial base), from monarchs such as the kings of France and Spain (who were now claiming hereditary rights to rulership over some communes), from the Emperor, and from the mercenaries (largely Swiss, although all nationalities – including English - were involved) who were employed by all of these and sometimes acted on their own account; the communes were also torn by internal dissention and between factions which supported one-or-another of the groups abovementioned.

In many ways, the *intellectual* climate of Machiavelli’s day was rather different from Marsiglio’s time. At the beginning of this course I referred to “humanism” as an intellectual perspective which is human-centred, as distinct from the scientific or

theological perspectives, which see humans as a rather small part of the natural order or of creation: this is a fairly modern definition of “humanism”. The intellectual environment of the Mediæval period was God-centred, based on knowledge of the scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers, and learning and discourse about matters of intellectual importance were confined to an educated élite: the masses were, deliberately, as far as possible, excluded from knowledge of, and participation in, these matters. This is why the Scriptures were forbidden to be translated into the vernacular: so that the “common people” would have to accept the “truth” as defined by their “betters”. During the Late Mediæval and early Renaissance periods, the invention of the printing press and the existence of an increasingly large literate audience brought the profane literature of Greece and Rome, and contemporary opinion about it, as well as vernacular writings, before a large public. Within this setting, a “humanist” was a person who was literate in Greek and Latin and familiar with their literatures, as well as the vernacular writings of the period: a meaning which the term still holds. Although Machiavelli apparently did not learn Greek, he was educated in Latin, and had some familiarity with Greek and Roman history and legend. The term “renaissance man”, usually refers to a person who is accomplished in a variety of fields of knowledge, of varied talent and learning. Machiavelli, whilst not outstanding in this regard, was a successful public servant (second chancellor of Florence for fourteen years), a diplomat, a successful military organizer, a playwright whose work is still performed and an all-round man of letters, and one of the most important political theorists of all time.

The project of previous political thinkers had been to aim for a political organization which, if not necessarily ideal, was a large improvement on existing political organizations. Machiavelli asserted that such projects were mere idle speculation: he was a “political realist”, the inventor of *realpolitik*, who based his ideas on what he considered to be empirical fact – what *worked*: the historical writings of the ancients and his own (quite extensive) personal experience of the inner workings of the political events of his time showed Machiavelli that there were norms of political life which were not affected by any particular systems of government. In *The Prince* Machiavelli is primarily concerned with the setting-up of a government – a new political order – by a new ruler or government (the “prince” is not necessarily an individual person) – this is

reminiscent of Plato's "Ideal Republic": or even the "clean slate"; in his *Discourses*, Machiavelli is concerned with the ongoing government of an established state.

Machiavelli's global interpretation is that the ends of political activity are, for the state, order and prosperity; for the ruler, power, glory, and reputation. For Machiavelli, politics is not value-free, but his conception of the state as an organic entity requires a social morality rather than an individual ethic. Machiavelli was committed to a non-Christian morality, a civic ethic with civic virtues such as public spirit, respect for law, fortitude, risk-taking, and firmness of purpose. Machiavelli's public *virtu* had nothing to do with Christian notions of individual virtue. Machiavelli's notion of *virtu* was closer to the Homeric notion of *areté* than the *areté* of Sokrates. Like Plato, Machiavelli lived in a small, politically independent city-state. Like Plato, Machiavelli lived in a time of flux and crisis, and his political theory emphasized the need for a powerful and stable political order. But Machiavelli was not a Plato who had seen a Sokrates allow himself to be judicially murdered rather than abjure a principal: for Machiavelli the survival of the state is the great end that overrides all notions of morality.

Since men are capable of every wickedness, the founder of a state must assume that all men will be "bad and ever ready to display their vicious nature". Being prepared for the worst does not preclude hoping for the best. The ancient *virtu* was widespread in Machiavelli's view of Athens, Sparta, and Rome at their greatest; the despotic rule of the few of Machiavelli's contemporaries who were possessed of *virtu* was necessary, in Machiavelli's view, for the preservation of the state until *virtu* was once more widespread.

Living in a period when the Christian ethic was dramatically juxtaposed with the ravages of war and internecine violence, Machiavelli saw the coercive power of the state, as wielded by the prince, as the only relevant technique for imposing political stability. Christian ethics were irrelevant to *realpolitik*. The controlled use of violence was, for Machiavelli, a central function of the state; the state must possess a constant reserve of coercive power and be prepared to exercise a controlled application of force in excess of that violence which disruptive elements were able to apply. The prince was a physician whose medicine – coercion, actual or threatened – could be administered in precise dosages appropriate to specific circumstances until the sickness in society was cured.

Correctly used, coercive cruelty should decrease over time as the social *malaise* receded. The purpose of the state is to maintain order and so reduce communal suffering.

Machiavelli's system does not rest on a metaphysical system, but on an empirical investigation of what Machiavelli saw as matters of fact. The traditions about various strong, stable states and the successes and failures of energetic statesmen provided Machiavelli with a list of maxims for preserving "the life and liberty of the country". He enquired of History (as he saw it) and of his own extensive experience: how are strong states established? How states are best stabilized? What causes the decay of states? This empirical and quasi-empirical theory resulted in a set of principles for the effective use of power as an instrument of harmonious order. The leading principle is that governments should imitate rulers who have been successful. Machiavelli advocated the ruthless but economical use of force; the effective use of persuasion, propaganda and deceit: maintenance of the initiative through prompt and decisive action (right or wrong) and the maintenance of a strong national army of citizen-soldiers. To be successful, a government must be able to control the forces of selfishness and disruption which may destroy political stability.

HOBBS

Just as the thought of Augustine both marks the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the mediæval world, the thought of Machiavelli marks both the end of the mediæval world and the beginning of the modern world. With Hobbes we encounter a mind which is recognizably modern, a mind which deals with political problems which are of some obvious urgency in the modern world, such as the political relationships between individuals and the relationship between individuals and the state. Living at the time of the English Revolution, Hobbes was suspected by Cromwell's government of Royalist sympathies, and by the Royalists of supporting Cromwell: in fact, the *Leviathan* is a general defence of autocracy equally applicable to either camp. The 17th century Europe of Hobbes saw constant violence as the Wars of Religion and other upheavals accompanied the concentration of power into the hands of absolute monarchs and the formation the Nation-States. The 17th century also saw the expansion of capitalism, particularly in Britain, with accompanying social changes as society adjusted to both the fact and the idea of individual profit-making.

Thomas Hobbes entered Oxford University at the age of 14 years and, upon graduating, began a career as a companion, secretary, and tutor to the aristocracy, including the future King Charles 11 of England.

Hobbes was an innovator in political philosophy on a number of counts. Firstly, he originated the related ideas of “man in a state of nature” and the “social contract”. Secondly, he is the first person to have based his political philosophy on the needs of the individual, rather than the well-being of the community: his predecessors had assumed that the well-being of the individual would be best assured by meeting the needs of the community; this focus on individual needs was to form the basis of Liberalism. Hobbes was also the first person to formulate a *mechanistic* view of human psychology: inspired by the views of Descartes and Galileo regarding the nature of motion, and his discovery (not until his 40’s) of Geometry, Hobbes insisted that all human thought and action proceeded from the motion of the particles of which the human body is composed; mental perceptions are sense impressions, and the qualities perceived by the senses are forms of motion. And it is with Hobbes that the language of rights and obligations, with respect to relationships between individuals, and between individuals and the state, begins to play a crucial part in political philosophy.

Hobbes’ notion of “man in a state of nature” was based on two factors: Eurocentric perceptions of some of the hunter-gatherer peoples observed by the early European explorers and the behaviour of 17th century Europeans when conditions of warfare had destroyed the authority of the state and the network of social institutions and obligations. (This is a political and social situation which conservative and liberal ideologists describe as “anarchy”.) But Hobbes’ “state of nature” is, however, an intellectual model (like a mathematical construct, for example a “triangle”) which does not need to have any existence in the real world: its purpose is to highlight some aspects of political relationships.

Hobbes based his notion of the state of nature on a pessimistic view of human nature, and conceived his “natural man” as a non-social individual, against the more realistic perceptions of Plato and Aristotle that the more primitive humans were already a communal animal. For Hobbes, the state of nature is a state of anarchy, a “war of all against all”. The mechanistic psychology espoused by Hobbes led him to assert the

fundamental equality of all men, in both body and mind, individual differences being statistically insignificant. Equal needs and abilities give rise to competition for available resources. In this state of anarchy, each individual has a right to everything, as anything might prove to be of use in the struggle for survival. Each individual desires to preserve his or her own life. Competition leads to murder and theft. Justice and injustice do not exist in this social context. The desire for personal security leads to a perpetual desire for power over others, as every degree of security must be still further secured. The logical result of all this is Hobbes' famous assertion that, in a state of nature, life is "nasty, brutish and short". In such precarious circumstances, self-interest demands the pursuit of peace. The means to peace is:

That a man be willing, when others
are so too ... to lay down this
right to all things; and be contented
with so much liberty against other
men, as he would allow other men
against himself.

This is a restatement of the "Golden Rule". In order to obtain peace and security, men agree to give up their rights to all things to an artificial person, the state, or body politic, as represented by the sovereign, who may be one person or an assembly. But no man can lay down his right to resist any who attempt to deprive him of his life or liberty, because the object of laying down the right to all things is to preserve one's personal security. It seems that, for Hobbes, the criminal charge of "resisting arrest" is philosophically invalid.

This artificial person, the state, exists in a state of nature *vis a vis* other states: international relations is a "war of all against all" between nations. Sovereigns live in a posture of perpetual war with each other; but in so doing, they maintain order within their various domains, and the employment generated by the defence industries benefits their subjects, so that the misery which accompanies anarchy does not follow.

Men have made a social contract with each other to give up their right to order their own affairs to the state. The sovereign derives his power from his position as the

representative of the state, not from the covenant, or contract, which the citizens have made with each other: there is no such contract with the sovereign.

Since the sovereign has not
covenanted to obey civil laws or
thereby to act unjustly, He has
absolute right and therefore absolute
authority.

The sovereign possesses all the rights which were laid down by his subjects. The sovereign is not subject to the laws. Since the covenant, or contract, which the citizens have made with each other, cannot be lawfully broken, the sovereign cannot be lawfully deposed. If, however, the sovereign fails to guarantee the peace and security of the realm, the subjects are at their liberty, in defence of their fundamental right to self preservation, to place themselves under the protection of another sovereign.

Within the state, justice and morality lie in obedience to the law. Injustice is breaking the law. Liberty exists only in the interstices of the law. Liberty against the state exists only in the case of personal self-defence, “So for other Liberties, they depend on the silence of the Law”. Because laws are different at different times and places, liberty is relative, it is not a constant, but depends on the particular legal system under which one lives.

Following Machiavelli, who was following Marsiglio, Hobbes defended the political dominance of the sovereign and derived the sovereign’s authority from those governed. Following Marsiglio, whose *Defensor Pacis* was used as a source for arguments to bolster Cromwell’s claim to authority over the Church, Hobbes insisted on the primacy of the state over the Church, saying

*The preaching of the gospel was not
commanding, but persuasion ... no man
has any just pretence of religion,
against obedience to commonwealth.*

The Church, for Hobbes, has no right to command people, only the state has the right to command the obedience of its subjects, and churchmen are amongst those subjects.

LOCKE

Whereas Hobbes was the prophet of autocratic government, with political ideas influenced by the perceived needs of the growing capitalist middle class to expect some political protection for their lives and property, John Locke, starting from a Hobbesian position (Hobbes was still alive, admired and respected), was to become the prophet of constitutional government with limitations on the power of rulers, as exemplified by the accession to the throne of William and Mary with the support of (and considerable control by) the Parliament.

Locke entered Oxford at the unusually late age of 20 and, although he was as disgruntled with the still-largely-mediæval curriculum as Hobbes had been, Locke persisted with his studies until he gained his M.A. in 1658 (the year that Cromwell died) and became a tutor in Greek, although his chief interests were in science and medicine, which he successfully practiced *before* he began his subsequent career as a public servant. He obtained his degree as a Bachelor of Medicine in 1675.

The concept of “Natural Law”, which dates back to Aristotle, is an assertion that there exists an absolute standard for human behaviour, a standard not subject to change which rules man but is not man-made; it is a descriptive law of nature, like the Law of Gravity. People and societies are better or worse as they live more or less according to Natural Law. Men can apprehend Natural Law by a process of reasoning and rational observation.

John Locke used the Natural Law concept to justify his model of civil society. According to Locke, civil society is the administration of Natural Law, it is a judge which determines whether men are performing their natural duties and possess their natural rights. If government upholds rights or administers laws which conflict with Natural Law, injustice occurs. As with Hobbes, Locke perceived civil society to be an artificial, human-made construction, which is thus is an artefact which can be shaped according to perceived needs.

Locke, like Hobbes, postulated a theoretical “State of Nature” from which to derive his views. Because of the further explorations of Europeans, and especially of the English, and therefore greater knowledge about the societies and lifestyles of “primitive” peoples,

Locke's "State of Nature" is far more benign than that of Hobbes. Unlike Hobbes' natural state of "anarchy", Locke envisaged a certain amount of natural cooperation in a state of nature. But in the State of Nature each individual is necessarily the judge of what behaviour is, or is not, in accordance with Natural Law. The need for civil government was a need for a common independent judge to determine the precise content of Natural Law and its application in particular circumstances. Locke assumed that the principle was simple and rational which derives the authority of government from the consent of the governed and exalts the sovereign people as the source of all authority. Although this principle lies at the foundation of democratic thought, Locke himself was no democrat, despite the fact that future generations would derive their democratic systems from Locke's political philosophy. Marsiglio had proposed that the "better part", or the "greater part", of the community should choose its officials and rulers by election. Machiavelli had pointed out that the support and approval of the common people was necessary to the success of the Prince. Hobbes had founded civil society on the notion that people covenant to form a state which *is* the Sovereign. Locke likewise founded civil on an agreement between individuals to form a social order. All these thinkers, therefore, rest their notion of political legitimacy on the consent of the governed.

"Consent", in Locke's thought, is a very important concept, as it was to be for most subsequent political thinkers. "Consent" does not mean that each individual citizen must approve of every governmental action. Locke begins by asserting that all men are *by nature* equal in a state of nature. In civil society, of course, inequalities "naturally" abound; children for instance have no claim on equality until they come of age. The act of giving consent is, for Locke, restricted to the *establishment of government itself*. Men are only equal in their constituent capacity. By living within a civil society, and therefore benefiting from the protection of one's possessions by its laws, a person gives tacit consent to the government of that society. Whilst rebellion against a ruler who has failed to keep the terms of the contract is legitimate, rebellion against the social order, the breaking of the contract to form a civil society, can never be legitimate.

Both Hobbes and Locke propose a theoretical "social contract" as the basis for civil society. But whereas Hobbes postulates a single contract, to form a government which *is* the Sovereign, who cannot be bound by laws, Locke insists that there are *two* contracts,

one between individuals to form a society, and one between society and the ruler: the ruler is therefore bound to accept obedience to the law, to the terms of the contract. Locke's theory derived from two political myths current in his time: one myth was to the effect that God's will and reason were reflected in England's parliamentary history, this is the basis of Locke's notion of a contract to form a civil society; the other myth was the conception of a covenant between the King and his people, this notion of a second contract permits Locke to assert "proper" limits on the power and authority of government, as well as government's subjection to the law. For Locke, government has only as much authority as is needed for the common good; the natural right which people do not, and *cannot* sacrifice by living in civil society is their freedom from absolute arbitrary power. One cannot sell oneself into slavery. The basic natural right which is possessed by all people is the right to life, liberty, and property.

In the time of Julius Cæsar, Cicero had asserted that the purpose of government is to secure the rights of property. But what is "property"? For Locke, anything that a person

removes out of the state that nature
hath provided and left it in, he hath
mixed his labour with, and joined to
it something that is his own, and
therefore makes it his property.

The largely agrarian focus of Locke's thought is demonstrated by his stricture that

As much as any one can make use of to
any advantage of life before it spoils,
so much [a person] may by his labour
fix a property in; whatever is beyond this,
is more than his share, and belongs to others.

A person has a right to as much land as he can personally cultivate to provide for his and his family's needs, *and no more*. Money, however cannot spoil, and therefore may legitimately be accumulated.

Locke's argument about the nature of property and the right to land was to provide the "moral" and philosophical justification for European usurpation of the lands of hunter-gatherer and subsistence-farming peoples such as the Amerindians and Australian

Aboriginals. Recent perceptions about the labour-relationship between these peoples and the land that they used have resulted in the same arguments being used to as part-justification of indigenous land-right claims. All told, Locke's position on property justifies the wealth of the rising commercial classes whilst attacking the privileges of the great landowners: the rights of the majority, the community as a whole, are asserted without substantially challenging the established social order.

The majority has conclusive authority over the individual by virtue of the doctrine of consent; when the community takes action it is only because the majority consents to do so: if this does not happen, it is impossible that the body of citizens should continue to be one community. This notion of majority rule has been enshrined in the democratic practice of Western Liberal Democracies, and has been called "the tyranny of the 51%", but for Locke, who was no democrat, the concept was really only of relevance to the relationship between the community and the ruler. The pivotal position in this relationship was, for Locke, occupied by the Parliament, which Locke perceived to be the vehicle of the majority. Here is the philosophical justification for the "Glorious Revolution", when King James II was deposed in favour of William and Mary. There is scant mention in Locke's work of the possibility of the Parliament being tyrannical.

The government of the United States of America is largely founded on 18th century perceptions about the government of Republican Rome, Montesque's perception of a "separation of powers" in British government, and the philosophy of John Locke.

ROUSSEAU

With Rousseau, democracy enters the modern political debate about the "best" way in which civil society can be governed. The concepts of the "State of Nature", the "Social Contract", and "political legitimacy" are presented by Rousseau in a new and challenging light. Modern trends towards totalitarianism, social anarchism, majoritarian democracy, socialism, and much of the democratic strain in Liberal thought can be traced to Rousseau's influence, which is also apparent in our contemporary educational theory, criminology, literature and music. The course of the French Revolution, which began the year following his death, was predominantly swayed by Rousseau's thought.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a largely self-educated man whose voracious but undisciplined reading in his youth had laid the foundations for his later literary success. His outrageous behaviour, unorthodox opinions, and mental instability kept him in trouble with the authorities of several countries and soured many of his friendships. A gifted stylist, Rousseau's rhetorical eloquence combined with his lack of training in formal logic and his undisciplined thinking cloud his writing with contradictions and obscurities.

Like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau began his political modelling with a hypothetical "State of Nature". Increasing knowledge by Europeans about the lifestyles and societies of "primitive" peoples had led to the admiration, by some, of these "simple" lifestyles and their closeness to the natural world. Rousseau combined this perception with a picture of Adam and Eve before the fall, and presented "man in a state of nature" as good and innocent, self-reliant and honest. This "noble savage" was to have a long history in literature. Man, like animals, is subject to the "Law of Nature"; unlike animals, man is self-aware, and can *choose* whether to obey the law of nature or to resist nature. Civilization is the corruption of this natural liberty. Rousseau presents three different, but compatible, accounts of this loss of innocence. One suggests that comparisons between oneself and others led to pride, and a desire for status; vanity, deceit, conspiracy, and vengeance follow, destroying the fraternity and equality of the State of Nature; status is a worthless goal because it depends on the opinion of others for one's self-evaluation. The second account posits the development of agriculture and metallurgy as creating a need for cooperation which benefited individuals unequally, so that the more aggressive individuals were able to utilize their inequitably larger share of goods to further appropriate the production of the earth and eventually the earth itself. The third account indicts the invention of property:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine', and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from

how many horrors and misfortunes might
 not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling
 up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and
 crying to his fellows: `Beware of listening
 to this imposter; you are undone if you once
 forget that the fruits of the earth belong to
 us all, and the earth itself to nobody’.

For Rousseau, as for Hobbes and Locke, civil society is an artefact, not a natural condition. Deliberately unfair and unnatural social arrangements have created the inequality and loss of liberty which characterizes civilization:

Man was born free, and he is everywhere
 in chains.

The rulers and the owners of property are as much enslaved by the vicious social order as the ruled and propertyless: society perverts *all* humanity. There is no going back: the State of Nature has been lost. It is, however, possible to set us free from bondage and attain the perfectibility of human society.

In order to free mankind from the corruption of our inequitable social system and return mankind to the freedom previously held in the State of Nature, Rousseau, like Hobbes and Locke, proposes a “Social Contract”. Here, as with Hobbes, we have a *single* contract; but in the Rousseau’s version, *every* individual hands over *all* his power and *all* his rights to the community. This condition at first appears to instigate a more absolute autocracy than even Hobbes’ covenant. But for Rousseau there is no necessity for a sovereign to embody or personify the state. The corporate body, the community, set up by the Social Contract, possesses a Will; this General Will reflects the true good, not only for the community as a whole, but for each and every individual within the community. If an individual should perceive that his best interests are not served by obedience to the General Will, he is mistaken about the nature of his true interests, and must be “forced to be free” and compelled by the community as a whole to comply with the General Will. The General Will is *always* in accordance with the common interest, and the true interest (rather than the apparent interest) of each individual is in accordance with the General Will.

Despite its fundamental importance to Rousseau's political thought, the precise nature of the General Will is difficult to determine. Rousseau clearly distinguishes between the Majority Will, the Unanimous Will (or the Will of All), and the General Will. The Majority Will, or even the Unanimous Will is, for Rousseau, only the sum of private interests, of Particular Wills; the General Will is concerned only with the common interest, the common good. It is as difficult to ascertain how we are to know the content of the General Will as it is to ascertain its nature, because Rousseau fails to provide a coherent account of the process by which we arrive at such knowledge. He says:

If, when the people, being furnished with adequate information, held its deliberations, the citizens had no communication one with another, the grand total of the small differences would always give the general will, and the decision would always be good.

Here Rousseau is not only vague about how the General Will is to be determined, but he does not explain what he means by "the people" or "the citizens" or, indeed, of what body people are citizens: are "the people" the educated, the poor, property-owners, adults, or adult males? Are they citizens of a nation-state, a province, a district, a city, a town, or a village? Rousseau also diminishes his argument in this respect by weakly suggesting that a majority vote is, after all, a reasonable approximation of the General Will. The many people who have seen Rousseau as a progenitor of totalitarianism regard the General Will, and the punishments for deviating from it, with considerable horror. The many people who have seen Rousseau as a prophet of modern democratic principles assert that politicians cannot ignore the General Will, which they see, probably wrongly, as grass-roots opinion.

Rousseau seems to have drawn his model of the political community from a combination of the government-by-mass-meeting-of-the-citizens which was current at this time in the Swiss communes where he grew up, and his perception of the government of the Classical Greek *polis*. The General Will is to be ascertained, however, not by voting, but by determining the "sense of the meeting". The process of government is the application of community values. Politicians, political representatives, are not required:

there is no representation; the people govern themselves, *directly*. In practice this procedure is not as unsatisfactory as it might appear, and can be a quite efficient and non-divisive mode for the self-government of small groups. It is never made clear, by Rousseau, just how such a procedure could apply to the large populations of a Nation-State. Perhaps this is because Rousseau felt that politics is an art, rather than a science dealing with measurable data: the General Will is to be felt, rather than calculated. In our modern world, computer technology has opened up the possibility of government by constant referendum.

Before such a fully-democratic society can be initiated, the social chains which bind mankind must be removed. Rousseau calls the being, the person, who is nominated to reorganize society “The Legislator”. Critics have frequently seen in this proposal a sinister forerunner of Hitler and Pol Pot, and their like. Rousseau was here borrowing from a common practice in ancient Greece, where a *polis* suffering from internal political strife, or a group of persons about to form a new community, would call on the services of a “lawgiver”, a disinterested and highly-regarded thinker, to formulate a constitution which would (hopefully) eliminate the perceived causes of political dissention. Rousseau’s “Legislator” is not a politician or a dictator, he is a public servant employed to perform a specific task.

Liberal-Democratic critics of Rousseau fear the probability of a stifling social conformity which they see as inherent in his conception of direct democracy, as well as the possibility of irredeemable and morally indefensible errors as the result of over-hasty direct application of public opinion. Supporters of Rousseau reply that Liberal Representative Democracy is an inherently élitist form of government which illegitimately excludes the mass of the people from real political decision-making, and is merely a screen to perpetuate the political dominance of the few at the expense of the many.

EDMUND BURKE AND TOM PAINE

Following the disturbances occasioned by the English Revolution, the British Parliament, Lords and Commons, was loosely divided into “Whigs” and “Tories”. At a time when political parties as we know them today did not exist – Parliament was effectively composed of independents – the Whigs and Tories were drawn from the landed gentry, and those under their patronage: these two groups were only loosely separated and there were many factions within the Parliament which often cut across other divisions on particular issues. Generally, however, the Tories supported the Established Anglican Church and the King, whilst the Whigs were more Presbyterian in religion, and wished to curtail the prerogatives of the King and supported the constitutional dominance of Parliament. Eventually, the Tories were to become the Conservative Party and the Whigs the Liberal Party.

During the 18th century, the colonists in the British North American settlements had become increasingly restive at the curtailment of the rights which they asserted that, as free-born Englishmen, they would have enjoyed had they lived in Britain rather than the Americas. Taxation and controls on trade were particularly galling issues. In 1776 the discontent flared into open rebellion. The American Revolution was a middle-class revolution, largely led by professional people, including many lawyers, and those with commercial interests: it was a Liberal Revolution, which derived its notions of intellectual legitimacy from perceptions about the government of Republican Rome, Montesque’s notions of the connection between the separation of powers and liberty, and the philosophy of John Locke.

Whilst the notion of absolute monarchy had been largely defeated in Britain by the English Revolution and the establishment of constitutional monarchy under William and Mary, and John Locke’s conclusions about political legitimacy had been widely accepted to the point of having become an ideology, France was still ruled by an autocratic monarchy. The French monarchy’s restrictions on trade and commerce became intolerable to the middle classes and those who depended on manufacturing and commerce for a living. The example of the successful American Revolution, in which many prominent Frenchmen took part, was one of the stimuli for the French Revolution.

The French Revolution derived many of its notions of intellectual legitimacy from the American revolutionaries, such as Tom Paine, and from the philosophy of Rousseau.

Edmund Burke was an Anglo-Irishman who made a career in Parliament under the patronage of the Whig Lord Rockingham; the founding thinker of Conservatism was therefore grounded in the “party” which was to become the Liberal Party, and he is one of the few political thinkers who were also practicing politicians. Burke took a number of unpopular stands during his career, including opposition to slavery, support of religious toleration, the freedom of Parliament from royal interference, support of the native Irish and their commerce against English restrictions, support of the rights of Indians against abuses by the East India Company and its officials, support of the American revolutionaries against the autocratic domination of England, and his opposition to the French Revolution. It is symptomatic of the looseness of political allegiance at this time that it should be a life-long Whig who laid the foundations of Conservative political philosophy.

Adam Smith was a lecturer in Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow when he published his *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. “(E)conomics” is a Greek word which roughly means “household management”, or “estate management”; Adam Smith applied the term to “nation management”. Smith challenged the prevailing “mercantilist” view that wealth was to be measured in precious metals with the view that true wealth was the surplus which is created by a healthy economy operating in a free and competitive market. Although free-trade arguments were not in themselves new, Adam Smith incorporated them into a wider-ranging system and single-handedly founded the discipline of Political Economy (often described as “the dismal science”) and provided a developed philosophical rationale for a market-operated capitalist society. Smith was not, however, averse to *some* governmental activity, particularly to ensure that the market actually *was* free and competitive, and his position was a good deal more interventionist than modern “economic rationalists” would like. Edmund Burke and Tom Paine were amongst his admirers.

Tom Paine recalls Jean-Jaques Rousseau in many ways. A largely self-educated man, Paine was a successfully-emotive pamphleteer and a supporter of majoritarian democracy who ridiculed, amongst other things, the doctrine of the separation of powers. Despite his

popular success (and, in fact, largely because of it) in rousing the American colonists to fight against England, Paine was something of an embarrassment to the American revolutionary leaders, who were emphatically *not* democrats, and they were glad to see him return to England, where he was welcomed by the supporters of the Revolution, including Edmund Burke.

Burke opposed the Liberal idea that society was an artefact with the assertion that a polity was an organic growth which evolved its various institutions over time, adapting as it developed to the particular needs of its people. A society's religious, social, economic and political institutions were so intertwined and deep-rooted that injudicious and sweeping "reforms" were most likely to cause worse problems than the predicament that they were intended to solve, or have at least, unforeseen and invidious consequences. Social and political change should take place slowly, as society evolves, as organic evolution, not by means of sweeping governmental or political reforms which could destroy much that was good along with acknowledged inequities.

Burke's support of the Irish, the Indians, and the Americans was based on the damage that autocratic English chauvinism was inflicting on the traditional structures of those societies. For Burke, "rights" carry corresponding obligations, and consist of traditional liberties which have evolved over time; he was vehemently opposed to the notion of "rights" derived from metaphysical abstraction, to "human rights". As abstractions, Burke was unremittingly opposed to "rights": as legal practice, he took "rights" for granted; that is, he only recognized "rights" which were founded in local socio-cultural practice, common law, or long-established and tested legislation. Against the Liberals, Burke asserted the derivation of general principles from actual political events (following Machiavelli) rather than the Enlightenment priority on abstract reason.

Abstract liberty, like other mere
abstractions, is not to be found.
Liberty inheres in some sensible
object.

Burke perceived the extension of democracy as a threat to liberty, asserting the English political system of his own day as more conducive to civil freedom. The limited democracy of England was balanced by traditional institutions such as the monarchy, the

church, and the aristocracy; even the abolition of the notorious “rotten” and “pocket” boroughs, and the extension of the parliamentary franchise to districts currently unrepresented in the parliament were opposed by Burke, who saw these factors as a corrective to passing public opinion. A contemporary move by constituencies to instruct their members of parliament on how to vote on certain measures before the parliament caused Burke to oppose this notion of democratic delegation with the principle of representation. In Burke’s view, a parliamentarian should consider the interest of the nation as a whole, rather than the limited interest of a single constituency. His forthright explication of this view cost him the seat of Bristol.

The American Revolution in support of the traditions which had grown up in the colonies was endorsed by Burke; the French Revolution, which attempted to dismantle the entire structure of the institutions of government based on the monarchy and the Church, replacing them with a mass democracy based on rational principles derived from Rousseau’s thought, was opposed by Burke. At the bottom of Burke’s endorsement of the American Revolution was his insistence that the Americans were merely taking back rights which were traditionally theirs. At the bottom of Burke’s opposition to the French Revolution lay the fact that the revolutionaries were attempting to abolish all tradition, the support given to them by English Liberals and Burke’s fear that the movement would spread to Britain. Tom Paine’s initial admiration for Burke as a supporter of the aims of the American Revolution gave way to dismay on the publication of Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*: Paine replied with *The Rights of Man*, which outraged Burke and resulted in Paine’s prosecution (instigated by Burke) by the British authorities for sedition.

Paine rejected Burke’s notion of tradition-based “rights” in favour of equal “natural rights” based on creation. Tom Paine asserted that all creation stories, regardless of religious tradition, stressed the unity and equality of man, without distinction of class or status. In Paine’s view, each child is, at birth, in an identical position to the first created humans; all people are, at birth, possessed of equal natural rights, including the right to ensure one’s personal comfort and happiness, and the right to intellectual (including religious) liberty, insofar as the right to the exercise of such liberty does not interfere with the liberty and rights of others. Civil rights develop from natural rights: in order to live in

civil society people exchange some natural rights for civil rights, which are rights that individuals cannot obtain for themselves. This version of the Social contract Paine derives from Locke, but the *nature* of the contract, between individuals to obtain social order and maximize liberty, *not* between governed and government, Paine derives from Rousseau. Against Burke, Tom Paine asserted that, just as each individual is born with equal rights, so each generation is born with all natural rights anew, so that no society can be bound by the contracts of previous generations: **the rule of tradition is the dictatorship of the dead.**

For Paine, only simple mass democracy could ensure government in the public good, rather than government in the interest of some particular group. Since direct participatory democracy is obviously impractical to apply to either large geographical areas or to large populations, representation should be grafted onto universal suffrage. But good government depends on good principles, so that a nation needs to establish the principles of its government in a constitution which takes a proper account of rights and duties *before* system of government arises or is formulated.

Paine's notion of democracy was founded on equality, and he asserted that in a society where material goods were unequally distributed, some rights for some people were overridden. Whilst Paine approved of Adam Smith's free-trade-minimum-government position, his prescription for the basis for government action differed. Paine proposed measures to ensure *equality of opportunity*, such as progressive taxation, pensions for the aged and infirm, income supplements for families and subsidized education for the children of the poor. Paine's welfare measures were, however, intended to be only a temporary measure: education would enable would enable people to work and save, so that within a generation or so most would be independent and able to fully manage their own lives, thus providing the conditions for the free market to operate for the benefit of a free and independent society. The idea that certain policy-measures would only need to apply for a limited period – until society adjusted itself - was to be a consistent feature of Liberal and Socialist thought for a considerable period.

The debate between Burke and Paine highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Conservatism and Liberalism. Burke's predictions of the dangers inherent in the Liberals' radical meddling with social traditions and institutions was to be borne out in the progress

of the French Revolution from a mass participatory democracy to totalitarian terror to the dictatorship of Napoleon. Paine's criticism of hereditary élites and the stultifying effects of outmoded institutions exposed the self-interest and contempt for the majority of the population which lies at the heart of Conservatism and many strains of Liberalism.

BENTHAM

Like many early-modern and 19th century thinkers, Bentham was an intellectually precocious child: he read Latin at the age of four, French at six, and entered Oxford University at the age of twelve. At this time, intending undergraduates had to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England: young Jeremy Bentham had doubts and said so, but was harassed into signing; consequently he became a life-long enemy of organized religion. After taking his B.A. at the age of fifteen, Bentham studied Law, but his career as a barrister was short and notably unsuccessful. His legal studies had impressed him, however with what he saw as the fallacies, confusions, and illogical nature of British Law, and following his early (very) retirement from the Bar, Jeremy Bentham set out, supported by a substantial inheritance, on a career as a reformer.

Bentham, as his reading demonstrates, was a thinker in the tradition of Locke, Montesquieu, Hume and Adam Smith, although his politics were Tory for most of his life. His work on law reform and ethics was constantly interrupted by his fascination for other schemes, such as new methods of preserving food, a model prison called the Panopticon, and a proposal to substitute, in place of the statues used for public decoration, the embalmed and varnished corpses of deceased persons: his own body was so treated, and is now kept at London University, where it is sometimes brought out to sit at the head of the table during celebratory dinners.

Although Bentham did not invent the notion of "utility", he made use of its application to law, government, and ethics with a thoroughgoing directness. In his criticism of Sir William Blackstone, a leading British legal thinker who eulogized the existing British constitution, Bentham abandoned the prevalent notions of "moral sense", "natural law", and the "eternal rule of right". Determined to put legal and ethical thinking on what he felt was a more scientific and secular basis, Bentham formulated his famous principle:

It is the greatest happiness of the
greatest number that is the measure
of right and wrong.

This principle was to be applied by organizing society in such a way that a person's duty coincided with his or her interest. A person's rational self-interest is governed by the desire to maximize pleasure and to avoid pain. Bentham thought that existing law benefited the rich and unscrupulous. He asserted that no-one knew the meaning of justice, but that everyone knew what caused them pain.

Now, when Bentham asserts that men and women are psychological hedonists, determined to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, he asserts both that this is a basic *fact* of human nature and that this is the way that people *ought* to behave. But if acting on the pleasure-pain principle is the way that people *do* behave, there seems little point in telling people that this is how they *should* behave. *Perhaps* Bentham has confused "is" statements with "ought" statements, or perhaps he thought that the conventions of social arrangements sometimes thwarted human nature.

Bentham's *principle* of utility is an ethical standard by which the actions of individuals, groups and governments can be judged: an action is good if it promotes the general happiness of the greatest number. Utility itself is a *property* of things, a tendency in any given thing to produce pleasure, good or happiness. Bentham is not interested in the *motives* of human actions, but in the *consequences* of human actions. One objection to this line of thought might run: if the extermination of an ethnic minority can be shown to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number in the community, is such an action morally "right"?

Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau and Paine founded, in their different ways, their notions of political obligation on a hypothetical social contract and on consent. For Bentham, citizens should obey the state as far as obedience promotes the general happiness. Since short-term general happiness, at least, is unlikely to be promoted by civil unrest, disobedience or rebellion, Bentham's notion of political obligation is, generally speaking, anti-revolutionary. Bentham also asserted that natural law and natural rights theories were dangerous, in that they encourage rebellion whenever a state's actions do not conform to some particular notion of "natural law" or "natural right". Also, Bentham held that, since

no-one would enter into a social contract if that contract was not going to promote their greater happiness, make them better-off, then any social contract *must* be based on utility; therefore social contract theories are irrelevant to any explanation of political obligation (because utility is a more basic, simpler, and effective explanation for this). However, Bentham did accept that political resistance could be justified when the disutility created for the community by resistance was less than the disutility created for the community by obedience.

As a legal positivist, Bentham claimed that the only laws that can be shown to exist are those instituted by governments and that the only *rights* are *legal rights*, that is, rights given by the law. “Natural rights”, for Bentham, are “nonsense on stilts”.

Jeremy Bentham saw political society as one where the members of the society have a common superior to whom the citizens pay natural obedience. A sovereign is a person, or group, to whom the citizens pay habitual obedience. Laws are commands which express the will of the sovereign. Obedience to the law is the legal duty of the subject; failure to comply with one’s legal duties is punishable. Therefore, citizens cannot have rights against rulers, only rights against such other citizens as do not fulfil their legal duties.

However, laws can be criticized, judged as good or bad, by applying the principle of utility, by undertaking a sort of cost-benefit analysis, in order to ascertain whether a law promotes the greatest good of the greatest number. This process is sometimes known as Bentham’s “hedonistic calculus”.

In order to apply this principle, Bentham was driven to assume the equal worth of the interest of the interest of each individual, the *moral equivalence* of the happiness of each individual. This leads to the moral equivalence of pleasures: Bentham asserted that “poetry is as good as pushpin” (pushpin was a children’s game). No one individual counted for more than any other individual; no one individual’s pleasure counted for more than any other individual’s pleasure. While this refusal to accept that any individual or their pleasures could have more moral value than those of any other individual or their pleasures is potentially a very democratic position, the question remains: is utility an adequate moral foundation for political policy or political action?

Bentham is an important liberal, concerned, as liberals typically are, with restricting the power of government and maximizing the freedom of the individual. But he defends

liberty on the grounds of utility rather than on Locke's "natural right": for Bentham, liberty is not *an end in itself*; it is a *means* to happiness. For Bentham, *restrictions* on freedom cause pain, and are to be avoided unless the *benefits* of restriction outweigh the pain that restrictions cause.

Bentham drafted a good many model constitutions, which he offered to various governments around the world. Thomas Jefferson preferred to write his own. There is nothing necessarily democratic in these ideas of Bentham's – Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, adopted some of them – and, whilst Bentham's constitutions were never accepted, as a whole, by any polity, his ideas were widely influential, especially in the newly-independent nations of South America. At some time around 1808, Bentham met James Mill, who convinced Bentham that, in order to prevent rulers from maximizing their own interest at the expense of the ruled, rulers must be made responsible to the ruled. Bentham therefore abandoned his hitherto lifelong Tory politics to argue the then radical-liberal position that democratic representative government is the best guarantee that government will govern for the greatest good of the greatest number. Bentham's notion of representation depended, in part, on the elected representatives being members of the nation's intellectual élite: like James Mill and other early democratic reformers, it did not occur to Bentham that workers might elect other workers to the parliament. For Bentham, rational persons will elect *only* persons who are demonstrably "better", more capable, than themselves.

JAMES MILL

James Mill was born in 1773, the son of a poor cobbler and a determined mother who ensured that he had a sound Scots education. Under the patronage of Sir John Stuart, James Mill was enabled to attend the University of Edinburgh. Today, many historians assert that the Scots universities were the intellectual leaders of Europe at this time, and considerably better than the English universities: it is claimed that Edinburgh was then the best of the Scots universities. Fenn claims that

From 1790 to 1810 ... a group of men
emerged who were to dominate the
intellectual and political life of
Great Britain for the next forty [years].

Mill studied theology, but “his reading [was] quite unlike that of other divinity students”, as revealed by the library records. James Mill read voraciously in philosophy and politics, and in his degree work took Greek well beyond the required minimum, to achieve such a level of knowledge of Greek language and literature that he was later to seriously consider applying for a professorship in Greek.

Although Mill took his degree in divinity, and was ordained in the Church of Scotland in 1798, by 1810 he was an agnostic. By then Mill had met Bentham. By then Bentham had become a democrat. The two men had reacted on one another: James Mill became an agnostic publicist for Bentham’s ideas; Bentham became a radical democrat. James Mill, now married and with a family, was earning a sporadic living as a journalist when his radical-utilitarian views began to curtail his income, as the publications for which he worked were frightened of publishing his views. Bentham largely supported the Mill family during the eight years that it took James Mill to write his *History of British India*: a work which made Mill’s intellectual reputation and which, despite its critical tone, obtained for him a senior position in the British East India Company and assured his financial future.

There is a problem with James Mill’s political thought: he had two distinct sets of views. One set of views was a public political philosophy; the other set of views was much more radical, and was held so privately that even his son, John Stuart Mill seems to have been unaware of them, and which only came to light during an academic study of James Mill’s private papers. There was good reason for this dichotomy – the same reason that Bentham published largely abroad, and in French. Censorship, and severe penalties for anything that could be construed as “sedition” against the prevailing aristocratic government, made the publication of too-radical views personally risky; also Mill appears to have publicized, in many cases, only watered-down versions of his thought which he felt might be more generally politically and socially acceptable to the middle classes. For example, James Mill’s *published* view on the suffrage did not advocate giving women the vote (to his son’s disgust) and restricted male suffrage; his private papers reveal his *personal* advocacy of full, or universal, adult suffrage. As James Mill’s private views remained so until well after his lifetime, and therefore had no influence, the following discussion will be confined to a brief description of his publicly-acknowledged thought.

James Mill accepted Bentham's psychological principle that all persons desire to maximize their own happiness. He also accepted Bentham's ethical principle that the "greatest good of the greatest number" is the "proper end" of all government. Mill concluded that the only way to prevent rulers from maximizing their *own* happiness at the expense of the community was to establish a representative democracy with a sufficiently wide suffrage to prevent the dominance of any "sinister interests".

James Mill understood that the majority of individuals do not perceive their true interest. But it would be wrong to exclude them from the franchise on that account, for a restricted ruling class will always govern in its own perceived interest rather than that of the community. If the masses are enfranchised and provided with an education, they will engender a far better government than any irresponsible ruling minority. So, to summarize James Mill's political thought, people's actions are always governed by their private, worldly, personal interest. Only rulers whose interests are in common with the interests of the community will govern in accordance with the interests of the governed. Only the accountability of the governors to the governed causes the governors to identify with the interest of the governed. Fear of loss of power will force the governors to rule in the interest of the ruled.

HEGEL

Hegel was nineteen when the French Revolution erupted in 1789. Rousseau's ideas had affected the nature of the French Revolution; the French Revolution affected the nature of Hegel's ideas. Hegel is a systematic philosopher whose ideas on every subject are so interrelated that they are difficult to summarize or simplify, yet so influential that we must take them into account in any discussion of political ideas: everything in the Hegelian system is related to everything else. Modern notions about nationalism, history, politics, and economics are deeply pervaded by Hegelian thought. Hegel's political philosophy was a reaction to the impact of Liberal individualism on the still community-based political societies of the Germans.

One of the earliest influences on Hegel was Plato, and Hegel was attracted by the notion of the *polis* as an ethical community; this ideal of social and political unity was in contrast to the political disunity of the German people. The spirit of nationalism with

which Napoleon had imbued the French people, and which French aggression had, by reaction, imbued in many of the peoples of Europe, was another important factor in Hegel's thought. Hegel claimed that his philosophy was *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*; in his view, the task of philosophy was to understand, rather than dictate guide-lines.

Hegel's great contribution to philosophy is the logic of the dialectic. For Plato, "dialectic" is the *process* of discussion from which philosophy emerges. For Hegel, the dialectic was the process of life itself. Hegel's insight was that a concept may contain its own opposite, and that this opposite can be used as the second premise in a logical progression: a "thesis" contains its opposite, the "antithesis"; both are transformed by "reason" into a "synthesis". This is a continuing process, so that the "thesis" is at once the antithesis and the synthesis of various stages of reason. In terms of History, each historical period is at once the synthesis of former periods, the antithesis of the preceding period, and the thesis of the periods which will follow. Whilst Hegel believed that Germanic society was the high point of cultural development, he also asserted that no philosophy can "transcend its contemporary world", so that there is no indication that Hegel thought that Germanic society was a cultural terminus.

Hegel's notion of "spirit", *geist*, is difficult to define. So is the notion of a "folk", *volk*. Roughly, we can say that the Germanic people were scattered throughout a number of nation-states, yet Hegel asserted that they possessed a quality in common, made up of a variety of cultural phenomena, which made them a "folk": the "spirit" is the subjective group consciousness of the "folk", perhaps akin to Rousseau's "General Will", which becomes objective when it becomes individual self-consciousness.

Hegel was convinced that history is a progress of "reason", and therefore the modern state exemplifies a clear improvement on preceding political forms: in the Oriental World, Hegel asserts, only the monarch is free; in the Classical World, only a few were free; in the Modern World, everyone is free. Note Hegel's chauvinistic assumptions and comparisons with non-European, and especially non-Germanic, societies. Modernity is characterized by the capacity to fairly allow the expression of citizens' individuality. The corrupting influence of the collectivist Classical World was the existence of "particular interests", what James and John Stuart Mill also called "sinister interests"; the Modern

World is in the process of learning to control this social element, to form a unity *from* diversity, rather than having a unity *destroyed* by diversity.

For Hegel, Ethical Life, which is derived from Spirit, is a social interaction which produces some common good. The Family is a form of ethical life in which unity is based on feeling; the Family does not recognize the individual as such; family unity suppresses individual rights.

Civil Society is a form of ethical life which is the social interaction of individuals based upon mutual but selfish, especially economic, needs; civil society is close to Hobbes' "war of all against all", in which individuals are bound together by the very needs, the search for which divides them: legal arrangements are required to rationalize the common good and selfish needs, which are not completely separate. The law universalizes individuals, providing them with universal rights as humans and discounting tribal, religious, and economic differences. Public Authority implements the law, by force if necessary, but preferably by socialization imparted by education. Civil Society, the domain of particular interests, is linked to the State by the Corporations, the guilds, which in Hegel's Germany combined many of the functions of modern-day trade unions and firms, mediating the conflict of selfish interests; the selfish purpose of the Corporations, because it serves the *common* interest of its members, has a cohesive and universalizing tendency.

The Hegelian State is the third stage of ethical life, which is concerned with the universal interest, the common good. Being based upon selfish interests, civil society cannot fully regulate itself; the common good is served by regulation stemming from the State. The Assembly of Estates (very roughly, the parliament) is integrated to aim at a consensus which will tend towards a common will: the Estates consist of the agricultural class, the industrial class, and the professional class. As the Assembly is influenced by the particularity of situations, it is unsuited to the formulation of laws. The universal interest is, therefore, expressed in the form of Law by the paid Bureaucracy. The monarch, despite having no substantial political rôle, stabilizes the body politic by providing continuity *via* the hereditary principle.

Hegel, like Burke, viewed the political structure as an organic growth; he argued that political conflict and its resolution was natural and inevitable, not to be solved by

mechanistic tinkering based upon abstract principles. The underlying fact of political society is organic cohesion, and it is the organism that displays rationality and freedom rather than “abstract” individuals.

In Hegel’s view, “freedom” is a non-selfish awareness of the interest of the universal. Plato had asserted that a person with a knowledge of the Form of the Good could have no aspiration to act in ways inconsistent with the Good. Rousseau restated the same idea in asserting that true freedom lay in acting in accordance with the General Will. For Hegel

The state is only actual when its members
have a feeling of their own selfhood
and it is stable only when public and
private ends are identical.

In this way Hegel, like Rousseau, avoided the problem of how to handle, in practice, the paradox of freedom: that the freedom of one individual often violates the freedom of others.

JOHN STUART MILL

John Stuart Mill,
By a mighty effort of will,
Overcame his natural bonhomie
And wrote ‘Principles of Political Economy’.

The basis of John Stuart Mill’s early education was the Liberal psychological doctrine of the *tabula rasa*. This held that a new-born child was a “blank slate”, on which anything might be written. In other words, *nature*, one’s genetic inheritance, has no part in determining one’s personal development: *nurture*, one’s environment and education, is solely responsible for one’s adult *persona*. Until very recently, this theory of human psychology was dominant over the Conservative assertion that “blood will out”, that one’s character is predetermined by one’s ancestry. It is now understood that one’s early childhood upbringing and environment act upon one’s inherited psychology to produce one’s character.

James Mill was an important figure in the early development of psychology and, in line with the latest thinking, determined to give his son the best education possible: young John Mill was brought up on Bentham’s Utilitarianism, Platonic philosophy, and Political

Economy. John Stuart Mill was later to claim (with some justification, as modern educational research confirms) that his own early attainments (reading Greek at three, translating Plato's *Republic* at eight) were possible for *any* child, given an appropriate mode of learning. At fourteen, John Stuart Mill was better educated than most university graduates of thirty. No ivory-tower philosopher, Mill spent his working life in the political section of the British East India Company, whilst in private life he was active in Radical Liberal causes. He served a term as a member of Parliament, was called before governmental enquiries as an expert witness on moral problems, and his *A System of Logic* and *Principles of Political Economy* were still standard texts very many years after his death.

Bentham's principle of utility insisted on the *moral equivalence* of all pleasures. Following such a line, one would have to argue that, for example, reading Plato's *Republic*, or creating an outstanding piece of music, was no more to be preferred as a pleasurable occupation than spending one's leisure-time in the pub working the pokies. For Mill, an ethics that gave no proper weight to people's finer motivations, the love of truth and beauty, a sense of dignity, in general, the "nobler" impulses, was quite unsatisfactory. Bentham's utilitarianism makes no allowance for virtuous activities; John Stuart Mill wanted to make virtue a central part of happiness.

Some scholars have argued that Mill destroys the point of utilitarianism by his revisions, which they see as a mere manifestation of what they see as Mill's snobbery. By instituting a hierarchy of pleasures, they assert that Mill has destroyed the essential equality of human dignity that is fundamental to utilitarianism. And as important, it can be asserted that Mill's hierarchy of pleasures is undemocratic.

Mill's first task was to prove that there was an ultimate end for morality, and this is difficult: morals and ethics are about how people *should* behave, "what ought to be": how does one *prove* such a thing? Mill began by defining his area of enquiry: "the criterion of right and wrong". He goes on to restate the principle of utility: that actions are right insofar as they produce pleasure, wrong insofar as they produce pain. But, Mill insists, all pleasures are *not* equal: the pleasures of a Sokrates are not equal to the pleasures of a pig, or the pleasures of a fool. Mill asserts that those who have experienced the higher pleasures and the lower pleasures prefer the higher pleasures. Mill claimed that such

experienced individuals form a moral élite who can judge which pleasures are to be preferred. Mill's happiness/pleasure concept is virtue, and for a person who has acquired a knowledge of the "higher pleasures", or "virtues", the "lower pleasures" provide a much smaller quantity of pleasure than the "higher pleasures".

Mill goes on to tackle the question of whether happiness is, in fact, the highest good. Challenging the notion that continual happiness is impossible, and that the moral individual should therefore renounce pleasure and cultivate dedication to duty, Mill insists that reasonable happiness *is* possible for most of us, given some social reforms, and that, whilst it may be virtuous to forgo pleasure in favour of devotion to duty, it is only so if this contributes to the greater good of mankind.

Now Mill raises the question of whether persons will act in accordance with the greatest good for the greatest number. Here he raises his famous "harm principle". Persons can act in ways that do not affect others, for good or ill. Such acts, "self-regarding actions", should not be interfered with, either by legislation, regulation, or social pressure. Actions that *do* affect others, "other-regarding actions", *may* need to be controlled, if harm to others can be demonstrated to immediately result from them. But how are we to know in what way to act if there is insufficient time to work out the full consequences of our actions? Mill here proposes that traditional, socially acceptable, conventional morality provides a rule-of-thumb: if people always act in accordance with their own perceived best interests, then the traditional rules of behaviour can be assumed to have evolved for the greatest good, to have utility, at least until the moral philosophers have reached conclusions more precisely in line with the greatest good. It can be noted here that this is not particularly practical in a multi-cultural society exhibiting a large number of different accepted traditional rules of behaviour. Returning to the first question, can we *prove* an ultimate end for morality? Mill asserts that, if the proof that an object is visible is that people can see it, if the proof that a sound is audible is that people can hear it, then the proof that happiness is desirable is that people desire it.

The nature of justice is the topic of the last section of Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Having worked through a range of ideas, Mill shows that justice is linked to a number of notions, such as rights, honesty, impartiality, and giving a person his/her due. Injustice is wrong done to someone. Justice is to do with performing acts that we should perform because

other people's rights are involved, the turning from self-interests to universalized concerns, which, of course, still involves maximizing one's pleasures and minimizing one's pain. That is, the consideration of justice for others is in one's own best interest.

Born in France in 1805, the Comte de Tocqueville is, as one political scientist has remarked, referred to as Liberal in France and as a Conservative in the United States: a warning to people to be very careful in reading, understanding, and using political terms. In this case, the difference lies in the French and American perceptions of what "Liberalism" and "Conservatism" *are*. We can call him a Liberal.

In de Tocqueville's view, democracy had evolved in the United States of America without any of the restricting influences imposed by the traditional institutions of European political society. De Tocqueville's fear, based on his observations of American society, was that political equality would engender a social equality, which would lead to a "tyranny of the majority" that would override minority behaviours and interests – a social conformism that, resulting from informal social pressure, could endanger individual liberty. In other words, the moral will of the democratic majority is likely to act in such a way on the individuals in the general population as to suppress differences in behaviour and ability and to stifle controversy: a pathological desire to "lop tall poppies", or any one else who dared to differ from the "grey norm". De Tocqueville had feared the probability of a "tyranny of the majority". John Stuart Mill was most impressed by de Tocqueville's arguments, and Mill turned to the question of how to deal with the problem. His answer is relevant to any problem where the claim of "the public interest" conflicts with claims for the freedom of the individual.

John Mill begins by saying that his purpose "is to assert one very simple principle", in order to reconcile public claims with private interests. This principle states that the *only* reason that can justify society interfering with the freedom of *any* member of society is to prevent harm to others: the person's own good is not a sufficient reason to warrant interference. Mill goes on to defend freedom of discussion and individuality. The problem, for Mill, is that people are becoming far too much alike:

they ... now read the same things, listen to
the same things, see the same things, go to
the same places, have their hopes and fears

directed to the same objects, have the same rights and liberties, and the same means of asserting them.

Modern civilization, with the spread of industry and improved communications, more democratic political forms, and increasing social equality, is a threat to human individuality. Mill felt the need to show that individual human differences are valuable in themselves, so that people will want to protect, rather than limit, individual freedoms and liberties. Mill tells his readers that his subject is

civil, or social liberty: the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.

There are a number of problems here, already. First, Mill, as a utilitarian, already *has* a principle: it is utility. How can he argue for *both* liberty *and* utility being a *single* principle on which the good life must be founded? What he *does* argue that liberty is the best and most consistent *means* to achieve human improvement; that **liberty has utility**.

When Mill defends liberty, he does not, however, defend total liberty of thought and speech. Freedom of thought should be absolute, but freedom to express those thoughts should not. In his famous example of the corn-dealer, Mill asserts that opinions about corn dealers and the way in which they go about their business should be tolerated, but a person standing outside a corn-dealer's house making inflammatory comments about corn-dealers can legitimately be restrained. In other words, **speech or actions that might reasonably be assumed to cause direct, immediate, unjustifiable and serious harm to others must be restricted**. "Harm", in Mill's definition, is deliberate interference with another person's rights, injury to persons or their interests, **or the denial of a person's legitimate aspirations**. This definition of harm excludes many of the effects that one's actions might have on others.

In general, however, Mill vigorously defends freedom of thought and discussion. Mill does not extend his notion of liberty to minors or others whose education has not progressed to the point where they can be intellectually improved by freedom of thought and discussion. In part, Mill's purpose is to protect minorities and individuals from

government suppression of their opinions. He feared that unpopular views might be suppressed by governments seeking political or electoral advantage. Mill's defence of tolerance is, simply, that majority opinion has, historically, often been wrong. Even if a suppressed opinion has been shown to be incorrect, it is still useful as a challenge to the majority view, a challenge which forces people to think carefully to effectively to counter the false opinion. But, since most opinions, even the apparently ridiculous, are at least partly true, suppression of such opinions leads to suppression of a truth which, if left in circulation, will be available to be recognized and taken up by future generations of philosophers. Mill goes on to assert that the way in which a person becomes an individual whose judgement can be trusted is to rigorously test his or her opinion and judgement against other opinions and judgements on any given point: a task that would be made awkward if there were no contrary opinions to test oneself against. He goes on to list a number of individuals and groups who have been put down for their opinions, noting especially Jesus and Sokrates. Mill asserts that, as mankind progresses, the number of truths which are open to controversy will diminish, that through reasoned discussion mankind's knowledge will improve. To reach an opinion of one's own, and to act on it, is a good thing; to decide the question for others, without letting them examine the contrary arguments, is decidedly a bad thing. Sokrates is Mill's model of the courageous individual free-thinker.

This liberty of everyday behaviour is not, for Mill, to be applied to minors, criminals, or the intellectually underdeveloped: authoritative guidance towards an educated attitude is in order for such people. Neither does liberty of behaviour include acts harmful to others. Nor is Mill excusing extremes of behaviour: proper training in childhood, which teaches the results of human experience, is a pre-requisite for adult decision-making, in lifestyle as in intellectual activity. In other words, responsible, educated human beings should be allowed to *choose* their lifestyle and opinions, even if they choose what is customary. Despite his insistence that this liberty will benefit mankind by encouraging the Sokrates and Bentham's of this world, Mill is not trying to encourage a dominant intellectual élite of eccentrics, either: the place of such people is to advise, not to coerce.

The state is a major problem for Mill, because its coercive power acts against liberty. For example, social sentiments to repress the sale of alcohol can be translated into the

coercive power of the state by means of law; or social sentiments against certain kinds of sexual activities can be translated into legal sanctions. *These are not, for Mill, legitimate spheres of State activity.*

And, of course, education is, in itself, a problem. In Mill's day, the general perception of the problem of education was "which religion shall be taught to the 'poor'". Because this *was* a problem [and a cause of very divisive argument] the poor were, generally, not taught. Mill's answer was that religion should be taught like philosophy or any other competing world-view. Mill proposed a system of state-funded education, under which each child – regardless of social class - would be allocated equal funding to purchase education at the school of the parent's choice [children, being minors, were not considered competent to make decisions in such matters]: good schools would attract the most students and the most income; bad schools would fail; the market would pronounce on the quality of education. State-schools were not on Mill's educational agenda: he would rather have enabled working-class children to attend Eton than force any child into a state-run education system.

Basically, what Mill is saying is that, although we sometimes need government interference, we can demand too of it. Usually, for Mill, one can, or should, work out the solution to one's own problems. Even if the state can sort things out for you better than you could, you'd be a better person if you stood on your own two feet. And if you allow the government to have too much power over your personal life, you might end up *powerless*, with no power against the bulk of society or the government.

When Mill discovered Thomas Hare's book, *Treatise on the Election of Representatives* (1859), he thought that Hare had discovered a practical political means to prevent, or curtail, the tyranny of the majority. Hare's scheme was for proportional representation (modified versions were to be instituted as the electoral system in Tasmania and many organizations, such as student unions) combined with multiple voting to ensure the election of prominent candidates who were unlikely to be favoured by majority opinion. Mill became a publicist for this scheme, which figures largely in his *Considerations on Representative Government*.

Representative government is the best form of government for modern industrial societies, in Mill's view, because it demands intelligent citizen involvement. But there

are problems, both actual and potential. Politicians might attempt to do important administrative work themselves, instead of relying on trained, expert public servants. The government may become subservient to the pressure-tactics of special-interest groups (what Mill called “sinister interests”) whose ends are not compatible with the community’s interests. The government may, by over-legislating, interfere too much with individual liberty. And the government might become too responsive to majority opinion, thus threatening minority interests and instituting a tyranny of the majority.

Mill dismisses direct democracy because he sees it as impractical in large nation-states, and also because it might minimize the influence of the better-educated section of the community. Mill asserts the value of participation as a protection against “sinister interests”: the more people involved in politics, the less likely it is that some special-interest group will be able to get its own way at the expense of the community. Yet Mill’s advocated version of Representative Democracy is far more participatory than many democratic theorists of today would advocate. Mill asserts the value of participation as a protection against what he terms “sinister interests” – what we today would call “special-interest-groups” – and goes on to explain that the more people involved in politics, the less likely it is that some special-interest-group will be able to get its own way at the expense of what the community might see as its interest.

John Stuart Mill claimed that one of the main functions of government was to improve community standards, both morally and intellectually, and that through representative government the standards of the wisest members of the community, as well as the standards of the community as a whole, would be brought to bear on the rulers, who, in turn, would influence the community. Selfish considerations ensure that rulers will govern in their own interest. The rights and interests of the individual are only safeguarded when the individual is both able and habitually inclined to stand up for those rights and interests. Therefore government in the interest of all must be government by all. Mill asserted that, as intellectual attainment is the result of active effort, and as participation in public affairs is both active effort and a practical education in public affairs – because interests must be weighed and judgements made for the common good – the greater the participation, the greater the education. Therefore the intellectual capacities of the individual members of society are enhanced, and the whole society will

progress. Because modern states are too large to allow direct mass government, representative government allows the greatest possible number of citizens to take part in political decision-making. Direct participation in more localized organizations such as trade and professional associations, party branches, progress associations and clubs are also important avenues for both citizen participation in political and community affairs and practice in the conduct of affairs.

Representative government permits the citizenry to exercise the ultimate controlling power of the state through periodically-elected deputies. Mill proposed that the function of government should be to oversee and control the public service, to air the grievances of the electorate, and to debate opinions. The actual administration of government should best be left to the specialist expertise of a professional public service. The business of drawing-up the legislation that was proposed by the representatives should be in the hands of a professional legislative commission, whose expertise would minimize loopholes and other bad consequences of loosely-worded or ill-conceived bills. As the parliament of a fully-representative government would be a sampling of the population of the nation, it should truly mirror the opinions of the electorate.

However, Mill saw dangers in majority rule; he feared the possibility of legislative oppression of minority interests. As parliament would be a representative sample of the electorate, Mill feared that ignorance and incapacity in the electorate would be reflected in the parliamentary representatives. He described majority rule as a form of élitism that disenfranchised minorities. Mill therefore advocated a version of the Hare system of proportional representation to ensure minorities of a parliamentary voice. By allowing citizens to vote for a candidate irrespective of the electorate the candidate stood for, or the citizens voted in, Mill hoped that the intellectual minority would elect a number of the nation's best minds, thereby improving the quality of parliament. Mill stressed the educative value of political participation: democracy was a necessary condition for mass education, and *vice-versa*. Basic literacy and numeracy as a prerequisite for the franchise are so fundamental to Mill's thought that he does not argue a case for the requirement. As the widest franchise is desirable, it follows that a mass education system must be established. Given mass access to education, the illiterate would only be disenfranchised by laziness or proven incapacity. If literacy is a basic qualification for the franchise, it

follows that the higher degrees of education deserve increased voting-power, so long as such enhanced voting-power is not increased to the point of class privilege: Mill specifically rejected the concept of intellectual elitism. The élite should form a part of parliament by representing the same numerical fraction of the parliament as any other group in the general community.

Mill's notion of a literacy test as a franchise qualification was also an opportunity to sponsor mass formal education; plural votes, increasing with the degree of education; were an encouragement for people to pursue further education to the limit of their ability. Given the low standard of literacy in Great Britain at the time, it appears that Mill saw this provision as a temporary expedient to raise the educational standard of the electorate. John Stuart Mill's fundamental aim was the improvement of mankind. Mill did not want so much a nation *ruled* by philosophers as a nation *of* philosophers.

John Stuart Mill's practical proposals concerning political representation in the parliament are made to protect minority interests and do not conflict with his emphasis on the importance of direct citizen involvement in the politics of a democratic society. However, Mill felt that such participation, a valuable learning experience, was best experienced at the local level. Town councils, workplaces, co-operative societies, and various other local bodies should provide a forum for discussion and political action in local affairs and a starting-point for political initiatives at the national level.

Political democracy, as it developed, was, in Mill's view, being accompanied by social democracy, not only a deplorable levelling-out of differences of taste, opinion and attitudes, but by the hostility of the masses towards any differences from their limited perception of generally-accepted ways of thinking and acting. One of Mill's responses to this problem was his advocacy of a proportional representational system of voting to ensure minorities of a voice. Another was his development of the concept of self-regarding and other-regarding actions.

KARL MARX

The various political theories which are referred to as "Socialism" have as their common point an insistence on the economic, rather than the political, as the predominantly important aspect of human society, and a call for an equalitarian

distribution of economic resources. The focus of Socialism has always been on the needs of the broad mass of the general public against the claims of special-interest-groups, individuals, or élites. Socialism has its ideological beginnings in the peasant revolts of the Middle Ages, when the rural populace, incensed by the opulent lifestyle and display of powerful churchmen in contrast with their own poverty and frequent starvation, intermittently attempted to directly affect a redistribution of wealth and to reorganize social arrangements along egalitarian lines: such outbreaks were ruthlessly put down.

During the course of the English Revolution, officers and men of Cromwell's New Model Army, calling themselves "Levellers", demanded equal political representation, democracy – an attack on economic and political privilege – whilst another group, the "Diggers", asserting that private property was the root of sin, attempted to form a commune for the production of food, the surplus from their efforts was to be given to the poor: both of these groups, which included the seed-notions for the Quakers, were savagely dealt with.

In reaction to the excesses of the industrial revolution in Britain, which saw the industrial and urban working classes in England and Southern Scotland driven to live and work under appalling conditions on grossly inadequate wages, under appalling conditions on grossly inadequate wages, Robert Owen began a model Socialist community at New Lanark in Scotland which was conspicuously successful, and which laid the foundations for Britain's workers' co-operatives, popular education system, and trade unions. Saint-Simon and Fourier in France also founded Socialist movements which achieved substantial popular support and considerable practical success. The Owenites, Saint-Simonians and Fourierists, despite their many differences, had a number of theoretical points in common. They all believed in economic equality, mass education, the power of scientific developments to improve the human condition, and the abolition of the family. These early Socialisms were theoretically uninterested in, or incapable of dealing with, the problem of the State, and devoted their energies to changing society from within, the formation of societies for the promulgation of their ideas and programmes, and the formation of "ideal communities", some of which enjoyed considerable practical success.

Socialists, springing as they did from the lower middle classes, were literate, but hardly trained thinkers.

They tended to know more about the contents of the Bible than about philosophy. These thinkers tend to be left out of courses on philosophy because they lacked academic training of any kind, and it shows: they had no technical apparatus for critical thinking. And because of their lowly position in society, any writings that may have survived for posterity tend to be disregarded. Karl Marx, however, was a fully-trained, university-educated philosopher, and his outrageous attitudes and conclusions could not be dismissed as the ranting of an ill-educated fool.

Karl Marx was the son of a Jewish lawyer in the German Rhineland; the family was subjected to racial discrimination and political repression. Beginning his university studies in Law at the precocious age of seventeen, and after achieving his Doctorate, he moved to Paris where he met Engels, to study Economics and write. In Belgium in 1848, Marx began his career as an organizer and educator of industrial workers. From 1849 to his death in 1883, having been expelled from and/or declared *persona non grata* by most European countries, Karl Marx lived and worked in England, where he remained virtually unknown despite his high reputation and fame on the Continent: British Socialism remained largely free of Marxist influence until after the First World War.

Against Hegel, Marx insisted that the point of philosophy was not to interpret the world, but to change it. However, Marx the social analyst, whose work contains valuable insights into the way that society functions, must be viewed differently from Marx the political activist and prophet, because whilst Marx's activism may be judged by some as ill-advised, and his prophecies proved to be lacking in some specific accuracies, his socio-political analyses are quite sharp and difficult to dismiss. Also against Hegel, Marx substituted the notion of "class", a material concept that could be examined, for Hegel's nebulous concept of "spirit". Marx asserted that consciousness was a social product deriving from the necessity of human intercourse; one's human consciousness does not determine one's humanity: one's being [one's 'humanness'] as a social person determines one's consciousness. When specialization results in the separation between physical labour and mental labour, consciousness loses its connection with being and the creations of the mind are substituted for "real being". When intellectual labour becomes disassociated from physical work, consciousness loses contact with the real world and becomes "pure" theory, ideology. Ideology is, for Marx, the intellectual superstructure

which arises on the back of the real foundation of society, the economic structure. When power over the choice of inputs into work and over the disposal of the product of labour is removed from the producer, the producer is alienated from the means of production, and degraded to a function of the existing social order. The existing social order, and its intellectual production, changes as the economic system, the mode of production, changes. The present economic system alienates man from the means of production, leaving him a prey to ideological thinking; ideology – for Marx – is a “false consciousness”: the dominant ideology of any stage of social development is the ideology of the ruling class at that time. Therefore, at a stage of social development where division of labour has not evolved, ideas have “real being”.

Marx’s version of the dialectic asserts that fundamental contradictions within an economic system will call forth its antithesis. For example, the “slave society” of the ancient world gave way to its antithesis, the “feudal society” of the Middle Ages; the synthesis is capitalism. The alienation of workers under capitalism will result in worker’s revolutions and eventual socialism.

Capitalism is distinguished by the presence of a free workforce which is paid for its labour by the hour; labour is a commodity like any other: beyond wages, the capitalist needs to make no further provision for the support of the workers, unlike the slave and feudal economic systems. Marx began his economic theory with the assumption that a commodity has value according to the amount of labour needed to produce it. The difference between the value of the labour required to produce a commodity, and the price at which the commodity is sold, is “surplus value” which is appropriated by the capitalist (this is a very simplified version of Marx’s theory of Surplus Value).

Competition means continual expansion; to expand, firms must continually accumulate capital for investment; capital is accumulated through surplus value; increased production and competition forces down prices; as firms compete for the available labour, wages rise; to resolve the problem of rising wages and falling prices, capitalists invest in labour-saving machinery; the unemployment which results from the introduction of labour-saving machinery technologies means that wages fall and the workers can no longer afford to buy the commodities produced by the capitalist enterprises and the entire system

collapses under its own contradictions: the working class revolts and, taking over the means of production, reverses the process of alienation.

Marx asserted that the class-structure of a society depended on the mode and relations of production in that society. Existing relations of production give rise to a particular economic system and a particular economic system gives rise to a particular class-structure. Individuals form a class insofar as they are engaged in a common struggle against another class: a class cannot exist unless it is conscious of itself as a class. In capitalist society, Marx conceived of two main classes: the ruling class, who own capital and employ labour, and the working class, or proletariat, who sell their labour power. He also referred to the “petty bourgeoisie”, who own capital but employ little or no labour, who he thought would be swallowed up in the class struggle between capital and labour and absorbed into either the working class or the ruling class.

Marx’s revolution has failed to materialize as yet. Political “democracy” and socio-economic mobility have slowed the process of social polarization (indeed, many commentators would assert that social homogenization rather than polarization has tended to occur) in the industrialized nations, which have been able to expand their economies beyond Marx’s expectations at the expense of the non-industrialized nation-states of the “Third World”. Marx mistook the necessary timescale of his own theories. The “Marxist” revolutions which took place during the course of the 20th Century were, in Marx’s terms, premature, as they predated the triumph of capitalism which he envisaged as heralding the collapse of capitalism. It is probably far too soon to suggest that the so-called “failure of communism” means that Marx was wrong.

PROBLEMS IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The history of political thought illustrates a number of enduring political problems that have not yet been solved in practice. The answers proposed by the great political thinkers have frequently been deemed to be unacceptable, usually because the answers have involved interested (sinister-interested?) citizens giving up some of their claim to a portion of political power to others. Even modern democracies face the problem of persuading minorities to accept majority decisions, or sometimes face a refusal by minorities to accept the notion that a proper majority decision has been made at all. And

we must not forget the tendency of majorities to ignore the opinions of substantial minorities. Even so, *some* of the answers proposed by the great political thinkers have been accepted and implemented, at least in part and sometimes in a strange and unfamiliar guise, and modern political systems substantially derive from these measures. Because of this, the study of the story of Political Thought through the ages is a practical study, and is of assistance in the understanding of modern political systems, and the identification of political problems by the great political thinkers assists us in identifying these same problems when they occur in our own societies.

The great political thinkers based their political philosophies on conceptions about the cosmos and the nature of humanity, the actual relationship of humans to the rest of the cosmos, as well as the proper relationship of humans to the rest of the cosmos and each other. Specialized sub-disciplines of philosophy, such as ethics, moral philosophy, epistemology, aesthetics, logic, and even metaphysics are called upon to provide hopefully firm foundations upon which right political action may be based. This course has focused more upon the recommendations of political thinkers and the political impetus of their enquiries and the nature of their results than on the philosophical content of the enquiries and their results; this is because the works of the great philosophers and the secondary commentaries on them are usually generally and easily accessible, and you should have read them in conjunction with this course.

The early Greek thinkers were faced with the problem of the loss of community identity and unity in the face of factionalism. Parmenides asserted that persuasion (that is, reasoned logical discussion), so that all parties recognized the truth, was the solution to the problem. Plato identified two major problems in Athenian political life: one was the absence, or loss of, social and political unity in the community, another was perceived incompetence in the decision makers. His answer to these problems was to turn the entire community into an institution of higher education. Such a community-as-university would have a unifying ideology; its citizens, having all embarked upon the intellectual path to the limit of their abilities, would be accepting of the superior knowledge and experience of their better-educated, more able fellows, and would give over policy-making and administration to the tacitly-recognized wisest available minds. It is worth noting here that government-by-scholar was institutionalized in China from an early date,

and resulted in considerable social stability despite invasions, civil wars, and revolutions. In the western world, since Plato's day, rulers have intermittently placed considerable reliance for policy advice and administration on persons who have appeared to demonstrate a combination of education with ability, culminating in the university-trained public services, largely a product of mass education, of modern western governments.

Aristotle concluded that the political community should ideally demonstrate an equitable distribution of wealth, minimizing the number of both rich and poor. Such a convergence of economic status should mitigate political division and encourage social and political stability. Studies in both Political History and Economics have tended to support this view. The wealthy few, and those who aspire to join their number, find the notion incomprehensible.

Stoicism, a product of an age of empire, encouraged the citizen to turn inward in order to realize personal potentialities rather than to public life, whilst enjoining duty to the community and obedience to the political rulers as virtues. St. Augustine of Hippo drew on the Stoic and Platonic traditions to formulate a Christianity which stressed obedience to Church orthodoxy and obedience to the rulers who provide the political stability within which the Church can accomplish its spiritual mission. The twin ideals of private probity and public duty expressed within a Christian ethic are still with us.

For Thomas Aquinas, the State is itself an expression of God's order, of Natural Law, of rationality, as is custom. Apparent differences in opposing viewpoints can be reconciled with the application of reason (remember that this was Parmenides' position), thus avoiding potential causes of social dissention. The community is the source of political authority, and has the right to replace unsatisfactory rulers. For all the thinkers that we have looked at before Aquinas, the function of the citizen is to serve the community; with the closing years of the Mediæval Period and the beginning of the modern era, Aquinas' work came to imply the notion that the community can justifiably call rulers to account for their actions.

The separation of Church and State, and the subordination of Church to State in public affairs (rather than the other way around) are notions which were strongly argued by Marsiglio, who also asserted that all political authority derived from the community.

Marsiglio also allowed for the delegation of political authority to elected representatives. The questions are still with us as to whether the State should operate on religious principles, as fundamentalists of various kinds insist, or whether an Established Church should operate as an arm of government, as has sometimes been the case in England, or whether religion has no place at all in political life.

Machiavelli asserted that the necessities of political life enjoined a political morality based upon what was for the ultimate good of the community, that the private morality of religion was inapplicable to the conduct of political affairs. The survival of the political community is the great end that overrides the conventions of religious morality. For Machiavelli, the effective use of coercive power is an essential tool for the maintenance of social order and harmony. The physical coercion and control of citizens by the State is a fact of modern political life which sits uneasily beside democratic notions of the control of the state by the citizens.

After the Renaissance, the focus of the philosophical search for the foundations of “the good life” shifted from the community to the individual. From Plato to Machiavelli it had been assumed that if the political community was healthy, that is, orderly, stable, prosperous, and wisely-ruled, all was well in the body politic. Such a community was the end of political life, and the well-being of individual citizens was subordinate to the needs of the community as a whole. Capitalism and Protestant religious beliefs were symptomatic of a new emphasis on the individual and the individual’s needs. The assumption that if the political community was sound, then the individual would be happy, was turned on its head and replaced with the assumption that if the individuals composing the community were happy, the soundness of the political community would follow.

Hobbes began the trend to a political focus on the individual by asking a new question: why do people come together to form a government at all? His answer was, to ensure their personal security. Arguing from a stance which posited the existence of individual human rights, Hobbes came down in support of the Augustinian position of asserting the necessity for complete obedience to the ruler, with the important stipulation that no-one can give up the right to self-defence. Freedom, for individuals or groups, lies in areas

where the law, the will of the ruler, is silent. In modern terms, one has an obligation to always obey the law, although one is always free to persuade the ruler to change the law.

Locke, however does not allow governments so much authority, and insists that there are large areas of social life where government cannot legitimately intervene. Arguments about the proper limitations on governmental activity are still current. Paine took Locke's arguments even further, in support of political democracy and the freedoms of all individuals.

Rousseau reasserted the needs of the community as a whole, although he did so by way of arguments based on the individual by way of political democracy. Fears about the consequences of a Rousseauian mass democracy have been partly allayed by the manifest impracticability of such a political form in a modern nation-state. The development of modern communications and computer technology has caused these debates to resurface.

Edmund Burke, worried that the social fabric would not withstand the pace and strain of too-rapid-and-radical social and political change, argued for the value of, and for the maintenance of, traditional political and social structures and institutions. Again, the pace of social change, with its technological causes and its political and legal consequences, is a matter of current concern.

Bentham restated the Liberal Position, choosing to base his philosophy on the concept of utility, thus allowing individual freedoms and limitations on government activity without recourse to philosophically doubtful notions of "Natural Law" and "Rights". However, the idea of a moral code without a basis in religion is disturbing to many people, and Utilitarianism has not met with general philosophical acceptance, however much it may be applied in practice. Bentham's direct impact on modern political life has been largely in the field of welfare provisions; indirectly, through his influence on nineteenth-century Radical Liberalism and Socialism, the shape of modern democracy owes much to Bentham.

In a Germany which still retained many of its mediæval community-based political, social, and economic institutions, Hegel predicted the synthesis of these institutions with Liberal Democratic political forms. Hegel was wrong; individualism and capitalism came to dominate modern Western political systems. However, the Hegelian analysis of

political society has proven to have been acute, and his emphasis on the place of groups, as well as of individuals, in political life is a useful corrective to the current overemphasis on individual needs and actions.

Plato's *Republic* was re-invented as a democracy by John Stuart Mill. Plato's philosopher-rulers are here presented as a professional public service, and as the Legal Commission which Mill envisaged being responsible for the framing of Laws: an intellectual élite chosen by competitive examination and experienced in the day-to-day administration of public affairs, the heads of a modern political bureaucracy are a reasonably close representation of the philosopher-ruler. Mill's other recommendations have been generally considered to be a little too radical for practical implementation, depending as they do on an informed public opinion, a politically-active populace, and rational debate by responsible politicians; Mill did not allow for the development of the modern disciplined political party. However, moral debates in political life are still conducted within the framework of Mill's notions of individual liberty, and with reference to his "harm principle".

Mill's concerns with the relationship of individual citizens with each other and with the functioning of government are complemented by Marx's concerns with the functioning of whole societies and the relationships between the classes that compose them. The way in which the economic base of a society determines even the belief-systems of that society was explicitly exposed by Marx, and the needs of the mass of the people against the exploitation of the few were dramatically highlighted. The idea of democratic *economic* decision-making has met with considerable opposition from political, owning, and managerial élites, but it is by no means dead. Increasing concerns about the globalization of the world economy, economic depression, and the impoverishment of increasingly-high proportions of entire populations serve to provide further justification of Marx's social, political, and economic analysis.

All the thinkers whose work has been examined in this course have had an impact upon the way in which we today live our lives. Each has highlighted important aspects of the human condition and enriched our experience by so doing.

