11

Political Philosophy

Man, when perfected, is the best of all animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all. . . . Justice is the bond of men in states.

—Aristotle

That one human being will desire to render the person and property of another subservient to his pleasures, notwithstanding the pain or loss of pleasure which it may occasion to that individual, is the foundation of government. —James Mill

While the state exists there is no freedom. Where there is freedom, there will be no state. —Vladimir I. Lenin

Ethics is the philosophical study of moral judgments. But many moral judgments are at the same time political judgments.

Should goods be distributed equally? Or should they be distributed according to need? Or perhaps according to merit, or according to contribution to production, or to existing ownership, or to something else?

Is it justifiable for a government to restrict the liberty of its citizens and, if so, in what measure?

When, if ever, is fine or imprisonment legitimate? And what is the purpose of fine and imprisonment: punishment? deterrence? rehabilitation?

Are there natural rights that all governments must respect? What form of political society or state is best? Should there even be a state?

---

1 James Mill (1773–1836) was a Scottish philosopher, historian, and economist and the father of John Stuart Mill, about whom you will read in this chapter.
The answers to these questions are moral judgments of a political variety. Political philosophy considers such issues and the concepts that are involved in them.

More generally, political philosophy seeks to find the best form of political existence. It is concerned with determining the state’s right to exist, its ethically legitimate functions and scope, and its proper organization. Political philosophy also seeks to describe and understand the nature of political relationships and political authority, though scholars whose inquiries are focused within the purely descriptive branch of political philosophy now usually call themselves political scientists.

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Let’s start with Plato and Aristotle because they were the first to try to build a political philosophy from the ground up.

Plato

According to Plato’s Republic, the human soul has three different elements, one consisting of raw appetites, another consisting of drives (such as anger and ambition), and a third consisting of thought or intellect. In the virtuous or just person, each of these three elements fulfills its own unique function and does so under the governance of reason. Likewise, according to Plato, in the ideal or just state there are also three elements, each of which fulfills its unique function and does so in accordance with the dictates of reason.

The lowest element in the soul—the appetitive element—corresponds in the well-ordered state to the class of craftsmen. The soul’s drive element corresponds in the state to the class of police-soldiers, who are auxiliaries to the governing class. This last class, in the well-ordered state, corresponds to the intellectual, rational element of the soul.

The governing class, according to Plato, comprises a select few highly educated and profoundly rational individuals, including women so qualified. An individual becomes a member of a class by birth, but he or she will move to a higher or lower class according to aptitude.

In the healthy state, said Plato, as in the well-ordered soul, the rational element is in control. Thus, for Plato, the ideal state is a class-structured aristocracy ruled by philosopher-kings.

Unlike the craftsmen, the ruling elite and their auxiliaries, who jointly are the guardians of society, have neither private property nor even private families: property, wives, and children are all possessions held in common. Reproduction among the guardians is arranged always to improve the bloodline of their posterity in intelligence, courage, and other qualities apt for leadership. The guardians not only must be trained appropriately for soldiering but also must be given a rigorous intellectual education that, for the few whose unique abilities allow it, prepares them for advanced work in mathematics and dialectic (that is, the Socratic method; see Chapter 3). These few, at age fifty and after many years of public service, advance
to membership in the ruling aristocracy and to leadership of the state. Such is Plato’s vision of the ideal political structure.

It is important to be aware that, from Plato’s perspective, the state, like the person, is a living organism whose well-being must be sought by its subjects. Although he assumed that the healthy state is best for the individuals in it, Plato also believed that the health or well-being of the state is desirable for its own sake. And just as a person’s health or well-being requires the proper functioning and coordination of the elements of the soul under the overarching rule of reason, the state’s health or well-being lies in the proper functioning and coordination of its elements under the rule of the reasoning elite. The ideal state, according to Plato, is well ordered in this way, and its being well ordered in this way is something that is intrinsically desirable.

In Book VIII of the Republic, Plato identified five forms of government. The preferred form, of course, is an aristocracy, governed by rational philosopher-kings. According to Plato, however, even if this ideal state could be achieved, it would in time degenerate into a timocracy, in which the ruling class is motivated by love of honor rather than by love for the common good. A timocracy in turn gives way to a plutocracy, which is rule by men who primarily desire riches. Under a plutocracy, society becomes divided between two classes, the rich and the poor, Plato thought. Nevertheless, this form of government, Plato said, is preferable to the next degeneration, democracy, which results because “a society cannot hold wealth in honor and at the same time establish self-control in its citizens.” (Perhaps we will eventually see whether Plato is correct that a society that honors wealth cannot maintain self-control.) With Plato’s democracy, people’s impulses are unrestrained, and the result is lack of order and direction. “Mobocracy,” is what we would call Plato’s “democracy” today. Tyranny, the last form of government in Plato’s classification, results when the democratic mob submits itself to a strongman, each person selfishly figuring to gain from the tyrant’s rule and believing that the tyrant will end democracy’s evil. In fact, Plato thought, the tyrant will acquire absolute power and enslave his subjects. Further, he, the tyrant, will himself become a slave to his wretched craving for power and self-indulgence. Plato was not always an optimist.

We, of course, are most likely to evaluate Plato’s prescriptions solely according to what they would do for the general welfare—that is, the welfare of all the citizens or subjects of the state. And so it may occur to you that, if the citizens are satisfied with their class level and do not think that their natural abilities warrant higher placement, then they might like Plato’s form of government. After all, the division of power, responsibility, and labor among classes as envisioned by Plato might maximize (as he thought it would) the productivity of the state; and the unavailability of private property to the ruling elite could conceivably remove acquisitive temptations so that members of the elite would devote their efforts to the public good rather than to personal gain. A state governed by a wise and enlightened aristocracy that seeks the betterment of its citizens might well do much to enhance the public welfare and happiness, even if it sometimes might be difficult for a ruling aristocracy to understand the needs and desires of the populace. In short, you may be disposed to give Plato a passing grade on his state, at least with reference to what it would do for the welfare of its subjects. You would probably not be inclined to think of the state as an organism in its own right whose well-being is something desirable for its own sake.
Aristotle, the Political Scientist

Aristotle was a keen observer of the world around him, including the political world. But he wasn’t merely a describer of political systems. Aristotle did enunciate principles in terms of which various forms of government can be evaluated. Also, when he listed monarchy, aristocracy, and polity as proper forms of government and tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy as their corresponding improper forms, he was not merely describing these forms, as a modern-day political scientist might, but was also evaluating them, as a political philosopher will do.

Nor is Aristotle a historian of political systems.

(The Platonic idea of the state as an organism whose well-being is desirable for its own sake has been exploited, as we will see, as justification for the more totalitarian premise that the individual must sacrifice his or her own well-being for that of the state. Plato himself, however, did not advocate tyrannical rule.)

Aristotle

Aristotle, too, regarded the state as an organism, as a living being that exists for some end, for some purpose. That purpose, he believed, is to promote the good life for humans. (The good life, for Aristotle, is one that gives you the highest human good—happiness.) Thus, Aristotle offered a standard of evaluation of the state different from Plato’s. For Aristotle, a state is good only to the degree to which it enables its citizens themselves to achieve the good life, whereas for Plato a state is good to the extent that it is well ordered.

Aristotle, who had studied the constitutions, or basic political structures, of numerous Greek city-states and other states, was a practical thinker. He insisted that the form of the ideal state depends on, and can change with, circumstances. Unlike Plato, Aristotle did not set forth a recipe for the ideal state. A state, he said, can be ruled properly by one person; but it can also be ruled properly by a few people or by many. When a state is properly ruled by one person, he said, it is a monarchy; improper rule by one is tyranny. Proper rule by the few is aristocracy; improper rule, oligarchy. Proper rule by the many is a polity, and improper rule by them is a democracy. Good forms of government tend to degenerate into bad, he thought, as Plato also did. Aristocracies become oligarchies, monarchies become tyrannies, polities become democracies. (Also see the box “Aristotle, the Political Scientist.”)

Though Aristotle thought that states may be good or bad irrespective of their form, he observed that political societies always have three classes: a lower class of laborers and peasants; a middle class of craftsmen, farmers, and merchants; and an upper class of aristocrats. He further observed that political power rests in one or another of these social classes or is shared by them variously, irrespective of the form of the state.

Aristotle, like Plato, was no egalitarian. (An egalitarian believes that all humans are equal in their social, political, and economic rights and privileges.) But
even though Plato’s ideal state has no slaves, Aristotle held that some people are by nature suited for slavery, whereas others by nature are suited for freedom. Even freemen are not equals, Aristotle held. Those who, like laborers, do not have the aptitude (or time) to participate in governance should not be citizens. But, he said, beware: the desires of lesser men for equality are the “springs and fountains” of revolution and are to be so recognized by a properly functioning government, which takes precautions to avoid revolt.

NATURAL LAW THEORY AND CONTRACTARIAN THEORY

Aristotle was an ethical naturalist (see Chapter 10). For answers to questions about what ought to be the case, he looked around him (i.e., he turned to “nature”) to see what is the case. To determine what the purpose of the state ought to be, he considered what the purpose of existing states actually is. Ought all people to be equal in freedom? in citizenship? Aristotle’s answers to these and other questions of political ethics were grounded on what he observed. In this instance, the apparent natural inequality of people he perceived prompted him to answer negatively.

Because of his naturalism, Aristotle is sometimes viewed as the source of natural law political theory. According to this theory, questions of political ethics are to be answered by reference to the so-called natural law, which alone supposedly determines what is right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust, proper and improper.

As you saw in Chapter 10, however, the first relatively clear concept of natural law per se is probably found not in Aristotle’s writings but later, in Stoic philosophy, in which the natural law is conceived as an impersonal principle of reason that governs the cosmos. But the Stoics were not primarily political philosophers. So it is to the celebrated Roman statesman Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.) that we turn for the classic expression of the Stoic concept of natural law as applied to political philosophy. “True law,” wrote Cicero,

> is right reason in agreement with Nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting. . . . There will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens; or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times.

In other words, Cicero is proposing that there is only one valid law, the natural law of reason, which holds eternally and universally. This is a bold idea, and to a certain extent we still accept it today.

Augustine and Aquinas

In the thought of Augustine (354–430) and Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), the natural law as conceived by the Stoics, which according to Cicero was the only valid basis for human law, was Christianized. Natural law was conceived by these Church
Cicero, who held there is but one valid law, the natural law of reason.

philosophers to be the eternal moral law of God as humans apprehend it through the dictates of their conscience and reason.

With Augustine and Aquinas, two vital questions were raised: the relationship of secular law to the natural law of God and, correspondingly, the relationship of state to church. According to both thinkers, the laws of the state must be just, which meant, for them, that the laws of the state must accord with God’s natural law. If secular laws do not accord, they held, they are not truly laws, and there is no legitimate state. For Augustine, the purpose of the state is to take “the power to do hurt” from the wicked; for Aquinas, it is to attend to the common good (which, for Aquinas, meant much more than merely curbing human sinfulness). For both, the Church provides for a person’s spiritual needs, and, though the state does have rights and duties within its own sphere, it is subordinate to the Church, just as its laws are subordinate to natural law.

Perhaps Aquinas’s most distinctive contributions to political philosophy is his discussion of law. Aquinas distinguished among four kinds of law. Most fundamental is eternal law, which is, in effect, the divine reason of God that rules over all things at all times. Then there is divine law, which is God’s gift to man, apprehended by us through revelation rather than through conscience or reason, and which directs us to our supernatural goal, eternal happiness. Natural law is God’s eternal law as it applies to man on earth; in effect, it is the fundamental principles of morality as apprehended by us in our conscience and practical reasoning. Natural law directs us to our natural goal, happiness on earth. Finally, human law is the laws and statutes of society that are derived from man’s understanding of natural law. A rule or decree of a ruler or government must answer to a higher authority, said Aquinas; it must conform to natural law. Any rule or statute that does not, he said, should not be obeyed: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Aquinas’s conception of law, especially of natural law and human law, bears widely on our own conceptions.
Hobbes

Whereas Augustine, Aquinas, and other Christian thinkers conceived of the natural law as the moral law of God, **Thomas Hobbes** (1588–1679), whose ethical principles were discussed in Chapter 10, construed the natural law as neither the law of God nor moral law. In fact, Hobbes’s conception of natural law amounts to discarding the older religious concept.

Hobbes did not speak of the natural law in the singular, as did the classical and Church philosophers, but of natural *laws* in the plural. These, for Hobbes, are simply rational principles of prudent action, prescriptions for best preserving your own life. According to Hobbes, who was a naturalist and in this respect resembled Aristotle, there is no higher authority beyond nature that passes judgment on the morality or immorality of human deeds. You obey the laws of nature insofar as you act rationally, and insofar as you do not, you do not live long.

Hobbes’s first law of nature is to seek peace as far as you have any hope of obtaining it, and when you cannot obtain it, to use any means you can to defend yourself. As you can see, this “law” is indeed simply a prescription of rational self-interest. It is easy to understand why Hobbes regarded this as the first law of nature. From Hobbes’s perspective, the question of how best to prolong one’s life was a pressing issue for most people. Historians emphasize the importance of the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century, which included the discoveries of Gilbert, Kepler, Galileo, Harvey, Boyle, Huygens, Newton, and others. The seventeenth century, in fact, reads like a *Who’s Who* of scientific discoverers. But most seventeenth-century Europeans, plain folk and ruling aristocrats alike, had never even heard of these discoveries, and even if they had, they would have considered them uninteresting and irrelevant. That is because the seventeenth century was a century of political chaos and brutal warfare both in England and on the Continent. The Thirty Years’ War, an ugly spectacle, happened during this century, and most Europeans were somewhat preoccupied with the safety of their skins. For most of them, the question of personal survival was of more than academic interest.

Hobbes’s second law is to be content, for the sake of peace and self-preservation, provided others are also content, with only so much liberty “against other men” as you would allow other men against yourself. And the third law is “that men perform the covenants they have made.” (A covenant is an agreement or contract, a compact.) But nobody, Hobbes said, is so stupid as to live up to an agreement that turns out not to be in her or his own best interest. So, if you want people to live by their agreements, you have to make sure that they will suffer if they try to break them. This means you have to have some third power to enforce them. “Without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed,” Hobbes wrote, covenants are only words.

In light of these considerations, Hobbes concluded, if you apply the three “laws of nature” listed here to real-life situations, what they mean is this: For their own welfare, people should transfer both their collective strength and their right to use whatever is necessary to defend themselves to a sovereign power that will use the acquired power to *compel* all citizens to honor their commitments to one another and to live together peacefully. This is the best road to peace and security, according to Hobbes. Without this central power to make them honor their agreements and keep
them in line, people live in a “state of nature,” a state of unbridled war of each against all, a state of chaos, mistrust, deception, meanness, and violence in which each person stops at nothing to gain the upper hand, and life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

The central **sovereign power** to which people will transfer their power and rights, if they are smart enough to see that it is in their own self-interest to do so, is called by Hobbes the **Leviathan**. (A leviathan is a sea monster often symbolizing evil in the Old Testament and Christian literature.) When people transfer their power and rights to the Leviathan, they in effect create a **social contract**. It is this contract that delivers people from the evils of the natural state to civil society and a state of peace.

The social contract is thus an agreement between individuals who, for the sake of peace, are willing to make this absolutely unconditional and irrevocable transfer of right and power to the sovereign, or Leviathan.

According to Hobbes, only when people have contracted among themselves and created the Leviathan is there **law or justice**, and Hobbes was speaking of civil laws, not natural laws. **Justice** and **injustice** Hobbes defined as the keeping and the breaking of covenants. Because covenants and laws are meaningless unless there is a Leviathan to enforce them, law and justice can exist only under a Leviathan.

Now, the original social covenant, or contract, that creates the Leviathan is not a contract between the Leviathan and its subjects, Hobbes stressed. It is a contract among the subjects themselves. There is not and cannot be any covenant **between** the Leviathan and its subjects. Here is why: because the Leviathan holds all the power, it would be free to break any pledge, promise, agreement, commitment, contract, or covenant that it made. And that means that a covenant between the Leviathan and its subjects would be unenforceable and hence would be empty words.

Therefore, because logically there cannot be any covenant between the Leviathan and its subjects, and because justice is defined by Hobbes as the keeping of a covenant, it is **impossible** for the Hobbesian sovereign or Leviathan to act unjustly toward its subjects. Likewise, the Leviathan’s laws—and the Leviathan’s laws are
Power Politics: Niccolò Machiavelli

One of the most famous political treatises of all time, Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1532), explains how a prince best may gain and maintain power and is often regarded as the foundational treatise of modern political science.

Niccolò Machiavelli [mak-yah-VEL-ee] (1469–1527) did not mince words. He stated frankly that, in the actions of princes, the ends justify the means, and that princes who wish to survive had to learn how not to be good and how to be feared as well as loved. If the prince has to choose between the two, being feared or being loved, Machiavelli added, it is much safer for him to be feared. *The Prince* was a shocker when it was written and is still a shocker today. It established Machiavelli’s reputation as a cold-blooded advocate of power politics.

Machiavelli, however, though he recognized the importance of power in politics and had but little belief in the intelligence or rationality of the common run of men, made a distinction between the virtuous leader and the villainous or ignoble one, finding little to admire in the latter type.

Further, his more expansive earlier political work, *Discourses on Livy* (1531), reveals his preference for free republics over monarchies as better means of securing liberty, order, stability, and the interests of all, though he thought that, under the prevailing circumstances, the only way to secure order was to establish an absolute power that could curb the excesses of the ambitious and avaricious.

In the Roman republic, people had been more devoted to liberty than in his time, he thought, and in general they had been stronger in character and less prone to become prey to evil-minded men. Why had people changed? Christianity, he perceived, in emphasizing humility, meekness, and contempt for worldly objects, had made men feeble and needy of the absolute rule of a prince.

The only laws, for they alone can be enforced—cannot be unjust. The Leviathan, according to Hobbes, has the right to lay down any laws it can enforce (although, as you will see shortly, it cannot require us to take our own lives), and we are not only physically but also morally obliged to obey them, for only through its laws are we kept from anarchy.

That no covenant exists between the Leviathan and its subjects means that the Leviathan has no legal or moral obligation to them. That it has no legal or moral obligation to its subjects means that they are gambling when they agree among themselves unconditionally to transfer all power and rights to it; they are gambling that life under its rule (conditions of “peace”) will be better than it would be under the conditions of anarchy that otherwise would obtain. Perhaps a rational sovereign is likely to see that it is not in his own self-interest to destroy or abuse his subjects, but there is always a chance that he will not.

Hobbes, obviously, thought the gamble a wise one. Were people to live without a common power, he wrote, a power “to keep them all in awe,” their innate viciousness would preclude development of any commerce, industry, or culture, and there would be “no knowledge on the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society.” There would be only, he wrote, “continual fear, and danger of violent death.” In Hobbes’s view, given the alternatives of anarchy and dictatorship (the Leviathan)—and these are the only alternatives—the most reasonable choice is dictatorship, even though it does involve the risk of despotism.

Hobbes did make the political establishment of the Leviathan subject to certain minimal safeguards for its subjects. If the Leviathan fails to provide security to its
PROFILE: Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

Scientific discovery, geometry, and the violence of civil war and anarchy—these were the major influences on Hobbes's philosophy.

A graduate of Oxford, Hobbes became a tutor in the influential Cavendish family, in which role he was able to meet many of the important intellectual figures of his day, including Galileo and Bacon. Through his acquaintance with the work of these and other early scientists, it occurred to him that everything that happens does so as the result of physical matter in motion. This perception became the basis of his entire philosophy, including his metaphysics and political thought.

Amazingly, it was not until his early forties that Hobbes chanced on a copy of Euclid's Elements. This work influenced him to think that all knowledge could be derived deductively from axioms based on observation. Consequently, he devised a comprehensive plan, which he never fully completed, to apply the Euclidean deductive method to all questions of physical nature, human nature, and the nature of society.

Hobbes's political philosophy, however, has earned him his greatest fame. The basic themes of his political writings—that man is by nature violent, self-serving, and at war with all other men, and that for their own defense against their natural predaciousness, people must submit to a strong power capable of enforcing peace—are clear reflections of the political turbulence of the times. During Hobbes's lifetime, the Thirty Years' War on the European continent struck down half the population, and in England a state of anarchy followed the Civil War and the rule of Oliver Cromwell. Moreover, the plague ravaged England no fewer than four times during Hobbes's long life. Hobbes was no stranger to death, destruction, chaos, and the willingness of men to sacrifice others for their own ends.

subjects, they may transfer their allegiance to another sovereign. Further, because no one has the right to take his own life, this right is not among those transferred to the Leviathan at the time of the social contract of its subjects. Therefore, the Leviathan cannot rightfully compel a subject to take his or her own life.

Critics of Hobbes, not surprisingly, scoff at such “safeguards.” As a practical matter, the Leviathan, having been given the collective power of its subjects, is able to do whatever it pleases with its subjects. As John Locke said, with Hobbes you trade the chance of being ravaged by a thousand men acting independently for the chance of suffering the same fate at the hands of one person who has a thousand men at his command.

One other important concept in Hobbes’s political philosophy needs to be mentioned here: Hobbes uses the phrase natural right and asserts that, when peace cannot be obtained, we have a natural right to use all means to defend ourselves. Today we think of a natural right as something that it would be immoral for others to deprive us of. For example, when we say that a person has a natural right to life, we mean that it would be wrong for others to deprive the person of life. For Hobbes the emphasis was slightly different. He meant that, when peace cannot be obtained, we suffer no moral restrictions whatsoever and that, if necessary for survival, each person can use any method he or she wants—including depriving
another of his or her life. For Hobbes, one’s natural right to life does not prohibit any activity.

We have spent some time here on Hobbes. This is because Hobbes, in basing the creation and power of the Leviathan on a social contract, is the first philosopher to enunciate systematically the concept that the state, and with it justice, is created through an agreement or “contract” among the people whom the state comprises. This is, of course, a familiar notion to Americans because the United States Constitution, about which more will be said later, is the social contract that brought this country into existence.

So Hobbes really did more than reject the principle of natural law as representing God’s will and its corollary that the laws of the state and the state itself derive their legitimacy from their harmony with this divine natural law. According to Hobbes, the legitimacy of the state and its laws derives from an initial consent of those governed (though keep in mind that this consent is “required” by those principles of practical reason that Hobbes refers to as natural laws). With Hobbes begins an important tradition in Western political philosophy, so-called contractualism. Contractualism is the idea that the legitimacy of the state and/or the principles of sound justice derive their legitimacy from a societal agreement or social contract. Contractarianism is often used as a synonym. You will encounter other contractarian theories besides Hobbes’s as we proceed, beginning with the philosophy of John Locke.

TWO OTHER CONTRACTARIAN THEORISTS

Two other contractarian theorists from the modern period, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, were very important to the history of political philosophy. Both influenced American political thought, especially Locke, the earlier of the two.

John Locke

Hobbes lived much of his life during a time of rather unpleasant turmoil, and he quite reasonably thought that civil peace should be a primary objective for people. John Locke (1632–1704), who was born some forty or so years later, responded in his writing to a threat other than that of anarchy and chaos—namely, the threat posed by a Roman Catholic monarch in Anglican England. To avoid getting lost in the maze known as English history, let’s just say that this Catholic monarch, James II, was a blunderer of the first rank who not only suspended laws against fellow Catholics but also did his best to populate higher offices with them. In response, English aristocrats invited the Dutch head of state, the Protestant William of Orange, to take the throne (which, of course, he was happy to do). When William landed in England, James was forced to flee to France, and in 1688 the throne was offered jointly to William and his wife, Mary, who, incidentally, was James’s daughter.
II. Moral and Political Philosophy

11. Political Philosophy

PROFILE: John Locke (1632–1704)

Locke, like Hobbes, was educated at Oxford. Though he became a lecturer there, he turned to the study of medicine, and as the physician, friend, and advisor of Lord Ashley (who later was the Earl of Shaftesbury and Lord Chancellor of the Realm), Locke became an influential man of state.

When Shaftesbury, who was involved in a plot to overthrow King Charles II, was forced to leave England, Locke found himself suspected of disloyalty by the king and went into exile in Holland in 1683. Five years later, when Prince William and Princess Mary of Orange were called to the throne in the Glorious Revolution, Locke returned to England as part of the entourage of the future Queen Mary.

Locke’s two most important works, Two Treatises of Government and An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, were published in 1690, by which time Locke already was a famous philosopher and a respected political advisor. In his last years, he withdrew from political affairs and devoted himself to religious contemplation and study of the Epistles of St. Paul.

His contributions to epistemology and political theory were of major and lasting significance, and he is recognized as an articulate advocate of natural rights and religious freedom, as well as a strong opponent of the divine right of kings.

Locke’s Two Treatises of Government were published anonymously. During his life, rumors correctly reported that Locke was the author of these works, but Locke always denied this.

This switch was known as the Glorious Revolution, and its relationship to Locke’s writings was this: Locke wished to define a right to resistance within a theoretical framework that would not at the same time undermine the state’s power to govern effectively. Although Locke wrote his Two Treatises of Government before the Glorious Revolution, he published them in 1690, and they were regarded as the philosophical justification of the Glorious Revolution.

Locke’s treatises, and especially the Second Treatise of Government, are essentially an outline of the aims and purposes of the state. They have affected democratic theory at least as much as anything else that has ever been written. At the time of the American Revolution, Locke’s political thought was well known to American political leaders and had become considerably incorporated in American popular political thought as well. It had a marked impact on the contents and wording of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights and has had a continued substantial impact on American political thought and political institutions to this day. All Americans are directly or indirectly influenced by John Locke.

Locke, unlike Hobbes, believed there is a natural moral law that is more than a set of practical principles for survival. According to Locke, we are all made by God and are his “property.” It logically follows that we are obliged to preserve ourselves and, as far as possible, the rest of humankind. Accordingly, except for the sake of just punishment, no person may take away or impair another’s “life, liberty, health, limbs or goods,” or anything on which these various items may depend.
Catharine Trotter Cockburn (1679–1749) was an Englishwoman who, with no apparent formal education, learned French, Latin, and Greek and read philosophy. Until very recently, her philosophical writings went unexamined by scholars. We mention her here in connection with Locke.

Trotter was an immensely successful playwright before she turned to writing philosophy. London’s Drury Lane is the predecessor of New York’s Broadway. When Trotter was a teenager, her first play, *Agnes de Castro*, was produced at Drury Lane. It was so popular that she was immediately able to get hundreds of subscribers to pay money in advance to support the writing of her next play. (The list of her subscribers reads like a *Who’s Who* of England.) When she was twenty-one, she had three blockbuster plays on Drury Lane at the same time.

Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Wooster, was a subscriber to Trotter’s plays. He was, in addition, a major critic of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, especially of its consequences for morality and religion. He thought that Locke’s views challenged the authority of divine revelations on the nature of morality, and he wrote several highly publicized (and unbelievably long) letters condemning Locke. An individual named Thomas Burnet of the Charterhouse anonymously published three sets of “Remarks” in support of Bishop Stillingfleet’s criticism of Locke. Everyone ducked these broadsides, even Locke. Nobody would say a word against the powerful Bishop of Wooster.

Then Catharine Trotter anonymously published *A Defence of Mr. Locke’s Essay of Human Understanding, Wherein Its Principles, with Reference to Morality, Revealed Religion, and the Immortality of the Soul, Are Considered and Justified: In Answer to Some Remarks on That Essay*. She published her defense of Locke anonymously because she was afraid that a defense of Locke by a woman would further inflame Bishop Stillingfleet. (How could a woman claim any religious or moral authority to give an opinion?) However, within six months, Catharine Trotter was identified as the author of the *Defence*, and her plays all closed, in an apparent blacklisting. Locke sought her out and gave her some books and a large sum of money in gratitude.

Leibniz (see Chapter 6) was working on his own critique of Locke but put off finishing it until he could read Trotter’s *Defence*. Several years after publishing *Defence*, Catharine Trotter married a clergyman named Cockburn [KO-burn] and continued to publish philosophical pamphlets defending Locke’s philosophy from his religious critics until shortly before her death.

That no person may destroy or impair another’s life, liberty, or property requires, according to Locke, that each person has inalienable natural rights and duties. They are inalienable and natural in that their existence is entailed by the fact that we are God’s creations. This conception of natural rights is more in accord with contemporary popular views than is the conception of Hobbes, discussed earlier.

Locke was considerably less gloomy than Hobbes in his opinion of people and was not nearly so pessimistic about what they might do to one another in the absence of civil society (i.e., in a hypothetical “state of nature”). Nevertheless, he thought it plainly advantageous to individuals to contract among themselves to establish a state to govern them, because the state, chiefly through its laws, offers
the means to protect the right to property and to ensure “the peace, safety, and public good of the people.”

Thus Locke, like Hobbes, held that the state is created and acquires its legitimacy by an agreement or social compact on the part of its citizens and subjects. For both philosophers the purpose of the social compact is to ensure the “public good,” but for Locke the purpose is also to protect natural rights. For Hobbes, each subject gives up his rights to the Leviathan in exchange for, or rather in hopes of obtaining, peace and security. For Locke, the subject entrusts his rights to the state for safeguarding.

For Locke, then, the legitimacy of the state and its governing of its citizens rests on their prior consent to the state’s existence, authority, and power. Without that prior consent, it is a violation of a person’s natural rights for the state to exercise political power over him. Because men are “by nature all free, equal and independent,” he wrote, “no one can be . . . subjected to the political power of another without his consent.”

It is plain, however, that most people in most states have never explicitly given their consent to be governed by the state. Do you recall ever having given such consent? Therefore, can it not be argued that existing states, by having laws and punishing lawbreakers, in effect violate the natural rights of their citizens?

Locke resolves this problem by maintaining that, if we accept any of the advantages of citizenship—if, for instance, we own property or rely on the police or travel on a public highway—then we have given tacit consent to the state to make and enforce laws, and we are obliged to obey these laws. In this way, Locke can maintain that states do not violate the natural rights of citizens (and others subject to their authority) by exercise of governmental authority over them, even though these individuals have never explicitly expressed their consent to that authority.

**Locke and the Right to Property** That people have a natural right to property, Locke regarded as evident. Because all people are created by God and thus (as explained earlier) have a right to their body (their “limbs”), it follows, Locke

According to Locke, your property is what you mix your labor with (subject to certain provisos mentioned in the text). But here is a problem: Just what is the astronaut mixing his labor with? The entire planet? Or just what he has walked on? Or maybe just with the sign and the ground in which it is pounded? Also, whose labor is involved here, only the astronaut’s?
reasoned, that they have a right to their body’s labor and thus to whatever things they “mix their labor with.” That is, they have a right to those things, provided that the things do not already belong to or are not needed to sustain someone else, and provided that they do not exceed in amount what can be used before spoiling. Because money is durable, a person may “heap up as much of it” as he can, said Locke.

Locke’s theory of property implies that although all people equally have a right to property, they do not all have a right to equal property, because how much property a person lawfully has will depend on his ingenuity and industriousness. This distinction is important because it can go some way toward justifying an unequal distribution of wealth.

Separation of Power When people agree to unite themselves in a state, Locke said, they consent to entrust to it the power to make and enforce laws and punish transgressors, and they consent to submit to the will of the majority. The majority must decide for itself what form of government is best—that is, whether it (the majority) will run the government itself or will delegate its ruling power to a select few, or even to one, or will adopt yet some other arrangement. The body to which the power is delegated (or the majority itself, if the power is not delegated to anyone) is the legislative, or lawmaking, branch of the government.

Lawmaking is the central function of government, in Locke’s opinion, for it is only through law that people are assured of equal, fair, and impartial treatment and are protected from the arbitrary exercise of power by the government.

But, Locke thought, the persons who make the laws should not themselves execute them, and so, he said, the government should have an executive branch as well. Further, in addition to the legislative and executive branches of government, there must be, he believed, a federative branch with the power to make war and peace. Though Locke believed it essential that there be a judiciary to settle disputes and fix the degree of punishment for lawbreakers, the idea that the judiciary should be a separate branch of government was not Locke’s but that of the influential French jurist Montesquieu (1689–1755).

Locke’s political theory also contrasts sharply with Hobbes’s in that, for Hobbes, political power is surrendered to an executive authority, whereas for Locke, political power is delegated to the legislature. Also, as we have seen, Locke, unlike Hobbes, called for a division of governmental authority.

Because, according to Locke, the power of the government is entrusted to it by the people of the state, the government is the servant of the people. Whenever, in the view of the people, the government acts contrarily to that trust, the people may dismiss their servant. In other words, when this violation of trust is perceived to have happened, rebellion is justified.

It is plain, then, that several basic concepts of the American democratic form of government are found in the political theory of John Locke. These include the ideas that people have natural rights that the government cannot infringe on, that the government is the servant of the people and its power is entrusted to it by them, that law rather than force is the basis of the government, that the will of the people is determined by majority vote, and that the government should be divided into separate branches.
The General Will

Rousseau’s concept of the general will is essentially the same as such familiar concepts as the “sentiment of a nation” and “the will of the people.” The idea is that a group of people may collectively or as a group desire or wish or want something and that this collective desire, though it may coincide with the desires of the individuals in the group, is a metaphysically distinct entity.

Two questions about the general will, and all similar notions of a collective sentiment, are controversial to this day. First, what is it? Let us suppose, for example, that every member of a group of people believes that the federal deficit should be reduced. We may say, then, that the general will is that the federal deficit should be reduced. But can saying this possibly mean otherwise than simply that every individual in the group believes that it should be reduced? In this instance, that is, the general will seems no different from the wills of all individuals.

Let us suppose now that 60 percent of the group believes that the deficit should be reduced. If we now say that the general will is that the federal deficit should be reduced, can we mean anything other than what we did in the first instance, namely, that the general will seems no different from the wills of all individuals.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

According to Hobbes and Locke, people are better off in the properly constituted state than they are or were in the “state of nature.” Quite a different point of view was expressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau [roo-SO] (1712–1778), at least in his early political writings.

In the state of nature, in which there was neither state nor civilization, people were essentially innocent, good, happy, and healthy, maintained Rousseau in his Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Men (1754). Further, in the state of nature, he said, people enjoyed perfect freedom. But with the advent of private property, this all changed. “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,” which brought with it the destruction of natural liberty and which, “for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labor, slavery and wretchedness.”

To put this in some sort of perspective, Rousseau wrote this indictment of civilization in 1754. This was sixty-seven years after Newton had published his Principia. It was two years after Benjamin Franklin, with key and kite, had proved
that lightning is electricity. Thirty years earlier, Fahrenheit had devised his thermometer. Bach had been dead four years, and it had been twenty-three years since he had completed the Brandenburg Concertos, a masterpiece of mathematical reasoning expressed in music. This, in short, was the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment, the age of light, the Age of Reason. Civilization was stuffed with benefits. Philosophers were (as always) critical, but this critical? Civilization a step backward? Rousseau was regarded as insane.

But Rousseau later came to think that in the proper society people would surrender their individual liberty for a different and more important collective liberty. Through a social compact, a people may agree, in effect, to unite into a collective whole called “the state” or “the sovereign,” and through the state or sovereign enact laws reflective of the general will. An important point to be aware of here is that, for Rousseau, the state or sovereign is an entity in its own right, a “moral person” (as Rousseau says), a nonbiological organism that has its own life and its own will. Rousseau’s concept of the general will—that is, the will of a politically united people, the will of the state—is his most important contribution to political philosophy (for further discussion of the concept, see the box “The General Will”).

If you have difficulty conceiving of a state as a person or an organic entity, remember that Plato also viewed the state as an organism. Or think of a football team, which can easily be regarded as something “over and beyond” the individual players that make it up, or of a corporation, which the law regards as a person.

The general will, according to Rousseau, defines what is to be the common good and thus determines what is right and wrong and should and should not be done. And the state or sovereign (i.e., the people as a collective agent) expresses this general will by passing laws.

Further, the general will, the will of the people taken collectively, represents the true will of each person. Thus, insofar as the individual’s actions coincide with the
PROFILE: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)

He [Rousseau] is surely the blackest and most atrocious villain, beyond comparison, that now exists in the world; and I am heartily ashamed of anything I ever wrote in his favor. —David Hume

Rousseau—philosopher, novelist, and composer—loved many women and eventually became paranoid to the point of madness. He was born a watchmaker’s son in Geneva. In his early teens he was apprenticed to an engraver but ran away from his master. When he was about sixteen, he met Baroness Louise de Warens, who became his patroness and later his lover. With her he spent most of his time until he was thirty, attempting through wide reading to remedy the deficiencies in his education. In 1742 he went to Paris by himself to make his fortune, which he failed to do, with a new system of musical notation he had invented. There he became a close associate of several important literary figures of the time, including, most significantly, Denis Diderot (editor of the Encyclopédie, the crowning jewel of eighteenth-century rationalism). There he also met Thérèse Le Vasseur, an almost illiterate servant girl, who became his common-law wife.

In 1749 Rousseau won first prize in a contest sponsored by the Academy of Dijon for his essay on the question, Has the progress of the sciences and art contributed to the corruption or to the improvement of human conduct? His answer, startling to the sensibilities of the French Enlightenment, was an attack on the corrupting effects of civilization and instantly made him famous. A second essay, Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men (1754), which again portrayed the evils brought to man by civilization, was also highly controversial. Voltaire, to whom Rousseau had sent a copy of the work, thanked him for his “new book against the human race.”

At this time Rousseau, disillusioned with Paris, went briefly to Geneva to regain his Genevan citizenship, but he soon returned to Paris and retired to the estate of yet another woman, Madame d’Épinay. Always emotional, temperamental, suspicious, and unable to maintain constant friendships, he suspected his friends—Diderot, Mme. d’Épinay, and others—of conspiring to ruin him. He departed and became the guest of the Duc de Luxembourg, at whose chateau he finished the novel La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761), written under the influence of his love for (yes!) the sister-in-law of Mme. d’Épinay.

The Social Contract and his treatise on education, Émile, both published the following year, were so offensive to ecclesiastic authorities that Rousseau had to leave Paris. He fled to Neuchâtel and then to Bern. Finally, in 1766 he found a haven with David Hume in England. But after a year, Rousseau, who by this time had become deeply paranoid, quarreled with Hume, who he thought was plotting against him. In fact, Hume had been trying to procure a royal pension for Rousseau. (Hume’s last opinion of Rousseau is stated at the beginning of this Profile.) Rousseau now returned to France and eventually to Paris, even though he was in danger of arrest. He was left undisturbed, however, and spent his last years copying music, wandering about reading his Confessions out loud, and insulting the curious throngs who came to look at him.

Still, few philosophers have had as much impact as Rousseau on political philosophy, politics, education, or literature.
common will, he is acting as he “really” wants to act—and to act as you really want to act is to be free, said Rousseau. Compelling a person to accept the general will by obeying the laws of the state is forcing him to be free, Rousseau wrote in a famous passage. So we may lose individual or “natural” liberty when we unite to form a collective whole, but we gain this new type of “civil” liberty, “the freedom to obey a law which we prescribe for ourselves.” Thus, Rousseau wrote, “it is to law alone that men owe justice and [civil] liberty.”

The question arises, of course: Just how do we know what the general will is? Rousseau’s answer: If we, the citizens, are enlightened and are not allowed to influence one another, then a majority vote determines what the general will is.

The general will is found by counting votes. When, therefore, the opinion which is contrary to my own prevails, this proves neither more nor less than that I was mistaken, and that what I thought to be the general will was not so.

Rousseau, however, distinguished between the “will of all” and the general will. The former, Rousseau wrote,

is indeed but a sum of private wills: but remove from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel each other, and then the general will remains as the sum of the differences.

According to Rousseau, it makes no sense to think of either delegating or dividing the general will. Therefore, he calculated, in the state there cannot validly be a division of powers (in contrast to what Locke thought), and though we may commission some person or persons to administer or enforce the law, these individuals act only as our deputies, not as our representatives.

Rousseau maintained that the citizens of the state have the right at any time to terminate the social contract. He also held that they have the right at any time to depose the officials of the state. The implication of the right of the citizenry to terminate the social contract at any time and of their right to remove officials of the state at any time is that the citizenry have a right of revolution and a right to resume anarchy at any time. Thus, Rousseau is thought to have provided a philosophical justification for anarchy and revolution.

Did Rousseau also unwittingly establish a philosophical basis for totalitarianism? Some think that is the case because he said that “the articles of the social contract [reduce] to this single point: the total alienation of each person, and all his rights, to the whole community.” If the community is regarded not just as the sum total of its members but as an entity somehow over and above the individuals in it, an entity with its own life and will that can itself do no wrong and must always be obeyed, then Rousseau’s words do have an ominous ring and invoke concepts that are incorporated wholesale in the philosophy of fascism. (Hitler’s claim that the Führer instinctively knows the desires of the Volk [German for “the people”] and is therefore due absolute obedience is an appeal to the general will.) Also ominous is what Rousseau wrote near the end of The Social Contract (1762):

If any one, after he has publicly subscribed to these dogmas [which dispose a person to love his duties and be a good citizen], shall conduct himself as if he did not believe them, he is to be punished by death.
U.S. constitutional political philosophy incorporates several important philosophical concepts and ideas. As we have seen, before the U.S. Constitution was written, philosophers had theorized about a social compact as the foundation of the state. But there had been only a few instances of written constitutions, and these were of no lasting importance. England was the only great power that had ever had a constitution, which lasted only a few months during Oliver Cromwell’s rule. Thus, the first significant experience with written constitutions was the U.S. Constitution.

The main trend in U.S. political thought has been embodied in the development of theory pertaining to the Constitution. The trend relates essentially to natural law and natural rights and to the incorporation in the federal and state constitutions of a social contract to establish or control a political state. The Constitution is a continuing experiment in applied philosophy.

Natural Law and Rights in the Declaration of Independence

In 1776, the Declaration of Independence proclaimed the doctrines of natural, or divine, law and of natural, or God-given, rights. The Declaration asserted that there are “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” and the framers appealed “to the Supreme Judge of the World for the rectitude of our intentions.” The Declaration also asserted that it is “self-evident” that

all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that amongst these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The framers also stated that “it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish” any form of government whenever that form of government becomes destructive of “its ends to secure” the unalienable rights with which men are endowed by their Creator.

In proclaiming the existence of natural or divine law and of natural or God-given rights, the Declaration incorporated what had become widespread political theory in the colonies by the time of the American Revolution, a theory prevalent among those who opposed the British king and parliament. This political theory was rooted in (1) familiarity with the writings of European political theorists, particularly the British ones, and (2) in the colonies, the constant preaching of the clergy, who had been dominant in civil and political as well as religious matters, that the moral code reflected divine law and should determine civil rights.

As for the philosophically vexing question of who should say what natural or divine law ordains and what God-given rights are in particular, by the time of the declaration it was no longer generally conceded that this power belonged primarily to the clergy. Instead, it was recognized that the power lies ultimately in the people and mediately in the legislative branch of government, subject, some people thought, to judicial review. The last provision, that the power of the legislative branch is subject to judicial review, is now almost universally accepted, as we shall see.
Natural Law and Rights in the U.S. Constitution

The original Constitution was directed toward establishing law and order and not toward guaranteeing natural rights. There is no explicit reference to divine law or God-given rights in the original. Before the adoption of the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution), the Constitution refers to natural law or divine rights only implicitly and only in its preamble, in stating its purpose to “establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the General Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty.” However, it is plausible to say that these purposes are those of natural law and that the “Blessings of Liberty” include natural rights. In addition, the Bill of Rights arguably limits the federal government in ways dictated by natural law and arguably guarantees rights in ways dictated by the existence of natural rights. Without question, the rights explicit and implicit in the preamble and in the Bill of Rights were regarded by the framers of the Constitution and by the American people in general as the unalienable rights to which the Declaration of Independence alluded.

In Marbury v. Madison, decided by the Supreme Court in 1803 under Chief Justice John Marshall, and in Supreme Court cases in its wake, it became firmly established that, under the Constitution, the Supreme Court has the power to declare void federal and state laws that violate it. Thus, it is for the Supreme Court to determine the extent to which what may be called natural law and rights are incorporated in the Constitution.

Under Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified July 9, 1869, most of the limitation on government and guarantees of rights contained in the Bill of
Rights became applicable to the states as well as to the federal government. The relationship of the authority of the states to the authority of the federal government has always been a central issue in American constitutional philosophy.

The Right to Privacy

What specific rights are explicit and implicit in the Bill of Rights and other clauses of the Constitution is not crystal clear. For example, the Constitution does not mention a right to vote, a right to refuse medical treatment, a right to travel freely, or a right to have children. One issue concerning which there is much current discussion is whether the Constitution protects a right to privacy. The question is especially controversial because, in its landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court upheld a woman’s right to abortion as included within the right to privacy. A right to privacy arguably also would cover a right to engage in various forms of sexual intimacies; whether there is such a constitutional right therefore is questioned by those who would proscribe sexual practices they regard as immoral. Differences on the issue tend to fall along partisan lines, with Democrats generally believing that such a right is implied in the Constitution and Republicans generally believing that it is not. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan’s nominee to the Supreme Court, Robert H. Bork, was rejected by the U.S. Senate mainly because of his views on the question of whether there is a constitutional right to privacy. Subsequent nominees have all been questioned carefully about their views on the subject.

In 2003, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the Court ruled that a Texas law prohibiting homosexual sodomy was unconstitutional. Significantly, the majority opinion was based not on a right to privacy but on the grounds that the anti-sodomy law was a violation of rights “implicit in ordered liberty.” The case perhaps represented a shift in the Court’s thinking toward an emphasis on constitutional guarantees of liberty rather than privacy. Many constitutional scholars view *Lawrence v. Texas* as a landmark decision for a variety of different reasons, including its potential impact on statutes prohibiting certain types of sexual practices.

CLASSIC LIBERALISM AND MARXISM

We turn now to the nineteenth century, the century ushered in by Romanticism in art, music, and literature; by grandiose metaphysical speculations in philosophy; and (to mention something non-European for a change) by the accession of Muhammad Ali (the pasha of Egypt, not the boxer). It was the century that saw spreading industrialization and nationalism, Darwin and Freud, the Suez Canal, civil war in America, the emergence of Italy and Germany as states, and the invention of photography and the automobile. The two major political philosophies were liberalism and Marxism. They still are, for the most part, despite the demise of Soviet communism. (See the box “Marxism and Liberalism Compared” on
Marxism, of course, is the socialist philosophy of Karl Marx (1818–1883). **Liberalism** (from the Latin word for “liberty”) is the philosophy well expressed by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)—who will be discussed shortly—in his treatise *On Liberty*: “The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is . . . to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.”

**Adam Smith**

The most important classical liberal economic theorist was **Adam Smith** (1723–1790), a contemporary of David Hume. The principle of Smith’s economic theory is that, in a laissez-faire economy (one in which the government remains on the sidelines), each individual, in seeking her or his own gain, is led “by an invisible hand” to promote the common good, though doing so is not her or his intention. As an exponent of the benefits for everyone of **capitalism** (a system of private ownership of property and the means of production and distribution) and a **free-market economy** (in which individuals may pursue their own economic interests without governmental restrictions on their freedom), Smith advocated positions that resemble those of many contemporary American conservatives. His *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) has become a classic among American political conservatives.

**Utilitarianism and Natural Rights**

**Utilitarianism**, as you may recall from the preceding chapter, is the theory that the rightness of an act derives from the happiness or pleasure it produces as its consequences. You may also recall the name **Jeremy Bentham** (1748–1832), the famous utilitarian. Here we mention him for his view that talk about natural rights is so much nonsense. And, indeed, utilitarian philosophy in general does not easily accommodate a belief in natural rights. Why? Well, consider a possible natural right—for example, the right to keep what you have honestly earned. If taking from you what you have honestly earned and distributing it to people who are poorer than you are increases the sum total of happiness, utilitarianism apparently requires that we do this, despite your “natural right.” Utilitarianism seems to require violating any so-called natural right if doing so increases happiness.

Utilitarians often attempt to accommodate our intuitions about natural rights by maintaining that in civilized society more happiness results when what are called natural rights are respected than when they are not. They say that natural rights should be regarded as secondary rules of conduct that must be obeyed for the sake of the general happiness. However, in viewing natural rights as a system of moral rules that promote general happiness, utilitarians do not always explain why such rules should not be overridden when doing so better promotes the general happiness.
Harriet Taylor

Like many women philosophers, Harriet Taylor (1807–1858) has been known to the public primarily through her association with a male philosopher; in Taylor’s case the male philosopher was John Stuart Mill (coming up next). Taylor and Mill shared a long personal and professional intimacy, and each shaped and influenced the ideas of the other. However, Taylor was a published author of poetry before she even met Mill in 1831. Recently, a draft of an essay on toleration of nonconformity was discovered in Taylor’s handwriting; it appears to have been written in 1832. She was a regular contributor of poetry, book reviews, and a literary piece to the radical, utilitarian, and feminist journal The Monthly Repository. Later, Mill, too, became a regular contributor, and eventually Taylor and Mill began writing together. However, their writings were published under Mill’s name, partly because a man’s name gave the work more legitimacy within a sexist culture but also because Taylor’s husband was unhappy with the idea of his wife’s gaining notoriety. Nevertheless, from the evidence of their manuscripts and their personal correspondence, it is possible to piece together an idea of which works were primarily Taylor’s and which were Mill’s; she was a profound thinker in her own right.

Taylor was interested both in sweeping transformations of society and in specific legal reforms. One of her greatest concerns was the tendency of English society to stifle individuality, originality, and radical political and religious views. English society, in her opinion, was intolerant of opinions that failed to conform to the mainstream. She considered the intolerance of nonconformity to be morally wrong and ultimately dangerous to human progress. Taylor’s essay on such intolerance is a stirring statement of the theory that “the opinion of society—majority opinion—is the root of all intolerance.” Her defense of minority viewpoints and individuality predated by twenty-seven years Mill’s famous treatise On Liberty (see the excerpt from this work at the end of the chapter).

John Stuart Mill

Like Locke and Rousseau, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was much concerned with liberty. Mill, you will recall from the previous chapter, was a utilitarian. He believed that happiness not only is good but also is the good, the ultimate end of all action and desire. “Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness,” he wrote. But remember that utilitarians are not egoists, and Mill believed that it is not one’s own happiness that one should seek but instead the greatest amount of happiness altogether—that is, the general happiness.

Unlike Rousseau, Mill does not view a community, a society, a people, or a state as an organic entity separate and distinct from the sum of the people in it. When Mill says that one should seek the general happiness, he is not referring to the happiness of the community as some kind of organic whole. For Mill, the general happiness is just the total happiness of the individuals in the group.

Now, Mill, following Bentham and Hume and like Rousseau, rejected Locke’s theory that people have God-given natural rights. But he maintained that the
general happiness requires that all individuals enjoy personal liberty to the fullest extent consistent with the liberties of others. “The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is . . . absolute.” Mill regarded personal liberty, including freedom of thought and speech, as essential to the general happiness. It is essential, he argued, because truth and the development of the individual’s character and abilities are essential to the general happiness, and only if there is personal liberty can truth be ascertained and each individual’s capacities developed. It therefore follows that an individual should enjoy unrestrained personal liberty up to the point where his or her activities may harm others.

Of course, it is difficult to identify when an action may be said to harm others. Liberalism places the burden of proof on the person who claims that harm to others will be done. That the burden must be so placed is Mill’s position.

The best form of government, according to Mill, is that which, among all realistic and practical alternatives, produces the greatest benefit. The form of government best suited to do this, he maintained, is representative democracy. But Mill
What's so great about an education anyway?

Did you ever meet a person who had one who'd trade places with you?

This idea comes straight from J. S. Mill, who observed that “no instructed person” would consent to become an ignoramus even if he were persuaded that as an ignoramus he would be happier than he presently is. Plato had a similar thing in mind when he said that a person who had found knowledge would rather be the slave of the poorest master than be ignorant.

was especially sensitive to the threat to liberty posed in democracies by the tyranny of public opinion as well as by the suppression by the majority of minority points of view. For this reason he emphasized the importance of safeguards such as proportional representation, universal suffrage, and enforcement of education by the state.

Now, promoting the general happiness would seem sometimes to justify (if not explicitly to require) restrictions on personal liberty. Zoning ordinances, antitrust laws, and motorcycle helmet laws, to take modern examples, are, arguably, restrictions of this sort. Mill recognized the dilemma that potentially confronts anyone who wishes both to promote the general happiness and to protect personal liberty. His general position is this: The government should not do anything that could be done more effectively by private individuals themselves; and even if something could be done more effectively by the government, if the government’s doing it would deprive individuals of an opportunity for development or education, the government should not do it. In short, Mill was opposed to enlarging the power of the government unnecessarily.

**Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**

**Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** (1770–1831), whose metaphysics we considered in Chapter 7, offered a social political theory as part of his metaphysics. When you read about Karl Marx in the next section, you will see parallels with Hegel, though stripped of the metaphysical trappings.

Hegel believed that (in his words), “the human is nothing other than the series of his acts.” Humans, he observed, have consciousness and speech. With
these assets, they constitute the becoming that, in his metaphysics, is time and history.

Humans are restless and active, and their actions arise from their desires. Lower desires—animal desires—stem from a vague feeling of selfhood rather than from consciousness of self. This is not a difficult idea to grasp. Think of your pet dog, Smokey, let us say. Smokey cannot transcend his body or his feelings, and, although he barks, he does not truly speak. Most important, Smokey does not think of himself as an “I.” Still, Smokey’s desires make him superior to plant life—which, incidentally, explains why animals consume plants and not vice versa, according to Hegel. But you and I—we are humans and rise above mere animal desires—if we are to achieve true freedom and autonomy.

Now, according to Hegel, to desire only the present, immediate being (a la Smokey) is to be enslaved by it. Liberation to one’s true self begins with desire for what is not yet—and this desire necessarily is the desire for nonbeing. All becoming, all time and all history, arises out of an ongoing annihilation of the present, that is, immediate being. The annihilating process can take the form of fighting—and it can take the form of working. Fighting and working both are processes by means of which the self is “transcended,” and true being and liberation are found. We can sum it up this way: the human being for Hegel, is an active process of becoming, whose actions are driven by desires.

What is your deepest desire? According to Hegel, the deepest of human desires is the need for recognition. The human being longs not merely for recognition by others but for universal recognition through actions arising out of the nonbiological “I.” Only universal recognition provides true and lasting satisfaction. Since this desire is the universal condition of the species, humans are in continuous “life and death fights” with each other, Hegel reasoned. Each person wants to override, negate, and destroy all others. For Hegel, if you do not enter into this fight, then you are not truly a human being.

By equating human satisfaction with “immortal” fame, Hegel resurrected an ancient Greek idea (though not endorsed by Plato) of personal immortality as fame. You could also think of Hegel as basing human action on the idea from Heraclitus that war is the father of all.

The victor in war is lord and master. What makes the master victorious is a willingness to go all the way in battle. He would rather die than submit and be dominated. Remember that the victor is fighting for a nonbiological goal, namely, for prestige and for recognition. The master is a fighter who demands to be recognized by others, namely, those whom he has defeated: his slaves. The master’s keenest pleasure consists in knowing that his slaves recognize his superiority—though he is not averse to booty or the physical goods that his slaves produce for him.

However, there are limitations in being a lord and master. First is the frustration of not being recognized by equals but only by inferior slaves. Second is the master’s static, nonevolving status. The master cannot grow and will eventually be outstripped by the very slaves he now owns and exploits. Let us consider how this happens.

The slave, according to Hegel, begins in a subordinate position—because of his unwillingness to fight to the death for recognition. Facing the possibility of death and experiencing the dread of ultimate nothingness, the slave opted for subservience rather than annihilation. As a result, he works for the master’s ends and
not his own. His life is in service to another. His master is free; he is not. He, the slave, is an object for the master’s use and pleasure.

Nevertheless, his suffering, alienation, and coerced work eventually provide the slave with an intuition of his ideal or free self—and an intuition, as well, of the means eventually to achieve it. Consider the issue closely: The master attained freedom and domination by overcoming the instinct to live. The slave gradually, through his work and the accompanying thoughts of self-regard that arise out of it, comes to an idea that he likewise can come to dominate Nature. But the slave’s form of domination is creative; it modifies and shapes Nature to thought and ideals, giving rise to a science of the natural world.

So the work and service of the slave lead to a transformation of Nature through science. Likewise, work and servitude transform and ultimately free the slave to a higher self. He gradually achieves self-regard based on his accomplishment of transforming Nature; to put it in Hegelian terminology, he becomes the incarnation or embodiment of the Absolute Idea and the realization of Absolute Knowledge. The ultimate result is that the slave has weapons not only to overcome the fear of death but also to escape the yoke of the master. Moreover, through this struggle, the slave provides the changes that determine the evolution of history. This fact provides the slave with an ultimate prestige as well as with freedom and autonomy. The slave is a slave no more but has risen above the master and Nature alike.

Now, this process that the slave undergoes to become free is a hard and enduring struggle. Furthermore, not all labor is freeing, Hegel believed. The all-important labor lies in Bildung, or self-building education. This shapes and humanizes the slave, bringing him ever closer to his own idea of selfhood. At the same time, it shapes and transforms the world, bringing it closer to its ideal realization. This dual process yields the “world historical individual,” one who shapes the course of history. For Hegel, history is determined by historical individuals who understand instinctively what must be done and have the drive to do it. Their work is the progress of the world.

The struggle between master and slave has many stages, according to Hegel. One important stage is Christian ideology, in which the slave ceases to struggle for freedom. Instead, he commits to absolute slavehood under an absolute master. He equates freedom and happiness with the Hereafter, which he thinks begins with death. Consequently, he finds no reason to fight for freedom, and self-denial is considered a virtue. For Hegel, this phase of history expresses the ultimate domination of the slave’s fear of death. He believed that freedom and self-realization occur only by surmounting this absolute enslavement to death.

The final stage of human development occurs in the demise of the master–slave dialectic. This happens when we accept our finitude and learn to live in this world as autonomous and free individuals. The key is to overcome fear of death. Through work and Bildung, as explained earlier, the individual is gradually formed and becomes self-conscious; he leaves the static, empty, boring stage of sheer being and becomes a particular, progressive, conscious realization of the Universal or Absolute Idea. This stage of human development represents for Hegel the actualization of the idea of the god-man. This god-man is immanent, present reality as Absolute Self-Consciousness. Here Hegel is following Spinoza’s equation of Nature and God (Natura sive deus). Hegel claimed that, after Spinoza, all philosophy would be Spinozism.
Heinrich Heine, a famous German poet, once heard Hegel lecture in Berlin. He put it as follows: “I was young and proud, and it flattered my presumption to learn from Hegel that the dear God did not really live in heaven as my grandmother supposed, but rather that I myself was the dear God down here on earth.”

Hegel saw this final development of the human spirit in Napoleon, or, to put it more precisely, he saw it in the person of Napoleon as infused with Hegelian self-consciousness. The idea of a transcendental god having evolved into an immanent Universal existing in the world was, for Hegel, the Ideal State realized in history. Only in such a state can a person find ultimate satisfaction and total autonomy. Only in such a state can true individuality be achieved as a unique synthesis of Particularity and Universality. The evolution to this Ideal State involves not only human consciousness of the Absolute Idea but also its concrete realization in history.

**Marxism**

The utilitarians pursued social and political reform. Karl Marx (1818–1883) went even further. Marx wanted not merely to reform society but to transform it.

Marx, who is famous for (among other things) his remark that philosophers have tried only to understand the world, whereas the real point is to change it, did not regard his work as philosophy. This must be kept in mind in the following discussion of Marx’s thought. Marx offers a description and analysis of the human social and political condition, but he did not himself present this understanding as the absolute and final truth.

The Means of Production versus Productive Relations  For Marx the ideal society has no economic classes, no wages, no money, no private property, and no exploitation. Each person will not only be provided a fully adequate material existence but will also be given the opportunity to develop freely and completely all physical and mental faculties. The alienation (estrangement) of the individual from the surrounding world will be minimal.

Furthermore, according to Marx, this type of society will ultimately arise as the result of the historical process. Here is why.

Humans, Marx believed, are social animals with physical needs, needs that are satisfied when we develop the means to satisfy them. These means of producing the satisfaction of needs are called the means or forces of production. The utilization of any one set of means of production leads to fresh needs and therefore to further means of production. For example, the invention of iron tools (a new means of production) for the cultivation of needed crops leads to still a newer need—for iron—and therewith to the means for satisfying this newer need.

Thus, human history consists of successive stages of development of various means of production.

Furthermore, the utilization of any given means of production, whether it is a simple iron tool or a complex machine, necessarily involves certain social relationships, especially those involving property. These social relationships (or, as we might say, institutions or practices) are called the productive relations. Thus, the
social relationships (the productive relations) depend on the stage of evolution of the forces of production.

The forces of production at a given stage, however, develop to the point where they come into conflict with the existing social relationships, which are then destroyed and replaced by new social relationships. For example, the need at the end of the Middle Ages to supply the new markets in the Far East and the colonies in the New World required new methods of manufacture and commerce, which brought with their development societal changes incompatible with the feudal social structure of the Middle Ages.
Marxism and Liberalism Compared

“Classical” liberalism and “orthodox” Marxism both drew from the Enlightenment (eighteenth-century) belief that the natural order produces perfection. Both looked forward to a future of ever-increasing human freedom and happiness and placed great faith in human goodness.

To highlight some of the similarities and differences between these philosophies, here is a list of ten doctrines that many orthodox Marxists accept, together with comments on how a group of classical liberals might respond to them. (Note that we said “classical” liberals. Contemporary so-called liberals share some but not all the values of classical liberals, and contemporary so-called conservatives do so as well. You will read more about contemporary usage of the term liberal in Chapter 12.)

1. Ideally, society should provide for human beings as much happiness, liberty, opportunity for self-development, and dignity as possible.

Liberals would agree to this claim, and who would not? Utilitarian liberals, however, would emphasize the importance of happiness over the other three values or would regard the others as part of happiness.

2. The only society that can provide these ends is a socialized society—that is, one in which both ownership and production are socialized.

Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberals would not have denied that their ultimate ethical objectives could be achieved within a socialist society, but most would have denied that socialism alone could accommodate these objectives. Most also thought that these objectives are more likely to be achieved within a constitutionally based representative democracy with a market economy.

3. In nonsocialist societies, the function of the state is to serve and protect the interests of the powerful.

Liberals maintained that in nonsocialist societies it is possible for the state to serve and protect the interests and rights of all its subjects, both strong and weak, even though few states, if any, were thought effectively to have done so.

4. A group’s interests can be protected only through exercise of its power.

A common liberal response is that a group’s interests can be and are best protected through law. Marxists would say in rejoinder that, ever since Locke, the “rule of law” has been slanted toward protecting property and the propertied class.

5. Human essence is defined historically, and economic factors largely determine history.

Liberals also emphasized the importance of economics to social history and evolution but stressed that certain fundamental human characteristics (e.g., having rights, desiring pleasure) are unalterable by history.

6. The value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labor required for its production.

Liberals regarded this thesis as an oversimplification and maintained that many factors affect the value of a commodity.

7. Capitalist societies necessarily are exploitative of a laboring class.

Private ownership, many liberals believed (and still do), is not inherently or necessarily exploitative, though individual capitalists may exploit their workers. Exploitation, they say, may be eliminated through appropriately formulated laws, and a society in which a great unevenness in the distribution of wealth exists may nevertheless permit equal freedom and opportunity for all.

8. A capitalist state cannot be reformed, for two reasons: (a) It is inherently exploitative. (b) True reforms are not in the interest of the ruling class, which therefore will not permit them. Because such a state cannot be reformed, it must be replaced.

Liberals thought (and still think) that, through reform, many states, including most capitalist states, can gradually be improved. They did not deny the appropriateness of revolutionary overthrow of dictatorships. Contemporary Marxists insist that liberal reforms in the United States are made possible through exploitation of third world nations.

(continued)
The redistribution of goods through welfare, taxation, and similar means is mere tokenism serving only to pacify the exploited classes in order to protect the exploiting class from uprising and revolt.

Liberals thought (and still think) that measures like these, if they benefit the less well off, are required by principles of fairness, justice, or utilitarian considerations.

10. The philosophy of liberalism, with all its talk of fairness and justice, is merely an attempt to rationalize and legitimize capitalist oppression.

Liberals regard this as an *argumentum ad hominem* (an attack on them rather than a refutation of their position). Liberal claims must be evaluated on their own merits, they say.

The new social relationships then endure until new needs arise and a new stage is reached in the evolution of the forces of production.

This **dialectical process** repeats itself over and over again and is the history of people, economics, and society. To put this another way, *history is the result of productive activity in interplay with social relationships*. According to Marx, this interplay accounts not only for all socioeconomic—political situations but also for morality, law, religion, and, to a greater or lesser extent, even philosophy and art.

**Class Struggle** As already stated, according to Marx the critical social relationships involve property. With the advent of private property, society became divided into two classes: those with property and those without.

Hostility between the two classes was, and is, inevitable, Marx said. Those with property, of course, are the dominant class, and government and morality are always the instruments of the dominant class. When the forces of production create conflict with the existing social relationships, **class struggle** becomes acute, revolution results, and a new dominant class seizes control of the organs of state and imposes its ethic. This dialectical process repeats itself until private property and the division of society into opposed classes disappears.

**Capitalism and Its Consequences** In modern capitalist societies, what has happened, according to Marx, is that the means of production are primarily concentrated in large factories and workshops in which a group of individual workers cooperatively produces a product. They collectively “mix their labor with the product,” as Locke would say. But the product they mix their labor with is not owned by them.

Rather, it is appropriated by the owners of the factories, who thus in effect also own the workers. Out of this circumstance comes the fundamental conflict of capitalist society: **production is socialized, but ownership is not.**

Furthermore, Marx argued, capitalists obviously must sell what their workers produce for more than they pay the workers to make it. The laborers thus produce goods that are worth more than their wages. This exploitation of the workers is inevitable as long as the conflict between socialized means of production and non-socialized ownership continues. It is a necessary part of the capitalist system and is not a result of wickedness or inhumanity on the part of the capitalist.
There are two further unavoidable consequences of continuing capitalism, in Marx’s opinion. First, the longer the capitalist system continues, the smaller and wealthier the possessing class becomes. This is simply the result of the fact that the surplus value of products—that is, the value of a product less its “true” cost, which is the cost of the labor put into it—continues to accrue to the capitalists. Further, as smaller capitalists cannot compete, and as a result fail in their enterprise and sink into the ranks of the workers, society’s wealth becomes increasingly concentrated: fewer and fewer people control more and more of it.

**Alienation** The second consequence of continued capitalism, according to Marx, is the increasing alienation of the workers. The more wealth the workers produce, the poorer they become, relatively speaking, for it is not they who retain this wealth. So the result of increased productivity for the workers is, paradoxically (but inevitably), their devaluation in their own eyes and in fact. They have become mere commodities.

In addition, because workers produce through their labor what belongs to others, neither the workers’ labor nor the products they make are their own. Both labor and products are as alien things that dominate them. Thus, workers feel at home with themselves only during their leisure time and in eating, drinking, and having sex. Workers’ presence at work is not voluntary but imposed and, whenever possible, avoided. Because they have put their lives into what belongs to others, workers are abject, debased, physically exhausted, and overcome with malaise. And because the relation of people to themselves is first realized and expressed in the relationship between each person and another, workers are alienated from their fellows.

**Capitalism Is Self-Liquidating** The situation Marx describes is, in his view, self-liquidating. The capitalist system of property ownership is incompatible with the socialized conditions of production and ultimately destined to failure. Inevitable overproduction will result in economic crises, a falling rate of profit, and increased exploitation of the working class, which will increasingly become conscious of itself and its own intolerable condition, the inadequacy of capitalism, and the inevitability of history. The revolution of the proletariat (working class), leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat, will follow. In this instance, however, the overturning of the existing social order will eventually result in the classless society just described, for property, as well as the means of production, will have become socialized. The disappearance of classes will mark the end of class struggle and also, therefore, the end of political power because the sole function of political power is the suppression of one class at the expense of another.

**Marxism and Communism**

By the end of the nineteenth century, most European socialist parties were committed to Marxism, but a split developed between the revolutionists, those who believed (as for the most part had Marx) that a violent revolution was necessary to set in place the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, and the revisionists or evolutionary socialists, those who thought that these ends could be achieved through peaceful (and piecemeal) reform.
Although evolutionary socialism became strong in Great Britain and survives in the socialist parties of many nations to the present day, the revolutionists gained ascendancy in the Second International, the successor to Marx's International Workingmen's Association, or the First International (though the “revolutionists” were not particularly revolutionary). Under the leadership of Lenin, the revolutionist Bolsheviks came to control the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and seized control of Russia itself in the Revolution of 1917, becoming in 1918 the Communist Party of the USSR.

Although the Russian Communists withdrew from the Second International and founded the Third International or Comintern in 1919 to gain leadership of the world socialist movement, most European Socialist parties disassociated themselves from the Communists. The term **Communism**, with a capital C, today still denotes the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the parties founded under the banner of the Comintern and is to be distinguished from lowercase-c **communism**, which denotes any form of society in which property or other important goods are held in common by the community.

### Anarchism

Anarchists deny that the state is necessary for peace, justice, equality, the optimum development of human capacities, or, indeed, for any other worthwhile pursuit. In the nineteenth century, **anarchism** was the main philosophical alternative to liberalism and Marxism.

Pierre Joseph Proudhon [přew-DOHn] (1809–1865), the so-called father of anarchism, was among the first in modern times to call himself an anarchist. Proudhon believed that all authoritarian political institutions hinder human development and should be replaced by social organizations founded on the free and voluntary agreement of individuals, organizations in which no person has power over another. The existence of private property, he argued, creates social inequalities and injustice and gives rise to government; both it and government should be eliminated, though not through violent means. Communists were much influenced by Proudhon’s attack on the idea of private property.

The famous Russian anarchist Communists Mikhail Bakunin [ba-KOO-nin] (1814–1876) and Prince Piotr Kropotkin [krəh-POT-kin] (1842–1921) both emphasized the intrinsic goodness of the individual and viewed law and government as the instruments of the privileged classes and the true source of human corruption (both Bakunin and Kropotkin were aristocrats, incidentally). Kropotkin, much influenced by Charles Darwin, held that humans have a biologically grounded propensity to cooperate that will hold society together even in the absence of government. Bakunin—who, unlike Proudhon and Kropotkin, advocated the violent overthrow of all government—was active in the Communist First International. A clash between Marx and Bakunin, and more generally between Marxist Communists and anarchist Communists concerning the necessity of a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat, led to the demise of that organization.

The slogan “From each according to his means, to each according to his needs” came from the anarchist Communists.
In this dialogue, Plato portrays “Socrates” in prison the day before his execution. Socrates’ friend Crito has come to help Socrates escape, but Socrates refuses. In this excerpt, Socrates explains why it is wrong for him to try to escape: because doing so would violate an implicit agreement with the state.

Socrates: Then consider the matter in this way—imagine I am about to escape, and the Laws and the State come and interrogate me: “Tell us, Socrates,” they say, “what are you doing? Are you going to overthrow us—the Laws and the State, as far as you are able? Do you imagine that a State can continue and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of Law have no power, but are set aside and overthrown by individuals?”

What will be our answer, Crito, to these and similar words? Anyone, and especially a clever orator, will have a good deal to say about the evil of setting aside the Law which requires a sentence to be carried out. We might reply, “Yes, but the State has injured us and given an unjust sentence.” Suppose I say that?

Crito: Very good, Socrates.

S: “And was that our agreement with you?” the Law would say, “Or were you to abide by the sentence of the State?” And if I were surprised at their saying this, the Law would probably add: “Answer, Socrates, instead of opening your eyes: you are in the habit of asking and answering questions. Tell us what complaint you have against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the State? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and conceived you. Say whether you have any objection against those of us who regulate marriage?”

None, I should reply. “Or against those of us who regulate the system of care and education of children in which you were trained? Were not the Laws, who have the charge of this, right in commanding your father to train you in the arts and exercise?” Yes, I should reply.

“Well then, since you were brought into the world, nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us. Nor can you think you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or do any other evil to a father or to your master, if you had one, when you have been struck or received some other evil at his hands? And because we think it is right to destroy you, do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country so far as you are able? And will you, O expounder of virtue, say you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover your country is more to be valued and higher and holier by far than mother and father or any ancestor, and more regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? It should be soothed and gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and if not persuaded, it should be obeyed. And when we are punished by the State, whether with imprisonment or whipping, the punishment is to be endured in silence. If the State leads us to wounds or death in battle, we follow as is right; no one can yield or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his city and his country order him. Or, he must change their view of what is just. If he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he

do violence to his country,” What answer shall
we make to this, Crito? Do the Laws speak
truly, or do they not?

C: I think that they do.

S: Then the Laws will say: “Consider, Socrates, if
this is true, that in your present attempt you are
going to do us wrong. For, after having brought
you into the world, nurtured and educated you,
given you and every other citizen a share in
every good we had to give, we further give the
right to every Athenian, if he does not like us
when he has come of age and has seen the ways
of the city, he may go wherever else he pleases
and take his goods with him. None of us Laws
will forbid or interfere with him. Any of you
who does not like us and the city, and who
wants to go to a colony or to any other city,
may go where he likes, and take his possessions
with him. But he who has experience of the
way we order justice and administer the State,
and still remains, has entered into an implied
contract to do as we command him. He who
obeys us is, as we maintain, triply wrong;
first, because in disobeying us he is disobeying
his parents; second, because we are the authors
of his education; third, because he has made an
agreement with us that he will duly obey our
commands. He neither obeys them nor con-
vinces us our commands are wrong. We do not
rudely impose our commands but give each
person the alternative of obeying or convincing
us. That is what we offer and he does neither.
These are the sort of accusations to which, as
we were saying, Socrates, you will be exposed if
you do as you were intending; you, above all
other Athenians.”

Suppose I ask, why is this? They will justly
answer that I above all other men have ac-
knowledged the agreement.

“There is clear proof,” they will say, “Soc-
rates, that we and the city were not displeasing
to you. Of all Athenians you have been the
most constant resident in the city, which, as you
never leave, you appear to love. You never went
out of the city either to see the games, except
once when you went to the Isthmus, or to any
other place unless you were on military service;
nor did you travel as other men do. Nor had
you any curiosity to know other States or their
Laws. Your affections did not go beyond us and
our State; we were your special favorites and
you agreed in our government of you. This is
the State in which you conceived your children,
which is a proof of your satisfaction. Moreover,
you might, if you wished, have fixed the penalty
at banishment in the course of the trial—the
State which refuses to let you go now would
have let you go then. You pretended you pre-
ferred death to exile and that you were not
grieved at death. And now you have forgotten
these fine sentiments and pay no respect to us,
the Laws, whom you destroy. You are doing
what only a miserable slave would do, running
away and turning your back upon the agree-
ments which you made as a citizen. First of all,
answer this very question: Are we right in say-
ing you agreed to be governed according to us
in deed, and not in word only? Is that true
or not?”

How shall we answer that, Crito? Must we
not agree?

C: We must, Socrates.

S: Then will the Laws say: “You, Socrates, are
breaking the agreements which you made with
us at your leisure, not in any haste or under any
compulsion or deception, but having had
70 years to think of them, during which time you
were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to
your liking or if our covenants appeared to you
to be unfair. You might have gone either to
Lacedaemon or Crete, which you often praise
for their good government, or to some other
Hellenic or foreign state. You, above all other
Athenians, seemed to be so fond of the State and
of us, her Laws, that you never left her. The
lame, the blind, the maimed were not more sta-
tionary in the State than you were. Now you run
away and forsake your agreements. Not,
Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make
yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city.

“Just consider, if you do evil in this way,
what good will you do either yourself or your
friends? That your friends will be driven into
exile and lose their citizenship, or will lose their
property, is reasonably certain. You yourself, if
you fly to one of the neighboring cities, like
Thebes or Megara, both of which are well-
governed cities, will come to them as an enemy,
Socrates. Their government will be against you
and all patriotic citizens will cast suspicious eye
upon you as a destroyer of the Laws. You will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. For he who is a corruptor of the Laws is more than likely to be corruptor of the young. Will you then flee from well-ordered cities and virtuous men? Is existence worth having on these terms? Or will you go to these cities without shame and talk to them, Socrates? And what will you say to them? Will you say what you say here about virtue, justice, institutions, and laws being the best things among men. Would that be decent of you? Surely not.

“If you go away from well-governed states to Crito’s friends in Thessaly, where there is a great disorder and immorality, they will be charmed to have the tale of your escape from prison, set off with ludicrous particulars of the manner in which you were wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise and metamorphosed as the fashion of runaways is—that is very likely. But will there be no one to remind you in your old age you violated the most sacred laws from a miserable desire of a little more life? Perhaps not, if you keep them in a good temper. But if they are angry you will hear many degrading things; you will live, but how? As the flatterer of all men and the servant of all men. And doing what? Eating and drinking in Thessaly, having gone abroad in order that you may get a dinner. Where will your fine sentiments about justice and virtue be then? Say that you wish to live for the sake of your children, that you may bring them up and educate them—will you take them into Thessaly and deprive them of Athenian citizenship? Is that the benefit which you would confer upon them? Or are you under the impression that they will be better cared for and educated here if you are still alive, although absent from them because your friends will take care of them? Do you think if you are an inhabitant of Thessaly they will take care of them, and if you are an inhabitant of the other world they will not take care of them? No, if they who call themselves friends are truly friends, they surely will.

“Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the rulers of the other world. For neither will you nor your children be happier or holier in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the Laws, but of men. But if you escape, returning evil for evil and injury for injury, breaking the agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live. Our brethren, the Laws in the other world, will receive you as an enemy because they will know you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito.”

This is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of a divine flute in the ears of the mystic. That voice, I say, is humming in my ears and prevents me from hearing any other. I know anything more which you may say will be useless. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

C: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

S: Then let me follow what seems to be the will of the god.
SELECTION 11.2

Republic*

Plato

[Here Plato, through “Socrates” (who is the first speaker), explains the relation between the male and the female guardians of society, as well as other features of the ideal state.]

Socrates: . . . [I]t looks as though our rulers will have to make considerable of falsehood and deception for the benefit of those they rule. And we heared that all such falsehoods are useful as a form of drug.

Glaucon: And we were right.

S: Well, it seems we were right, especially where marriages and the producing of children are concerned.

G: How so?

S: It follows from our previous agreements, first, that the best men must have sex with the best women as frequently as possible, while the opposite is true of the most inferior men and women, and, second, that if our herd is to be of the highest possible quality, the former’s offspring must be reared but not the latter’s. And this must all be brought about without being noticed by anyone except the rulers, so that our herd of guardians remains as free from dissen- sion as possible.

G: That’s absolutely right.

S: Therefore certain festivals and sacrifices will be established by law at which we’ll bring the brides and grooms together, and we’ll direct our poets to compose appropriate hymns for the marriages that take place. We’ll leave the number of marriages for the rulers to decide, but their aim will be to keep the number of males as stable as they can, taking into account war, disease, and similar factors, so that the city will, as far as possible, become neither too big nor too small.

G: That’s right.

S: Then there’ll have to be some sophisticated lotteries introduced, so that at each marriage the inferior people we mentioned will blame luck rather than the rulers when they aren’t chosen.

G: There will.

S: And among other prizes and rewards the young men who are good in war or other things must be given permission to have sex with the women more often, since this will also be a good pretext for having them father as many of the children as possible.

G: That’s right.

S: Then there’ll have to be some sophisticated lotteries introduced, so that at each marriage the inferior people we mentioned will blame luck rather than the rulers when they aren’t chosen.

G: There will.

S: And among other prizes and rewards the young men who are good in war or other things must be given permission to have sex with the women more often, since this will also be a good pretext for having them father as many of the children as possible.

G: That’s right.

S: And then, as the children are born, they’ll be taken over by the officials appointed for the purpose, who may be either men or women or both, since our offices are open to both sexes.

G: Yes.

S: I think they’ll take the children of good parents to the nurses in charge of the rearing pen situated in a separate part of the city, but the children of inferior parents, or any child of the others that is born defective, they’ll hide in a secret and unknown place, as is appropriate.

G: It is, if indeed the guardian breed is to remain pure.

S: And won’t the nurses also see to it that the mothers are brought to the rearing pen when their breasts have milk, taking every precaution to insure that no mother knows her own child and providing wet nurses if the mother’s milk is insufficient? And won’t they take care that the mothers suckle the children for only a reasonable amount of time and that the care of sleepless children and all other such troublesome duties are taken over by the wet nurses and other attendants?

*From Plato, Republic, translated by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Copyright © 1992 by Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved.
G: You’re making it very easy for the wives of the guardians to have children.

S: And that’s only proper. So let’s take up the next thing we proposed. We said that the children’s parents should be in their prime.

G: True.

S: Do you share the view that a woman’s prime lasts about twenty years and a man’s about thirty?

G: Which years are those?

S: A woman is to bear children for the city from the age of twenty to the age of forty, a man from the time that he passes his peak as a runner until he reaches fifty-five.

G: At any rate, that’s the physical and mental prime for both.

S: Then, if a man who is younger or older than that engages in reproduction for the community, we’ll say that his offense is neither pious nor just, for the child he begets for the city, if it remains hidden, will be born in darkness, through a dangerous weakness of will, and without the benefit of the sacrifices and prayers offered at every marriage festival, in which the priests and priestesses, together with the entire city, ask that the children of good and beneficial parents may always prove themselves still better and more beneficial.

G: That’s right.

S: The same law will apply if a man still of begetting years has a child with a woman of child-bearing age without the sanction of the rulers. We’ll say that he brings to the city an illegitimate, unauthorized, and unhallowed child.

G: That’s absolutely right.

S: The same law will apply if a man still of begetting years has a child with a woman of child-bearing age without the sanction of the rulers. We’ll say that he brings to the city an illegitimate, unauthorized, and unhallowed child.

G: That’s absolutely right.

S: However, I think that when women and men have passed the age of having children, we’ll leave them free to have sex with whomever they wish, with these exceptions: For a man—his daughter, his mother, his daughter’s children, and his mother’s ancestors; for a woman—her son and his descendants, her father and his ancestors. Having received these instructions, they should be very careful not to let a single fetus see the light of day, but if one is conceived and forces its way to the light, they must deal with it in the knowledge that no nurture is available for it.

G: That’s certainly sensible. But how will they recognize their fathers and daughters and the others you mentioned?

S: They have no way of knowing. But a man will call all the children born in the tenth or seventh month after he became a bridegroom his sons, if they’re male, and his daughters, if they’re female, and they’ll call him father. He’ll call their children his grandchildren, and they’ll call the group to which he belongs grandfathers and grandmothers. And those who were born at the same time as their mothers and fathers were having children they’ll call their brothers and sisters. Thus, as we were saying, the relevant groups will avoid sexual relations with each other. But the law will allow brothers and sisters to have sex with one another if the lottery works out that way and the Pythia1 approves.

G: That’s absolutely right.

S: This, then, Glaucon, is how the guardians of your city have their wives and children in common. We must now confirm that this arrangement is both consistent with the rest of the constitution and by far the best. Or how else are we to proceed?

G: In just that way.

S: Then isn’t the first step towards agreement to ask ourselves what we say is the greatest good in designing the city—the good at which the legislator aims in making the laws—and what is the greatest evil? And isn’t the next step to examine whether the system we’ve just described fits into the tracks of the good and not into those of the bad?

G: Absolutely.

S: Is there any greater evil we can mention for a city than that which tears it apart and makes it many instead of one? Or any greater good than that which binds it together and makes it one?

G: There isn’t.

S: And when, as far as possible, all the citizens rejoice and are pained by the same successes and

---

1 The priestess of Apollo at Delphi.
failures, doesn’t this sharing of pleasures and pains bind the city together?

G: It most certainly does.

S: But when some suffer greatly, while others rejoice greatly, at the same things happening to the city or its people, doesn’t this privatization of pleasures and pains dissolve the city?

G: Of course.

S: And isn’t that what happens whenever such words as “mine” and “not mine” aren’t used in unison? And similarly with “someone else’s”?

G: Precisely.

S: Then, is the best-governed city the one in which most people say “mine” and “not mine” about the same things in the same way?

G: It is indeed.

S: What about the city that is most like a single person? For example, when one of us hurts his finger, the entire organism that binds body and soul together into a single system under the ruling part within it is aware of this, and the whole feels the pain together with the part that suffers. That’s why we say that the man has a pain in his finger. And the same can be said about any part of a man, with regard either to the pain it suffers or to the pleasure it experiences when it finds relief.

G: Certainly. And, as for your question, the city with the best government is most like such a person.

S: Then, whenever anything good or bad happens to a single one of its citizens, such a city above all others will say that the affected part is its own and will share in the pleasure or pain as a whole.

G: If it has good laws, that must be so.

S: It’s time now to return to our own city, to look there for the features we’ve agreed on, and to determine whether it or some other city possesses them to the greatest degree.

G: Then that’s what we must do.

S: What about those other cities? Aren’t there rulers and people in them, as well as in ours?
if they do otherwise? Will these be the oracular sayings they hear from all the citizens from their childhood on, or will they hear something else about their fathers—or the ones they’re told are their fathers—and other relatives?

G: The former. It would be absurd if they only mouthed kinship names without doing the things that go along with them.

S: Therefore, in our city more than in any other, they’ll speak in unison the words we mentioned a moment ago. When any one of them is doing well or badly, they’ll say that “mine” is doing well or that “mine” is doing badly.

G: That’s absolutely true.

S: Now, didn’t we say that the having and expressing of this conviction is closely followed by the having of pleasures and pains in common?

G: Yes, and we were right.

S: Then won’t our citizens, more than any others, have the same thing in common, the one they call “mine”? And, having that in common, won’t they, more than any others, have common pleasures and pains?

G: Of course.

S: And, in addition to the other institutions, the cause of this is the having of wives and children in common by the guardians?

G: That more than anything else is the cause.

S: But we agreed that the having of pains and pleasures in common is the greatest good for a city, and we characterized a well-governed city in terms of the body’s reaction to pain or pleasure in any one of its parts.

G: And we were right to agree.

S: Then, the cause of the greatest good for our city has been shown to be the having of wives and children in common by the auxiliaries.

G: It has.

S: And, of course, this is consistent with what we said before, for we said somewhere that, if they’re going to be guardians, they mustn’t have private houses, property, or possessions, but must receive their upkeep from the other citizens as a wage for their guardianship and enjoy it in common.

G: That’s right.

S: Then isn’t it true, just as I claimed, that what we are saying now, taken together with what we said before, makes even better guardians out of them and prevents them from tearing the city apart by not calling the same thing “mine”? If different people apply the term to different things, one would drag into his own house whatever he could separate from the others, and another would drag things into a different house to a different wife and children, and this would make for private pleasures and pains at private things. But our people, on the other hand, will think of the same things as their own, aim at the same goal, and, as far as possible, feel pleasure and pain in unison.

G: Precisely.

S: And what about lawsuits and mutual accusations? Won’t they pretty well disappear from among them, because they have everything in common except their own bodies? Hence they’ll be spared all the dissension that arises between people because of the possession of money, children, and families.

G: They’ll necessarily be spared it.

S: Nor could any lawsuits for insult or injury justly occur among them, for we’ll declare that it’s a fine and just thing for people to defend themselves against others of the same age, since this will compel them to stay in good physical shape.

G: That’s right.

S: This law is also correct for another reason: If a spirited person vents his anger in this way, it will be less likely to lead him into more serious disputes.

G: Certainly.

S: But an older person will be authorized to rule and punish all the younger ones.

G: Clearly.

S: And surely it’s also obvious that a younger person won’t strike or do any sort of violence to an
older one or fail to show him respect in other ways, unless the rulers command it, for there are two guardians sufficient to prevent him from doing such things—shame and fear. Shame will prevent him from laying a hand on his parents, and so will the fear that the others would come to the aid of the victim, some as his sons, some as his brothers, and some as his fathers.

G: That’s the effect they’ll have.

S: Then, in all cases, won’t the laws induce men to live at peace with one another?

G: Very much so.

S: And if there’s no discord among the guardians, there’s no danger that the rest of the city will break into civil war, either with them or among themselves.

G: Certainly not.

S: I hesitate to mention, since they’re so unseemly, the pettiest of the evils, the guardians would therefore escape: The poor man’s flattery of the rich, the perplexities and sufferings involved in bringing up children and in making the money necessary to feed the household, getting into debt, paying it off, and in some way or other providing enough money to hand over to their wives and household slaves to manage. All of the various troubles men endure in these matters are obvious, ignoble, and not worth discussing.

G: They’re obvious even to the blind.

S: They’ll be free of all these, and they’ll live a life more blessedly happy than that of the victors in the Olympian games.

G: How?

S: The Olympian victors are considered happy on account of only a small part of what is available to our guardians, for the guardians’ victory is even greater, and their upkeep from public funds more complete. The victory they gain is the preservation of the whole city, and the crown of victory that they and their children receive is their upkeep and all the necessities of life. They receive rewards from their own city while they live, and at their death they’re given a worthy burial.

G: Those are very good things.

S: Do you remember that, earlier in our discussion, someone—I forget who—shocked us by saying that we hadn’t made our guardians happy, that it was possible for them to have everything that belongs to the citizens, yet they had nothing? We said, I think, that if this happened to come up at some point, we’d look into it then, but that our concern at the time was to make our guardians true guardians and the city the happiest we could, rather than looking to any one group within it and molding it for happiness.

G: I remember.

S: Well, then, if the life of our auxiliaries is apparently much finer and better than that of Olympian victors, is there any need to compare it to the lives of cobblers, farmers, or other craftsmen?

G: Not in my opinion.

S: Then it’s surely right to repeat here what I said then: If a guardian seeks happiness in such a way that he’s no longer a guardian and isn’t satisfied with a life that’s moderate, stable, and—as we say—best, but a silly, adolescent idea of happiness seizes him and incites him to use his power to take everything in the city for himself, he’ll come to know the true wisdom of Hesiod’s saying that somehow “the half is worth more than the whole.”

G: If he takes my advice, he’ll keep to his own lifestyle.

S: You agree, then, that the women and men should associate with one another in education, in things having to do with children, and in guarding the other citizens in the way we’ve described; that both when they remain in the city and when they go to war, they must guard together and hunt together like dogs and share in everything as far as possible; and that by doing so they’ll be doing what’s best and not something contrary either to woman’s nature as

2 Hesiod was an early Greek poet who is thought to have lived around 700 B.C.E. —Ed.
compared with man’s or to the natural association of men and women with one another.

G: I agree.

S: Then doesn’t it remain for us to determine whether it’s possible to bring about this association among human beings, as it is among animals, and to say just how it might be done?

G: You took the words right out of my mouth.

S: As far as war is concerned, I think it’s clear how they will wage it.

G: How so?

S: Men and women will campaign together. They’ll take the sturdy children with them, so that, like the children of other craftsmen, they can see what they’ll have to do when they grow up. But in addition to observing, they can serve and assist in everything to do with the war and help their mothers and fathers. Haven’t you noticed in the other crafts how the children of potters, for example, assist and observe for a long time before actually making any pots?

G: I have indeed.

S: And should these craftsmen take more care in training their children by appropriate experience and observation than the guardians?

G: Of course not; that would be completely ridiculous.

S: Besides, every animal fights better in the presence of its young.

G: That’s so. But, Socrates, there’s a considerable danger that in a defeat—and such things are likely to happen in a war—they’ll lose their children’s lives as well as their own, making it impossible for the rest of the city to recover.

S: What you say is true. But do you think that the first thing we should provide for is the avoidance of all danger?

G: Not at all.

S: Well, then, if people will probably have to face some danger, shouldn’t it be the sort that will make them better if they come through it successfully?

G: Obviously.

S: And do you think that whether or not men who are going to be warriors observe warfare when they’re still boys makes such a small difference that it isn’t worth the danger of having them do it?

G: No, it does make a difference to what you’re talking about.

S: On the assumption, then, that the children are to be observers of war, if we can contrive some way to keep them secure, everything will be fine, won’t it?

G: Yes.

S: Well, then, in the first place, their fathers won’t be ignorant, will they, about which campaigns are dangerous and which are not, but rather as knowledgeable about this as any human beings can be?

G: Probably so.

S: Then they’ll take the children to some campaigns and not to others?

G: Correct.

S: And they’ll put officers in charge of them whose age and experience qualifies them to be leaders and tutors?

G: Appropriately so. . .
Of the Natural Condition of Mankind As Concerning Their Felicity and Misery

Nature has made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind . . . I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. . . . That which may perhaps make such equality incredible, is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree, than the vulgar; that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame, or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of men, that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent or more learned; yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves; for they set their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proves rather that men are in that point equal, than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of any thing, than that every man is contented with his share.

From this equality of ability, arises equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader has no more to fear, than another man's single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requires, and is generally allowed. . . .

Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company where there is no power able to over-awe them all. For every man looks that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares, (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his condemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first, makes men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

* Edited slightly for the modern reader.
Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For WAR, consists not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time, is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lies not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together; so the nature of war, consists not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.

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

It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things; that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade, and destroy one another; and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man’s nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them: which till laws be made they cannot know: nor can any law be made, till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it. . . .

To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body, nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses, and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no propriety, no dominion, no mine and thine distinct; but only that to be every man’s, that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggests convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles, are they, which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature: whereof I shall speak more particularly, in the two following chapters.

Of the Interior Beginnings of Voluntary Motions; Commonly Called the Passions. And the Speeches by Which They Are Expressed

. . . Whatever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire, that is what he calls good; and the object of his hate and aversion, evil; and of his contempt, vile and inconsiderable. For these words are always used with relation to the person using them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so. Nor is there any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of objects themselves, but from the person of the man (where there is no commonwealth); or (in a commonwealth), from the person who represents it; or from an arbitrator, whom men disagreeing shall by consent agree to make his sentence their rule.
Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts

THE RIGHT OF NATURE, which writers commonly called Jus Naturale, is the liberty each man has to use his own power as he will himself, for the preservation . . . of his own life; and consequently of doing anything which in his own judgment and reason he shall conceive to be apt. By LIBERTY is understood, according to the proper significance of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments may often take away part of a man's power to do what he would, but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment and reason shall dictate to him.

A LAW OF NATURE (Lex Naturalis), is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or takes away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that by which he thinks it may be best preserved. For though they that speak of this subject confound Jus and Lex, right and law; yet they ought to be distinguished; because right consists in liberty to do or to forbear; whereas law determines and binds to one of them: so that law and right differ as much as obligation and liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent.

And because the condition of man (as has been declared in the preceding chapter) is a condition of war of everyone against everyone; in which case everyone is governed by his own reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help to him, in preserving his life against his enemies; it follows that in such a condition every man has a right to everything; even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of man to everything endures, there can be no security to any man (how strong or wise he is) of living out the time which nature ordinarily allows men to live. And consequently it is a precept or general rule of reason, that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule contains the first and fundamental law of nature; which is to seek peace and follow it. The second, the sum of the Right of Nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves.

From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law; that a man be willing, when others are also, as far as for peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, 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. For as long as every man holds this right of doing anything he likes; so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he; then there is not reason for anyone to divest himself of his: For that would be to expose himself to prey (which no man is bound to) rather than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the gospel; whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do to them. . . .

To lay down a man's right to anything, is to divest himself of the liberty of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same. For he that renounces or passes away his right, gives not to any other man a right which he had not before; because there is nothing to which every man had not right by nature: but only stands out of his way that he may enjoy his own original right without hindrance from him; not without hindrance from another. So that the effect which reverberates to one man by another man's defect of right, is but so much diminution of impediments to the use of his own right original.

Right is laid aside, either by simply renouncing it; or by transferring it to another. By simply RENOUNCING; when he cares not to whom the benefit thereof reverberates. By TRANSFERRING; when he intends the benefit thereof to some certain person or persons. And when a man has in either manner abandoned or granted away his right; then is he said to be OBLIGED or BOUND not to hinder those to whom such right is granted or abandoned, from the benefit of it: and that he ought, and it is his DUTY, not to make void that involuntary act of his own: and that such hindrance is INJUSTICE and INJURY, as being sine jure; the right being before renounced or transferred. . . .

When a man transfers right or renounces it; it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself; or for some good he hopes for. For it is a voluntary act: and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is good to himself. And therefore there are some rights which no man can be understood by any words or other signs to have abandoned or transferred. As first: a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them that assault him by
force to take away his life; because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at good to himself. The same may be said of wounds and chains and imprisonment; both because there is no benefit consequent to such patience; as there is to the patience of suffering another to be wounded or imprisoned: as also because a man cannot tell, when he sees men proceeding against him by violence, when they intend his death or not. And the motive and end for which this renouncing and transferring of right is introduced is nothing else but the security of a man's person, in his life and in the means of so preserving life as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words or other signs seems to rob himself of the end for which those signs were intended; he is not to be understood as if he meant it or that it was his will; but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted.

The mutual transferring of right, is that which men call CONTRACT.

Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth

The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves (in which we see them live in commonwealths) is the foresight of their own preservation and of a more contented life; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent (as has been shown) to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants, and observation of those laws of nature set down in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters.

For the laws of nature (as justice, equity, modesty, mercy, and, in sum, doing to others as we would be done to) of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature (which everyone has then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely) if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men.

The only way to erect such a common power as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another and thereby to secure them in such a way as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is to confer all their power and strength upon one man or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man or assembly of men to bear their person.

This is more than consent or concord; it is a real unity of them all in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man or to this assembly of men, on this condition that you give up the right to him and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin, Civitas. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that mortal God to which we owe under the immortal God our peace and defense. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he has the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. And in him consists the essence of the commonwealth; which (to define it) is one person, of whose acts a great multitude by mutual covenants one with another have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defense.

And he that carries this person, is called SOVEREIGN, and said to have sovereign power; and everyone besides, his SUBJECT.

The attaining to this sovereign power, is by two ways. One, by natural force; as when a man makes his children submit themselves and their children to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war subdues his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition. The other is when men agree amongst themselves, to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily on confidence to be protected by him against all others. This latter may be called a political commonwealth, or commonwealth by institution; and the former a commonwealth by acquisition.
[The first sentence of this famous passage states clearly what Mill intends to accomplish in his essay.]

**Chapter 1. Introductory**

The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. There are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil, in case he do otherwise. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him must be calculated to produce evil to some one else. The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage. The early difficulties in the way of spontaneous progress are so great, that there is seldom any choice of means for overcoming them; and a ruler full of the spirit of improvement is warranted in the use of any expedients that will attain an end, perhaps otherwise unattainable. Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne, if they are so fortunate as to find one. But as soon as mankind have attained the capacity of being guided to their own improvement by conviction or persuasion (a period long since reached in all nations with whom we need here concern ourselves), compulsion, either in the direct form or in that of pains and penalties for noncompliance, is no longer admissible as a means to their own good, and justifiable only for the security of others.

It is proper to state that I forgo any advantage which could be derived to my argument from the idea of abstract right, as a thing independent of utility. I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being. Those interests, I contend, authorize the subjection of individual spontaneity to external control, only in respect to those actions of each, which concern the interest of other people. If any one does an act hurtful to others, there is a prima facie case for punishing him, by law, or, where legal penalties are not safely applicable, by general disapprobation. There are also many positive acts for the benefit of others, which he may rightfully be compelled to perform; such as, to give evidence in a court of justice; to bear his fair share in the common defence, or in any other joint work necessary to the interest of the society of which he
enjoys the protection; and to perform certain acts of individual beneficence, such as saving a fellow creature's life, or interposing to protect the defenceless against ill-usage, things which whenever it is obviously a man's duty to do, he may rightfully be made responsible to society for not doing. A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury. The latter case, it is true, requires a much more cautious exercise of compulsion than the former. To make any one answerable for doing evil to others, is the rule; to make him answerable for not preventing evil, is comparatively speaking, the exception. Yet there are many cases clear enough and grave enough to justify that exception. In all things which regard the external relations of the individual, he is de jure amenable to those whose interests are concerned, and if need be, to society as their protector. There are often good reasons for not holding him to the responsibility; but these reasons must arise from the special expediencies of the case: either because it is a kind of case in which he is on the whole likely to act better, when left to his own discretion, than when controlled in any way in which society have it in their power to control him, or because the attempt to exercise control would produce other evils, greater than those which it would prevent. When such reasons as these preclude the enforcement of responsibility, the conscience of the agent himself should step into the vacant judgment-seat, and protect those interests of others which have no external protection; judging himself all the more rigidly, because the case does not admit of his being made accountable to the judgment of his fellow-creatures.

But there is a sphere of action in which society, as distinguished from the individual, has, if any, only an indirect interest; comprehending all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or, if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary, and undeceived consent and participation. When I say only himself, I mean directly, and in the first instance: for whatever affects himself, may affect others through himself; and the objection which may be grounded on this contingency, will receive consideration in the sequel. This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness, demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow; without impediment from our fellow-creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals; freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.

No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified. The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.
SELECTION 11.5

Communist Manifesto*

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

[Marx and Engels’s Communist Manifesto is one of the most famous political documents of all time. This selection includes the most important aspects of the Marxist analysis of economic history.]

1. Bourgeois and Proletarians
The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is splitting up more and more into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising Bourgeosie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guildmasters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class by industrial millionaires—the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the work market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political
advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune, here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France), afterward, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.”...

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society....

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations....

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie keeps doing away more and more with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralization....

The bourgeoisie during its rule of scarce one hundred years has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange, on the foundation of which the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in a word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it and by the economic and political sway of the bourgeoisie class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society
that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeoisie society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that in all earlier epochs would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and as soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class, the proletarians.

---

CHECKLIST

To help you review, here is a checklist of the key philosophers and terms and concepts of this chapter. The brief descriptive sentences summarize the philosophers’ leading ideas. Keep in mind that some of these summary statements are oversimplifications of complex positions.

**Philosophers**

- **Aristotle** held that a state is good to the degree to which it enables its citizens to achieve the good life and believed that the form of the ideal state depends on the circumstances. 332

- **St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas** Christianized the concept of natural law. They were concerned with the relationship of secular law to natural law and of the state to the Church. Aquinas distinguished four kinds of law; this was one of his most important contributions to political philosophy. 333

- **Jeremy Bentham**, a utilitarian philosopher, dismissed talk about natural rights as meaningless. 351

- **Georg Hegel** explained the road to freedom via master and slave. 354

- **Thomas Hobbes** was a contractarian theorist who held that civil society, civil laws, and justice come into existence when people contract among themselves to transfer their power and rights to a sovereign power who compels people to live in peace and honor their agreements. Hobbes believed the transfer is “commanded” by natural law, which he held to be a set of rational principles for best ensuring self-preservation. 335

- **John Locke** held that people have God-given natural rights and that the state is created for
the protection of those rights by mutual agreement among its citizens, who entrust their rights to the state for safeguarding. 339

- **Karl Marx** held that human history is a dialectical interplay between social relationships and economic productive activity that involves class warfare but ultimately leads to an ideal society lacking classes, wages, money, private property, or exploitation. 357

- **John Stuart Mill**, a classical liberal theorist, held that the function of the state is to promote the general happiness (not to safeguard natural rights). He stipulated that a person’s liberty may be interfered with only to prevent harm to others. 352

- **Plato** held that the best or “just” state is a class-structured aristocracy ruled by “philosopher-kings.” 330

- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**, another contrac-tarian, held that, through a social compact, people may agree to unite into a state and through the state to enact laws reflective of the general will. He believed that people neither give up their rights to the state nor entrust them to it, for they are the state. 344

- **Adam Smith** was a classical liberal economic theorist who was an exponent of capitalism and a laissez-faire economy. 351

- **Harriet Taylor** was a reformist philosopher who advocated the liberation of women and stressed the importance of political tolerance and individualism. 352

**Key Terms and Concepts**

- alienation 361
- anarchism 362
- aristocracy 331
- capitalism 351
- class struggle 360
- Communism 362
- communism 362
- contractualism 339
- democracy 331
- dialectical process 360
- divine law 334
- egalitarian 332
- eternal law 334
- free-market economy 351
- general will 345
- human law 334
- *Lawrence v. Texas* 350
- Leviathan 336
- liberalism 351
- *Marbury v. Madison* 349
- means (forces) of production 357
- monarchy 332
- natural law 334
- natural law political theory 333
- natural rights 341
- oligarchy 332
- philosopher-king 330
- plutocracy 331
- political philosophy 330
- polity 332
- productive relations 357
- proletariat 361
- revisionists/evolutionary socialists 361
- revolutionists 361
- *Roe v. Wade* 350
- social contract 336
- sovereign power 336
- tacit consent 342
- timocracy 331
- tyranny 331
- utilitarianism 351

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REVIEW**

1. According to Plato, the ideal state consists of three classes. What are they, what are their functions, and how is class membership determined?

2. Is the well-being of the state desirable in its own right, apart from what it contributes to the welfare of its citizens?

3. Evaluate Aristotle’s idea that people who do not have the aptitude or time to participate in governance should not be citizens.

4. Explain the four types of law distinguished by Aquinas.

5. In the absence of civil authority, would anyone live up to an agreement that turned out not to be in his or her own best interest?

6. Would it be wise for people, for their own good, to transfer their collective strength to a sovereign power? Explain.

7. Can a covenant between the Leviathan and its subjects be made? Why is it impossible for Hobbes’s Leviathan to act unjustly toward its subjects?

8. Which is better, in your view, dictatorship or anarchy? Why?

9. Does the Leviathan have the right to take your life, according to Hobbes? Explain.


11. What is Locke’s argument for saying that each person has inalienable natural rights?

12. What is tacit consent?
13. “All people equally have a right to property, but they do not all have a right to equal property.” What does this mean? Do you agree?

14. Explain Locke’s concept of private property. Is this a realistic concept?

15. What is the general will, and how do we know what it is?

16. Can you think of any justification for the principle that people have natural rights other than that proposed by Locke?

17. Do people have a natural right to privacy? Explain.

18. Can you think of a sounder justification for abortion rights than the “right to privacy”? Explain.

19. If people have a right to privacy, do children have that right? Do infants? Explain.

20. Would people be better off without any government at all? Explain.

21. “The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is absolute.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

22. What, for utilitarians, are “natural rights”?

23. What did Taylor think was so important about toleration? In what ways did she think English society was intolerant?

24. Compare and contrast classical liberalism and orthodox Marxism.

25. What, according to Marx, are the consequences of capitalism, and why are they consequences?


27. Would Rousseau have agreed with Socrates’ explanation to Crito (Selection 11.1) about why he should not try to escape from prison? Why or why not?

SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS


Cicero, *De re publica* and *De legibus* both translated by C. W. Keyes (and both London: Loeb Classical Library, 1928). See book III of each of these classic works.


Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Penguin, 1990). Some seminal themes from this period are developed, such as individuality, the inner voice, and self-determination.


Paul E. Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (New York: Norton, 1988). New translations of selections from the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologica* that include Aquinas’s views on government, law, war, property, sexual ethics, the proofs of God, the soul, the purpose of man, and the order of the universe.


E. Jonathan Wolfe and Michael Rosen, eds., *Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). A selection of important writings concerning the prime questions of political philosophy from Plato to contemporary times.
