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Ideas, Revolution, and Democratic Defeat, 1748–1830

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Introduction

Radical Enlightenment and "Modernity" (1650–1850)

1.1. BASIC ARGUMENT AND SCOPE

A quarter century after originally formulating my Radical Enlightenment thesis, this volume extends the project's core themes by reaching back before 1650, to consider the underground movements of the "Radical Renaissance" and "Radical Reformation" in relation to the Enlightenment, and forwards to encompass a range of relevant contexts thus far not covered or brought together, such as women's emancipation, black emancipation, race theory, the rise of the Spanish American republics, education reform, law reform, and the advent of economics and especially post-1789 revolutionary upheavals in the trans-Atlantic world and the early nineteenth century. The volume also addresses key objections raised in the escalating controversy surrounding the thesis.

In recent decades, an important response of the historiography to the growing need to reassess the overall Enlightenment phenomenon in both its unity and diversity, given the burgeoning wealth of detail research has made available and the growing need also to adopt a much wider geographical perspective than was once usual, has been to reorganize the topic primarily in terms of "plural enlightenments" and focus increasingly on particular national and religious contexts. The core argument presented in *Radical Enlightenment* (2001) and developed further in *Enlightenment Contested* (2006) and *Democratic Enlightenment* (2011) was that the Western Enlightenment as a whole resulted from a shared outpouring of basic new findings and ideas in philosophy, science and general scholarship, especially concepts of a liberating, tolerationist, secularizing kind, bringing in its wake, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, numerous wide-ranging practical improvements. Consequently, basing one's view of the Enlightenment on a "diverse family" typology, though understandable as a reaction to the historiographical problems, weakens our sense of the Enlightenment's unity, universal pretensions, and cosmopolitan flavor, as well as near global reach, *and* our sense of its continuing relevance to politics and society today.

Greater awareness of the unifying threads of the unfolding Enlightenment seems no less essential than increasing responsiveness to the Enlightenment's geographical range and diversity. The new criteria and findings of science combined with post-Cartesian philosophy to generate a vast panorama of fresh, innovative spheres of intellectual interest ranging from law reform to economics, ethnology, and what today are called the social sciences. This led, in turn, to an explosion of schemes and projects of amelioration aspiring to raise the level of human wellbeing by improving society's institutions, education, and basic organization. If this was a shared trans-Atlantic experience, while some of the welter of new ideas and reform projects were of a bold, far-reaching character, others were just adjustments to the prevailing status quo; whereas some were so transformative in implications and effects as to threaten the entire framework of society, religion, and politics, others could be easily absorbed within existing social conditions and structures of authority. Hence, what is chiefly required, arguably, is not a "family of enlightenments" typology but a carefully defined binary classification of ideas and reform projects into socially endorsing and socially oppositional blocs, differentiating those backed by state and church from those rejected. In this way we can more adequately profile the overall scenario and understand the international Enlightenment's shared internal tensions and conflicts. Projects intellectual and practical aiming at improvements inevitably divided into two basic kinds: schemes conserving the main components of the existing *ancien régime* framework, established religious authority, and social hierarchy based on aristocracy and monarchy especially, versus those challenging and potentially revolutionizing the existing foundations of society, culture, and education with wholly new forms of thought and practice.

As the latter category, that of the radical enlighteners, was generally considered a threat to society and religion, and both their writings and activities remained comprehensively banned until 1789, they tended to detach themselves to an extent from the rest of the Enlightenment, and society, forming clandestine networks of gatherings, organization, and book culture. Starting as a few minuscule groups, they evolved into a widely condemned underground intellectual "sect" adopting clandestine practices to camouflage, publicly screen, their challenging the beliefs, practices, and institutions of the then prevailing social and religious system. Growing from the 1660s down to the 1830s and 1840s, Radical Enlightenment little by little (though never completely) divested itself of its early clandestine practices but never its oppositional character. Some commentators assume the "Radical Enlightenment" category proposed encompasses all writers and thinkers rejecting the sway of theology and religious belief.[1] But that is not the case. Many essentially irreligious Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, La Mettrie, Hume, Gibbon, and Goethe abjured the religious assumptions of the past privately, but not the social hierarchy, principle of monarchy, traditional moral norms (at least for most people), and outward religious

[1] See, for instance, Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, 6, 15–16, 136.

format—so that these too must be excluded from any meaningful radical category. Neither Moderate nor Radical Enlightenment can in fact be satisfactorily defined in terms of religious or irreligious Enlightenment. Unitarian, Arian, and other heterodox freethinking religious fringes existed, opposing church sway and conventionally-accepted Christian theology and inclined to embrace universal and equal rights, from whose ranks emerged several prominent "radical enlighteners" like the great Welshman Richard Price (1723–91).[2]

From the 1670s for over a century, the most common nomenclature applied to these underground Enlightenment radicals, albeit rather less so in England and America than continental Europe, was to label them *Spinosistes*, as they were known in France. As we shall see, there has been much dispute as to what significance, if any, should be attached to this nomenclature. But the important point for now is that although, throughout the period from 1670 down to the 1830s, "Radical Enlightenment" generally had some (mostly indirect and tenuous) connection with the actual philosophical and textual legacy of Spinoza, Spinoza had nothing to do with the existence of the radical tendency as such which stemmed directly from the deep divisions in the Dutch Republic between Orangists and anti-Orangists in the third quarter of the seventeenth century; it was never part of the argument to claim the Radical Enlightenment "originated in Spinoza" as hostile commentators regularly misrepresent the argument. Claiming the "Radical Enlightenment thesis" fails because it artificially imposes Spinoza's philosophy as a kind of "package logic" onto texts and thinkers when some of these, like Condorcet, rarely if ever mention Spinoza and showed no direct sign of his influence, is distorting the debate with inapplicable objections. Radical Enlightenment here remains what it was in the earlier volumes—refusal of religious guidance of society on philosophical grounds combined with universal principles rejecting aristocracy and monarchy in favour of representative, democratizing republicanism, nothing more nor less.

After the third volume of the series, *Democratic Enlightenment* (2011), appeared two specialized studies, *Revolutionary Ideas* (2014) on the French Revolution, and *The Expanding Blaze* (2017), on the American Revolution, requisite as preliminaries to this volume, especially to provide enough evidence and analysis of texts to substantiate overarching arguments relating to the revolutionary era and beyond on which, ultimately, the entire "Radical Enlightenment thesis" rests. The conclusions reached diverge from much of the previous historiography. Although the vast upheaval and turmoil of the French Revolution was chiefly due to the crown's financial breakdown and mass movements of protest, the democratic republican orientation, direction and legislation of 1789–93, these works argue, flowed principally from a vanguard of philosophical republicans who were actual or virtual republicans mixing in *philosophique* circles well before 1789, often among the coteries of Diderot, d'Holbach, and Helvétius.

[2] Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 30–1; Duthille, *Discours Radical*, 87–8, 94, 104–5.

Also, from 1789, a much noisier, more public rift manifested itself among enlighteners than had existed earlier. Many enlighteners recoiled from the new democratic and secularist credo, aligning defensively with monarchy, church, and aristocracy against the democratic republicans while others, in many countries, supported the Revolution in its more democratic mode, embracing "general will" in its non-Rousseauist format, universal and equal rights and egalitarian principles. Revolutionary turmoil, inevitably, sharply polarized and widely publicized enlighteners' splits, pushing them into two openly, soon violently opposed camps. While democratic republican secularizing groups plainly belonged to the Radical Enlightenment category, powerful factions of constitutional royalists commanded another main thrust within the Revolution, led by figures such as Mounier, Lally-Tollendal, Malouet, Maury, and Barnave, rejecting radical ideas and claiming the Revolution must compromise with monarchy, aristocracy, and established religion,[3] and are hence classified as heirs to the Moderate Enlightenment. Moderate enlighteners strove to steer between democratic Enlightenment and outright reaction, scorning the scorning of all enlightened change characterizing Counter-Enlightenment. Hence, post-1789 "moderate enlighteners", including the French *monarchiens*, Adams, Burke, Gibbon, and Ferguson, and, even more, the post-1806 Prussian court reformers, still believed further reform, secularization, and rationalization were needed (up to a point) and should be carried further whether on the basis of the "mixed government" British model derived from the Lockean "Revolution principles" of 1688 or that of "enlightened despotism," as under Napoleon's or Czar Alexander I's rule.

Revolutionary era moderate enlighteners hence opposed both the radicals on one side and encroaching Counter-Enlightenment on the other. The education reformer Johann Ludwig Ewald (1747–1822), writing in 1792, for example, urged Germany's princes fighting the democratic republican challenge not to retreat into mere repression and rejection but instead build on the Enlightenment of Frederick the Great (reigned: 1740–86) and Joseph II (reigned: 1780–90), restructure monarchy, and continue reforming their realms, but cautiously, always allied to ecclesiastical authority and Christianity.[4] Under the 1814–15 Restoration, after Napoleon's final defeat, radicals and moderates came under renewed pressure from reactionary Counter-Enlightenment, though frequently this had the opposite effect to that intended. In Ireland, Canada, and the United States as well as Britain, what made the "idealized, radical Enlightenment vision appear even more inspirational and heroic" to hardened political dissidents than it had before, as one scholar expressed it, was the "violent resistance it met from British authorities."[5] In Britain, this intensified climate of reactionary repression lasted four decades, from 1792 down to the Great Reform Bill of 1832.

Both basic categories of Enlightenment, then, moderate and radical, are deemed "revolutionary." The central role ascribed to both in the American, French, and other

[3] Ewald, *Über Revolutionen*, 244.
[4] Ewald, *Über Revolutionen*, 237–47.
[5] Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America*, 78.

revolutions makes this a fundamental point. Both Enlightenment streams sought to curb despotism, reduce religious policing, enhance individual freedom, expand freedom of the press and expression, and generally ameliorate society by spreading "enlightened" ideas and expanding education. For all this, the trans-Atlantic revolutions were indebted to the international Enlightenment as a whole. The core thesis regarding the French Revolution is that the two divergent streams during 1787–93 both contributed to the making of the Revolution but became competing revolutionary ideological blocs within it, a struggle continuing until the Montagnard coup of June 1793. This brought to the fore a third force, one rhetorically appealing to (but at the same time vigorously repressing) the *sans-culottes*, using a dramatically different, anti-intellectualist, and in some respects more Rousseauist, essentially populist authoritarian, Counter-Enlightenment ideology.

Fundamental to the "Radical Enlightenment" throughout was that its "democratizing republicanism" was always focused on "representative democracy": all Radical Enlightenment theorists from Spinoza to d'Holbach, Condorcet, Price, Volney, Destutt. and Bentham rejected pure "direct democracy," considering the common people of their time still too ignorant, superstitious, and prey to "priestcraft" to understand the issues, though they hoped, and some optimistically expected, this would change in the future. For "democracy", as they understood it, to work, the "common good," or "general will," contrary to Rousseau's teaching, must be represented by responsible, aware, and well-educated spokesmen and delegates. Radical Enlightenment hence invariably opted for "representative democracy" or, in its most sophisticated versions—as with Condorcet or the post-1810 Bentham—a complex balancing of representative and direct democracy backed by frequent re-election of representatives.[6] Pure "direct democracy," by contrast, the voice of the streets, Rousseau's dispensing with representation, radical thinkers down to 1848 invariably abjured as "unenlightened" and dangerous. Failing to see this, critics assuring readers the thesis collapses because key radical enlighteners like d'Holbach and Volney repudiated "direct democracy," as indeed they did, are confusing the issue.[7]

What is sometimes called Robespierre's "ultra-democratic project," direct popular sovereignty, was intrinsically alien to the Radical Enlightenment creed which remained relentless in stressing the ignorance of "the multitude," albeit "multitude" understood not in terms of class but in terms of ability or inability to understand the "reality of things." In Spinoza and d'Holbach this exacting standard by no means ruled out unprivileged, poor, and humble individuals who are perceptive and aware. But their "multitude" definitely did encompass most kings, princes, courtiers, aristocrats, professors, and clergymen who, radical enlighteners typically assumed, either fail to grasp

[6] Urbinati, "Condorcet's Democratic Theory," 56–7; Israel, *Radical Ideas*, 346–9.

[7] Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 62–4; Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 644, 813–21, 948; Israel, *Radical Ideas*, 348, 357–8, 365; Peonidis, "Jeremy Bentham," 448; for examples of this confusion, see Chisick, "Of Radical and Moderate Enlightenment," 63; 66, 348; Kim, "Volney and the French Revolution," 236; see also Steenbakkers' review of Ducheyne's *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment* in BMGN for 2018.

or deliberately obfuscate the reality of things. Radical Enlightenment was inherently and always entirely at odds with Rousseau's "sublime science of simple souls."[8]

Another key argument about the revolutionary era elaborated in *The Expanding Blaze* is that until the Montagnard coup of June 1793 there existed enough basic parallels between the American and French Revolutions, especially egalitarian concepts and "universal and equal rights," to persuade leading radical publicists of the era, like Franklin, Price, Paine, Jefferson, Barlow, Mirabeau, Brissot, Condorcet, Volney, Cooper, and Priestley, that the two revolutions' core principles were closely linked or, as Paine expressed it, "identical." Unlike former revolutions which he dismissed as just "a change of persons, or an alteration of local circumstances," the American and French revolutions, for Enlightenment radicals either side of the Atlantic, together constituted "a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man . . . "[9] American and French radicals, as democratic republicans, shared a common creed. When the revolutionary American Congress convened, in Philadelphia 1775–6, no privileged status of any kind was permitted or acknowledged, no social orders were separately represented, observed Condorcet, in 1788, before the onset of the French Revolution when, already firmly republican, he wished to justify excluding the French aristocracy from the future national legislature.[10] Shutting the clergy altogether out of America's state constitutions, concurred Cérutti, in 1788, was likewise a vital lesson for Europeans.[11] The American Revolution's role in inspiring the ideological framing and especially the universal and equal rights discourse and reformism of the French Revolution was indeed basic.[12]

Unsurprisingly, given its centrality, Radical Enlightenment is no new concept. Since the 1920s, first introduced as a pivotal idea by Leo Strauss, the term has infused the historiography for almost a century, even if most historians and general readers only became aware of its importance from the 1970s. My own work seeks to extend the meaning and scope of this century-old concept. Many eighteenth-century political figures often characterized in history books as "radicals" but whose intellectual assumptions and arguments focused less on universal principles applying to all men deriving from "natural right" or "natural rights", and more on longstanding constitutional traditions and precedents real or alleged particular to their own country, are excluded from the category as employed here. Such figures may have been "radical" in local contexts, but were not "enlighteners" promoting general radical principles internationally. Thus, many eighteenth-century British and American figures often referred to as "radicals" are excluded because in their pamphlets, speeches, and publicity they relied primarily on localized, particularist, constitutionalist arguments,

[8] Neidleman, "Sublime Science," 823, 830, 833. [9] Paine, *Rights of Man*, 144.
[10] Condorcet, *Sentimens d'un républicain* (1788), 18–21, 25.
[11] Cérutti, *Mémoire pour le peuple* (1788), 22–3.
[12] Gauchet, *Révolution des droits*, 48–54; Israel, *Expanding Blaze*, 252–74.

and played little part in international Enlightenment debates or drawing the connection between political radicalism and rejecting religious authority.

The main constituent claims, or sub-theses, underpinning the overall argument down to *Democratic Enlightenment* (2011), were the initiating role in the 1660s and 1670s of the *cercle spinoziste*, the earliest intellectual ferment combining rejection of religious authority with democratic republicanism; second, the amplifying role of Huguenot and other French intellectuals around 1700 in disseminating "Spinozistic" ideas projecting the now Europe-wide clash between the moderation of Lockean Enlightenment dualism and radical one-substance monism;[13] third, the mediating, intermediary role of the English "deists," especially Toland, Tindal and Collins; fourth, the war between opposing Enlightenment factions between 1756 and 1765 over whether or not the *Encyclopédie* was so subversive of monarchy as well as religion that it should be banned; fifth, the public rift with which Voltaire became intensely preoccupied in the last decade of his life, what he called the "guerre civile" [civil war] dividing the French enlighteners, with one wing assailing the alleged alliance of kings and priests, and Voltaire and his following insisting on focusing on "priests" alone. Especially the *cercle spinoziste* theme and second and third sub-theses diverge from Margaret Jacob's rival thesis that the "first stirrings" of the "radicals of the Enlightenment" subscribing to what she calls a "pantheistic conception of the universe" occurred in England "after the Revolution of 1688–9."[14]

Following on from the above points, this volume brings into the picture the extension of the basic rift into new areas, especially women's emancipation, race theory, and black emancipation, the "parallel" profiles of the French and American revolutions (until June 1793); *Robespierrisme* as a populist Counter-Enlightenment to which all veritable radical enlighteners were adamantly opposed; continuation of the basic Enlightenment rift after 1815 through the 1820s revolutions; and, lastly, the argument that a growing rift arose between socialism and Radical Enlightenment in the 1830s and 1840s, friction that among much else led to Karl Marx's conversion from a Radical Enlightenment outlook to his post-1844 economics-based socialism.

1.2. DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES

The incipient "Radical Enlightenment" of the 1660s and 1670s, the philosophically revolutionary phenomenon seeking to sweep all before it, commencing among the *cercle spinoziste* in Holland, emerged against a backcloth of a much older and wider

[13] On this general point, if nowhere else, one finds considerable overlap between Jacob's account and my own, Jacob, "Heavenly City," 52–3.

[14] Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. xiv; in her latest book, however, Jacob seems to have modified her position and become more willing to acknowledge the decisive role of pre-1688 clandestine philosophical literature and the pre-1688 Dutch context: see Jacob, *Secular Enlightenment*, 8, 64-9, 78–9, 91, 100–1, 103, 164–7, 180, 185, 189, 197–8.

dissident fringe. It stood out from a longstanding mix of Epicureans, sceptics, *libertins érudits*, anti-establishment eclectics, alienated types, and philosophical and political rebels, a milieu fertilized by texts scholars today label *clandestina*, that is clandestine manuscripts occasionally supplemented by anonymous and illicitly printed texts, promoting intellectual traditions and structures of thought condemned, banned, and severely repressed by state and church.[15] By contrast, the new tendency commencing in the 1660s and 1670s had a much tighter inner philosophical coherence and more dynamic conception of the relationship between forbidden thought and action. But assuredly it fed on the now long-established older clandestine milieu of furtive copying and discussion of forbidden subversive texts primarily in Latin and French, and clandestine networking. Diffusing slowly from the seventeenth century's third quarter onwards, Radical Enlightenment's illicit spread was aided by the older intellectual substratum of forbidden philosophy which had long nurtured a tenacious, carefully masked, underground social structure with its own hierarchies, practices, and contacts often built around "under the counter" booksellers and elusive printers. Simultaneously a social, cultural, and intellectual phenomenon, Radical Enlightenment forged a new, separate intellectual identity, fundamentally rewriting the relation between thought and action, while diffusing, organizing, and expanding amidst a complex, diverse milieu of rival clandestine philosophical agendas, a bewildering medley of Neo-Epicureanism, skepticism, Averroism, rebellious eclecticism, underground "deism," Iberian crypto-Judaism, Socinianism, radical fideism, a vast mix of underground theologico-philosophical currents long challenging established theological tenets.

Largely due to their concealed, marginal character, both the older, broader, more passive as well as variegated underground culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the more activist new phenomenon starting in the 1660s, based on hidden philosophical manuscripts and banned printed texts, unified only by a common tendency in one way or another to resist religion's sway, rarely attracted mainstream scholarly attention until recent decades. Latterly, though, the early modern clandestine philosophical literature has become a field of intensive study with many significant discoveries being brought to light by such outstanding scholars as Gianni Paganini, Miguel Benítez, Martin Mulsow, Silvia Berti, Winfried Schröder, and Antony McKenna.[16]

Since Radical Enlightenment arose out of, and early on was chiefly nourished by, a wider hidden substratum, a collection of underground social and intellectual hidden networks in several countries, diverse but always antagonistic to mainstream

[15] Paganini, *Filosofie clandestine*, 149–67; Paganini, "Enlightenment before the Enlightenment," 183–5.

[16] For the post-1660 clandestine philosophical literature in relation to the Radical Enlightenment's origins, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 684–703; Israel, "Radical Enlightenment: A Game-Changing Concept," 15–47; Israel, "'Lumières radicales" comme théorie générale," 387–436; Israel, "Democratic Republicanism and One-Substance Philosophy," 14–43; and the new two-volume expanded edition of Mulsow's *Moderne aus dem Untergrund* entitled *Radikale Frühaufklärung in Deutschland, 1680–1720* (2 vols., Göttingen, 2018) especially vol. 2, entitled *Clandestine Vernunft*.

religious, educational, and political culture, it has to be understood as inherently a social-cultural opposition movement as much as an intellectual phenomenon. Classifying the split between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment philosophically, in intellectual terms, as "reason" alone versus reason tempered by truths "above reason" and accessible only to theology, hence represents only one side of the coin, one side of the "Radical Enlightenment thesis," as it has evolved since the early 1990s. The intellectual aspect by itself hardly suffices for a proper appreciation of this revisionism; for it focuses equally on the social, cultural, and educational dimensions and repercussions of this escalating struggle, not least the post-1770 intensifying quarrel over whether all of society needed enlightening, as radical enlighteners insisted, or whether Enlightenment should (or unavoidably had to) be restricted just to society's elites, as moderates like Voltaire and Frederick the Great maintained. Since "moderates" had no wish to abolish existing social hierarchies and broadly endorsed the existing order, they perceived no pressing need for everyone, or indeed anyone beyond the elites, to become "enlightened." It was unnecessary and unrealistic, argued Voltaire and Prussia's celebrated "enlightened despot," to try to enlighten more than a small proportion of society. Enlightened despots like Frederick, Catherine, Joseph II of Austria, and indeed Napoleon, consequently assigned ecclesiastics and the churches an imposing slice of moral, legal, educational, social, and political power, responsibility and censorship and sanctioned the ecclesiastical grip over society—even if, as became obvious at elite level and at court, not with any great personal conviction.

Throughout the more than a century and a half of its existence, the radical tendency undeviatingly sought to exclude theology and organized religion from science, political theory, education, and philosophy. In this respect it proceeded quite differently from mainstream early Enlightenment, from figures like Locke, Newton, Le Clerc, and Leibniz aiming at reconciling science and religion by means of the "argument from design," Locke's "above reason," Leibniz's monads, and other pertinent dualistic devices. But here the Radical Enlightenment also strikingly contrasted with earlier clandestine philosophical currents: philosophically, it was the irreconcilable foe not just of the established order but also of skepticism, eclecticism, Socinianism, Neo-Epicureanism, crypto-Judaism, and radical fideism—all the strands of the earlier and wider underground dissident mix. Taking its cue from the mathematical logic of the post-Galilean Cartesian laws of science, the naturalistic philosophical underground proclaimed philosophical-scientific reason the exclusive criterion of truth, a unified and total system, the sole path to verifying "the truth" of things. Wholly usurping the previous role of theology, at least in its own estimation, this new creed, or "sect" as Bayle, Le Clerc, and Toland called it, became uniquely linked, as we shall see, to a revolutionary new concept of science as universally applicable, unchanging, unalterable general "natural laws" explaining the whole of reality which should hence also be the basis of men's understanding of society and politics. The clandestine radical tendency's proposed reforms it sought to anchor in the natural laws allegedly determining human behavior,

morality, and thought while at the same time—again in contrast to Moderate Enlightenment—excluding all alternative or rival sources of truth verification and authority, all principles based on tradition, religion, common law, older philosophy, and the status quo.

While reconciling reason and faith following Locke, Newton, or Leibniz long remained hegemonic in the public sphere, privately or in small-group discussion, Locke's and Leibniz's reputedly cogent reconciling of "reason" and faith progressively eroded, leaving many among the intellectually sophisticated unconvinced, even among those most eager to compromise with religion and the political and social status quo. The latter therefore found themselves forced back on less philosophically confident solutions, and less compelling social arguments, of the kind resorted to by Montesquieu and Voltaire. The necessity of ecclesiastical guidance, if not for themselves, then, as they saw it, for society's unschooled lower orders, continued to be insisted on even by such notorious religious skeptics as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon, and Frederick the Great, but without offering much philosophical argument with which to ward off the radicals. This vulnerability ceaselessly aiding the radical wing's advance hence long remained a central factor from around 1660, even during the tendency's most inconspicuous and clandestine early phase.

From the late 1740s onwards, in France, constraints on the clandestine philosophical underground slowly loosened due to gradual easing and circumvention. New modes of surreptitious expression with frequent publishing of passages affirming the opposite of what was meant indicated with sly literary winks and nods, beside discreet appeals to police and administrative authorities to soften enforcement of prohibition of illicit books, became a cumulative shift in which Diderot played a pivotal part. Typically for this mid-eighteenth-century successor phase, subversive ideas, extracted from the founding texts, were increasingly surreptitiously propagated through innuendo and carefully guarded hints buried in more generally available published texts, like the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert, making possible a much wider general impact than seemed attainable prior to the 1740s.[17]

Nevertheless, as the radical underground's writings diffused in a more direct, complete, and uninhibited fashion than earlier during the eighteenth century's middle decades, their more openly irreligious and anti-establishment writings still circulated only inconspicuously and in highly restricted quantities. Only from 1770, with the anonymous publication of the *Histoire philosophique des Deux Indes* (1770) and equally explosive, anonymous *Système de la nature* (1770), was a new stage reached when production and dissemination of Radical Enlightenment literature suddenly escalated to become a vastly larger, more formidable challenge to the existing order of things than in the past. This produced not just a much wider diffusion of Radical Enlightenment concepts in the 1770s and 1780s than had occurred earlier, but also a more open, general cultural drive by promoters of moderate Enlightenment, Religious

[17] Le Ru, *Subversives Lumières*, 7–20; Duflo, "Diderot et la fin," 26–9.

Enlightenment, and *anti-philosophes*, first in France, but soon conspicuously in Britain, Germany, and America too, to alert opinion and mobilize the public against what was now widely viewed as the overwhelming general menace of "la philosophie moderne"—the very antithesis of theology, authority, moderation, aristocratic primacy in the social hierarchy, monarchy, and faith.

Already, three years before the Revolution, Adrien Lamourette (1742–94), a key Catholic Enlightenment reformer seeking to reconcile theology and science using an element of skepticism, warned of the danger of a universal morally and socially destructive "révolution deplorable," stemming from clandestine philosophical premises. The threatened upheaval, he admonished in 1786, would cause the overthrow of religion and total negation of monarchy and aristocracy, leading to the remaking of all the laws on the principle of "equality": "le vrai dessein de la philosophie est de tout bouleverser [the true goal of the [modern] philosophy is to overthrow everything]."[18] But in proclaiming "modern philosophy" a contagion affecting all social strata, explained Lamourette, he meant to target only those behind the irreligious anonymous subversive texts, not "les systèmes modérés" of *philosophes* like Montesquieu, to him a stalwart defender of Christianity, or Rousseau, deemed by him far more respectful of religion and "virtue" than his former friends (Diderot and d'Holbach), the primary authors of the intellectual subversion he styled a malign force, dishonest, dogmatic, and overbearing, "as much an enemy of throne as of altar."[19]

Since radical enlighteners by definition repudiated theology and guidance by churchmen, most of society tended to characterize their pre-1770 underground, where they knew of it, as "atheistic." Radical enlighteners themselves, however, certainly before 1770, usually denied being "atheists," claiming to have a naturalistic anti-theological notion of "God." What their thought world did reject altogether was assuming that any prophets, spokesmen, or chosen individuals exist, or ever could exist, who stand closer to God than anyone else and are qualified to explain his ways and commands to everyone else. Theology and what they called "priestcraft," society's existing structure and established "morality," was not to them a system of law divinely delivered via any prophet, pope, or church, nor comprised practices intended or sanctioned by God or any supernatural events. While "atheism as a concept" was by no means unfamiliar to erudite academic debate during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century but rather a topic inherent in the "mental furniture of the Christian learned world,"[20] arguing for the intellectual and moral superiority of "atheism," or non-religious philosophy, over Christian revelation and teaching, remained strictly forbidden, illegitimate in the eyes of governments, universities, and most contemporaries, and everywhere vigorously repressed, as was arguing

[18] Lamourette, *Pensées sur la philosophie*, 55–7, 83–5, 92; Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 142, 148; Lehner, *Catholic Enlightenment*, 210–11.

[19] Lamourette, *Pensées sur la philosophie*, 83–4, 89, 113–15, 203; Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 276–9.

[20] Kors, *Naturalism and Unbelief*, 2.

human morality needs elevating by being stripped of its theological underpinning. Denying miracles and divine providence, insisting everything, without exception, including the origins of life and morality, is governed by mathematically precise natural laws without any knowing or benevolent divine intervention remained entirely illicit. Equally condemned was outright anti-Scripturalism, all Bible criticism maintaining divine revelation does not exist, that miracles are impossible, that there are no *supernaturalia*.

The pivotal role of anti-Scripturalism and one-substance doctrine in this broad international scenario, of itself assured Spinoza an exceptional status in Enlightenment history. Hobbes, La Peyrère, and one or two others undoubtedly preceded him in developing a powerful, sophisticated anti-Scripturalism, "but no-one smote the foundations of the Pentateuch more completely than Spinoza," insisted the eminent Zurich scholar Johann Heinrich Heidegger (1633–98), among the key Swiss theologians of the age, or did so with greater *audacia*.[21] Furthermore, Spinoza was the first anti-Scripturalist systematically to combine a rigorous new Bible criticism with a sophisticated metaphysics eliminating all *supernaturalia* and divine providence philosophically while viewing these components as "necessarily" linked to seeing the democratic republic as the best and most natural type of state. Hence, there is nothing surprising in Spinoza's unparalleled, posthumous presiding role in theorizing the early Radical Enlightenment or in the rapid forming, first in Holland in the 1670s, of a "Spinozist" sect, nor in his legacy remaining central to key debates subsequently. Samuel Clarke simply reflected the contemporary reality, in 1705, when ranking him as the early Enlightenment's number one challenger of theology's hegemony and calling "Spinoza, the most celebrated patron of atheism in our time (who thought that there is no difference of substances but the whole and every part of the material world is a necessarily existing being), and that there is no other God but the universe . . . "[22]

During the mid-eighteenth century, strict constraints as to how and in what manner philosophy and religion were presented everywhere remained in force and Spinoza still retained his earlier unique status among those challenging this overriding status quo. When Diderot embarked on his philosophical odyssey in the late 1740s, he was already steeped in the clandestine philosophical literature, but at that point possessed only a sketchy knowledge of Spinoza's philosophy.[23] Yet, in a key text of these years, the *Promenade du sceptique*, written in 1747 but not published until decades later, a clandestine text the Paris police searched for and came close to obliterating, Spinoza's system plays a central role. In this debate between a set of mutually disagreeing thinkers all rejecting revealed religion—a deist, sceptic, *spinoziste*, and representative of a crudely mechanistic, immoral atheism reminiscent of La Mettrie—it is the *spinoziste* who ends up presenting the most cogent, compelling,

[21] Heidegger, *Exercitationes Biblicae*, 304, 369, 385.
[22] Clarke, *A Demonstration*, 20.
[23] Goggi, "Spinoza contre Rousseau," 180–2.

and morally uplifting stance.[24] That *spinozisme* emerges from Diderot's clandestine conference, defeating deism, skepticism, and immoral atheism in this way, is deeply symbolic, heralding both Diderot's own allegiance and *spinozisme*'s, or perhaps better *le néo-spinozisme*'s or *neo-Spinozism*'s, emerging ascendancy during the eighteenth century's third quarter over French underground radical thought more generally. In the *Encyclopédie* volume XV, Diderot warns that his "Spinosistes modernes," holding as they do different views about biology, should not be confused with the "Spinosistes anciens" but also emphasizes that, aside from their views on living organisms, new *spinozistes* (among whom he placed himself) follow *l'ancien spinosisme* "in all its consequences."[25]

But here further qualification and clarification is needed given that many scholars oppose my core argument, a mass of critics here termed the "negative critique," while others, without endorsing every feature, react more positively. The controversy has become large and complex. Two recent volumes of essays presenting a balanced mix of both sides, one in English, Steffen Ducheyne's *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment* (2017), the other in French, have helpfully set out the arguments *pro et contra* enabling readers to gain, with reasonable ease, an overview of the still escalating debate.[26] For the German context, the same applies to a third collection presenting both sides, Carl Niekerk (ed.), *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany.*[27] The "negative critique," probably still the larger phalanx,[28] frequently assumes what is being argued is that the Radical Enlightenment "originated in" as some put it, or evolved from Spinoza's philosophy, that the argument is "Spinoza-based." This is incorrect on

[24] Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 568–70, 699; Venturi, *Jeunesse de Diderot*, 117–18; Quintili, *Pensée critique*, 150, 159; Paganini, *Filosofie clandestine*, 160–1; Benítez, *Foyer clandestin* i, 462–6; Blom, *Enlightening the World*, 42, 53; Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 818–21.

[25] Diderot, article "Spinosistes" in Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie* XV. 474; Wolfe, "Determinism/Spinozism," 49; Métraux, "Über Denis Diderots physiologisch interpretierten Spinoza," 128–9; Villaverde, *Rousseau y el pensamiento*, 38, 44–5, 49.

[26] See Marta García-Alonso (ed.), *Les Lumières radicales et le politique* (Paris, 2017).

[27] Carl Niekerk (ed.), *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany* (Leiden, 2018).

[28] The main "negative" critiques of the Radical Enlightenment thesis thus far are those of Antoine Lilti, Anthony La Vopa, Johnson Kent Wright, Harvey Chisick, Ann Thomson, Ursula Goldenbaum, Samuel Moyn, Dale Van Kley, Annelien De Dijn, Paolo Casini, Carolina Armenteros, Francesco Benigno, Darryn McMahon, Eduardo Tortarolo, Theo Verbeeck, Vincenzo Ferrone, Helena Rosenblatt, Joanne Stalnaker, Lynn Hunt, Jose Peña, Keith Michael Baker, Margaret Jacob, Eric Schliesser, Jeremy Popkin, Dan Edelstein, David Bell, Minchul Kim, Andreas Pečar, and Damien Tricoire; among the foremost and most cited publications presenting their arguments are: Antoine Lilti, "Comment écrit-on l'histoire intellectuelle des Lumières? Spinozisme, radicalisme et philosophie," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* (2009), 171–206; A. J. La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History? Jonathan Israel's Enlightenment," *Historical Journal* 52 (2009), 717–38; and Harvey Chisick, "Interpreting the Enlightenment," *The European Legacy,* (2008), 35–57; for four hostile interventions against the "Radical Enlightenment" approach to the French Revolution, see *H-France Forum*, vol. 9 issue 1 (Winter 2014), no. 5; for overviews of the whole debate, see Villaverde, "L'Abbé Raynal," 230–44, 248–51, and Borghero, *Interpretazioni, categorie*, 311–28, 505–7; the most extended critique in German is Andreas Pečar and Damien Tricoire, *Falsche Freunde: War die Auklärung wirklich die Geburtsstunde der Moderne?* (Frankfurt, 2015), originating in the 2012 debate on "Radical Enlightenment" at the Halle Center for Enlightenment Studies.

three counts.[29] First, "Radical Enlightenment" in this series means use of philosophy to reject religious authority linked to broadly democratizing republican schemes for reform so that certain groups and individuals not "Spinozists" in any specific sense could still belong to this category. These non-Spinozist elements included both radical Christian Socinians, Arians, and Unitarians like Jarig Jelles, Richard Price, and Joseph Priestley opposing theological mysteries they deemed incompatible with philosophical-scientific reason while espousing a democratic tendency, and also "deists" like Shaftesbury, meeting the criteria for inclusion under our rubric, who either expressly repudiated Spinoza on moral or some other grounds or, like Mandeville, Franklin, and also Jefferson (who called himself an "Epicurean"), stopped short of expressly renouncing a creator God separate from Nature.

Wrongly assuming that my argument holds that the radical tendency "originated" in Spinoza has led "negative critique" proponents to focus on one or another part of the tradition's complex transmission process, trying to show Spinoza played little or no direct role in a particular thinker's intellectual development. A notable instance is d'Holbach's indubitably substantial debt to Toland.[30] Several discussants point to the strong connection between Toland and d'Holbach, a tie evident not least from the contents of d'Holbach's personal library,[31] but then wrongly infer this means "Spinozism" did not shape d'Holbach's radicalism. Recent research on Toland, however, only reinforces claims that his Bible criticism and attack on priestcraft, and systematic subversion of Locke, rejection of Locke's dualism and "supra rationem," were steeped in Spinozism. Far from misplaced, concludes one scholar, "the extent of a general Spinozistic influence [on Toland] has been—if anything—under-determined and under-appreciated;" the same then applies to d'Holbach.[32] In any case, being a social as much as an intellectual underground Radical Enlightenment did and could not "originate" in the philosophy of any particular thinker. Obviously, if such a movement existed it was a social and cultural as much as intellectual movement drawing vitality, impetus, durability, and ultimately its broad meaning from the social, economic, and political tensions amidst which it flourished.[33]

Intellectually, the group, the *cercle spinoziste*, was a collaborative endeavour with significant contributions to what evolved into "Spinozism" being made by several others beside Spinoza himself—Franciscus van den Enden, Adriaen Koerbagh, Lodewijk Meyer, the Brothers De La Court, and others.[34] One of the few critics to fully appreciate this, Pierre-François Moreau, seeing Spinoza was by no means the first to combine abjuring religious authority with democratic republicanism, and that several of the circle were more explicitly republican, democratic, and hostile to religion, as well more libertarian in sexual matters, than Spinoza himself, inquired with

[29] Israel, "Radical Enlightenment: A Game-Changing Concept," 37–9.
[30] Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, 20, 154, 286; Borghero, *Interpretazioni, categorie*, 23–4, 113, 323.
[31] *Catalogue de livres de la Bibliothèque de feu M. le baron d'Holbach*, 24, 176.
[32] Leask, "Speaking for Spinoza?," 144.
[33] Israel, "Radical Enlightenment: A Game-Changing Concept," 36–40.
[34] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 175–274.

an ironic flourish: "was Spinoza then a 'Spinozist'"?[35] The frequently-encountered eighteenth-century French label "spinoziste," Moreau suggested, casting doubt on whether Spinoza does actually evince a "revolutionary impulse," is a misnomer; he questioned whether the "Spinozist conception of the common good" does advance the cause of equality and a political and social revolution based on the "general will," stirring a lively dispute about the revolutionary potential of Spinoza's philosophy among Spinoza specialists. Nevertheless, all Spinoza scholars agree there are cogent grounds for viewing Spinoza as a deliberate political and religious subversive, so that even if one accepts the view of those arguing Spinoza opposed all violent revolutionary upheaval (which I do not), that would not of itself negate the claim that his stance entails opposition to religion's sway combined with opposition to kings and restricted oligarchies. We would still be left with a broad, enduring opposition movement exerting a major historical impact over a long period commencing with the efforts of a particular circle, shaped by a particular historical context, later becoming a growing force extending across Europe and eventually the entire Atlantic world, with one philosopher's contribution having a continuous, long-term presence in the tradition.

Radical Enlightenment, then, "originated" not in anyone's ideas, but rather in group intellectual responses to challenging historical realities, first in Holland, and later more generally in reaction to profound antagonisms within European and New World society and politics. The Radical Enlightenment thesis does not hold, therefore, that the late seventeenth and eighteenth century historical phenomenon contemporaries labeled "Spinozism" or the "sect of Spinozists" was necessarily tightly anchored in Spinoza's own texts as such. It is hard to dispute the findings of Paul Vernière's classic monograph, of 1954, that leading French radicals of the High Enlightenment era—Diderot, d'Holbach, Helvétius, and Condorcet—mostly had only a fleeting, superficial knowledge of Spinoza's texts and rarely cite him directly, albeit Diderot and d'Holbach were in the habit of echoing Spinoza more frequently than is usually realized.[36] Nor can one dispute that Spinoza's texts generally ceased to be as widely known and intensively studied as they had been after the first quarter of the eighteenth century (before reviving again strongly in Germany, in the 1780s).[37] In 1726, when reviewing Wollaston, Le Clerc observed that the "system of Spinoza" which earlier, as he himself had remarked, had gained a large following, having since the 1670s attracted many supporters,[38] was now no longer the chief vehicle of free-thinkers to the extent it had been, no longer "la grande mode des Libertins."[39] But it is wrong to infer from this that the continuing frequent use of labels "Spinosiste" and "Spinosisme" through the eighteenth century was therefore just a vague rhetorical

[35] Moreau, "Spinoza est-il spinoziste?," 292–3; on this point, see Villaverde, "L'Abbé Raynal," 235 and Henry, "L'Égalitarisme," 50.
[36] Goggi, *De l'*Encyclopédie *à l'éloquence républicaine*, 100–2, 174–83, 397–414.
[37] Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 699–700.
[38] De Vet, "Spinoza en Spinozisme," 3.
[39] De Vet, Spinoza en Spinozisme," 3, 23.

ploy, a set of insignificant catch-all phrases essentially unconnected with Spinoza's system, a piece of frippery, as Yves Citton suggested, declaimed for purely rhetorical purposes by hundreds of writers with little grasp of the content of Spinoza's philosophy.[40]

Many scholars, including some eminent names, find the Postmodernist deconstruction techniques applied here by scholars like Antoine Lilti and Yves Citton compelling. Antonio Negri, convinced the thesis "Spinoza is the foundation of the radical Enlightenment" is wrong, compliments Lilti's "remarkable analysis" for demolishing it altogether.[41] Rather than a "theoretical corpus," Spinozism, contends Lilti, following Daniel Roche—and this constitutes Lilti's prime argument against the "Radical Enlightenment" thesis—is just "un scandale, la figure extreme de l'héterotoxie," a term lacking content and irredeemably ambivalent in meaning and problematic.[42] The argument that different writers meant all manner of different things by "Spinozism," that the eighteenth-century cultural phenomenon *spinozisme* possessed no unity of content or cultural cohesion, that much of the talk of *spinozisme* was generated by detractors misunderstanding it or distorting it for polemical purposes, that eighteenth-century "Spinozism" is just a meaningless pool of ambivalence, is hugely applauded. Many scholars want Lilti's contention to be true; but it is not even remotely tenable. For it would mean that even though all over Europe, from around 1670, writers frequently identified Spinoza and "Spinozism" as the most audacious existing philosophical threat to religion, previous philosophy, and the moral order, nevertheless they did not mean anything concrete by this. Such an approach could not even begin to explain the systematic deployment of "Spinozism" in crucial passages of Leibniz, Le Clerc, Toland, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Voltaire (for whom it played a central role in the controversies of the last decade of his life); nor account for the concept's all too obtrusive coherence as institutionalized in the era's major encyclopedic compendia such as Bernard Picart's and Jean-Frédéric Bernard's *Céremonies et coûtumes religieuses*, Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, and Baumgarten's *Nachrichten*.

Not only did Clarke, Le Clerc, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Kant, and many others become entangled in complex controversies about "spinozisme" obviously meaning something highly specific by this term, but all the Postmodernism in the world cannot make *spinozisme* as found in texts like Diderot's *Promenade* and the *Encyclopédie* compatible with revelation, miracles, divine providence, religious authority, deism, mysticism, fideism, eclecticism, moral relativism, Aristotelian substances, Platonic ideals, Prisca theologia (natural religion), Cartesian dualism, Lockean dualism based on *supra rationem*, double truth, fixity of species, Epicurean swerves, La Mettrie's materialism, or the durable and powerful thrust of skepticism. This does not mean there was absolutely no element of ambiguity or uncertainty; *spinozisme* was not always a precise philosophical-theological category. Some commentators, including Leibniz, claimed *spinozisme* was closely related to Stoicism, that

[40] Citton, "L'Invention du spinozisme," 310–12. [41] Negri, *Spinoza for our Time*, 16–17.
[42] Lilti, "Comment écrit-on l'histoire intellectuelle," 188–9, 192; Borghero, *Interpretazioni, categorie*, 506.

ancient Stoics were "presque spinozistes," while others demurred, aligning *Spinosistes* closer to Epicureanism. But the phenomenon invariably meant an unremitting naturalism, anti-Scripturalism, and rejection of all *supernaturalia* within a highly integrated philosophical "system," a rigorous atheism opposed to all theology and viewing organized religion as a prop to a wider apparatus of tyranny. If Spinoza's style, his "geometric method," appeared "terribly archaic" to Diderot and the "new Spinozists" of the 1750s, the latter, as Lilti himself concedes at one point, nevertheless intended "to follow [Spinoza] in the 'consequences' of his system." What matters far more than Spinoza's style of argumentation historically, is the tight interlinking of his system's main components—the attack on priestcraft, revelation, miracles, and preference for democracy as the most "natural form of government," is closely tied to the oneness of substance, God, and nature, his monism conceiving movement as inherent in matter, and a strictly social conception of morality and "good" and "bad," and, finally, to the question of how to reorganize life and politics, how thought relates to action, philosophy to improving individual life and humanity in general. To regard Diderot's, Montesquieu's, or Voltaire's repeated, clear usage of the term *spinozisme* as so elastic as to have little real meaning would be as reckless and absurd in an Enlightenment scholar as to suppose this with respect to Lessing, Goethe, Herder, Fichte, or Hegel. Rather than showing acumen, excessive preoccupation with "signification slippage" led the Postmodernist challenge to severe misconstruing of Spinoza's Enlightenment legacy and also of other elements of the story, including Bayle's legacy, which Lilti wrongly supposed one of skepticism instead of as anti-skeptical, anti-theological moral rationalism.[43]

Whether only a sketchy knowledge of Spinoza was revealed, as in Diderot's *Promenade*, or whether a given writer showed a profound, familiarity, *spinozisme*, wherever deployed in Enlightenment controversies, invariably entails an anti-Lockean and anti-Newtonian (and hence anti-Voltairean) comprehensive eradication of theism and theology in favour of a philosophy rooted in mathematically expressed universal laws of science.[44] Contrary to Roche, Lilti, Citton, Negri, and here also Borghero, "Spinozism" *was* broadly coherent and meaningful as a concept and tradition, albeit not infrequently detached from Spinoza's political and social thought so that, in practice, one could, like Boulainvilliers, La Mettrie, or Goethe, be a "Spinozist" in important respects, and in Boulainvilliers' case a key figure of the clandestine literature, without strictly being part of the Radical Enlightenment at all. Laurent Bove is very likely correct in arguing that Boulainvilliers' "spinozisme" was confined to his attack on religion, and not reflected in his political and social writing to the extent I earlier suggested; still, this does not obviate the main reason for including Boulainvilliers as a notable contributor to the rise of the Radical

[43] Lilti, "How Do We Write the Intellectual History?," cue 55; Israel, "L'Histoire intellectuelle," 209–10.
[44] Israel, "L'Histoire intellectuelle," 211–15.

Enlightenment given his pivotal role as an underground transmitter of Spinozist texts and concepts in France.[45]

The social reformist and political aspects of Spinoza were not as conspicuously or solidly embedded in the cultural phenomenon "spinozisme" in royalist France and princely Germany as the assault on religious authority. Yet, while possible, it was never easy, theoretically, to detach Spinoza's rigorous naturalism from its social and political consequences, as we discern not only in his own works and the *cercle spinoziste*, but also Toland and, from the late 1760s, Diderot, as he became politically more radical. For it follows directly from Spinoza's metaphysical stance that morality is a purely social tool invented by men to reconcile individual self-interest with the common interest; and from this that an entire new morality is required if we are to build a "happier" society based on worldly justice and equality and, from this, that the existing laws urgently needed reforming on many points, that numerous social abuses, as Diderot and his circle viewed them, such as penalizing homosexuality, prohibiting divorce, collecting tithes, and the social role of nunneries, needed eradicating. *Spinozisme*, like the *Encyclopédie* was hence always a social and political as much as philosophical *machine de guerre* geared to assault broader forms of "tyranny" than just oppression by religious authorities. "Spinozism" always implied that what Spinozists and Tolandists called "priestcraft" not only unjustly invades freedom of thought and conscience, persecutes dissenters, and distorts the academic agenda, but bolsters society's general oppressiveness by abetting political tyranny. What the specifically "democratizing" tendency consisted of, prior to the American Revolution, was not so much electoral practices tending toward universal suffrage as yet than the idea of elevating the autonomy of every individual on an equal basis and pursuing the "common good" or "general will" in the sense of promoting the well-being of society as a whole.

By 1775, and the outbreak of the American Revolution, the age of small hidden networks and clandestine manuscripts was definitely over, even if the Radical Enlightenment still remained in part a clandestine sphere, with d'Holbach, for example, carefully preserving his anonymity. Some illicitly published books, in French especially, were beginning to sell in large quantities, even if the trade remained illegal and even though, in Germany, demand for legally-sold French books tended to fall off after 1770.[46] Radical enlighteners had become an increasingly vocal and conspicuous (though often still anonymous) international fraternity, a now fast growing and relatively large, widely scattered intellectual elite predominantly formed by informal literary, academic, student, and professional enclaves, but now sporadically able to mobilize support well beyond those limits. Such fringes coalesced into a trans-Atlantic political and social movement present especially across France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Ireland, and the United States.

[45] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 566–74; Bove, "Boulainvilliers lecteur," 373–9.
[46] Freedman, *Books without Borders*, 81, 84, 239, 243–4, 267–8.

By 1786 the combined, integrated threat this posed to kings and religion was, as Lamourette contended, manifest.

By the 1770s, the battle between moderate (aristocratic-courtly) and Radical (democratizing republican) Enlightenment had hence completed its arduous historical transition from the world of clandestine manuscripts and anonymous illicit publications to unyielding and often ferocious open ideological warfare in newspapers, pamphlets, journals, lecture-halls, and courtrooms. By the 1790s, this was a battle equally intense, bitter, and formative in America *and* Europe.[47] One unavoidable consequence, massively evident everywhere Enlightenment thought counted, was that from the 1770s the Enlightenment itself became not just deeply, but now, as Lamourette also noted,[48] self-consciously and publicly divided in basic premises and general principles into bitterly warring factions, for and against democratizing republicanism linked to rejection, or alternatively acceptance, of ecclesiastical authority. In America, the main split within the Revolution was between a dominant "aristocratic" Federalist faction led by John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, John Jay, and their associates adopting "British mixed government" as their highest political ideal, and their chief ideological foes to the Left, the Jeffersonian so-called "true republicans" rejecting the British model and demanding elimination of "aristocracy" and wider suffrages, the two sides unrelenting in denouncing each other.

Little of this, the reader should note, had much to do with broad cultural shifts, cultural turns, or general "sociability," notions in recent decades much cherished by mainstream Enlightenment scholarship and decidedly part of the explanation why the revolutionary era's basic ideological and intellectual mechanics remain, much of the time, so obscured from view. While popular grievances and resentment generated the basic motive force behind the revolutionary developments of 1775–1848 so that in a primal sense revolutionary impetus did derive from society as a whole, including the disadvantaged and downtrodden, it is largely untrue that the complex revolutionary ideas that changed the world during those decades, the theories about how and why society must be transformed, what is good and bad for society, politics, and education, stemmed from mainstream culture's mostly vague and directionless generalized sociability or its discontents. Leadership and articulation of demands derived rather from small, besieged and highly restricted intellectual fringes. The prime shaping force generating and diffusing the new principles, political theories, democratic outcomes, rhetoric, terminology, and zeal to crush ecclesiastical authority, above all the revolutionary new principle of "universal and equal rights," did not arise from mainstream society, and had little direct derivation from public opinion as normally conceived. Rather, as we shall see, a very sharp opposition arose, as acute in Britain and America as France, the Low Countries, and Germany, between revolutionary ideas as a "universal and equal rights" programme and the conventional

[47] See Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America*, 4–60; Newman, "Paine, Jefferson and Revolutionary Radicalism," 71–94; Stewart, *Nature's God*, 133–363; Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, 30–52.

[48] Lamourette, *Pensées sur la philosophie*, 105–6, 203.

thinking of the populace at large. Democratic republican revolutionary ideals, equal rights, and attacking organized religion, derived not from general cultural shifts, or mainstream culture, but overwhelmingly from the still basically fringe sources and intellectual traditions of the Radical Enlightenment.

1.3. THE END OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT?

Although by longstanding convention historians place the end of the Enlightenment, viewed as an epoch, at 1789 or 1800, this poses something of a problem given that the objectives and concerns of many prominent early nineteenth-century intellectual and political figures were still broadly characteristic, indeed conscious continuations, of the late Enlightenment. Schemes of philosophically defined, non-religious political, legal, and social reform, not primarily focused on economic goals, proliferated. Bentham and the Benthamite Utilitarians in England, the French *Idéologues*, (the post-1815) Sismondi in Switzerland, the Spanish revolutionaries of 1820, the Von Humboldts in Germany, some Decembrists in Russia, Bolívar in Spanish America, and not least Napoleon and his brothers, and some of his subordinates, all exemplify this powerful post-1800 prolongation of bold Enlightenment projects reorganizing and rationalizing, at least purportedly, to ameliorate humanity. Hence, even if most historians prefer to adhere to convention and stop around 1800, there are undeniably grounds for postulating a resolutely reforming Enlightenment continuing at least until the 1830 revolutions. Within this perspective, "liberalism" as a distinctive label customarily applied by historians to the early nineteenth century becomes a somewhat superfluous term for the Enlightenment's late phase, a powerful continuing tendency operative at a time when "nationalism" and socialism, still relatively weak, were not yet major ideological rivals.

This does not mean all or most thinkers, publicists, and orators, active when these reform schemes were introduced, necessarily still belonged to the Enlightenment. If many middle-of-the-road conservatives and so-called "liberals" lacking enthusiasm for large-scale Enlightenment projects did still favour reform up to a point, there arose also a revivified and strengthened Counter-Enlightenment movement both Catholic and Protestant (and in eastern Europe, Jewish) resolutely and aggressively opposing Enlightenment core concepts and values on the basis of faith, political loyalism, and tradition. Around 1820, outright intellectual foes of the Enlightenment, "anti-philosophes" as their French representatives were called, abounded and received widespread political support in elaborating anti-Enlightenment ideologies amounting to far more than just obscurantist attitudes, fanaticism, and religious militancy, though enlighteners moderate and radical generally dismissed these figures as "fanatics."

Overtly Counter-Enlightenment revolt against "the Enlightenment," urging the populace to reject the supposedly arrogant and overconfident "enlightened" spirit

of the age, remained a striking feature of the trans-Atlantic world certainly down to the 1820s. An exceptionally eloquent example is *Objections to the Spirit of the Century* (1823) by the poet Isaac da Costa (1798–1860). Son of an Amsterdam Sephardic merchant and a sister of the famous economist David Ricardo, after converting to Christianity, da Costa became a leading early nineteenth-century Dutch literary figure who vehemently protested against the "enlightened" spirit in his view still towering over Europe, especially its sweeping plans to supposedly improve society through education, law reform, vaccination, and alterations to economic life. He objected too to secularizing society by placing all churches together on the same subordinate level under state supervision, as the new ruler of the United Netherlands, William I (reigned: 1815–43), a former pawn of Napoleon, prided himself on doing.[49] Da Costa fervently resisted the Enlightenment's triumphant sense of advancing social and political progress on secular lines, what he saw as its upstart but illusory belief in the power of human reason, and especially its ignoring what to him was humanity's unalterably abject character, the innate shortcomings of human capacity viewed from what he considered the genuinely Christian perspective.

Da Costa did not portray the Enlightenment as a whole as irreligious and hostile to religion. Many enlighteners strove, he knew, to fuse Enlightenment strategies with traditional belief and defense of religious authority in the tradition of Locke, Le Clerc, Leibniz, Wolff, and Burke, or, if not reconcile, then at least, as with Voltaire, Hume, and Kant, compromise with organized religion for reasons of social and political expediency, conserving the existing order's religious frame for the sake of social stability. But even among sincere believers, following the path of moderation, it had always been the non-religious component of their plans for improvement that rendered their efforts integral to the Enlightenment. The category "Religious Enlightenment" only meaningfully applies to reformers who, while sincere believers or at least defenders of ecclesiastical authority (not at all the same thing), nevertheless aimed to reform Christendom, or in the case of Moses Mendelssohn, Judaism, by rejecting, or greatly toning down, confessional barriers, intolerance, and dogmatism. Religious Enlightenment qualified as Enlightenment specifically through advancing toleration and inter-confessional dialogue, by banishing religious conflict, and espousing strands of modern science, Newtonianism above all, suited to reconciling religion with science, and hence religion with philosophy.[50] Both "Religious Enlightenment" and such reconciling strategies remained typical features of the continuing Enlightenment of the 1820s.

In the eyes of counter-enlighteners, both wings of the Enlightenment, moderate and radical, remained in essence non-religious since the basic tools of Enlightenment compromise with religion, toleration and reasonable dialogue, resort to the "argument from design", in themselves seemed not to be religious undertakings. Rather,

[49] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 10, 13–15, 81, 84; Lok, "Vijanden van de Verlichting," 212; De Vet, "Verlichting en Christendom," 122.
[50] Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 5–6.

both reflect Enlightenment secularizing of the Christian conception of "redemption," leaving ample room for more ardent faith-based approaches comprehensively repudiating enlightened values and objectives. The torrent of anti-Christian texts authored by Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Helvétius, and the rest, contended Da Costa, had yielded no genuine moral or social improvement; rather, the world had witnessed only regression into selfishness, licentiousness, and disorder. The revolutionary conceit that mankind could be dramatically refashioned on a vastly improved basis by recasting society's political, educational, and other institutions employing abstract ideas, philosophical principles, rather than embracing the God-given divine moral and social order, struck Da Costa as disastrous—as did Enlightenment stress on individual freedom which, from his faith-based perspective, meant immorality and "spiritual slavery." Enlighteners demanded tolerance, but enlightened *Tolerantismus* he pronounced bogus since reprehensible, vicious intolerance remained utterly alien to true Christian believers: it is found, instead, among non-believers as the French revolutionary Terror of 1793–4 proved for all to see. Were not Robespierre and Marat crueler, more oppressive violators of human freedom than Alva and the Inquisition? Christendom, led by religious leaders, monarchs, and teachers, must rise up and overcome every conception of the "modern" underpinned by "Enlightenment."[51]

Writers like De Maistre, Chateaubriand, De Lamennais, Bonald, and Da Costa demanded an uncompromising revival of religious faith and feeling (which, among much else, moved Da Costa to head a protest group resisting compulsory vaccination against smallpox and other endemic diseases).[52] As these all rightly saw, non-religious, non-traditional, philosophical-scientific preoccupation with schemes for sweeping change aimed at general improvement in politics, administration, health-care, education, moral attitudes, legal and penal systems, plans primarily non-economic in character but often including schemes to spread prosperity more evenly, remained the Western world's hegemonic cultural and political tendency during the nineteenth century's first quarter. Despite the noisily acclaimed 1814–15 Restoration following Napoleon's defeat, and its vow to reorder the world on the basis of faith, monarchy, and aristocracy, the truth was, all these counter-enlighteners complained, that religion continued to be systematically elbowed aside from education, healthcare, social institutions, and economic policy by leading publicists and intellectuals and some Western governments.

The justifications historiography offers for the old convention of selecting the French Revolution or Restoration of 1814–15 as the Enlightenment's conclusion are distinctly unsatisfactory. The Restoration was far less of a break with the Enlightenment than historians once assumed. Still less does it make sense to identify the Enlightenment's end with the events of 1789, claiming the Revolution demonstrated for all to see "how reason could fail," that social and political efforts inspired and

[51] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 24. [52] De Vet, "Verlichting en Christendom," 120.

"conditioned by reason need not result in progress."[53] Even if that was the French Revolution's legacy (which is questionable), it was decidedly not the lesson those governing France or the rest of western Europe drew following Robespierre's overthrow. Rather, as counter-enlighteners complained, continuing confidence in the power of human reason, opposing the Holy Alliance's and Congress of Vienna's often ineffective efforts to spur political and religious reaction, belief in the power of "philosophy" to transform the world, barely receded at all.[54] The lesson guiding figures mostly drew from the Terror and unruliness of the *sans-culottes* was that reason and Enlightenment imperatives had abominably lapsed temporarily, betrayed by dishonest populist leaders like Marat, Robespierre, and Saint-Just whom all genuine enlighteners reviled as reprehensible deceivers of the people applying vile techniques of disinformation and lies, fraudulent opinion manipulators flattering popular ignorance.

The moral usually drawn from the experience of the Robespierre "tyranny" was not the Enlightenment's basic failure but, on the contrary, the need for redoubled effort to raise the common people's educational level and political awareness, improve attitudes and political culture on the basis of Enlightenment reason, and elevate the general level of society, to more effectively counter the irrationality of unreasoning populism and eradicate the manipulative mass politics that in the hands of Robespierre's Jacobinism proved so utterly destructive of Enlightenment values, ideals, and promise. It was exclusively *anti-philosophes* and prophets of Counter-Enlightenment who sought to pin Robespierre *to* the Enlightenment, all too plainly using the charge as a propaganda weapon for discrediting the Enlightenment in the public's minds.

One might agree up to a point and still object that whatever the basic post-1800 continuities, ending in 1789 or 1815 is so much the convention among practically all Enlightenment historians that terminating several decades later disturbs the entire shape of our received historiography of "modernity," especially the almost universally accepted practice of firmly separating the nineteenth century from the eighteenth, using the term "liberalism" as if it represented something fundamentally new. But there were no significant early nineteenth-century "liberal" projects that were not equally pre-1800 Enlightenment projects while the habit of using the term "liberal" to cover both anti-democratic "moderate" reformers, like Guizot in France, and those advocating universal male suffrage and other schemes that were democratic in orientation, serves only to blur vital distinctions. Certainly the great Enlightenment projects of the 1800–30 period were no mere emulation of past efforts. Some new elements appeared. But these are all best viewed either as applications of typically pre-1800 principles in new contexts, as with Bolivar's revolution in South America, or extensions of eighteenth-century concerns as with Bentham's schemes for

[53] O'Hara, *The Enlightenment*, 25, 27, 104–5, 113, 196; also Stalnaker, "How Does Enlightenment End?," 49–50; and Vermij, *Geest uit de fles*, 17–18.

[54] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 54, 84.

reorganizing representative government and the prison system, or Sismondi's proposals for spreading prosperity more evenly and ending slavery.

A prime instance of late Enlightenment universalism, concern with individual liberty, eschewing of theology and religious elements, and preoccupation with changing men's ideas, as the path to general improvement were the Prussian educational reform projects of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835). These aimed at ennobling humanity "by the very things which now, though beautiful in themselves, so often go to degrade it." Von Humboldt believed it possible to draw the mass of society, men and women equally, away from ignorance, superstition, religious fanaticism, low-level thinking, and soul-destroying drudgery, from crass entertainments and empty pastimes (as well as inflammatory, unreasoning politics), by means of far-reaching projects to re-educate everyone, peasants and artisans included, so as to understand enough about art, literature, and philosophy to ennoble them, and transform their ways of envisaging the world, work, leisure, and society. "The more a man accustoms himself to dwell in the region of higher thoughts and sensations, and the more refined and vigorous his moral and intellectual powers become, the more he longs to confine himself to such external objects only as furnish ampler scope and material for his internal development."[55] The process involved teaching how, aided by society's new schemes for public education, each individual's own inner striving for cultural elevation, or *Bildung*, could be what Von Humboldt optimistically deemed the vital path to greater happiness for all.

In Von Humboldt's vision, admittedly, one discerns a streak of "inwardness" revealing him to have been, besides one of the last great enlighteners, a bridging figure between Enlightenment and Romanticism. If one accepts Hegel's definition of Romanticism as "absolute inwardness," and agrees Rousseau was a founding figure of the Romantic movement,[56] there should be little difficulty in recognizing Romanticism as being in part a form of reaction, an abandonment, even a revulsion and protest, against the Enlightenment with its emphasis on "reason" and social projects. But though an anti-Enlightenment reaction, often an arm of Counter-Enlightenment, by exerting a strong impact on revolutionaries as well as counter-revolutionaries, Romanticism also acted as an intensifier serving to sharpen the rift between radical and moderate forms of Enlightenment as we see with the undeniable streak of Romanticism and nostalgia infusing the radical politics and social thought of figures like Shelley, Heine, Michelet, and Lamartine.

Meanwhile, in contrast to budding socialism and Romanticism, other widely proclaimed "new" elements historians customarily invoke as period markers supposedly fencing the nineteenth century off from the eighteenth, in particular nationalism, appear to have had much less bearing or significance in reality, at least before the 1830s and 1840s than has in the past been assigned to them. Nationalism did become a major factor eventually, but played remarkably little part in shaping reform schemes

[55] Von Humboldt, *Sphere and Duties*, 28.

[56] Blanning, *Romantic Revolution*, 9.

during the Napoleonic era even in Spain and Germany where some claimed to detect evidence of a "national" awakening among the public. Nationalism did not count for much in the revolutions of the 1820s which in Spain, Portugal, Naples, Piedmont, and Latin America were chiefly about escaping repressive monarchical forms of government and antiquated systems of laws, press control, and ecclesiastical guidance rather than, as in Greece (tenuously), about national unification, strengthening national awareness, and nation-building.

This granted, one might infer that the Enlightenment "continued throughout the nineteenth century,"[57] but that would stretch the concept beyond all useful limits. From the 1830s (except among socialists), and then more decisively after the final outburst of democratic revolutions, those of 1848, a less reform-oriented, less ambitious if in many ways steadier, more quiescent and settled phase in the Western world commenced in which "nationalism," imperialism, racism, and general reaction against Enlightenment cosmopolitanism became, together with socialism, the guiding forces, the new predominant ideologies. The prolonged phase of social, political, and cultural stability following 1848 finally extinguished, west of Russia at least, the revolutionary ardour of past decades. A predominantly complacent, conservative aura presided over the successful monarchies of Victoria, Napoleon III, Prussia's king (after 1871 the Kaiser), and the new Italian royal house. After 1848 followed an age of relative social harmony lasting until 1914, already presaged earlier by the quietening, steadying constitutional outcome of several of the 1830 revolutions, like that in Belgium and in more repressive fashion Poland, and most strikingly by the 1832 limited constitutional reforms in Britain that long quelled the pre-1830 pressure for further, more far-reaching political reform in the world's then leading empire and economy.

Socialism, it is true, in many instances shared some features with the Enlightenment. But in general it was essentially a new tendency without real eighteenth-century roots or predecessors. Indeed, many socialists, Proudhon most notably, combined socialism with a decidedly anti-Enlightenment (and in his case also ferociously anti-Semitic) outlook. During the transition phase of the 1830s and 1840s, Europe's and America's socialists succeeded in refashioning and redirecting the Left intelligentsia's outlook fundamentally: the intellectual plans of the pre-1848 democratic radicals for social amelioration were discarded for something broadly different. Replacing late Enlightenment reformism with an alternative opposition culture, Europe's and America's socialists developed fresh and distinctive ideologies for general improvement based far more on economic and labour theory, and labour reorganization, than changing men's basic ideas, or overcoming credulity, "ignorance," and "superstition." The aspiration now was for improvement via labour reform and basic economic adjustments, whether revolutionary or gradualist, in place of the pre-1830 political, legal, and educational reform schemes of the late Enlightenment.

[57] Conrad, "Enlightenment," 1001.

Arguably the most basic continuity linking the first third of the nineteenth century with the Enlightenment past was the early nineteenth-century reformers, including the Russian Decembrists, finding themselves compelled by circumstance to divide between those willing to ally with organized religion in part, leaving primary education largely with the churches, and compromising with the principles of monarchy and aristocracy, like Napoleon and his brothers following Bonaparte's concordat with the Papacy, in 1801, and those basically rejecting compromise with the principles of crown, altar, and social hierarchy, like the post-1815 Bentham, Bolivar, Sismondi, the *Idéologues*, and some Decembrists. These latter were the radicals that counter-enlighteners rightly differentiated from the moderate enlighteners because they systematically opposed the sway of religion in every respect, along with the traditional social and political order based on hierarchy and aristocracy.[58] This leads us back once more to the fundamental rift between the long divergent moderate and radical Enlightenment blocs.

Nothing better exemplifies this volume's argument than the address Spanish America's greatest hero, Bolívar, delivered before the Venezuelan legislature, at Angostura, in February 1819. Bolívar has often presented problems for adherents of our existing historiographical categories. One scholar tried to set the record straight by linking Bolívar's passionate republicanism to the "classical republican" tradition sketched by Pocock and Skinner.[59] He rightly claimed Bolívar's complex, crucially important ideology had little to do with traditional Spanish American Creole patriotism: colonial-era white Creole resentment did indeed exalt the white elite and the Conquest, accepting the basic institutional framework of the Spanish *ancien régime* while complaining bitterly of the privileged position assigned to European Spaniards in Spanish America in preference to American-born "Spaniards." None of this held much interest for Bolívar who cared relatively little for the Spanish American past. Yet, despite his fondness for ancient Sparta, Bolívar's republicanism had little to do either, it turns out, with "classical republicanism," since he was serious about eliminating slavery and drawing the non-white population into a framework of democratic equality. As Bolívar saw it (others disputed his claims), his vision was emphatically a "democratic republicanism" formed by his favourite authors in social and political thought—the post-1815 Sismondi, Volney, Gorani, Helvétius, Filangieri, Bentham, and the Venezuelan Simon Rodríguez, none of whom were nationalists, liberals, or socialists, none of whom were classical republicans or moderates; all of whom were specifically and solidly "Radical Enlightenment" writers.

The ideological program Bolívar spelt out at Angostura had no meaningful relation to traditional Creole patriotism, "classical republicanism," liberalism, or nationalism. His goal, he explained, was to achieve in northern South America a "democratic republic." But he also explained, in classic Radical Enlightenment fashion, that this could not yet be a question of one man one vote since it was vital to exclude the

[58] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 54–5. [59] Brading, *Classical Republicanism*, 9, 11.

illiterate and completely ignorant from participation, and from voting, given that ability to read laws and newspapers, and overcome superstition and credulity, is the foundation of all proper political awareness and capacity for citizenship. The ignorant, superstitious, and credulous he declared, are and will always remain victims of oppression, deception, and manipulation. "The most perfect system of government is that which produces the greatest amount of happiness possible, the greatest level of social security and the highest level of political stability."[60] Therefore, for the time being, the majority must be excluded from voting while the republic undertook the burden of educating and enlightening its population. His approach was democratic in the sense that his desired outcome would produce the highest level of freedom, satisfaction, and equality for all, based on an exclusively secular and egalitarian definition of the "common good." He fully concurred with the goals of the first Venezuela constitution of 1811 in so far as this forbade all vestiges of monarchy, aristocracy, and privilege, and affirmed the universal and equal "rights of man" and liberty of work, thought, speech, and writing. Revolutionary in expressly rejecting the *ancien régime* in every respect, Bolívar pointedly cited Volney, a classic radical enlightener, to underline his fervent hope that the infinite errors and misfortunes of the Old World rendering most of its inhabitants wretched, miserable, and ignorant would prove to be lessons imparting wisdom and happiness to the New.[61]

1.4. THE CONCEPT 'RADICAL ENLIGHTENMENT'

"Radical Enlightenment," in short, is the key to a great deal in historical studies, philosophy, political thought, Latin American studies, and the social sciences, an intellectual revolution profoundly affecting religion, morality, law, institutions, politics, healthcare, and education, as well as sexual attitudes and general culture while entailing also a sweepingly reformist and innately revolutionary new democratic approach to society and politics. By 1819 there were many Radical Enlightenment writers and orators and their global impact was vast. By Bolívar's time, Radical Enlightenment displayed a high degree of inner cohesion and consistency centering around the "universal and equal rights of man" understood as the "general will" not in Rousseau's but in Diderot's, d'Holbach's, and Volney's more lastingly important cosmopolitan sense as a body of universal truth, universally applicable. By contrast, from the outset, in the 1760s, Rousseau "rejected the notion of a universal bond obliging mankind," as it has been put, opening up a huge gulf between his then massively acclaimed thought and Radical Enlightenment.[62]

[60] Bolívar, *Discurso*, 25; Brading, *Classical Republicanism*, 15; Rojas, *Ideas educativas*, 44–5, 47.
[61] Bolívar, *Discurso*, 22.
[62] For a succinct summary of the difference between Diderot's (Radical Enlightenment) "general will" and Rousseau's "general will", see Shklar, "General Will," 276.

Counter-Enlightenment, meanwhile, did not deny the scale or grandiose hopes for improvement of the radical social projects of the post-1800 era; what it denied was that such radical schemes could in practice produce anything other than disorder, confusion, and setbacks. Philosophical champions of black emancipation on a republican basis planned not just to abolish slavery like some Christians, noted Da Costa, but "destroy the aristocracy of [white] skin colour"—they sought to end the oppression and *avilissement* of the blacks, by raising the blacks to the same level of freedom, education, and integration in society of the whites![63] In his view the only outcome of their ambitious schemes in the Caribbean (where dwelt several of his own relatives) had been devastation of colonies, slaughter of the white planters (as in Haiti), and bouts of cruel and bloody warfare.[64] Counter-Enlightenment preached submission to established authority, above all monarchy and ecclesiastics, along with total abandonment of such far-reaching schemes as Brissot and Condorcet had conjured up for black emancipation. Admittedly, Enlightenment moderates, like Burke, Guizot, and many others, acknowledged counter-enlighteners, also like them flatly rejected "universal and equal rights, black emancipation, women's emancipation, equality for Jews, eliminating religion's sway, and democratic republicanism, nearly as fervently sometimes as they did. But moderate enlighteners embraced *Tolerantismus*, schemes for constitutional and educational improvement, limiting monarchical power, depleting aristocracy, and spreading healthcare in ways corroding true Christian submission and the authentic mystique of aristocracy and monarchy. Da Costa fiercely denounced the widely acclaimed Spanish revolution of 1820–3 for its efforts to enthrone constitutionalism and elections, and dilute the sanctified majesty and authority of royalty and legitimacy as ordained by God.[65]

Radical Enlightenment defined as rejection of religious authority tied to democratic republicanism and universal and equal rights subsequently remained the chief agent of intellectual and political opposition to the existing order through the early nineteenth century, down to the 1848 revolutions. However, from the 1830s onwards it found itself increasingly challenged by a new and rival opposition movement, "socialism," which increasingly displaced the radical tendency. The two impulses, radical democratic ideas and socialism, already incipiently opposed earlier, noted Sismondi in 1819, became conscious, outright rivals during the 1830s and 1840s. Radical Enlightenment and socialism fully concurred that most men live in what d'Holbach called a "vale of tears," weighed down by tyrannical regimes and social systems, that the lot of the great majority is needlessly impoverished, oppressed, and wretched. The reason most men live in misery and in chains under debased and degrading conditions, both concurred further, is that the great majority are exploited, preyed on, taken advantage of, by cliques of privileged and wealthy persons. Radical enlighteners and socialists both believed dominant social elites deliberately deployed religion, conventional thinking, education, and ordinary public discourse, to dupe

[63] Brissot, *Mémoires* ii. 293.
[64] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 27–8.
[65] Da Costa, *Bezwaren*, 24, 58.

and mislead the people. It lies, the two movements further agreed, within humanity's power to create a much "happier" and more equal society. It was necessary, radicals and socialists alike believed, to emancipate, as one fervent democratic republican, Cérutti, expressed it, prior to the French Revolution, in 1788, the *classe populaire* from the slavery to which they are subjected by the *classe dominante*.[66] Thus far, the two trends comprehensively converged; but there the parallels and partial correspondence between the rival opposition blocs ended.

For the two rival camps' respective analyses of humanity's general state of oppression, and the remedies required for ending humanity's misery, differed substantially. For socialists, mankind is exploited, impoverished, and wretched because the economic system is geared to exploit them, to their systematic disadvantage; the way to emancipate humanity, accordingly, is to capture the economic system and transform it fundamentally, to usher mankind into the new age of fairness and equality. For radical enlighteners, by contrast, the *classe populaire*, most of humanity, live exploited, repressed, unnecessarily impoverished lives due to their own ignorance, credulity, and "superstition," their trust in priests along with perverse laws and institutions nourished by prevailing wrong beliefs and assumptions. Men are wretched, as Condorcet expressed a notion he shared with this entire tradition, because "they are deceived with regard to their true happiness and how to attain it," their minds being filled with "phantoms, fables, *réveries*, and mysteries."[67] For radical enlighteners, human emancipation, ameliorating the world fundamentally, ending the oppression of the *classe populaire*, is accomplished not by mass action, and not principally by capturing and transforming the economic system, but through the enlightened underground spreading on all sides and conquering ignorance, prejudice, "superstition," "priestcraft," the allure of aristocracy, and the mystique of monarchy, by enlightening men's minds sufficiently for them to be able to grasp genuinely enlightened modes of thought, the armament required to reform society, education, morality, culture, and the law.

A proven, valuable historiographical concept, the "Radical Enlightenment," most contributors to it (myself included) were unaware, prior to Frederik Stjernfelt's May 2013 Brussels lecture on the usage of the term, reaches back much earlier than Margaret Jacob's *The Radical Enlightenment* of 1981. First introduced into scholarly debate in an innovative and comprehensive fashion by the conservative German Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss (1899–1973) in the 1920s,[68] his "Radical Enlightenment" rightly viewed the phenomenon as emerging from an older, more variegated social and cultural underground, especially Epicureanism and late medieval Averroism. *Radikale Aufklärung* [Radical Enlightenment] in his view amounted basically to "atheism," an intellectual tendency that by the commencement of the early Enlightenment era had already existed in rudimentary form for many centuries. Strauss

[66] Cérutti, *Mémoire pour le peuple* (1788), 15. [67] Condorcet, *Bibliothèque* vi. 69.
[68] On the origins of the term "Radical Enlightenment" see Stjernfelt, "Radical Enlightenment: Aspects," 95–8.

envisaged *Radikale Aufklärung* as not just a rival to, but also as preceding the "Moderate Enlightenment" chronologically and outlasting it. For him, there was a less profound divide between Radical Renaissance and *Radikale Aufklärung* than is argued for in this volume. Contending that the Enlightenment possessed two main and in part contrary strands, moderate and radical, with only the latter being anti-religious and genuinely secular,[69] Strauss presented a philosophical bifurcation of the Enlightenment subsequently further developed by Strauss himself and then Günter Mühlpfordt,[70] Henry May, Giuseppe Ricuperati, Margaret Jacob, Silvia Berti, and Wim Klever.

Strauss introduced the category *Radikale Aufklärung* as part of a general reinterpretation of the Enlightenment on which he embarked while researching Spinoza's Bible criticism.[71] To him *Radikale Aufklärung* was the Enlightenment's veritable core; but because his label signified above all "atheism," he chiefly identified what by 1928 he already termed "moderate Enlightenment" in terms of the latter's theistic premises and willingness to compromise with ecclesiastical authority.[72] From the late seventeenth century, "Moderate Enlightenment" may have been the principal reforming project in the eyes of governments, churches, and educators, and have remained so in the minds of most philosophers and historians ever since, but beneath the surface, in terms of effective arguments, contended Strauss, the radical impulse proved sturdier philosophically and culturally, and in the long run, despite its long clandestine and inconspicuous beginnings, emerged as the "real" or principal Enlightenment, not least in shaping the Enlightenment's troubled legacy, the intellectual paradoxes and dilemmas of post-1800 modernity.[73] As well as essentially "atheistic," Strauss unhesitatingly pronounced *Radikale Aufklärung* the "true Enlightenment" while casting Locke, Leibniz, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Moses Mendelssohn, and other apparently committed "moderates" as cautious compromisers who ultimately, with their unworkable philosophical "fixes," weakened rather than strengthened their to many hard-to-defend dualist philosophical contrivances harmonizing reason with faith—and philosophical critique with kings and courts. Strauss also laid particular emphasis on Radical Enlightenment's embracing an exclusively naturalistic conception of science, philosophy, and knowledge, a naturalism radicals, not unlike Nietzsche later, in his middle period, deployed to ruthlessly strip out all *supernaturalia*. *Radikale Aufklärung* thinkers, he stressed, considered their standpoint more objectively true, more demonstrably verifiable, than alternative philosophies and

[69] Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 35; Smith, *Spinoza's Book of Life*, 191; Nicolas Dubos noted, in 2009, that when writing my earlier Enlightenment volumes I was, as yet, unaware that the radical–moderate dichotomy first originates with Strauss in the 1920s; see Dubos, "Hobbes et les Lumières radicales," 38–41.

[70] For republished articles of Mühlpfortdt's from the 1970s and 1980s, see Günter Mühlpfordt, *Halle-Leipziger Aufklärung: Kernstuck der Mitteldeutschen Aufklärung* (Halle, 2011).

[71] Israel, "Leo Strauss," 18–20. [72] Pangle, "Light Shed on the Crucial Development," 59–63.

[73] On America' Radical Enlightenment, see May, Stewart, Nash, Cotlar, Wilentz, and my *Expanding Blaze*.

creeds, being more concretely open to verification by reason and scientific observation than the views of Lockean moderates, like Voltaire, or of counter-enlighteners, Christian or Jewish.

There is much in Strauss's reasoning that has proved insightful. But although eliminating religious authority must necessarily have far-reaching political and social consequences, Strauss hardly broaches this dimension at all. He did not attach any specific political character to *Radikale Aufklärung*. By contrast, the first scholar to introduce the "Radical Enlightenment" debate into English was again not Jacob (as the "negative critique" regularly misinforms readers), but Henry F. May (1915–2012), who in several publications of the 1970s presented the "moderate Enlightenment" as crucial to American developments and 1775–6 as the point where the radical tendency first directly challenged "moderate Enlightenment" to become a major American Enlightenment ideology. May's American Enlightenment displayed an abiding split between radicals and moderates, but he projected this rift chiefly in terms of support for or against the democratizing tendency; he did also link the tendency to critique of religion but only secondarily, in rather vague terms.[74] Hence, neither Strauss nor May, the two main coiners of the concept "Radical Enlightenment," considered how exactly the two primary components, rejecting religious authority and espousing democratic republicanism, connect and interact. Strauss's and May's "Radical Enlightenment thesis" still left a yawning gap, an important historiographical analytical step yet to be taken: both hinted at, but neither underlined or explained the inherent, close, and abiding linkage of the tendency's secularizing and democratizing tendencies here identified as Radical Enlightenment's core characteristic.

The argument of this volume is essentially an amalgam of intellectual, social, and political history, but one clashing with the kind of "sociability" and cultural-turn arguments most historians employ to explain the advent of the revolutionary era and the "invention" of universal and equal rights. Although the statesmen and legislators of the era were often hard-headed men of the world uninterested in intellectual matters, during the revolutionary era so much hinged on fundamental constitutional and other public issues projected in the press, theatre, and debating and reading societies, that political leaders and statesmen like Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Mirabeau, Sieyès, Brissot, Mounier, Frederick the Great, Catherine the Great, Napoleon and his brothers, and later Miranda, and Bolívar, in Spanish America, could not afford to remain detached from the ideological discussions bearing on the political scene, and these figures all impressively immersed themselves in the literature and debates surrounding the theoretical and constitutional issues. Equally, key *philosophique* publicists and theorists—Paine, Price, Priestley, Burke, Filangieri, Condorcet, Lafayette, Cérutti, Brissot, Volney, Destutt, Von Humboldt, Constant, and, later, Bentham and Auguste Comte—often acquired formidable political weight, merely through being effective ideologues.

[74] May, *Enlightenment in America*, 88; Meyer, *Democratic Enlightenment*, pp. xiv–xxvi; Kloppenburg, *Toward Democracy*, 755 n. 51.

Philosophically charged ideologies during the revolutionary era helped reshape reality not because ideas shape reality but because reality is differently refracted, illustrated, and impacted on, by contrasting ideas diffused via newspapers, pamphlets, posters, books, cartoons, debates, banquets, toasts and public ceremonies, the law courts, theatres, and the arts, and also processions, mass meetings, and demonstrations, all these being channels whereby the public could participate in the ensuing struggles. The process pulled in the wider public, but with the theorists and ideologues, not ordinary men and women, or commonplace lawyers, professionals, military commanders, or purely pragmatic statesmen, exerting the main impact on the intellectual input colouring and infusing the political process. Intellectuals formulated and disseminated the ideals that inspired, motivated, armed, and empowered the various revolutionary vanguards acting as managers furnishing the rival ideologues and theorists with the meetings, newspapers, and publicity machines that procured them some mass support, albeit this was usually fitful and sporadic. Modernity, one might say, was forged by the masses on one level, and by intellectual, media-controlling elites interacting with them in a complex fashion on another, but with the former the main factor in generating grievance, dissatisfaction, instability, and upheavals, while usually in the more passive role as regards shaping ideology and agendas, and the latter playing the main active role only as regards guiding principles and legislative programs, without prevailing attitudes among the general population, commonplace notions, having remotely the impact on the great revolutionary declarations and enactments, or the rise of "universal and equal rights" some historians attribute to them.

Overall, it is hard to overstate the Radical Enlightenment's overriding centrality for any proper grasp of the revolutionary era starting in 1775, or for understanding the rise of "universal and equal human rights" and the process of world secularization—hence for the entirety of modern history. Since the 1990s, it has increasingly been recognized as of central significance relevant to all modern philosophy, politics, and moral and social thought as well as higher education, scholarship, and general awareness. Throughout its nearly two centuries of sustained impact, "Radical Enlightenment" fought to improve human existence generally, extend universal benevolence, and emancipate oppressed sections of society above all by transforming the way men think. It strove to replace what it denounced as credulity, "ignorance," "superstition," prejudice, and "fanaticism" with a fundamentally new conception of the individual as a free, educated and enlightened citizen participating on an equal basis in society and politics.

Broadly, the radical tendency began to weaken from the 1820s onwards and from the 1830s was more and more displaced by socialism. But while it was the rise of socialism in the early nineteenth century that actually displaced it from its position as main systemic opposition to the status quo, overwhelmingly the principal reason for its failure, we shall see, was Radical Enlightenment's continuing inability to sufficiently close the gap between the concepts it offered and the loyalist thinking and religious assumptions of the great majority. It viewed education as the answer to the

central contradiction in its general position and posture, but its educational reach never extended as far, or as rapidly, as the radical predicament demanded, and probably, in the circumstances could not have done. Initial successes between 1775 and 1793 were followed by successive heavy defeats during the ensuing later revolutionary era down to the 1848 revolutions. Following the failure of the 1848–9 revolutions, and armed clashes in Paris between socialists and radicals leading to the demise of the French Second Republic, Radical Enlightenment was finally and definitively marginalized. Opposed by most of society from the outset, the "Enlightenment that failed" remains vehemently contested today.

Part I

The Origins of Democratic Modernity

2

The Rise of Democratic Republicanism

2.1. ENGLAND AND THE "DUTCH WAY" (1688–1720)

Early nineteenth-century radicals decidedly preferred republics to monarchies. But merely preferring a "republic," as such, far from sufficed to meet the exacting requirements of democratic republican "modernity." Weighing the history of the Swiss republics in 1824, the eminent Genevan economist and (since 1814) philosophical radical, Jean Charles Leonard de Sismondi (1773–1842), was decidedly scathing in his judgment of the old Swiss republics.

Earlier, in the 1790s, Sismondi had been an Anglophile moderate opposing the French Revolution in most of its aspects. He was so disgusted, though, by Restoration Counter-Enlightenment rhetoric and reaction, the general reversal of values the conservative "Allies" of the Holy Alliance sought to impose on Europe from 1814–15, and especially with the Allies' brutal demolition of the modernized federal republic Napoleon established in his homeland in 1802–3 that, like Bentham, he switched to a forthrightly radical outlook to which he adhered undeviatingly from 1814. In itself, simply establishing a republic, the Swiss experience taught him, much as Italian experience in the late 1790s had previously convinced many Italian radicals, is to accomplish practically nothing regarding the common good, given that most republics, including all the eighteenth-century Italian, Swiss, and Dutch republics, were conservative, oligarchic "aristocratic republics."[1]

Early Modern republicanism needs urgently to be assessed simultaneously as a social and intellectual phenomenon. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Britain was dominated by aristocratic and gentry elites exercising a high degree of cultural and intellectual primacy. Hence, while many post-1650 English political writers and activists presented a "moderate" undifferentiated "republicanism" offering little or no real distinction between the aristocratic and democratic forms, conceiving this as a valuable continuing tradition, critics urging a more democratic society, as a few "Levellers" and Commonwealthmen already did during the 1640s and 1650s, made little headway against the dominant trend. There was also at least

[1] Fruci, "Democracy in Italy," 27–8, 42; Koekkoek, "Waare en vrije," 240; Israel, *Expanding Blaze*, 489–91; Romani, "Republican Foundations," 19–22.

one major, open, public confrontation—the Putney Debates of 1647—between England's democratic and aristocratic tendencies, revealing the depth of the rift. In writings such as *A Call to All the Souldiers of the Armie, By the Free People of England* (n.p., 1647), by the lifelong conspirator and radical John Wildman (*c.*1621–93), the men of the New Model Army were urged to rise against Cromwell's emerging tyranny and all "crafty politicians and subtill Machiavellians" and especially the principle of monarchy: "beware that yee be not frighted by the word ANARCHY, unto a love of Monarchy, which is but a gilded name for tyranny."[2] But at the climax of the English Revolution, the public controversy was decidedly more about the rights and nature of the Parliament and parliamentary sovereignty, and England's supposed pre-Norman freedoms, than the merits of "kingless rule" and the values of republicanism whether as a classical or democratic tradition. Though doubtless less malicious and "Machiavellian" than radical republicans contended, Cromwell did favour "mixed government," a "settlement with somewhat of monarchical in it."[3] The Putney debates had much to say about "every true Englishman that loves the peace and freedom of England," but little to add about the universal principles of citizenship.[4]

Adopting a revolutionary democratic republican stance, Wildman, Lilburne, and other Commonwealthmen charged Cromwell with renewing the "tyrannie and oppression" of the Stuart monarchy under false pretense of championing the "Laws, Rights and Liberties of England." They accused him of being driven by like "pride and ambition," and insidiously furthering his appetite for power with "high professions of Godliness, simplicity and integrity" and "hypocritical prayers and days of fasting." All true Englishmen they summoned to take up arms against Cromwell "in the great contest for right and freedom," to combat political tyranny allied to systematic abuse of religion and the churches.[5] That such Commonwealthmen were, to a degree, democratic republican revolutionaries, is indisputable; but Lilburne, Wildman, and their ilk produced no extended or coherent theory of democratic republicanism justified in terms of society's needs or explaining what they meant by "free-born" and "right and freedom." Moreover, in the writings of the main English republican theorists of the mid- and later seventeenth century, Harrington, Sidney, and Needham, the incipient, tentative confrontational aspect of seventeenth-century English republicanism, urging a more democratic format, rather than gaining ground, inexorably receded.[6] A seventeenth-century democratic republican tendency, sporadically sparked and glimpsed, it failed to produce a more robust and lasting tendency or enduring theoretical construction, never amounting to more than a few rhetorical flourishes. Bruno Bauer, in 1843, aptly described the English Revolution of the 1640s as a search for freedom perverted by "religious fanaticism" and a fruitless search for

[2] BL 102 b 37: [Wildman] *A Call to All the Souldiers*, 3, 6–7; Worden, "Republicanism," 318, 320, 324; Rees, *Leveller Revolution*, 204–11.
[3] Quoted in Worden, "Republicanism," 317, 319.
[4] Worden, "Republicanism," 324, 327; Robertson, *The Levellers*, pp. xxix–xxxi, 59.
[5] [Lilburne], *A Declaration of the Free-born People* (1654), 1; Rees, *Leveller Revolution*, 210–11.
[6] Villaverde Rico, *Ilusión republicana*, 99–101, 106–9; Houston, *Algernon Sidney*, 4, 7–8.

justification of men's "rights" in the "yellowed parchments" of ancient precedent, a fight for liberty unable to free itself from religion or precedent.[7] Consequently, neither the constitutional outcome of the English Revolution of the 1640s, nor that of the so-called "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, readily lent themselves as international models, or to formulation of clear, enduring, or universally influential forms of democratic republicanism as such.

If English republicanism nevertheless remained a potent and, for many, inspiring social and political reality with a pervasive impact in Britain, America, and Ireland, the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–9 only rendered English republicanism—decisively for subsequent British, American, and European developments, and for the eighteenth century—a still "tamer or softer body of ideas than before" and "in some ways," as it has been put, "a more difficult one to define and identify."[8] The Glorious Revolution diluted republican tradition especially in two respects— by lessening the tension between monarchy and republicanism with a robust and viable constitutionally limited monarchy, and, secondly, by firmly entrenching the aristocratic and gentry elites in power with an assuredness that long eased the friction between the democratic and aristocratic republican tendencies in the British context. Both developments, Condorcet, followed by Destutt de Tracy, later pointed out, were assisted over the long term by a predominantly willing and submissive public conditioned to venerate monarchy and aristocracy and to treat social superiors with deference.[9] This prolonged muting effect, already discernible before 1688, the Glorious Revolution reinforced and extended to America, another development of fundamental significance.

These trends mitigating tension between monarchism and republicanism, smoothing the friction between aristocratic and democratic republicanism, caused the "English republicans of the seventeenth century" to be, as one historian put it, "conventionally presented as being more inclined to aristocracy than to democracy."[10] They are trends well illustrated in the republican legacy of Algernon Sidney (1622–83) which was sturdy to an extent, especially in its anti-monarchism, his republicanism contributing to the aristocratic conspiracy to emasculate Charles II's absolutism in 1683, the so-called Rye House Plot. But, though partly inspired by the Dutch republican example, Sidney's republicanism relied, unlike that of the Brothers De La Court which was grounded in Hobbes's pessimism about human nature, on appeals to the citizen's "virtue" and "reason." During the crucial 1770s, around the onset of the American Revolution, Sidney's republican legacy helped reinforce the previously rather loose, undefined republican surge of sentiment in America. But no more than Locke did Sidney represent a ""threatening radicalism" or

[7] Bauer, *Christianity Exposed*, 2.

[8] Worden, "Revolution of 1688–9 and the English Republican Tradition," 241–2; Zurbuchen, "Republicanism and Toleration," 48.

[9] Condorcet, "Réflexions sur la Révolution de 1688," 1–3; Destutt de Tracy, *Commentaire*, 137–8, 141.

[10] Hammersley, "Rethinking the Political Thought," 355–6.

advance "democratic ideas" premised, as has been wrongly suggested, on "a shared commitment to the Christian ideal of mutuality."[11] Rather, Sidney's "classical republicanism" of virtue, if forthright in curtailing monarchy, proved decidedly unspecific in its social implications and consequences, sufficiently vague to be equally useful to "moderates" and "radicals"—and especially for papering over the gap between them.

During the American Revolution, consequently, Sidney's republicanism signally failed to cut a clear path to democratic republicanism. Rather it appealed equally to radicals and moderates and even to some "Tory" Loyalist opponents of the Revolution, leaving it firmly stranded on the moderate side of the great republican rift.[12] Thus, John Adams (1735–1826), a leading "moderate" of the American Revolution and stalwart anti-democrat (as well as foe of Franklin, Condorcet, and Paine), remained a lifelong Sidney enthusiast, evincing a republican zeal which he could perfectly consistently combine not just with resolute support for American Independence, but deep veneration for the post-1688 "British constitution," the "British model" as a structure buttressing aristocratic dominance of society, Although Sidney was read by radical republicans in late eighteenth-century France, his arguments no longer seemed relevant.[13]

Adams's first book, *Novanglus* (1775), the "New England man," eloquently sketched the ideology of what became the American Revolution's "republican" mainstream. Before 1776, he believed, the colonies already possessed "a constitution," by which he meant shared in the 1688 Glorious Revolution constitution, and this, in his eyes, remained the precious legacy British ministers irresponsibly and unjustifiably violated. In 1775, Adams still thought of America as sharing in the existing "British constitution" under the king even though the "nature of the encroachment upon the American constitution is, such as to grow every day more and more encroaching." Certainly, vigorous, openly revolutionary, steps were called for.[14] "If we enjoy the British constitution in greater purity and perfection than they do in England as is really the case, whose fault is this? Not ours."[15] A convinced aristocratic republican and Glorious Revolution ideologue using his posting as American envoy to the United Provinces in the closing years of the American revolutionary war to mobilize opinion against the pro-American Patriot democrats battling the Orangist pro-church and pro-British faction there, Adams allied exclusively with Dutch enlighteners who were moderates like his pro-oligarchy ally Jean Luzac (1746–1807), owner of the *Gazette de Leyde*, the foremost European paper backing the American cause, who likewise firmly rejected democratic principles. Luzac backed the American Revolution only in its "aristocratic" mode, as championed by Adams and Morris. Because of its democratic

[11] Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy*, 138.

[12] Scott, "Classical Republicanism," 68–71; Houston, *Algernon Sidney*, 7–8, 257–8, 261–6; Miquieu, *Spinoza, Locke*, 163–6, 309.

[13] Hammersley, *English Republican Tradition*, 74, 163–4.

[14] Adams, *Novanglus*, 26–34; Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 531, 546.

[15] Adams, *Novanglus*, 91; Bonwick, *American Revolution*, 2–4, 134; Nelson, *Royalist Revolution*, 159–60.

proclivities, he vigorously opposed the Genevan democratic revolution of 1782, publicly supporting the oligarchies ruling the Bernese and Zurich republics which Sismondi later came to detest. Both Adams and Luzac likewise urged an "aristocratic" outcome also for the bitter ideological struggle dividing the Dutch Republic during the 1780s, viewing the democrats as deluded ideologues misconstruing American developments, seeking to transfer a profoundly mistaken, falsely democratic image of the American Revolution to Europe.[16]

Adams's *Defense of the Constitutions* (1787–8) includes a discussion of the Swiss, Italian, and Dutch republics that was the mirror reverse of Sismondi's 1824 analysis: the democratic tendency was always destabilizing; the more "aristocratic" and like (most) American states, the Swiss republics stayed, the more stable, prosperous, and better governed they would be.[17] Mainstream English and American republicanism in the eighteenth century simply did not, at least not until the American Revolution, mirror the yawning divide between aristocratic and democratic republics. Yet, already long before 1775, this was the overriding issue already embryonically in the Putney Debates and more emphatically in the Netherlands and Switzerland, and hence potentially all Europe. Where British republicanism, from 1688, increasingly strove to circumvent the crucial—and increasingly challenging—question, the clash between aristocratic and democratic republicanism (except tangentially, at a few heated moments), those immersed in Dutch and Swiss developments became increasingly aware of the profound theoretical implications of this clash. This lasting, fundamental ambiguity, bridging the gap between aristocratic and democratic republicanism much as Anglicanism bridged the gap between Catholicism and Protestantism, became a major factor in forging the dual character, the unresolved tension between aristocratic and democratic republicanism, at the heart of the American Revolution.

Anglo-American non-engagement with the most decisive issue relating to Enlightenment era republicanism, the divide between aristocratic and democratic republics, ceased, from 1775–6, with the rise of a distinct radical tendency in the circles around Thomas Young, Ethan Allen, and Tom Paine, and the sporadic success of the radicals within a few key segments of the Revolution, especially their promoting universal male suffrage in Pennsylvania and Vermont in 1776. Their rhetoric and slogans, and especially Paine's sensational pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), an unfettered, vehement attack on the "British model," the British constitution and aristocratic republicanism, thoroughly antagonized Adams, Morris, Hamilton, and all America's "aristocratic" republicans, and helped stir what from the 1780s became a wholly new and more divisive Anglo-American ideological context than existed previously.

Aristocratic republics, held Paine, represented an entirely different kind of phenomenon from democratic republics. The two opposed categories had all along been at war with each other, in theory and practice, but this circumstance had for so long remained veiled in Britain and America that one rarely encountered there much

[16] Israel, *Expanding Blaze*, 242. [17] Ryerson, *John Adams's Republic*, 284–6.

understanding of the rift. That aristocracy and clergy, with what radicals saw as their cunning alliance, deliberately exploited public ignorance about this fundamental duality for their own gain, appeared evident to very few onlookers. As priests and priestcraft had often abused Christianity to further their particular interests, contends Paine, in *The Rights of Man* (1791–2), so it became integral to the "political craft of courtiers and court-governments to abuse something which they call republicanism" while rendering the concept as vague and innocuous (to them) as possible.[18] Where many Anglo-American and European contemporaries joined Adams in venerating Sidney, and enlisting Locke and Montesquieu too in aligning America's newly born republicanism behind Europe's aristocratic republics and "mixed government" systems, radicals like Paine resoundingly broke ranks. To them, much the same sliding back into degradation, reverting to aristocratic republican status that Holland experienced in 1787, had occurred earlier at Geneva, in 1782, after the French crown crushed the democratic revolution there.

Aristocratic republics, contended Paine, like the Dutch democratic republicans of 1795,[19] and Destutt and Sismondi later, were not really republics at all. These counterfeit "republics" since September 1787 now again included the United Provinces where the first sustained democratic upsurge, the *Patriottenbeweging*, had, by 1785, seemed to be gaining the upper hand, transforming the land from oligarchy into a democratic entity, but had then been abruptly suppressed by the Orangists with Prussian help, partly at British instigation. "It is true that certain countries, such as Holland, Berne, Genoa, Venice etc. call themselves Republics," remarked Paine, writing to the French revolutionary democratic republicans, Condorcet and Bonneville, in June 1791, "but these countries do not merit such a designation. All the principles upon which they are founded are in direct contradiction to every republican sentiment, and they are really in a condition of absolute servitude to an aristocracy."[20] Destutt de Tracy, writing under Napoleon, likewise highlighted the vast gulf separating "aristocratic republics" like those of Berne or Venice from the democratic republican model he admired and advocated. Venice Destutt considered especially pernicious in this connection: for, to maintain their ascendancy, the Venetian nobility had conceded much power to the Inquisition, ecclesiastics, and "superstition," rendering religion the key tool of their domination, reducing ordinary Venetians to a servile "canaille dépravée et misérable."[21] Aristocratic republics, held Europe's *Radicalen*, exhibited the same tendency as monarchies to keep their subjects "superstitious" and "ignorant," and therefore the same willingness to endorse religious authority.[22]

[18] Paine, *Rights of Man*, 178–9; Worden, "Revolution of 1688–9 and the English Republican Tradition," 242.
[19] Koekkoek, "Waare en vrije," 245.
[20] Paine to Condorcet, Bonneville, and Lanthenas, Paris, June 1791, in Paine *Writings* ii. 1317.
[21] Destutt de Tracy, *Commentaire*, 65, 82.
[22] Destutt de Tracy, *Commentaire*, 82–3.

In the Americas, as Europe, the two warring strands of republicanism, democratic and aristocratic, fundamentally divergent and irreconcilable, remained separated by an immense rift and, from 1775, were continually in conflict. Despite this reality having been largely masked by the distinctive Anglo-American republican tradition before 1775, the abiding significance of the clash increasingly impressed itself on the public's consciousness during the late Enlightenment. The ideological struggle steadily intensified from 1775 and, to explore this now crucial duality in broad theoretical terms, Anglo-American observers had to direct their intellectual gaze increasingly toward France, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland rather than their own political traditions. Hugely antagonized by Paine's analysis, Adams, Morris, and Hamilton were perfectly right in insisting that such notions had nothing whatever to do with authentic, mainstream English republican tradition which was rooted in the thoroughgoing Glorious Revolution papering over of the central clash. Stung by Paine's accusations of "abuse," contemporaries confined to the English-language context showed little appreciation of whence Paine's unprecedented and, for many, shocking, warring dichotomy, pitting democratic against "aristocratic" republicanism, derived, of how the new American radical republicanism and its wide trans-Atlantic resonance had suddenly burst on the scene.

2.2. A NOTABLE PUBLIC CONTROVERSY (1706–1710)

Paine, Price, Priestley, Barlow, and other American and British writers embracing democratic republicanism in the late eighteenth century shattered the post-1688, pre-1775 Anglo-American mold. But already well before 1775 several noteworthy public controversies had occurred that provided hints of the intellectual origins of the post-1775 ideological rift. The masking effect and deep implications of English fusing of aristocratic republicanism with Italian civic republicanism are strikingly illustrated, for example, by the noisy controversy, commencing in 1706, over one of the most fiercely contested early eighteenth-century English texts, *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted* (1706), the "most infamous book," as some styled it at the time,[23] of the recalcitrant Oxford don, Matthew Tindal (1657–1733).

Fellow of All Souls College since 1678, Tindal was a secular-minded eclectic and erudite legal scholar of declared anti-Trinitarian views who, during the Glorious Revolution and for some time afterwards, frequented republican circles.[24] His innocuous-sounding publication provoked a bigger furore and livelier efforts to get it banned (and those associated with publishing it punished), than almost any other publicly vilified text of the English "deists." It was a landmark case, the exceptional

[23] Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing from us," 147; Brown, "Theological Politics," 195.

[24] Hudson, *English Deists*, 108; Hudson, *Enlightenment and Modernity*, 5–6; Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 17, 20, 60; Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing of us," 140.

indignation it aroused stemming partly from the subtle insolence critics detected in its tone and variously styled "villainous," "fallacious," "disingenuous," "dangerous," and "blasphemous" insinuating suavity evident not least in his title, that Tindal gave his camouflaged subversive message. His method was to promote his political vision by engaging in lengthy digressions into ecclesiastical history and the Church Fathers richly punctuated with cutting remarks about the Anglican and Presbyterian as well as Catholic (and Jewish) churches.

Not only do churchmen of all stripes appropriate privileges, influence, and power to which they are not entitled by Scripture or law, contends *The Rights*, but "priests" of all religions universally abuse the power they usurp to pervert the moral and legal order. This "wolf" in "shepherd's clothing," protested one adversary, and his allies "love to give their books contrary titles, like *The Rights of the Christian Church.*"[25] The anonymous author, whose name remained less than wholly unknown to his adversaries throughout the ensuing huge public controversy, suggested that "priests" of all confessions are driven by more or less identical motives in building their relentlessly oppressive sway over mankind, all employing the same tried and trusted techniques for deceiving the superstitious, credulous, and ill-informed.[26] In a sermon preached in London, in October 1708, Robert Moss, Dean of Ely, designated the anonymous author of *The Rights* "a more disingenuous caviller perhaps, and more scurrilous scoffer, than ever was Julian the Apostate".[27] Anglican churchmen demanded Parliament suppress Tindal's text, as indeed, in 1710, eventually happened.

The controversy dragged on at an exceptional level of polemical heat for five years with over thirty full-length rebuttals, supplemented by court proceedings, hostile sermons, and newspaper reports. Some had expected the uproar to blow over quickly, that the "blazing meteor, what noxious influence so ever it had for a while" would soon decay and in a "short time die into utter darkness and contempt" like those "false lights that amused the world before." Had not earlier schemes of atheism soon lost appeal as fresh ones displaced them, asked Samuel Hill (d. 1716), Archdeacon of Wells, in 1708, in his *A Thorough Examination of the false Principles and fallacious Arguments, advanc'd against the Christian Church, Priest-hood, and Religion*? "So we have seen Hobbs, Spinoza, Blount and Toland, etc. with others of lower form in impiety, blaze for a while, and then go out in disesteem and neglect."[28] But others realized that the political and religious subversion plied by this eventually banned but far from effectually suppressed text, burnt by the common hangman in March 1710,[29] represented a challenge that needed guarding against in the future with great vigilance. The consternation it aroused stemmed almost as much from the book's far-reaching political implications as its aspersions on Christianity—from its impugning

[25] *The Second Part of the Wolf stript of his Shepherd's Cloathing*, 14.
[26] *Dangerous Positions: or, Blasphemous, profane, immoral and Jesuitical assertions*, 29.
[27] Moss, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish Church of St Laurence-Jewry, London*, 8.
[28] Hill, *A Thorough Examination*, p. A4v.
[29] Brown, "Theological Politics," 196; Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 59–62.

the 1688 revolutionary settlement with its solidly aristocratic outcome. All too obviously, while pretending to champion Glorious Revolution principles, the unknown writer insinuatingly defamed these as deception and betrayal.

Nor did this widely execrated author seem at all daunted or displeased that "*The Rights* made a great noise throughout England." Readers must carefully consider, he defiantly retorted, in a follow-up pamphlet pouring scorn on Oxford's "highflying clergy" who are "for allowing the Prince an unlimited power in civil matters,"[30] "why they, who are reckoned the most famous combatants of the Church-militant, batter'd *The Rights* with their heavy artillery from the press, while 10,000 random shot have been made at it from pulpit blunderbusses."[31] Imagining "themselves in a state of persecution, while they are ty'd up from persecuting others," England's sinister "highfliers," plotting "ever since the death of the late king [i.e. William III], assisted by the profess'd Jacobites and Papists," sought "to disturb the growing quiet of the nation, and to set all things in confusion, in hopes of breaking in on the sacred Act of Toleration." Nor was it only Highfliers who designed to wreck England's hard-won toleration: all churchmen everywhere threaten the basic freedoms "since the generality of the ecclesiastics in most places, by the Church, seem to mean only themselves, and by religion only their own power and dominion" so that in effect churchmen oppose not just toleration but "charity, benevolence, moderation, mutual forbearance, and all other Christian virtues." For Tindal, churchmen with their competing theologies were the "cause of Christians treating one another with so much barbarity" as they had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[32] True virtues are scorned by all clergies "and their contrarys cry'd up as the only virtues."[33] "Certainly "twill never be well with us," Tindal charged his adversaries of dreaming, "till something like to the Spanish Inquisition be in England."[34]

Such outrageous remarks, retorted opponents, are not just unacceptable in any "Christian" society, but turn everything upside down, subordinating faith to individual preference, and utterly destroying ecclesiastical sanction, privilege, and status. "Our assertor is pleased to make this reflection on the clergy," protested one adversary: "that where [the churches'] interest, power, and authority are at lowest ebb, there men are more angelical, and less diabolical, immoral, lewd, vicious, debauch'd and irreligious."[35] For tactical purposes, Tindal avowed that his aim was to conserve the Protestant Reformation's basic gains against the ravages of priestly ambition. But few doubted that behind this screen, Tindal was among the most articulate and systematic advocates of the early eighteenth-century "religion of nature." He was one of those who helped turn the young Benjamin Franklin into a convinced "deist" already at the age of 17.[36]

[30] [Tindal], *A New Catechism*, 16.
[31] [Tindal], *A Defence of The Rights*, 72, 267; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 97–8.
[32] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 23. [33] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 144.
[34] [Tindal], *A New Catechism*, 20.
[35] *Dangerous Positions: or, Blasphemous, profane, immoral and Jesuitical assertions*, 44.
[36] Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 98; Walters, *American Deists*, 12, 15.

While the outrage he provoked stemmed above all from Tindal's contempt for clergymen and theology, his accusing the world's churches of fomenting immorality instead of morality, considerable indignation sprang too from the purely political side of his argument, his subversive views on crown and constitution. Tindal's antagonists quickly identified his coupling rejection of church authority with democratic republicanism as the essential frame of his assault. Several tracts highlighted his political argument: starting from something resembling Hobbes's "state of nature," the malefactor established a list of basic freedoms, claiming, in highly unHobbesian fashion, that these then remained fundamentally intact in civil society, being rights no prince or church had any power to infringe or alter. Where in Hobbes the freedoms of the state of nature are "made over" to the prince, under civil society, by means of contract, Tindal denied all contract: "men are still in the state of nature, without any sovereign representative to determine for them, what they shall believe or profess," leaving every individual wholly free to believe, or not believe, whatever he likes with no church or state possessing authority to interfere in his or her free choice.[37] For Tindal, who rejected all mysteries out of hand, it is every person's duty to use his or her reason to examine the arguments of others, and determine for themselves what is true and what is not. Tindal's conception of the individual's untrammeled freedom to judge all matters relating to religion and morality for himself proved an especially provocative challenge for his age, even in England and America. "Tis a gross inconsistency, and an intolerable imposition upon the world," complained one adversary, "for *The Rights* to assert independency in religion, among the Natural Rights of mankind which can't be made over to Prince or Priest."[38]

The two prongs of Tindal's subversion, the anti-church and the democratic republican, noted several commentators, were, rather unusually, closely bracketed together. For the English, this theological-political challenge was bafflingly unfamiliar and hard to grapple with. While traditionally scholars stress Tindal's debt to Hobbes, and also his friend Locke,[39] in reality it was impossible to proceed from a radical standpoint more contrary to Hobbes and Locke, or contrary to Locke's limited toleration. The author constructed civil society and the state, from the state of nature, not just differently from Hobbes, transferring power and authority to sovereign governments only to a limited extent, and leaving churches without any authority or power of censorship, but failed to introduce any violable "contract" in the manner of Locke, "any compact between those who govern and those who are governed," as Paine expressed it.[40] Instead, Tindal lodged sovereignty and ultimate say in the

[37] *Dangerous Positions: or, Blasphemous, profane, immoral and Jesuitical assertions*, 3; Wotton, *Rights of the Clergy*, 2, 15; Stewart, *Nature's God*, 402; Hudson, *English Deists*, 108–9.

[38] *Dangerous Positions: or, Blasphemous, profane, immoral and Jesuitical assertions*, 3; Zerbuchen, "Republicanism and Toleration," 58–9.

[39] See, for instance, Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing from us," 145.

[40] Paine, *Rights of Man*, 70.

people itself without designating any general transfer of power and authority, either automatic or by contract![41]

"The authority of government," holds the author of *The Rights*, as Le Clerc summed up the political content in his lengthy review, in his *Bibliothèque choisie*, in 1710, "arises not from hence, That people have given an Absolute power of life and member, but from the natural Right every one has to preserve himself, and to prefer his own Good to any other person's." Consequently, "God, in giving Man this one innate principle inseparable from his nature (i.e. to seek his own Happiness, and endeavor to live as conveniently as Nature permits) has given him the right, or rather has enjoin'd it as his duty, to do all that is proper to attain that end."[42] Individual rights were proclaimed equal, very extensive, and in matters of conscience absolute. Not only was the text's political subversion distinctly "republican" but it exuded an unmistakable democratic tendency, erecting society's collective will as the true sovereign with an influence all the more insidious, according to most, in that the book "has been so much talk'd of, and by some applauded for one of the best books this age has produc'd."[43]

Especially outrageous to moderate Whigs as well as Tories and High Churchmen, was that in *The Rights* civil and church authority, as constituted by Parliament after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, were "assaulted" together.[44] "Kings and Queens," complained one detractor, "are but their [i.e. the people's] creatures, made by 'em and for 'em . . . " with the consequence that "noblemen and gentlemen, deriving their honours from Kings and Queens, are but creatures of a creature from the people; for were the people made for noblemen and gentlemen, any more than for Kings and Queens?"[45] Tindal's political creed plainly repudiated Locke's focus on "property" as the basis of civil rights and spurned his *supra rationem*. *The Rights* pronounced it impossible for two independent sources of authority, material and spiritual, to exist, as there can never be any independent power over others in religious matters. Since there can be only one authority in society, "nothing can be plainer than that all ecclesiastical power has no other foundation than the consent of the society."[46] Studying past and present human societies proves the "grievances and miseryes they labour under are chiefly, if not wholly owing to the abuse of power, by their governors either extending it to such things as they were not, or cou'd not be intrusted with, or else employing it [. . .] contrary to the end for which they were entrusted: and that Christians besides having their share in the common clamitys, have been miserably harassed by a new pretense of two independent powers [church and state] in the same society."[47]

[41] Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 137; Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing from us," 146–8.
[42] *Mr Le Clerc's Extract and Judgment*, 6–8; De Vet, "Spinoza en Spinozisme," 9–10.
[43] *The Villanous Principles of* The Rights, 3.
[44] Oldisworth, *A Dialogue Between Timothy and Philatheus* i, dedication, pp. A1v–A2.
[45] *Dangerous Positions: or, Blasphemous, profane, immoral and Jesuitical assertions*, 49.
[46] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 80; Hudson, *English Deists*, 111.
[47] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 1, 19; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 97, 136–7.

It was "plain how happy human societys would be, did not their rulers usurp more power than they could be invest'd with by their subjects, who would not oblige themselves to assist 'em with their force, except in such cases only as themselves had a right to use in the state of nature." Instances where rulers unjustly mobilize their subjects for war or other emergencies "cannot well be mistaken in; and, consequently, the commands of a tyrant are so far from justifying or excusing their assisting him either in unjustly invading their neighbours, or injuring their fellow-citizens, that they are oblig'd by the common ties of humanity to assist one another in opposing tyrants, who by betraying the highest trust, become the greatest and basest of traitors." Had men, "instead of becoming the cursed instruments of tyranny, assisted one another in defending their natural rights by whomsoever invaded, as by the Law of Nature they were oblig'd, the greatest part of mankind wou'd not for so many ages have groan'd under an insupportable slavery."[48] A classic "Spinozist" in the late seventeenth-century sense of perceiving royal absolutism as heavily vested in false theology: it was "at the instigation of priests, too many of whom have been everywhere active in enslaving their country," as Tindal put it, that tyranny had advanced so vigorously during the seventeenth century, leaving society now "reduc'd to a most miserable slavery."[49]

It is immoral to shirk responsibility for combating tyranny at home and abroad, contended Tindal, making sure readers grasped that "despotism" here has a double-barreled theological-political sense—meaning political oppression tied to "ecclesiastical tyranny and priestcraft." It is unworthy to disdain (as most Englishmen did) "those few but brave nations, which are happy as yet to be free" and have been "at so great expense of blood and treasure in maintaining their libertys, for which those who at present reap the mighty advantage, cannot without monstrous ingratitude condemn the conduct of their ancestors, or the noble principles which thus animated them."[50] In short, it was disgraceful to be ungrateful to the Dutch for their revolt against Spain, opposing Cromwell and the House of Orange, and helping engineer the 1688 Revolution. Tindal's explosive book not only disparaged the post-Glorious Revolution settlement and maligned the public church, but claimed the entire world languished in an unnecessarily wretched condition due to the inadequacy of most people's beliefs, mankind's generally defective understanding of morality, and lack of political activism against tyrants allied to churchmen. This was quintessential Radical Enlightenment. The world needed improving, from bottom to top, by reforming men's ideas and turning their thoughts to fighting the tight alliance of monarchy, aristocracy, and religious authority.

Men's duty to their fellows, as well as prime involvement with the state, is to ensure government adheres to its obligation, that all understand that the "chief end of it is to protect men in all such actions as may be done without prejudice or injury to one another," safeguarding their freedoms as if men are still in the state of nature. It was

[48] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 25–6; Hudson, *Enlightenment and Modernity*, 130–1.
[49] [Tindal], *A New Catechism*, 10. [50] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 26–7.

never compacts, agreements, or associations which they enter into with one another that "put them out of the State of Nature, but that political union only which they engage in for the defence of themselves and propertys, and where they oblige themselves to assist the magistrate in punishing all such injuries, as the good of the whole will not permit to go unpunish'd." Hence, the state of nature is "much wider than is generally imagin'd, since not only whole nations with respect to one another are still in it, and every one in the same society, [. . .] but all men are born in it, and always continue to be so in all such things as they may practice without injuring one another."[51] Since the "authority of government arises [. . .] from the natural right every one has to preserve himself, and to prefer his own good to any other person's," furthering the individual's and society's "happiness" is the state's sole function and obligation.[52]

Sovereignty of the people Tindal championed by condemning monarchy, aristocracy, and ecclesiastical pretension, and the entire system of despotism in his view rendering mankind unhappy. The present "deplorable state of mankind" Tindal attributed less to external force or direct oppression than the circumstance that the English, like "most nations have been enslav'd by their own governors, in not either soon enough perceiving the fetters design'd for 'em, or not daring to refuse wearing 'em."[53] The whole edifice of human delusion, misery, and wretchedness is therefore theological-political, resting on men's false beliefs; the sole remedy lies in changing how men think, and precisely here the churches were the prime obstacle: "since ignorance is the mother of devotion, not to God, yet to the priests, who are in a manner ador'd where the people are thoroughly ignorant, 'tis unreasonable to expect that they shou'd in earnest endeavor to make those whose education is intrust'd with 'em, so learned or wise as to be above priestcraft."[54] Tindal's Radical Enlightenment hence pivoted on freedom of judgment and conscience, including unrestricted freedom to criticize church and state in speech and publications. "If it be the liberty of the press (as all thinking men agree) which secures our other libertys, will not that be in a great measure restrain'd, if such men as are against all liberty civil and ecclesiastical (as 'tis notorious the railers of *The Rights* are) shall enter into a conspiracy to worry booksellers, and carry on malicious prosecutions?"[55]

Several of Tindal's detractors noted the rigorous coherence and unsettling novelty of his emphatically unHobbesian and unLockean political theory, and centrality of the assault on churchmen, churches, and theology in his political thought. The author of *The Rights* obviously despised most men's beliefs and was a republican democrat of a highly unusual and systematic kind, tightly interconnecting his rejection of monarchy, conventional notions, faith, priests, and all churches. The author invoked "the

[51] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 11; Hudson, *English Deists*, 110–11; *Mr Le Clerc's Extract and Judgment*, 9–10.
[52] [Tindal], *A Defence of The Rights*, 306; Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing of us," 141–2.
[53] [Tindal], *A Defence of The Rights*, 169.
[54] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 223; Wigelsworth, "God can require nothing of us," 149.
[55] [Tindal], *A Defence of The Rights*, 93–4.

Natural Rights of the People" but his approach had no connection with what most people believed: no doctrine could have been more foreign to English republicanism's mainstream tradition. From where did this disconcertingly militant doctrine of popular sovereignty, and curtailing of all ultimate transfer of sovereignty to government from the people, derive and whence his notion of the universal responsibility of all to oppose tyranny, aristocracy, ignorance, intolerance, and priestcraft? It seemed thoroughly but mysteriously extraneous.

Alternately labeling him "atheist" or "deist," adversaries reguarly associated Tindal's attack on religious authority and theology with Hobbes. Among the full-scale rebuttals that of the London editor William Oldisworth (1680–1734), an Oxford-educated Tory son of a Hampshire vicar, remarks that the author "has thought fit to found his whole hypothesis upon Mr Hobb's state of nature." Yet the core of his doctrine, Oldisworth also noted, his claiming the "state of nature" is "much wider than is generally imagin'd," and his discarding compacts and contracts to transfer legitimate power,[56] diverged markedly from what readers normally gathered from Hobbes and Locke. Especially unHobbesian, noted Oldisworth, anxious to ensure no political faction ever took root in England fed on such appallingly subversive principles, was that the author's "state of nature" was less "quarrelsome" than Hobbes's, indeed by comparison "very peaceable," without that brutal war of all against all for which Hobbes was notorious.[57] The reason for entering into civil society—to defend, stabilize and protect natural rights—according to this disturbing new doctrine was the sole legitimating principle in politics and its effect is to delegitimize and render secondary and derivative monarchy, nobility, ancient constitutions, existing law and all precedent, laws, institutions, and churches.

Unlike Hobbes, Harrington, Sidney, or Locke, this author showed no more reverence for gentry and aristocracy than for kings and priests. Rather he "crowded the overthrow of dukes, treasurers, speakers, deans, doctors, and other his subordinate-powers all into one paragraph," recasting everything "as a prey to the giddy licentious multitude." If the essence of the 1688 settlement and constitution was moderation, balance as between rights and monarchy, people and aristocracy, representation and authority, *The Rights* advocated the "supreme power of the mob," the "lowest defect", insisted Oldisworth, in his second volume on the controversy, dedicated to the Bishop of Winchester, "and most remote extream that ever deviated from the Golden Medium of legal liberty."[58] Not least, *The Rights* brazenly trampled on the restrictions on freedom of conscience in the Toleration Act (which Locke respected) "by removing the public fence and throwing open the bounds and limits of our indulgence and letting in the whole herd and spawn of ranters and enthusiasts."[59] The book's subterfuges, including its title, were obviously aimed at evading the "laws penal and

[56] *The Second Part of the Wolf stript of his Shepherd's Cloathing*, 19–20.
[57] Oldisworth, *A Dialogue Between Timothy and Philatheus* i, Preface, pp. xii–xiii.
[58] Oldisworth, *A Dialogue Between Timothy and Philatheus* ii, Dedication, p. A3.
[59] Oldisworth, *A Dialogue Between Timothy and Philatheus* ii, Dedication, pp. A8 and B6v–B7.

mulctuary, for securing the interests of religion and preserving the great mysteries and primary notions of Christianity, sacred and inviolate," namely the blasphemy laws. Hence, it was far from a purely academic question to unmask precisely whence such comprehensively malicious and malignant ideas derived. The author said nothing of his sources. "To avoid the vengeance due to such enormities, *The Book of Rights* (Prodigious irony)", complained Oldisworth, "skulks in obscurity".[60]

2.3. *SPINOZA REVIV'D* AND THE *CERCLE SPINOZISTE*

Plainly, the anonymous miscreant was perpetrating outrageously foreign influence: he "has advanced a set of notions that are without precedent: and therefore he ought to stick to his own principle of despising the authority and judgment of other writers; and yet he is not ashamed to refer himself to the opinions of foreigners." In places, Tindal cited Grotius; but this struck critics as just another ploy rather than an authentic derivation (though Grotius *was* actually a significant source for republican "carry over" of the basic freedoms from the state of nature into civil society).[61] The anonymous offending author had backed his claims with the testimony of those "most unfit to write of our Constitution, for which the author of *The Rights* professes himself an advocate; had he thought himself equal to the work he engaged in, he ought to have produced as many evidences in behalf of his notions, as those who opposed him, did in defence of theirs. This would have been agreeable to his doctrine of a majority: and yet in the excess of his modesty, he has contented himself with only one or two of a different communion and government than the English."

Following the Dutch "invasion" of 1688 and subsequent military occupation of London (1688–91) which had helped shape the constitutional outcome of the 1688 Revolution, antipathy to the Dutch nation, state and religious, commercial and political system among the English, unsurprisingly, had welled up strongly. Such antipathy became a marked feature of the English domestic scene,[62] with anti-Dutch sentiment seething especially among Tories and Jacobites. During Queen Anne's reign (1702–14), it remained commonplace for Anglican stalwarts and the conservative-minded to deplore the effects of "Dutch Toleration" and republican attitudes. One tract in this vein published shortly after William III's death, in October 1702, celebrated the aborting of the schemes of Wildman, that "cursed agitator with the Army, in procuring the murder of our royal martyr [i.e. Charles I]" that recalcitrant who "with much hazard [. . .] escap'd Cromwell's clutches, when he ap'd the monarch." "So professed a Common-wealth's man" was Wildman that, on returning from Holland, in 1688, he had tried to impart a republican twist to England's

[60] Oldisworth, *A Dialogue Between Timothy and Philatheus* i, p. A3v.
[61] *The Judgment and Opinion of Hugo Grotius Concerning the Principles and Notions of* the Rights, 3–5.
[62] Israel, "Dutch Role in the Glorious Revolution," 120–62.

Revolution, a tract of his of January 1688 claiming the "people may set up what government they please, either the old, or a new; a monarchy absolute, or limited; or even an Aristocracy or Democracy," and that the "way of doing it must be Great, Awful and August, that none may be able to quarrel it." He had proposed a "National Convention made up of representatives of the community: that the Convention may be truly national, and represent the community, it must be larger than a house of Commons ordinarily is." This "Grand Council of the Nation" should "have more power than a Parliament" and be "the Creator" of the new Body Politic.[63] Thankfully, agreed most, Wildman's democratic republicans secured nothing of the proposed "Foundation laid by this Convention" that no Act of Parliament "can be strong enough to move."[64] Wildman failed to influence the 1688 Revolution "which when settled, his confidants of the Republican Gang, upbraided him for betraying their cause: never could there be such an opportunity of setting up a Commonwealth, according to the Dutch way, and making the Prince head thereof."[65]

The "Dutch way" dreamt of by the handful of English radicals in Holland meant in essence usurping Parliament's sovereignty to substitute a republic for monarchy and curtail the powers and privileges of the public Church while eliminating the sway of aristocracy. The United Provinces were widely perceived during the early eighteenth century as the Western world's most prosperous and successful, as well as most republican, society. In Britain, France, and other lands, this often encouraged radical critics of the status quo to contrast their own country with the United Provinces as a way of sharpening their denunciations of the state of affairs at home. This was plainly the case with Louis XIV's France where many detested the advance of an intolerant, arrogant absolutism. For this reason the argument, leveled against the "Radical Enlightenment thesis," that because Dutch democratic republican writers belonged to an intellectual thought tradition so different and so strikingly unrepresentative of most of Europe at the time, they could have no real impact abroad can be seen to be fundamentally mistaken. That most of Europe differed so markedly from Holland, for some, served precisely to heighten, not dampen, the attraction of the "Dutch way," as the 1706–8 "Rights of the Church" controversy so vividly illustrates.[66] Abhorrence of absolutism rendered the "Dutch way" everywhere a highly effective subversive politico-philosophical strategy.

Most of British and European society after 1688 indeed remained impervious and fiercely hostile; but it was precisely dissidents, intellectuals, and academics like Tindal, countering commonplace notions from the republican side, who, though relatively few, discovered in "the Dutch way" an effective means with which to rationalize and consolidate a path toward a new kind of democratic republican polity shorn of noble dominance, "priestcraft," and royalty. According to Toland, in his *Anglia Libera* (1701), the Stuart dynasty from 1660 "sought to subvert our laws and liberties" as

[63] Wildman, *A Letter to a Friend*, 14–15.
[64] Wildman, *A Letter to a Friend*, 16.
[65] BL C.108 bbb 33 (2): *Separation and Sedition Inseparable* (31 October 1702), 8–9.
[66] See the rebuttal of Lilti in Israel, "L'Histoire intellectuelle," 211–17.

well as "extirpate the Protestant religion," in response to which "the free people of this kingdom invited over the Prince of Orange, under whom they put themselves in a posture of defense and successfully recovered the just rights of themselves and their posterity."[67] Alignment with Holland proved indispensable for recovering the people's rights and "the union of England and Holland," the "two most potent and flourishing commonwealths in the universe," also remained requisite, held Toland, for retaining them.[68]

While humanity is mostly a picture of misery, tyranny, and persecution with much of English, Scots, and Irish society lured into Jacobite modes of thinking, venerating despotism, intolerance, and theological sway, even as the world currently existed, held *The Rights*, some societies were incontrovertibly "happier" than others. "Is not Holland, from being one of the most beggarly provinces in the world, become, the most flourishing and most populous spot upon Earth?" Freer and more prosperous than neighbouring lands, there "we see the power of the clergy at so low an ebb, that they are not able to set on foot persecution, or any other of their darling methods by which a nation is render'd thin, poor and miserable;" the chief reason England, "next to Holland and the other United Provinces," was the best and most flourishing of lands was that England too was "most jealous of the clerical usurpations," the land that next to Holland keeps the "clergy most in subjection."[69]

If the contagion propagated by *The Rights* was essentially foreign, the most resolute effort to uncover the sources of Tindal's radicalism was that by an Irish ex-priest converted to High Church Anglicanism, William Carroll (dates unknown), reinforced by his mentor and ally, George Hickes (1642–1715), a former High Anglican Dean of Worcester compelled to resign, in 1690, for refusing to recognize William III's enthronement.[70] Carroll and Hickes entitled their joint refutation *Spinoza Reviv'd or, A Treatise proving the Book intitled The Rights of the Christian Church* [. . .] *to be the same with Spinoza's Rights of the Christian Clergy* (London, 1709). Actually, Carroll and Hickes wrongly inferred that the 162-page anonymous radical text published in 1665 that they highlighted—*De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*—issued from Spinoza's pen.[71] It was a common misattribution encountered earlier in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, and in subsequent eighteenth-century histories of thought like Giambattista Capasso's *Historiae Philosophiae Synopsis* (Naples, 1728),[72] though some early eighteenth-century authorities disagreed with this attribution given this text's distinctive Latin style and reference to God as "Deus optimus maximus," a term

[67] Toland, *Anglia Libera*, 22–3.

[68] Toland, *Anglia Libera*, 4–5, 26, 150–1; Toland, *Art of Governing By Partys*, Dedication.

[69] [Tindal], *The Rights*, 254; Hudson, *English Deists*, 111.

[70] Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 179–80; Brown, "Theological Politics," 195; Brown, "Locke as Secret 'Spinozist'," 217.

[71] The full title is *Lucii Antistii Constantis, De Jure Ecclesiasticorum, liber singularis: quo docetur, quodcunque divini humanique iuris ecclesiasticis tribuitur, vel ipsi sibi tribuunt, aut falso impieque illis tribui* (Alethopoli [Amsterdam], 1665).

[72] Capasso, *Historiae Philosophiae Synopsis*, 396.

Spinoza never uses. The most common alternative attribution, to Lodewijk Meyer (1629–81), Spinoza's Amsterdam physician ally, or Pieter de La Court, was also rejected by the great mid-eighteenth-century German bibliographer Baumgarten; but he could suggest no convincing alternative.[73] Still, the important point is that like Bayle and Baumgarten, Carroll and Hickes rightly identified the text's political theory as quintessentially Spinozist;[74] Carroll and Hickes showed, by comparing parallel passages, that *De Jure* was indeed the primary source from where Tindal derives his argument.

Claiming the ecclesiastical estate neither possesses, nor can possess, any inherent authority, superiority, privileges, or separate status,[75] *De Jure* is closely linked to Spinoza's legacy. Applauding Carroll for "discovering the mysteries of iniquity" behind Tindal's insidious anti-ecclesiastical republicanism, Hickes too stressed the affinities between *The Rights* and *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*. Several chapter headings and other key passages of Tindal's *The Rights* conspicuously paralleled key passages of *De Jure*. In fact, "having examined the late misnamed book *The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted*", Carroll and Hickes could announce that Tindal had followed *De Jure* so closely his text amounted to "Spinoza's *Rights of the Clergy* translated and made worse than the atheist himself made it." Tindal's primary concepts—"God," "soul," "Christ," man, "spirit of Christ," "spirit of God," state of nature, "natural rights of mankind"—all stemmed directly from the one-substance doctrine expounded in *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*.[76] Carroll not only denounced *The Rights* for propagating Spinozism but also Le Clerc, for reviewing it favourably, pronouncing him a concealed "Spinozist." Le Clerc was no "Spinozist" but in warming to this unprecedented assault on all ecclesiastical coercion had perhaps been somewhat incautious.[77]

According to *De Jure*, all political, legal, and religious power without exception originates from the sovereignty of the whole people acting as a collectivity. Authority begins, but also remains, democratic in its legitimate operation as well as origin. Who did write *De Jure* remains still today unknown. Sometimes attributed to Meyer, it undoubtedly sprang from the *cercle spinoziste* and was printed clandestinely, by an unknown publisher employing fictitious details on the title-page, with the place of publication given as "Alethopolis" [i.e. Eleutheropolis or "Freedom-city" (hence Amsterdam)].[78] Its illicit doctrine later attracted a few connoisseurs of such material, including Anthony Collins in whose remarkable library, auctioned at his death, on 18 January 1731, it was inventoried.[79] As the source of Tindal's revolt against

[73] Baumgarten, *Nachrichten* iii. 26–7.

[74] Brown, "Locke as Secret 'Spinozist'," 232 n. 79; Krop, "Secularism of Spinoza," 96–7; Israel, "Intellectual Origins," 14; Bordoli, "Monopoly," 126; Lavaert, "Lieutenants," 151.

[75] *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, 52, 55; Skeaff, *Becoming Political*, 18–19.

[76] Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, 1–4; Brown, "Locke as Secret 'Spinozist'," 232 n. 79.

[77] De Vet, "Spinoza en Spinozisme," 22; Marshall, *John Locke*, 565–7.

[78] *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, title-page; Lavaert, "Lieutenants," 149–51; Bordoli, "Monopoly," 126–8.

[79] *Bibliotheca Antonij Collins, Or A complete Catalogue of the Library of Antony Collins, Esq., Deceased* (n.p., 1731), part 1, no. 17.

England's crown and church, *De Jure*, reasoned Hickes, proved his extraneous, subversive republicanism was essentially Spinoza's bolstered by the latter's teaching concerning God, the universe, matter, and motion.[80] Tindal's principles "are only Spinoza's principles," insisted Carroll, "grounded upon that atheist's hypothesis."[81]

De Jure relies heavily on the claim that all inequality of status, authority, and privilege, including all ecclesiastical establishment, stems exclusively from human rather than divine government, that "aequalitatem omnium hominum naturalem status civilis constitutione in privatis non mutari"[82] which Carroll rendered as the "natural equality of mankind is not in private persons chang'd by the institution of a commonwealth." Since all institutionalized "inequality betwixt man and man, in the civil society, is descended or deriv'd from the vice-gods [i.e. those men speaking for the gods]" and as there cannot be two independent powers in the same society, all differentiated status is exclusively man-made and men's rights in the state of nature remain intact after formation of the state.[83] It is from the secular power alone, contends *De Jure*, that the delegated authority of the representatives of the gods presiding over civil society, that is the clergy's status "deriv'd, no less, nor otherwise, than that of the other civilians;" as Carroll renders the passage, hence, "there is no difference between the latter and the former."[84]

Neither in the Old Testament nor the New does one find any statement delegating jurisdiction over others to priests. Here as with their "universal, impartial, inviolable toleration in matters of religion," notes Carroll, "you see all this is bottom'd upon those men's favourite principle, to wit, That as to matters of conscience, or religion, mankind is actually in their state of nature, wherein every man has an equal natural, inalienable, inherent right, to believe, or not believe whatever he pleases."[85] Individuals are free, there is only one source of legitimate power in society, and churches have no divinely-given independent authority over anyone. As "all power is originally in, and immediately from the people," as Carroll summarizes Tindal, "they are the unappealable judges, judges in the last resort," so that the individuals constituting society remain "in a state of nature with relation to religious matters," everyone having a natural "inalienable right to chuse, believe, profess, etc. whatever religion they please," while retaining the right to take up arms to defend their natural rights, equality, and liberty in whatever respect these are infringed by any authority

[80] Hickes, "A Preliminary Discourse," in Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, pp. A5–6.

[81] Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, 150.

[82] *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, 38, 42–3, 154–5; Krop, "Secularism of Spinoza," 97; Lavaert, "Lieutenants," 157.

[83] *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, 38; Baumgarten, *Nachrichten* iii. 29–30; Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, 8–9; Bordoli, "Monopoly," 128–9.

[84] "Omnem inaequalitatem ecclesiasticorum non minus aut aliter, quam caetorum civium a solis prodiis procedure: nec ullum illorum et horum discrimen esse," in *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, 52; Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, 9.

[85] Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd*, 72; Baumgarten, *Nachrichten* iii. 31–2; Bordoli, "Monopoly," 129–30.

whatsoever. In the *statu civili* the basic equality reigning among men in the state of nature is conserved only now in a more orderly, structured way than before.[86]

These principles apply generally throughout the world, affirms *De Jure*, without special reference to any particular society; they are the quintessence of all societies. Crystallizing during the early 1660s as a group of enthusiasts debating Cartesianism, before long, as The Hague Cartesian physician Bontekoe noted, the *cercle spinoziste* had become an intellectual pressure group initially preoccupied with undermining and displacing Cartesianism and academic philosophy more generally.[87] With its roots in Amsterdam, Leiden, and The Hague, the network soon percolated to Utrecht, Rotterdam, and other places. Its founding members, apart from Spinoza, were Franciscus Van den Enden (1602–74) who in some respects was more emphatically radical and democratic than Spinoza and was later executed in Paris by Louis XIV for conspiring against his crown, Meyer, Johannes and Adriaen Koerbagh, the Collegiant Jarig Jelles (*c*.1620–83), Johannes Bouwmeester (*c*.1630–80), the prolific translator Johan Hendrik Glazemaker (1620–82), Abraham van Berckel, Abraham Cuffeler (*c*.1637–94), and—crucial for the evolution of the group's political thought—Johan and Pieter de La Court. The De La Courts likewise rejected religious authority per se though their views may have originated more in an anti-Calvinist, radical Arminian rather than a wholly secular stance; De La Court judged *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum* an "excellent" and "irrefutable" book.[88]

Van den Enden inculcated good Latin style into his pupils, getting them to perform the plays of Seneca and Terence in the original, and certainly helped Spinoza master Latin. It was also his practice, until ugly rumours spread, to insinuate atheistic ideas into those in his charge.[89] Koerbagh too, observed Goeree, "through contact with this man did not imbibe anything good [. . .] as is plain from all those offensive entries in his Dictionary, or stinking *Bloemhof*."[90] We do not know anything definite about the ex-Jesuit Van den Enden's views prior to 1660,[91] however, and, in any case, Spinoza's thought issued not from solitary, detached reflection, but group effort,[92] from a heterodox network that persisted after these individuals' deaths into the early eighteenth century,[93] a milieu characteristically Dutch but one noticed outside the Netherlands by the principal thinkers of following decades. The distinctive feature of their collective endeavor in the sciences, arts, scholarship, and philosophy as well as political thought was their eliminating religious authority from morality, social

[86] *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, 131, 139, 154; Baumgarten, *Nachrichten* iii. 32; Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza*, 88.

[87] Van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present*, 42; Israel," Spinoza as an Expounder, Critic," 41–53.

[88] Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 297–8, 313–14.

[89] Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza*, 3, 18 n. 12.

[90] Goeree, *Kerklyke en Weereldlyke Historien*, 665; Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle*, 192, 381–2; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 168.

[91] Mertens, "Franciscus van den Enden," 729.

[92] Mertens, *Van den Enden en Spinoza*, 63–78; Krop, *Spinoza,* 707, 711.

[93] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 307–27; Wielema, *March of the Libertines*, 9–17, 103–32; Wielema, "Een onbekende aanhanger," 23–40; Wielema, "Ongeloof en atheïsme," 332–53.

theory, and politics, and combining this with a fundamentally unHobbesian and unLockean democratic tendency in political thought.[94] Late seventeenth-century Dutch "democratic republicanism" Van den Enden rightly believed to be a fundamentally new conception of profound significance for the entire world.[95] Little acknowledged by historians and philosophers, the point needs emphasizing due to its crucial importance for understanding the history of the Radical Enlightenment, representative democracy as political theory, and the origins of Western modernity.

If Spinoza's philosophy was assuredly largely his own individual achievement, and while he clearly influenced others in their collective intellectual formation, his legacy was nevertheless also partly a collective outcome forged by all these personages in dialogue. "It would seem that by the late 1650s," writes one scholar, "Van den Enden, Spinoza, Meyer, Bouwmester, Van Berkel and possibly the Koerbagh brothers had embarked on a common quest."[96] Without entering here into a continuing disagreement about whether Spinoza was initially a disciple of the Antwerp ex-Jesuit, art-dealer, schoolmaster, and atheist, Franciscus Van den Enden, as sometimes claimed, following seventeenth-century Dutch reports, and therefore someone seeking to "elaborate the ideas of Van den Enden,"[97] as the Cartesian–Cocceian preacher, Salomon van Til (1643–1713), expressed it, or, alternatively, as an anonymous notebook discovered in the Utrecht University Library affirms, Koerbagh and Van den Enden "fuerunt praecipui discipuli Spinosae" [were Spinoza's principal disciples], the truth seems likeliest to lie somewhere between these two extremes: the relationship of Van den Enden and Spinoza was a two-way process.[98]

Dutch democratic republicanism was much indebted to Machiavelli, Descartes, and Hobbes, but the impetus and distinctive stamp of this group's political thought with its stress on elimination of religious authority, including its conspicuously unHobbesian and unLockean features, stemmed principally from their immediate predicament—the political and confessional crisis confronting the Dutch Republic. The *cercle spinoziste* formed a semi-clandestine early Enlightenment literary, as well as philosophical and medical, rebellion against established academic culture and theology, grappling also with issues of sexual repression and emancipation (a feature prominent in the writings of the Koerbaghs, Hadrianus Beverland, and Goeree), that the authorities deemed fundamentally godless and illicit. For these reasons, as well as their incisive criticism of the Republic's existing structure, all the group's principal works, including Spinoza's *Ethics* (1678) and *Tractatus Theological Politicus* (1670),

[94] Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza*, 11, 31–3; 61–2, 245–6; Krop, *Spinoza*, 94–102; Van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present*, 60–4, 195–8.

[95] Israel, "Intellectual Origins," 16.

[96] Van Bunge, "Introduction" to Wielema (ed.), Adriaan Koerbagh, *A Light Shining in Dark Places*, 8.

[97] Van der Wall, "*The Tractatus*," 216.

[98] Steenbakkers, Touber, and Van de Ven, "A Clandestine Notebook, 286–7 n. 92; Mertens, "Franciscus van den Enden," 733–5; Israel, "Dutch Golden Age Politics," 48.

were banned and actively suppressed in the United Provinces until well into the eighteenth century.[99]

An underground opposition culture simultaneously political and anti-church, that developed in the 1670s into a "sect" rooted both in big cities and universities, it spread among persons exposed to academic culture, an aspect reflected in the philosophical novel *The Life of Philopater* (published in two parts in 1691 and 1697) recording the embattled intellectual odyssey of a young theology student (Philopater) who, through discussion with competing intellectual factions, wrestling with issues of faith within himself, transfers first from Calvinism to Cocceian liberal Calvinism, then from faith to skepticism, and finally from skepticism to Spinozism. Participants in the post-1670 extended *cercle spinoziste* were in their different ways all political, religious, and social dissidents and often rebels against the sexual norms of their time—overtly so in the cases of Koerbagh, who died in prison in 1669, and Beverland, expelled from the Republic in 1679.[100] Furtive, publishing their most challenging works only anonymously, the *cercle* nevertheless became conspicuously embroiled in virulent public controversies starting in the mid-1660s. A huge uproar greeted publication of Meyer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (Eleutheropolis [Amsterdam], 1666), a book championing primacy of philosophical "reason" in interpreting Scripture that arguably "caused a greater shock among the Calvinist divines" than even Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*.[101] Subsequent major controversies provoked much anxiety at the supposedly catastrophic effects of "Spinozism" on society, that over Bekker's *The World Bewitched* (1691–4), trumpeting doubts about the reality of sorcery, satanic influence on individuals and witchcraft, and that surrounding Van Leenhof's *Den Hemel op Aarde* (1703), worries about how far *Spinozismus* had surreptitiously invaded theological studies and the Reformed Church ministry.

2.4. DUTCH DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICANISM (1650–1700)

No real equivalent existed in pre-1688 England, France, or Germany to these Dutch writers' democratic republicanism, not even in Switzerland, and this significantly added to the factors elevating the United Provinces to a unique and unparalleled position in the process of generating the Radical Enlightenment during the late seventeenth century. In political thought, it was a process fed not only by using local intellectual resources but also Machiavelli and Hobbes, whose concepts were intensively reworked and recycled, in particular by the Brothers De La Court and the author of *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum*, as well as Spinoza, to produce what one scholar termed "republican reinterpretations."[102] The specifics of the Dutch republican

[99] Hollewand, *Banishment of Beverland*, 52–68, 101–6.
[100] Mertens, "Spinoza's Amsterdamse vriendenkring," 73.
[101] Van der Wall, "The *Tractatus*," 218; Mangold, "Salomon van Til," 341.
[102] Laerke, "Anthropological Analogy," 22.

predicament between 1650 and 1672 were not the sole reason for the special character of this new phenomenon in Western history. Another fundamental reason why the West's "Radical Enlightenment" found its initial sources and roots in the Republic rather than elsewhere was that the Radical Reformation of Servetus, Castellio, Socinus, and Coornhert acquired, through the Dutch Revolt of 1572, deeper roots and a far wider early following there than, for example, in England, Germany, or Scandinavia.[103] By the 1650s, only a few in England consciously preferred what one writer called the "free Ayre" of Holland "where all religions are permitted" to the imposed, coercive Puritan conformity of New England.[104]

Nevertheless, the political drama unfolding in the mid-seventeenth-century Netherlands was, in the end, the crucial factor: for it was this that drove the first great wedge between oligarchic republicanism and an ideological opposition to oligarchic control that became the key feature of republican debate in the later eighteenth century in America and continental Europe. In direct opposition to Machiavelli and, still more, Hobbes, the *cercle spinoziste* transferred and institutionalized the state of nature's freedoms as basic human rights in political society and the "common interest." In claiming the collective power of the state is the greater the more it protects and equalizes the "natural rights" of its individual members, Spinoza expressed the main political thrust of the entire group.[105] Yet Van den Enden, whether or not he led in asserting one-substance monism, was unquestionably first among the Amsterdam group to follow the De La Courts in combining democracy with claiming that enlightening and educating the people against "superstition" is the sole and exclusive means to overcome political and religious tyranny; and maintain that a social system spurring everyone to improve their ideas, and discard "superstition," can only effectively pursue the "common good" where based on a democratic form of republicanism.[106] The form of government exalted by the *cercle* they identified as that which best defends the "common good" and is least apt to be captured by private interests infringing it.[107] Their political theory was a strategy rooted in their need for an activist, uncompromising anti-Orangist recipe capable of widening the support for the "True Freedom" and abolishing ecclesiastical direction of morality, society, and education.

Dutch democratic republicanism as such, it should be noted, first arose as a coherent political thought system neither in Van den Enden, Meyer, Koerbagh, or Spinoza, but in the *oeuvre* of Johan de La Court (1622–60) followed by his more

[103] Buys, "Without Thy Self," 363–8; Coffrey, "Toleration Controversy," 53–4; Israel, "Spinoza and the Religious Radical Enlightenment," 181–90.

[104] Coffrey, "Toleration Controversy," 54.

[105] On this point see also Ursula Goldenbaum's paper "The People Have the Power': Spinoza's Argument for Universal Inalienable Rights" given at the International Political Science Association's annual conference held at Atlanta, Georgia, 29–30 April 2005; Van Bunge, "Modernity of Radical Enlightenment," 141–2; Schnepf, "Enlightened Radicals," 103.

[106] Van den Enden, *Free Political Propositions*, 191, 194.

[107] Van den Enden, *Free Political Propositions*, 156–60.

famous but less original brother, Pieter de La Court (1618–85). If none of these, aside from Spinoza, were thinkers of the first order, they engineered a group breakthrough of pivotal importance in political thought that exerted a masked but crucial underground impact on English thought during the critical years from 1688 (followed by publication of the English version of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in 1689), down to Parliament's burning of Tindal's *The Rights* in 1710, in particular through Blount, Toland, and Tindal. Its innovative thrust should be regarded less as a purely intellectual reaction than a political response to the prolonged political and social crisis gripping the United Provinces in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, a crisis endemic in the very structure of the loosely constructed federal republic forged in the 1570s by rebellion against Spain.

While the Dutch Revolt had earlier produced several texts reflecting an incipient shift toward a republicanism based on humanist enquiry into Greek and Roman antiquity,[108] with ardent expressions of republicanism recurring sporadically during the 1570s and 1580s (also among English volunteers, like Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86), helping fight "Spanish tyranny" in the Low Countries), such flurries, though not unimportant, hardly amounted to a distinctive republican tradition capable of exerting a significant influence on the wider Western world. The Revolt retained symbolic significance as a classic instance of rebellion against despotism and persecution; but, for a theoretical corpus suited to grounding a comprehensive political, moral, and social democratic republican ideology, contemporaries had to wait until the aftermath of Stadholder William II's assault on Amsterdam, in 1650, and the mounting difficulties facing De Witt and the "True Freedom" in the 1660s. While the rivalry between the stadholders and the most powerful Dutch representative assembly, the States of Holland, was already intense much earlier with major clashes between Prince Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21), an episode still fresh in the collective memory of the *cercle*, it was the renewed conflict in and after 1650 that revealed the extreme precariousness of the freedoms which the Republic had since fostered and the immediate urgency of finding a political formula and set of values capable of rallying wider support on behalf of those besieged freedoms.

As political observers, the brothers Pieter and Johan de La Court matured in an unusual position. Offspring of a prosperous family of Flemish Protestant exiles, their father's successful textile manufacturing business afforded sufficient means for them to live comfortably without needing to work for their living, ample leisure to study, debate, and write while simultaneously locking them into an unprivileged, marginal, immigrant social milieu, and hence into exclusion from participation in the tightly oligarchic republican politics presided over by the seventeenth-century Dutch urban "regent" ruling class. Their marginal situation combined with their status as full-time amateur observers fostered a carefully crafted, long pondered oppositional attitude.[109]

[108] Van Gelderen, *The Dutch Revolt*, 177–8.

[109] Weststeijn, *Radikale Republiek*, 19, 39–40.

Exclusion from the corridors of power, and marginal social status combined with wealth, ease, and long years of intensive study, explain their rare ability to construct a political theory geared to actualities, innovative, and far from academic, but yet also closely tied to existing scholarship and erudition, a republican political theory based on close observation of one particular polity, their own, but yet consciously generalized, and universal in scope. Eager political observers since the 1640s, their first major publication, the *Consideratien en Exempelen van Staat* (Amsterdam, 1660), appeared, at a decidedly late stage in their development, after Johan's death (Pieter was then 32). Although from a public perspective this marked the starting-point, the text forcefully expressed ideas that had evolved in the private, unpublished writings of Johan over many years. Johan had long prevaricated about publishing his work; he knew his merciless analysis of oligarchic republican body politic and church would prove explosive and possibly entail unpleasant consequences for family and friends.

On his deathbed, dying at barely 40 in 1660, Johan instructed his brother that his political theory should not appear, but be destroyed. Pieter ignored his brother's directive, but did tone down some of his more vehemently anti-oligarchic and anti-ecclesiastical rhetoric. The unremittingly anti-oligarchic flavor of Johan's insights Pieter often softened by changing the wording in places to mean simply that republics are better than monarchies rather than provocatively pronouncing the democratic republic superior to monarchy *and* the aristocratic republic. But he by no means removed the democratic emphasis to the extent sometimes suggested. Even with this dilution, it still emerged plainly from their principal works (published anonymously and usually just signed with their soon notorious code "V.D.H."), that they not only conceived the democratic republic they extolled to be inherently superior to aristocratic republics like Venice, Genoa, Lucca, Zurich, Geneva, and the other Swiss cantons they discussed, but a political creed in unending and implacable conflict with the hitherto dominant form of republicanism.

The democratic republic the Brothers De La Court declared the "naturlijkste, redelikste, vreedzaamste en voordeligste voor de ingezetenen" [most natural, rational, peaceful, and most advantageous for the inhabitants] form of state.[110] This they proclaimed in sharp distinction to the "True Freedom" creed, the mainstream republicanism, of the ruling Johan de Witt faction, the familiar form of Dutch republicanism envisaging each of the Seven Provinces as a separate sovereign republic, governed in Holland and Zeeland by entrenched urban patriciates, an ideology strong on religious toleration and freedom of expression, and also individual liberty, but providing little scope for non-elite participation in the political sphere or criticism of the regime. De Witt's "True Freedom" contrasted favourably with the historic Venetian or Genoese model in key respects, especially by allowing greater freedom of expression and religious freedom, and by rejecting the hereditary principle by parading De Witt's central political maxim that in "a free republic no one has any right by

[110] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen,* 292; Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 151–4.

birth to the high dignities" and offices of the state,[111] that all office-holders should be chosen purely for their abilities by representatives of the cities and countryside. In theory, De Witt even accepted that the hereditary principle is always an imminent danger to a "free state," as the histories of the Visconti at Milan, and the Medici at Florence, abundantly illustrate. But De Witt's purportedly non-hereditary, non-noble representatives were in practice an entrenched privileged stratum of affluent urban regents, an informal oligarchy of families monopolizing political power, a narrow, exclusive semi-hereditary elite.

The Brothers De La Court considered it scandalous that not only in the United Provinces from Oldenbarnevelt down to De Witt, but all Europe's "northern" republics, including the leading Swiss cantons, Zurich, Berne, and Geneva, and principal German Imperial Free Cities, practically no serious effort had been made thus far to study the republicanism all these entities ostensibly acknowledged to be a precious asset benefiting their societies. Prior to themselves, no one had attempted to develop and perfect Europe's most valuable corpus of political theory, or clearly identify its basic principles. Consequently, all those republics had failed to consolidate and fortify their republican credentials as they should have done.[112] The brothers aimed to fill the gap both locally and more generally, in Europe, for which reason they theorized on a broad European level, in a relentless quest for the true foundations of the freest, most stable, prosperous, and enduring republic conceived as a benefit for everyone. Europe's medieval republics originated in what the Brothers deemed an instinctive, natural movement of resistance to the pretensions of the Visconti and other princes and feudal lords, an idea Sismondi would later revive in the 1820s. These late medieval Italian republics being small entities had all had to grapple uninterruptedly, like the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with their own obvious vulnerability and instability to defend their independence against grasping larger neighbours; they survived by forming leagues or federal unions like those of the Swiss and Dutch.[113]

De La Court republicanism was the first in the modern West systematically to assert as its central principle that the representative democratic republic is intrinsically the best form of government for all, contrasting it with aristocratic republicanism which it declares defective and inferior in every respect, a feature not encountered in England, Switzerland, or America, until much later. They dismissed the aristocratic republic whether on the Venetian–Genoese, Swiss, German Imperial City, or Dutch model, even if hitherto invariably more prevalent, as invariably intrinsically inferior. They also provided a clear explanation of how it was that no one had ever preceded them in attempting their kind of unprecedented and unparalleled theoretical break with all existing Italian, Swiss, German, Dutch, and English republican theories by claiming that studying politics systematically, and especially expressing views like theirs, had been strictly discouraged over the centuries, blocked from evolving into a

[111] [De Witt], *Deductie ofte declaratie* (1654), 121, 180; Weststeijn, *Radikale Republiek*, 37–9.
[112] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 2.
[113] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 196–7; Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 164, 214, 219.

fully-fledged representative democratic republican theory by dominant vested interests. Political thinkers before themselves had always succumbed to pressure to reiterate feeble, scholastic arguments against the democratic republic, a disastrous state of affairs ensuring what is best for society and all mankind had remained hidden from view, a deep secret concealed over the centuries behind a mass of obscurantist academic verbiage and mystification generated by manipulation, intimidation, and scholars' own vested interest. Since no rewards or favors can be obtained from the masses, political theorists invariably looked to princes, commanders, and especially grasping tyrants for remuneration and emoluments, rewards deriving only from them. Since writers lose rather than profit from speaking out in favor of the "common good," or championing the collective interest, speaking out against rulers and oligarchic oppression as the De La Courts did had been a perennially thankless and risky undertaking. Scheming, ambitious men waste no time expounding the will of the majority, or the common people's rights; they rush to extol princes, oligarchs, aristocracy, and ecclesiastics. Hence, the universal trend since ancient times had been to condemn democracy by greatly exaggerating its faults, "making elephants out of mice," as the brothers expressed it.[114]

Johan's *Consideratien* launches straight into a ferocious denunciation of monarchy in all its forms. So pernicious is hereditary monarchy that virtually all monarchs focus their ambitions in dynastic concerns, warlike rivalry, and acquiring territory, always placing their self-seeking, avaricious goals ahead of any concern for their subjects. Children of monarchs are raised to esteem themselves as belonging to a different species from everyone else, to care nothing for the people's interest; they seek only their own interest. Queens—in many respects even worse than kings—usually rule only in appearance, devolving effective authority to favorites and courtiers who, eager to retain their confidence, take care to cultivate only the royal interest along with their own, prioritizing their own gain and families even more brazenly than do monarchs and always wholly ignoring the needs of the populace. Since men only become courtiers through flattery and corruption, courtiers are usually baser than everybody else.[115]

While monarchy is always abysmal, what chiefly matters in the De La Courts' republicanism is that they likewise denounced all "mixed government." As "democracy" was the original form of state in their eyes, as well as the most natural and the best,[116] monarchy and aristocratic republicanism are both conceived by them as essentially perversions from an earlier state of "democracy," a view reaffirmed afterwards by Spinoza (and, following Spinoza, in the early 1840s by the young Marx). It was why the aristocratic republics were supposedly still governed, according to their constitutions, by both small and "great" councils "like for example most of the

[114] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen,* 283; V.H. [De La Court], *Aanwijsing*, 8–9.
[115] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 8–18, 36–7, 63–5, 260; [De La Court], *Aanwijsing*, 2–3, 7–8.
[116] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 259–60, 279–80.

cantons of Switzerland" but with the "great" councils now always a mere rubber-stamp and real power pertaining to the oligarchic "small" councils. Since everyone, however he or she presents their views, is governed by the laws of nature and pursues only his own quest for happiness, or what the De La Courts with their Hobbesian psychology call an "inborn drive and necessity to seek his own conservation, advantage and ease," formal aristocracies like those of Britain, France, Genoa, and Venice, and informal oligarchies like those running the "republics" of Switzerland, the German Imperial Free Cities, and so forth hardly differed in their contempt for the "common good." Aristocracies formal and informal always divide into rival cliques wrestling for power, striving to restrict the number of those exercising effective control. Regents of a closed oligarchy in a republic are just as reliant on corrupt methods in pursuing private advantage, and favoring family and friends, as any foreign prince or aristocrat. Informal oligarchy like the Dutch was hence no less harmful to society than monarchy, mixed government, and formal aristocracy.[117]

This point was later expanded on by the controversial Reformed preacher Frederik van Leenhof (1647–1713), a writer who extensively absorbed Spinozistic concepts into his "theology." Van Leenhof's writings, published in 1700–3 and widely influential in early eighteenth-century Germany, reaffirmed the Dutch Spinozistic tradition of democratic republicanism for the first decade of the new century. Everyone has the same needs, and right to security and opportunity, so there is no reason to accept claims that inherited wealth, rank, or position bestow rank and privilege above those of the common people. Just as kings possess no inherent right or worthiness to rule (and are usually worthless), men boasting social rank and offices are highly unlikely to be those who most deserve to exercise power on society's behalf, given that social rank is achieved more through power-seeking, favoritism, and nepotism than by reason.[118] Because high-ranking men normally disdain the common people, it is quite wrong, held Van Leenhof, for those of humble origin with virtue and intellect to be excluded from high office due to their humble origins; history teaches that from the humblest backgrounds derive princes, kings, and popes excelling all predecessors in achievement.[119]

The brothers soon found their recommendations for strengthening the Dutch polity opposed by De Witt's faction, as well as by Orange and the preachers. Pieter de La Court's last book, the *Aenwysinge der heylsame politique gronden ende maximen vande Republique van Holland* (1669), where he again avows that few of the Republic's citizens grasped the superiority of democratic republics over monarchy and aristocratic republics,[120] recommends curbing religious authority, and praises *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum* as an "irrefutable" book, spelling out the measures needed to widen support for the Republic, was immediately banned by the States of Holland, at

[117] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 120–1, 124–5; Scott, "Classical Republicanism," 67–8.
[118] Van Leenhof, *De Prediker*, 156, 292. [119] Van Leenhof, *De Prediker*, 292.
[120] [De La Court], *Aanwijsing der heilsame politique gronden*, 9.

De Witt's insistence, on 28 May 1669, for assailing the preachers "with very harsh, offensive and insulting expressions" and making highly unflattering remarks about monarchs who were the Republic's neighbors, risking royal allies becoming alienated from their alliances and engagements with the Republic.[121] Yet while De Witt's republicanism fell short in the eyes of all the *cercle spinoziste*, they still saw grounds to defend the "True Freedom" from its internal and external foes. Its broad toleration and respect for individual freedom still deserved their every effort to help conserve and defend it against the encroachments of Orangism and the public church. Since the "True Freedom" was chiefly vulnerable, in their view, because most people were insufficiently educated, informed, and aware to see through the Calvinist preachers' admonitions that their great men, Oldenbarnevelt, Grotius, and De Witt, were godless traitors and heretics, it was precisely that fatal defect representative democratic republican theory must devise methods to overcome.

Viewed from a radical perspective, De Wittian deference to kings and clergy only placed "True Freedom" toleration and individual freedom even more immediately at risk, as the events of 1672 and De Witt's overthrow soon demonstrated. De Witt's regime was simply too fragile to withstand the pressures threatening it. The Republic could survive only if popular support was broadened and popular support could not be broadened without two vital preconditions being met: the Republic had to become more representative of the "common good" while the people's veneration for religious authority and the clergy had to be drastically reduced. Here, for the first time, we find at the heart of political debate, tightly linked and constantly interacting, the two vital components of Radical Enlightenment—representative democratic republicanism tied intrinsically to rejection of religious authority.

In contrast to contemporary English republicanism, Johan vilified the aristocratic republic just as much as he did monarchy. The De La Court Brothers' approach meant publicly recognizing, as had no one before, that the universal principle grounding *all* monarchy and *all* aristocratic republics is "pure force and deceit" so that both are equally malign. Only through time, deception, and the people's passivity had these two generally accepted but universally pernicious forms become seemingly legitimized.[122] Both everywhere enjoyed enormous popular support—but only due to ignorance, superstition, lack of appropriate education, and credulity. The "democratic or popular form of government," by contrast, is not "founded on force but natural and rational and inherently possesses integrity: what could be more natural than to live under one's own judgment, order and laws?"[123] Democratic republicanism's superiority is doubly reflected in that whereas under all other forms of government *salus populi*, the people's welfare, the common good remains just a mask [*dekmantel*] for self-interest, in democracies it is the supreme law, the highest injunction. Given

[121] BL Dn 2/4 (24): decree of the States of Holland, 28 May 1669; Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 314.

[122] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 246–8.

[123] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 248–9, 252; Kossmann, *Political Thought*, 180.

that everyone seeks his own welfare, and strives for that, it follows necessarily that the voices of all together, decisions by majority vote, embody "het beste van 't gemeen" [the welfare of the whole].[124] With office holders and magistrates chosen "yearly," by majority vote, candidates (despite privately favoring their personal interest like everyone else) find themselves boxed into serving their fellow citizens "with all care and courtesy." Accordingly, the "democratic or popular form of government" does not thrust unnecessary wars and taxation on the people like monarchies and aristocratic republics (and England more than most).[125] The brothers' antipathy to ancient Roman bellicosity and all wars of expansion was one more striking contrast between their new brand of republicanism and Harrington's and Sidney's gentry republicanism with its unwelcome Spartan leanings.[126]

That all other forms of government are inherently likelier to initiate and prolong wars than democratic republics became a characteristic feature of the new Spinozist sect. Republics are uniformly preferable to monarchies, held Van Leenhof, because they avoid war except where the state's security and basic interests are at stake, while monarchs habitually embark on war for glory, dominance, and aggrandizement. Van Leenhof followed Spinoza not least in holding that the ancient Israelites became hugely more afflicted with burdens, wars, and devastation of war after ill-advisedly opting for monarchy than they had been previously, under the Hebrew republic: when the biblical kings gained sovereignty over Israel, wars were no longer fought, as before, for peace and freedom but for glory—"non amplius, ut antea, pro pace et libertate, sed pro gloria"—entailing a massive trampling on the collective interest. All Israelite kings, except one, initiated damaging wars, the sole exception, Scripture recounts, being Solomon (equally eulogized by Spinoza and Van Leenhof) "cujus virtus, sapientia scilicet, melius in pace quam in bello constare poterat" [whose virtue, wisdom of course, could be better demonstrated in peace than war].[127]

2.5. REVISING THE "POCOCK THESIS" ON REPUBLICANISM

Since society's well-being is best assured by promoting security, tranquility, and peace, the collective interest was linked by the *cercle* to the conditions under which the human individual most thrives and finds happiness. The essential purpose of political society being to provide safety, protection, order, and heightened opportunities for co-operation for all, and bring "a thousand advantages and services" to every individual, laws need crafting that serve that end but also guarantee the "same security and advantages for all."[128] Throughout its two centuries from the 1650s down to the 1848 revolutions, Radical Enlightenment, unlike socialism later, focused

[124] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 253; Scott, "Classical Republicanism," 69–71.
[125] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 254–5, 282; Stern, *Orangism*, 109, 112.
[126] Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 165, 218–19.
[127] Spinoza, *Opera* iii. 196–7.
[128] Van Leenhof, *De Prediker*, 50, 228; Israel, "Spinoza, King Solomon," 313.

primarily on the individual not in isolation, like the ancient Stoics and Epicureans, but in broad social context, a drive for political reform focusing on the quest for a collective consciousness enhancing individual "happiness" and freedom, individual and collective quality of life to the highest degree attainable via enlightenment and education. His principal book, *Hemel op Aarden* (1703), Van Leenhof dedicates to "alle slag van menschen" [every sort of person], omitting no persons, sex, age-group, or other category from consideration because no one group enjoys a greater right to happiness in this world than others and because the peace, tranquility, and happiness of everyone crucially depends on the tranquility and security of the whole, so that enhancing each individual's scope for happiness is inseparably tied to promoting collective happiness and swaying as many as possible to support the democratic republic.[129] The political context is duty bound to confer equivalent benefits on everyone as everyone has equally pooled his or her individual will in the collective will of the whole, and is equally motivated by nature to seek happiness and strive to avoid sadness.

Yet, while the democratic republic is always "absolutelijk de beste" [absolutely the best] form of state,[130] all types of government have their particular weaknesses and dangers with the democratic republic no exception. The De La Courts' democratic theory hinges on the idea that in a properly ordered society, the "laws must be so drawn up that all the citizens, seeking their own advantage and to avoid disadvantage, respect the general well-being."[131] But their own social psychology taught that individual drives and passions usually outweigh the individual's rational judgment.[132] They laid such stress on how self-centered monarchs and aristocrats deceive everyone aided by preachers that, like Van den Enden and Spinoza subsequently, they bequeathed a seeming contradiction that proved difficult to erase. The democratic republic they declared the best form of government for all, while at the same time the common people, being ruled by prejudice, "appearances," and passions, represent the principal threat menacing it. Democratic republicanism clearly confronted three perennial political foes according to the De La Courts—monarchy, aristocracy, and, thirdly, "het dumme graauw" [the stupid mob]. How then could locating sovereignty in the people be reconciled with their fundamental principle that reason is, and remains, the guiding principle and foundation of the democratic republic?

A happier society was their goal. The seventeenth century had proved an exceptionally violent, gloomy, dispiriting time for nearly all Europe. Among Pieter's closest associates at Leiden was the clandestine Catholic writer and translator Jean Nicolas de Parival (1605–69), who rendered parts of the De La Courts' *oeuvre* into French and shared many of Pieter's anti-clerical, republican views. Passionately lamenting the often man-made miseries and enormities of their age,[133] I.N.D.P. [Parival] tells his

[129] Israel, "Spinoza, King Solomon," 310, 313–14; Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza*, 137.
[130] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 282.
[131] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 95. [132] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 105.
[133] I.N.D.P. [Jean Nicolas de Parival], *Le Vray l'Interet* [*sic*] *de la Hollande*, "au lecteur."

readers in the French preface to one of his De La Court renderings that he agrees with V.D.H. that the republic exists to serve the interests of the people, to benefit "tous les habitants, sans en exclure aucun" [all the inhabitants, without excluding any], as even the most wretched remain part of the republic's citizenry, but pointed out that this presents serious difficulties. If the Dutch Republic was indeed a gleaming exception where peace, stability, and prosperity reigned, an oasis of peace enjoyed by all its citizens amidst a sea of devastation and misery, these advantages, noted Parival in his earlier *Abrégé de l'Histoire de ce Siècle de fer* (1655), were almost completely lost during the Twelve Years' Truce when the people became so incited that theological ire and popular fury, stoked by the clergy, gained irresistible force, almost destroying the Republic.[134] The Republic's greatest vulnerability, then, and both the De La Courts and Spinoza adopted this principle, is that the common people understood little of the political and nothing of the theological issues involved, having no inkling when taught to yell that the Arminians were "traitors" that they were being "deceived." Duped by princes and churchmen combining to exploit their simplicity, the populace invariably vent their frustration in the wrong direction, fomenting division, uproar, and tumult.[135]

Thus, the "multitude" became the central theme, and difficulty, of Radical Enlightenment political theory: the people's good is the highest objective but the people possess no understanding, at least not under existing circumstances, as to what their interest is. The people possess every right to express their dissatisfaction; but doing so on the basis of ordinary, commonplace notions and prejudices spells disaster for everyone. Infuriated by high taxes caused by war and dynastic rivalries, the people of Naples revolted, in 1647, led by a simple fisherman, Masaniello; but failing to understand their situation, pitifully yelled "Vive le Roy, le Diable détruise le mauvais gouvernement" [Long live the King; the Devil destroy bad government].[136] No matter how detrimental to men are monarchy, aristocracy, and churchmen, the greatest threat to the democratic republic are the ill-informed and least educated: popular "superstition" and ignorance menace the stability and "happiness of the people" more than anything else, an idea that remained basic to the Radical Enlightenment throughout. The democratic republic's dependence on "reason" and emancipating men from "superstition" in the end makes the people the prime menace also to those who frame its goals, its "politieke reformateurs" [political reformers]—the radical enlighteners spreading the new secular gospel whom the least educated are constantly instructed by their preachers to revile as "atheists."[137]

The people remained a deeply worrying dilemma to Spinoza, the De La Courts, and the *cercle spinoziste*. Had not the events of 1618 and 1650 proven that in struggles between the States of Holland and the Orangist faction, with the latter having the support of the preachers, the common people mostly align with intolerance and theological ire, against their own interest? In 1672, when De Witt and the "True

[134] I.N. de Parival, *Abrégé*, 119–20; Stern, *Orangism*, 150. [135] Parival, *Abrégé*, 121–2, 429–30.
[136] Parival, *Abrégé*, 431–2. [137] De La Court, *Politike Discoursen* i. 2–5, 8; Stern, *Orangism*, 147–9.

Freedom" were overthrown by a successful Orangist coup mounted by the young William III and his faction, Orangism was again backed by unruly mobs demanding vengeance on their supposedly "ungodly" leaders. Leading republicans among the regents were then ruthlessly purged from the States and city governments. Like Spinoza afterwards, both Pieter and, at least on his deathbed, Johan realized that nothing harms society more than a deeply divided potentially unruly state: all three, by the late 1660s, had become acutely aware of the vast difference between regular consultative, constitutionally regulated, meetings of the people's chosen representatives where "moderate" well-meaning and responsible people do the talking and passionate, spontaneous, irregular popular gatherings of crowds where "angry, highly emotional, or very ignorant, persons" deliver the speeches and decide what happens.[138]

According to the *cercle*, men must eventually learn the true causes of the prevailing general ignorance about reality and how things occur, the clergy's false pretensions must be exposed, the machinations of royal and princely propaganda uncovered.[139] In a democracy, making decisions contrary to the common interest occurs continually but only through ignorance and prejudice and these barriers, they maintained, can ultimately be overcome by public instruction and education. Indeed, nothing proved more characteristic of Radical Enlightenment as a tradition of intellectual opposition spanning two centuries than claiming the people's susceptibility to priestcraft, to the wiles of kings and nobles, and courtly pomp, can be conquered, albeit only slowly and with great difficulty, by changing how men think.[140] That was the essence; but of necessity it was a long-term strategy. One reason for the noticeable retreat from Johan's more forthright democratism, characteristic of Pieter de La Court's early works, including his 1661 reworking of the 1660 *Consideratien*, the new version appearing under the title *Consideratien van staat, ofte Politijke Weegschaal*,[141] was the challenge posed to all the Dutch radicals by the failure of English republicanism. The 1660 Restoration and the triumph of Charles II was widely considered proof in Holland, as elsewhere, that republicanism does not work, though it was also a brutal challenge demonstrating the need for a more powerful—but, at the same time, more cautious—theoretical formulation of democratic republicanism.[142]

Democracy offers no easy way to prevent unruly gatherings, and the hopes vested in re-educating the people, and weaning them from superstition and veneration for princes, could easily be viewed more as wishful thinking than the hard realism the De La Courts and Spinoza prided themselves on imbibing from Machiavelli and Hobbes. The French Revolution and rise of Robespierre and the Montagne would demonstrate further that democratic republicanism's exponents, starting with the Brothers De La

[138] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 282–4.
[139] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 259.
[140] V.H. [De La Court], *Consideratien en Exempelen*, 258–9; [De La Court], *Aanwijsing der heilsame politique gronden*, 9.
[141] Weststeijn, *Radikale Republiek*, 41–2.
[142] Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, 264.

Court and the *cercle spinoziste*, despite being vividly aware of the threat, had still underestimated the menace posed by intolerant, militant authoritarian populism, the kind all too readily turned against intellectuals, dissidents, and religious minorities, no less than political leaders vying with princes and churchmen.

Spinoza and the Amsterdam circle, unlike seventeenth-century English republicans and Locke, focused on how best to promote the collective "common good" as Spinoza calls it in his last work, the *Tractatus Politicus* (1676–7), when this is defined in exclusively worldly terms, on the basis of a moral theory rooted in the principle of equality and equal justice for all. Classical example, owning land, and possessing arms and a military bearing were all wholly irrelevant to the urban, mercantile republicanism of the Brothers De La Court, Van den Enden, Koerbagh, Meyer, and Van Leenhof no less than Spinoza—even while these remained central to the gentry republicanism of Harrington and Sidney. Indeed, English republicanism and its gentry attitudes—Pieter had lived for a time in England and knew English—were an integral part of what Dutch republican writers consciously criticized and rejected. The democratic republican format urged by "Spinozists" was a system that, contrary to Hobbes, leaves the natural freedom of the individual as intact as representative government can secure, and, contrary to Locke, eschews all contract and conditional transfer of power, indeed transfers to the sovereign, whether crown or legislature, unlike Locke, only absolutely.

By 1662, seven or more editions of the two distinct versions of the *Consideratien* had already appeared, and the De La Courts' ideas, as Van den Enden remarks, had diffused widely in the Netherlands and beyond. Inspired at least in part by them—though he also criticized them for not being inclusive enough in their concept of democracy—Van den Enden enthusiastically responded to their call for democratic republicanism.[143] Their common quest, as Van den Enden expressed it, was to "inquire, how in a collection of people the common best shall be most surely and safely pursued, promoted, and freed from, and protected against, all violence within and from outside so that at all times it will be able to grow and flourish toward an invincible well-being."[144] Here was the commencement of the secular, naturalist, as opposed to theological and Platonic, "general will" concept in modern political thought, a "general will" that achieves expression in assigned basic rights.[145] A regime will be the more stable and secure, held Van den Enden, Spinoza, and later followers like Van Leenhof, the more the private interests and concerns of those who govern are constrained and laws are framed and enforced for the benefit of all impartially and even-handedly. The more government is exercised for the "common good" in the *cercle spinoziste*'s strictly anti-religious sense, the less the people need to be coerced and the more they will respect their government. The more based on the "common good", the sturdier the republic becomes. "Everyone is by nature free,"

[143] Weststeijn, *Radikale Republiek*, 42, 45, 245–6.
[144] Van den Enden, *Free Political Propositions*, 148–9; Israel, "Dutch Golden Age Politics," 51–2.
[145] Miquieu, *Spinoza, Locke*, 478, 494–8, 502–7.

reiterated Van Leenhof later, "and prefers to be ruled by rational benevolence than compulsion."[146] In this sense, every regime, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, should be considered more or less democratic, with nearly all falling deplorably short.

Van den Enden sounds distinctly more optimistic that the "general well-being and common best" can indeed be advanced by enlightening the common people than does Spinoza. While "one people is better disposed to it, from nature or other circumstances, than another, I still take it that all of them (except the Hottentots at the Cape of Good Hope, if what is written about them, that they are more like an unconscious mass of flesh than humans, is true) can and also must be conducted to their common best by reason, without deceit."[147] Where Van den Enden developed theories of education, and Meyer and the Brothers Koerbagh published "books to educate the people," Spinoza, it has been argued "did nothing comparable."[148] But this is best explained as a difference of strategy. Van den Enden's expulsion from Holland and execution in Paris, and Adriaen Koerbagh's early death in prison, can only have confirmed Spinoza's notion that an overly bold activism, provocatively running schools on unacceptably new lines, propagating forbidden ideas in the vernacular, and organizing revolutionary conspiracies, was more likely to prove self-defeating than a more cautious strategy. Popular zeal for Orangism soon wrecked prospects for a more democratic system in the Netherlands, indeed gravely undermined and destabilized the "True Freedom." Following their overthrow by the Orangists in 1672, the De Witt brothers were caught by the mob in the streets of The Hague and literally torn in pieces, an atrocity that utterly horrified Spinoza but also strengthened his and his circle's conviction that the common people possess hardly any understanding of their own interest. Enlightening society must proceed more systematically but also more cautiously, slowly and securely, behind the scenes.

Aware that any direct challenge to the status quo will quickly be crushed, Spinoza opted for the clandestine approach, and the long haul. The lesson of the 1640s English Revolution, for Spinoza, was that if you let the people take the revolutionary initiative the only result is abject failure, replacing the old with "a new king" (Cromwell) under another name.[149] The one method of enlightenment that might eventually succeed was that presented to his mind by the experiences of his own family and other crypto-Jews facing the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal, a strategy pursued over centuries: forge a forbidden hidden underground of the enlightened like-minded creating networks that quietly and cautiously spread the message by clandestine means, cultivating chosen potential sympathizers unseen by vigilant as well as oppressive authorities. Clandestine networks might one day grow to the point of becoming formidable enough to undermine the grip of tyrannical monarchs, nobles, churches, and ordinary

[146] Van Leenhof, *Het Leven*, 168.
[147] Van den Enden, *Free Political Propositions*, 155; Schnepf, "Enlightened Radicals," 95–6.
[148] Schnepf, "Enlightened Radicals", 96–7, 102.
[149] Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 235–7; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 167.

thinking all lumped together—as indeed they did. Beating the Inquisitors allied to the ordinary requires immense patience, caution, and discretion.

Unlike the ideology of the Montagne in the French Revolution during 1793–4, Dutch Golden Age democratic republicanism did not and could not, appeal directly to "the people;" for in the eyes of the De La Courts, Van den Enden, the Koerbaghs, and Spinoza ordinary folk were the essence of the problem, not the solution. Radical Enlightenment was democratic in the sense of seeking to promote the collective "common good" on the basis of representative democracy but it was also, from the outset, vigorously anti-populist in the sense of fiercely contemptuous of popular ideas. When a theory of democratic representative government first emerged as a major plank of political theory in Britain in the revolutionary era, and then after 1815, with the democratization of the philosophic radicalism of Bentham and James Mill, much the same argument was heard as one encountered earlier among the Dutch *cercle spinoziste*: the pursuit of the "general happiness" in society can be pursued by democratic political means not because each individual seeks the general interest—each seeks only his own interest, and mostly from ignorance—but because such a democratic framework broadens and organizes the collision of individual interests in the direction of the greatest good; but only—leading advocates again still added the old proviso—if a certain educational level and degree of literacy is reached first.[150]

Yet "the people" were central to the Spinozist understanding of the purpose and benefits of republican forms of government. This was the first seed of the distinction so vital to the late Enlightenment (and also Hegel) between "the people" as a generalized democratic concept and the revolutionary crowds or *sans-culottes* viewed negatively, as in Naples in 1647 or at The Hague in 1672, as dangerously misguided spontaneous pressure-groups, the unruly multitude. The people were the reason why the *cercle spinoziste* developed a technique of subversion, using bookshops and the printing-press, that operated neither from top down nor from bottom up, but rather in clandestine fashion, sideways, horizontally, via the networks of like-minded dissidents that they created and which evolved into the Radical Enlightenment.

It has been suggested that Locke provides a sturdier principle of justified resistance than does Spinoza because Spinoza, like Hobbes, supposedly transfers the entire "natural right" of men to the sovereign with the forming of the state. But this is a major misconception. Spinoza accepts that no one has the right to disobey or resist the law, whether the laws are good or bad, so that in this sense the individual does transfer his natural right to the sovereign and cannot challenge the transfer. The very idea that there are illicit or illegal laws appears wholly self-contradictory, makes no sense in Spinoza's system. But the "natural right" of all is restored whenever the power of the multitude does successfully challenge or overthrow the sovereign, as the people broke the power of Philip II in the northern Netherlands, and that of Charles I in England. Natural right has no moral standing in Spinoza and basically amounts to

[150] Burston, *James Mill*, 203–5.

"might is right." If the multitude can overthrow the tyrant that happens whether the subsequent outcome is good or bad. Meanwhile, part of the individual's "natural right," contends Spinoza, the power to think independently, write and criticize, and discuss in groups, cannot be transferred to the sovereign and always remains intact however hard oppressive regimes try to censure thought and speech. Consequently, Spinoza's strategy of resistance, through philosophizing, discussion, and forming private groups with the ultimate aim of elevating and steering the multitude, actually provides a more democratic and less violent, if less direct, path for resistance than Locke's justified armed resistance which must always be entrusted to those prominent in rank. Spinoza insists, in contrast to Hobbes, that his aim is to protect and conserve as much of the individual's "natural right" and freedom as is possible and that this is the essence, as he (and Van den Enden) understood it, of the "common good" of society as a whole. Whenever the "multitude," as in medieval Aragon or in sixteenth-century Holland, successfully deters or strikes back at despots, it gains Spinoza's applause.

A glowing inspiration for Tindal, Mandeville, Radicati, and other republicans, in England and elsewhere, in the early eighteenth century, the United Provinces no longer served as an uplifting, enviable model by Montesquieu's time, due to economic decline and loss of power and prestige during the 1730s and 1740s, when the "decline of Holland" first became internationally evident.[151] If less fossilized and obviously an oligarchic tyranny in 1748, when Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Loix* was published, than Venice or Genoa, the Dutch Republic, not least owing to the 1747 Orangist coup which greatly strengthened the powers of the Stadholder and formalized a court nobility at The Hague, lost its former capacity to inspire, becoming, rather, an example of the dangers and costs of an opulent commerce and of oligarchization.[152] But the tension between democratic and aristocratic republicanism did not lose its central relevance, even if the significance of this has been unfortunately glossed over and obscured by quirks of the historiography.

Pocock's and Skinner's thesis about the role of Machiavellian republicanism in English format as background to the American Revolution deservedly has been, and remains, fruitful and influential, but suffers from a particular defect that, once perceived, is hard to overlook: it largely misses the centrality of the split between democratic and aristocratic republicanism in the development of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western political thought. For the most part it has become accepted practice,[153] among political scientists and historians of political thought, and among early modern historians, to view the history of republicanism as a story with classical origins, an Italian Renaissance middle, and an Anglo-American culmination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries bearing fruit in a supposedly relatively homogenized American republicanism, leaving the basic rift between democratic and aristocratic republicanism the real heart of the early modern republican drama (not least in the United States as the German immigrant journalist Francis

[151] Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 1002–18, 1067–82. [152] Kapossy, "Neo-Roman Republicanism," 227–8.
[153] Villaverde Rico, *Ilusión republicana*, 85–132; Albertone, "Democratic Republicanism," 108, 112.

Grund emphasized during the 1830s and 1840s),[154] papered over and hidden from view.

Pocock's argument resembles "an express international and boat service," remarked one historian humorously, that "between departure from Florence, refueling in England, and arrival in America" made "relatively few stops." As he watched this remarkable engine thunder past from a disused railway siding (Amsterdam), Ernst Kossmann, "could not help wondering if the driver were not missing something." He chose this playful wording to raise an important objection that probably needs formulating more forcefully. For what emerged was a wrongly constructed intellectual process of republican transition clarifying which requires a more adamant *rompedor de mitos* [breaker of myths] to dispel and reconstruct. Acutely aware though he was, of the De La Courts' and Spinoza's distaste for Spartan values and military zeal, and the sharp contrast between Dutch commercial republicanism and the Pocock–Skinner Machiavellian "Atlantic model,"[155] Kossmann failed to bring out sufficiently the Dutch (and soon Swiss) focus on the fundamental incompatibility and clash of aristocratic with democratic republicanism and the highly unfortunate and misleading absence of this clash, forming the principal political thought arena of the post-1775 revolutionary era, from the standard pre-1775 English republican texts.

The "limits of the present-day historiography of republicanism," as they have been aptly called,[156] represent an enduring, formidable barrier to an accurate appraisal of the history of modern political thought, and require extensive modification of a kind impossible without deviating somewhat from the standard historiography's relentless Anglocentricity, that is without paying more attention to the Dutch, Swiss, and pre-1789 French republican contexts. Pocock was right that English republicanism dominated the development of an "Atlantic republican tradition" that proved formative for the American Revolution, but wrong in thinking this constituted "the Atlantic republican tradition" representing the main thrust of early modern republicanism in Europe and America more generally. Recognizing the error, and modifying the thesis along the lines here suggested means not just shifting some of the emphasis from Harrington and Sidney, but more generally lessening the old stress on "classical republicanism," for "classical republicanism" was very far from being at the root of the "democratic republicanism" that became the real basis of trans-Atlantic democratic modernity. In fact "classical republicanism" is broadly irrelevant to Radical Enlightenment. The effect of making this substitution is to remove much of the stress given to pre-Enlightenment traditions, and re-cast the republicanism of the American Revolution as actually a protracted and unresolved conflict of two opposed currents of post-1660 Western republicanism, the democratic and aristocratic, with only the latter having its philosophical origins in the English context.[157]

[154] Grund, *Aristocracy in America*, 18–21.
[155] Kossmann, *Political Thought*, 181, 187, 191; Scott, "Classical Republicanism," 62.
[156] Mijnhardt, "The Limits," 75–7.
[157] Israel, *Expanding Blaze*, 22–3, 51–2, 55, 75–9, 132–3, 186–7, 321–5.

3

From Radical Renaissance to Radical Enlightenment

3.1. REDISCOVERING LUCRETIUS

The existence of forbidden clandestine anti-religious intellectual networks spread across the Western Europe by no means began with the *cercle spinoziste* in the 1650s and 1660s. During the European Renaissance, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, philosophical anti-Christianity, atheism, and forms of anti-fideist skepticism and eclecticism preceded Radical Enlightenment as an underground intellectual culture furtively aspiring to establish alternative structures of belief, morality, authority, and education. Very slowly but perceptibly, the impact of these various corrosive and subversive currents gained momentum during the course of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries.

Even though the teaching of Epicurus of Samos (341–270 BCE) and the great poem *De rerum natura* of Lucretius (99–55 BCE) were not in fact altogether forgotten during the Western Middle Ages,[1] no real debate about Epicureanism began until the mid-fifteenth century. Epicurean materialism, naturalism, and ethics were long sunk in oblivion until, during what today we call the Renaissance era, mankind's slow philosophical progress, as d'Holbach later expressed it, edging toward intellectual rationalization, resumed thanks to Lucretius, before accelerating, and proceeding more broadly and confidently, in the seventeenth century, with Hobbes, Spinoza, and Bayle.[2] Although during the early fifteenth century references to Lucretius and Epicureanism were few, the rediscovery of Lucretius' great poem, in 1417, by the humanist Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), an eager searcher for ancient manuscripts in monastic libraries, led to ancient Epicureanism being revealed as a moral and philosophical system challenging the existing order *in toto*, opening a debate about the meaning of Epicurus' world-view and moral system that gradually developed into a wider intellectual ferment of profound significance for the

[1] Brown, *Return of Lucretius*, 1; Passannante, *Lucretian Renaissance*, 12, 36, 63–4; Fubini, *Humanism and Secularization*, 149.

[2] Paul-Henri Thiry d'Holbach, *Le Bon Sens*, in Paul-Henri Thiry d'Holbach, *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. Jean-Pierre Jackson, iii (Paris, 2001), 339; Paganini, *Introduzione alle filosofie clandestine*, 149.

Renaissance era. Epicurean ideas circulated in Italy (as later in France), developing into a testing intellectual challenge to the existing moral order, belief, and tradition.

Poggio, though hostile to Epicureanism as such, was fascinated by features of the Epicurean system, and conscious of the attraction it exerted on some, as demonstrated by the dialogue *De voluptate* (1431) by Lorenzo Valla (1407–57), which Poggio condemned for boldly championing a philosophical sect "wiped away and almost buried centuries ago and condemned by all philosophers."[3] By the 1440s, the text had entered into a phase of creeping manuscript proliferation and, in 1473, for the first time was printed. Inconspicuous to begin with, this Epicurean underground showed signs of spreading and becoming more entrenched during the late fifteenth century, prompting the Church's ban on the Epicurean and Averroist philosophies for denying immortality of the soul and postulating the eternality of the world, in 1513.[4] From 1515, *De rerum natura* ceased to be printed in Italy.

In 1517, a papal synod condemned Lucretius as profoundly dangerous and contrary to Christian teaching and faith, and from then on, though not officially placed on the papal Index until 1559, the text's use was strictly forbidden in Florentine schools.[5] While an influential line of Renaissance studies, associated with Otto Kristeller, denies a revived Epicureanism, or any form of materialism or atheism, could in that era truly challenge the accepted beliefs of the age, and disagreement continues as to how far the "Lucreziani" officially condemned by the ecclesiastical establishment, from 1513, genuinely reflected the presence of Epicurean thought and Epicurean radicals in Italy,[6] most scholars today accept that a radical "naturalism" rejecting notions of creation, miracles, supernatural entities, and revelation did take root, an intellectual underground initially encountered chiefly in Florence. In his *Platonic Theology* composed between 1469 and 1474 and printed in 1482, Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), the greatest humanist thinker of the early Renaissance, vigorously assailed Lucretius, especially his and Epicurus' denial of immortality of the soul, to counter the local Florentine Epicurean "attack on religion." Ficino viewed his project as a continuing dialogue, an unfinished battle with contemporary "Lucretiani."[7]

What we might term Radical Renaissance slowly evolved into a varied mix of diverse strands featuring a radical skepticism and eclecticism, but with Neo-Epicureanism playing a central role,[8] into a tradition of *libertinage érudit* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that almost certainly reached back further than 1400 to the late medieval Averroist underground, even though Christian Averroists of the later Middle Ages mostly countenanced the possibility of "double truth," permitting Christian theology and philosophy seemingly to contradict each other,

[3] Fubini, *Humanism and Secularization*, 102–4, 149.
[4] Davidson, "Unbelief and Atheism," 61, 65; Brown, *Return of Lucretius*, 77–8; Mulsow and Schmitz, "Eigennutz, Statuserhaltung," 60–2.
[5] Palmer, *Reading Lucretius*, 36; Landon, "Bridging the Supposed Chasm," 67.
[6] Palmer, *Reading Lucretius*, 36–7.
[7] Brown, *Return of Lucretius*, pp. ix–xi, 5, 11; Palmer, *Reading Lucretius*, 37–8; Greenblatt, *The Swerve,* 221.
[8] McKenna, "Épicurisme et matérialisme," 77–9.

being unaware this was the opposite to what the medieval Andalusian philosopher Averroes [Ibn Rushd] (1126–98) himself actually taught. A forbidden "Aristotelian" philosophical freethinking underground, teaching the eternity of the world and mortality of the soul, already existed in the medieval Islamic and Jewish world, that was strengthened by Ibn Rushd, and subsequently seeped into Christendom and the Renaissance Jewish world. One prominent Renaissance Jewish writer steeped in crypto-Averroism, Elijah Delmedigo (1458–93), a Cretan active in Venice, Padua, and Florence during the 1480s, can be shown to have had a certain direct impact on Spinoza himself. During the age of conscious openness and philosophical and geographical enquiry characterizing the early Renaissance, a dose of Averroism assuredly featured too in the forbidden, clandestine philosophical mix.[9]

Condemnation of Lucretius' poem as a "lascivious and wicked work, in which every effort is used to demonstrate the mortality of the soul,"[10] stopped the text being taught and read in Florentine schools but only encouraged Lucretius' increasingly pervasive influence within the widening clandestine "Radical Renaissance" philosophical underground. Clandestine Neo-Epicureanism, especially Lucretius, may well have exerted a greater influence on Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and his political thought than historians usually acknowledge. The great Florentine rarely quotes Lucretius in his political works and never mentions him by name; yet we know he personally transcribed the whole of Lucretius' text as a young man, in 1497, whilst studying the various philosophical traditions intensively, imbibing a range of influences, at a time when it was particularly advisable to mask preoccupation with such ideas. For the fervent religious frenzy associated with the Florentine dictatorship (1494–8) of Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), a popular movement as fierce and intolerant as it was short-lived, to which Machiavelli was deeply averse, was then at its height.[11] Struck by how a massively popular leader "acts in accord with the time and colours his deception [of the people] accordingly,"[12] Machiavelli's *filosofia*, his radical this-worldliness, "materialism," notion of how readily men are led by theological "lies," conception of *virtù*, and conception of Christianity as a force rooted in fear and superstition, all resonate with hints of Neo-Epicureanism.

The "acutissimus Machiavellus" [the very penetrating Machiavelli], as Spinoza calls him in his *Tractatus Politicus*,[13] did not, of course, unlike Epicurus, Lucretius, and Spinoza himself, dare explicitly deny divine Revelation and providence, immortality of the soul, miracles, or the principle of religious authority; however, there are numerous insinuations in his thought that can be read as oblique criticism of Christianity and the papacy, as exposing what he considered the negative effects of religious belief on politics and society.[14] The great Neapolitan thinker Giordano

[9] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 80; Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions*, 26–7, 208; Tamamy, *Averroes, Kant*, 74, 98, 203–4; on Delmedigo and Spinoza, see Fraenkel, "Reconsidering," 216, 223, 230.

[10] Brown, *Return of Lucretius*, 14.

[11] Brown, *Return of Lucretius*, 113–15; Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 185; Morfino, *Temps de la multitude*, 203.

[12] Landon, "Bridging the Supposed Chasm," 65–7.

[13] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, 138.

[14] Davidson, "Unbelief and Atheism," 56, 67; Landon, "Bridging the Supposed Chasm," 76–8.

Bruno (1548–1600), an ex-friar, once a Dominican in Naples, ventured further still. A longstanding admirer of Epicurus and Lucretius, he was publicly burned alive in Rome, by the papacy, for "heresy," in 1600, among other things for asserting the eternity of the universe, denying Christ was God, and rejecting the Trinity along with Mary's virginity. His most "atheistic" text, according to his accusers, was *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* [Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast], a work written in England and published in 1584, much admired later by Toland, in which, careful readers perceived, "triumphant beast" referred not just to ignorance and vice but also to Christianity. All Bruno's works were comprehensively banned by the Inquisition in August 1603.[15]

Bruno's long-drawn-out trial and terrible end demonstrated how deeply entrenched but also how risky, during the Counter-Reformation era, steeping oneself in clandestine underground philosophy had become. Bruno is especially noteworthy among the Radical Enlightenment's precursors because he, more clearly than others, as Toland saw, conflated body and mind into a form of materialism tempered by Copernican astronomy and geared toward scientific discovery, rendering the universe infinite but also unitary based on minute units of being or monads, while also defending the principle of intellectual freedom. What separates him from the Radical Enlightenment is that all remains on a clandestine and also individual level—there is no element of republican activism or democracy in his philosophy, while his "materialism" possessed a distinctly vague ontological status not "unmixed with magical elements," being not yet consistently framed by a rigorous mathematical conception of reason, the principle of verifiability, later fundamental for the radicals.[16] Despite his clear affinities with Spinoza (and Toland), the differences remained substantial until the hermetic element was removed, most decisively by Spinoza, and the principle of mathematical-scientific verifiability more consistently applied.[17]

The *libertins érudits* of early seventeenth-century France, men such as Gabriel Naudé (1600–53) and, the most philosophical of them, François de la Mothe le Vayer (1588–1672), however, stood still further from Radical Enlightenment being less pantheist and Epicurean than Bruno, and more intensely skeptical, indeed verging on a fideism that was anti-intellectual, and hostile to science, more completely precluding any basis for a science-based naturalism than Neo-Epicureanism and Bruno's thought.[18] Like early French deism, the pre-1650 *libertinage érudit* cultivated in Richelieu's France by the circles of Naudé and La Mothe le Vayer, was either nonpolitical or else inclined to royal absolutism and political conservatism.[19] Meanwhile, the strain of skepticism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century clandestine philosophical literature remained a powerful current down to the early eighteenth century, as

[15] Paganini, *Introduzione alle filosofie clandestine*, 6; McClure, *Doubting the Divine*, 123–43.
[16] Wilson, *Epicureanism*, 97, 167; Dagron, *Toland et Leibniz*, 196–8; Passannante, *Lucretian Renaissance*, 10, 158; Gatti, *Ideas of Liberty*, 59–62.
[17] McClure, *Doubting the Divine*, 139–42.
[18] Wilson, "Epicureanism," 268; Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 90–4.
[19] Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen*, 122–3.

did eclecticism and, of course, deism.[20] Certainly, by the late seventeenth century, there existed several examples of clandestine manuscripts merging radical skepticism with quasi-Spinozistic rejection of miracles and conceptions of "God," and the immutability of the laws of nature; Renaissance skepticism too made its contribution to the rise of Radical Enlightenment.[21] But strictly viewed in themselves skepticism, eclecticism, *prisca theologia*, fideism, and deistic belief in a Creator God especially when accompanied by immortality of the soul were not, and could not be, precursors of the Radical Enlightenment to the extent Neo-Epicureanism was in several significant respects.

Lucretius no less than Spinoza inspired Goethe's uncompromising anti-Newtoniansm in the 1770s and 1780s. "Along with Spinoza, Lucretius," explains one scholar, "provided the eighteenth century with one of its main models for a rigorously naturalistic explanation of all reality, and the radical Enlightenment with one of its weapons against teleological and Providential views of nature and human history. Lucretius' arguments against established religion, immortality and the fear of death are continually cited by deists as well as radical *philosophes* with the line [. . .] 'tantum religio potuit suadere malorum' where Lucretius deplores the superstition that prompted the sacrifice of Iphigenia, becoming the line of Lucretius most resonant among both atheists and deists, not least Tindal, Radicati and Voltaire, and perhaps the most frequently quoted."[22] Only through embracing Lucretius and Spinoza, held Goethe and Lichtenberg, can human history be fully merged with natural history. This seemed incontrovertible to thinkers who were arguably "Lucretians" as much, or more, than "Spinozists"—in being unwilling to embrace the activist political and social agenda Spinoza invokes at the conclusion of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and in which the full-blown Radical Enlightenment came to invest so heavily. For Spinozists, unlike Epicureans, wherever popular notions and superstition are successfully combated, great benefits for society and a general re-ordering of our social, moral, and political universe in a more benevolent direction follow.

Lichtenberg typified the Neo-Epicurean syndrome of the late eighteenth century. A quietly radical thinker wholly committed to materialism, determinism, and rejection of religious authority, he plied his path, however, strictly only in private. Bold amid his thoughts and books, he remained withdrawn and timid in practice, refraining from all effort to realize radical principles in the intimidating world of power, religion, policing, and politics. But passively quiescent though such types were, the ideas of irreligious private "Epicureans" concealed from sight over the centuries nevertheless had a profound effect. More actively revolutionary spirits might dream of comprehensive change but even the most ambitious in thought could achieve

[20] Paganini, *Introduzione alle filosofie clandestine*, 88, 92–4; McKenna, "Épicurisme et matérialisme," 76; Gawlick, "Epikur bei den Deisten," 325.

[21] Paganini, "L'Apport des courants," 93–5, 99.

[22] Radicati, *Succinct History*, 21; Nisbet, "Lucretius in Eighteenth-Century Germany," 99–100; Gawlick, "Epikur bei den Deisten," 337–9; Baker, "Lucretius in the European Enlightenment," 285–6.

nothing in the real world until sufficient cracks in the wall of repression and conventional thinking appeared to afford some prospect of opening a breach, until favorable circumstances presented the opportunity. Until then, philosophers roundly repudiating the sway of the publicly accepted, despising conventional ways of viewing reality, either persevered inconspicuously underground or else sought truth for its own sake out in the open, which meant, as with Bruno and Vanini, doing so largely isolated from others, in a fashion requiring suicidal courage.

Meanwhile, strands of continuity linked ancient and Renaissance Epicureanism with Spinoza to a greater extent than to revived Stoicism, late medieval Jewish Averroism, or any other past tradition of thought. Spinoza shared the Epicureans' suspicion of the Stoics, rejecting what he considered the Stoics' "confused" and imaginary doctrine of the soul. Although Stoics conflated God and the world, like Epicurus and Lucretius, stressing God's immanence in nature, they retained divine providence and intention, teleology, final ends, enabling men to attune themselves to God through their souls.[23] These "errors," as Spinoza called them, especially concerning providence and the soul, originated in what he saw as Stoic failure to rely on clear inference from actual things perceived, causing them to be misled by their imagination.

Not the least of the strands connecting Epicureanism with Spinoza was their common rejection of asceticism and claim that joy, friendship, and happiness are the object of philosophy as well as of human life more broadly, and that the individual is happiest leading a thrifty life and eschewing ambition.[24] A reference in Spinoza's *Letters* together with his generally good grounding in Roman literature suggests he knew Lucretius, to whom he was probably introduced in the mid or later 1650s by Van den Enden, as he was to classical philosophy and literature more generally.[25] A possible echo of the *De rerum natura* occurs in the third paragraph of the preface to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), where Spinoza writes "tantum timor homines insanire facit" [to so much madness fear drives men],[26] a passage invoking the vast damage caused by religious superstition: "fear is the root from which superstition is born, maintained and nourished."[27] For exactly in this connection Lucretius' wrote his similar-sounding "tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."[28] In any case, this passage of *De rerum natura* and possible echo in the *Tractatus* reflect a fervently shared doctrine—that of the appendix of Part 1 of

[23] K. H. E.de Jong, "Spinoza en de Stoa," *Mededelingen van wege het Spinozahuis v* (Leiden, 1939), 2, 5; Brooke, "How the Stoics became Atheists," 391.

[24] Mignini, "*Een Ligt schijnende*," 200; Tatián, *Spinoza: filosofía terrena*, 121.

[25] Klever, *Spinoza classicus*, 10–11; Tatián, *Spinoza: filosofía terrena*, 108.

[26] Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 5; Samuel Shirley translates "tantum timor homines insanire facit" as "To such madness are men driven by their fears": see Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* translated by S. Shirley (Leiden,1989), 50; in the edition used here, prepared by Michael Silverthorne and myself, it is rendered: "It is dread that makes men so irrational" (see p. 4).

[27] Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 5. [28] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, book 1, line 101.

Spinoza's *Ethics* stressing the harm inflicted on mankind by commonly received beliefs rooted in fear.[29]

Prior to Spinoza, only the "Epicurei" altogether eliminated divine providence from our world scene or, as the seventeenth-century Dutch humanist scholar, Vossius, expressed it, "autem in totum tollebant providentiam divinam."[30] Peter Gay erred, though, in suggesting "the men of the Enlightenment found themselves completely at home in [Lucretius'] *De rerum natura*—that poetic rendering of the most unpoetic of philosophies, Epicureanism."[31] For if Voltaire possessed at least six editions and translations of Lucretius in his library, and privately scoffed at Cardinal Polignac's *Anti-Lucretius*,[32] for him, with his providential deism, belief in fixity of species, fervour for Locke and Newton, and commitment to the idea that morality is divinely delivered, Lucretius was no friend, but a challenging, disturbing complication, philosophically and politically, no inspiration but a menace with respect to final ends and divine Providence that he felt driven to combat.[33] Without demolishing Lucretius, Voltaire could not counter the anti-deist critique of Diderot, d'Holbach, and the other eighteenth-century materialists.

If the Radical Enlightenment too viewed Lucretius as the vital bridge connecting ancient Greek materialism with the Renaissance, and Spinozism, where Diderot and d'Holbach applauded, Voltaire, in his last years, furiously demurred. Loudly invoking the same Memmius, the patron and friend to whom Lucretius addresses his great poem, in his *Lettres de Memmius à Ciceron* (1771), when replying to d'Holbach's *Systeme de la nature* (1770), Voltaire tellingly directs his attack simultaneously against Lucretius *and* Spinoza. By merging his two targets into one he underlined his argument that his Enlightenment combats only priests, and not priests and kings together, like his wrong-headed unnamed Radical Enlightenment adversaries, while also discreetly pointing to the partnership of Diderot and d'Holbach, his target behind the scenes. Voltaire had no difficulty with their offensive against religion and priestcraft, it was Diderot's, Raynal's, and d'Holbach's denouncing the alleged alliance of priests and kings, a strategy bound to mobilize all the world's courts and monarchs against the *philosophes*, that deeply alarmed him. The *philosophie moderne* proselytizing materialist atheism that he opposed, held Voltaire, threatened to wreck the *philosophes*' standing and (his) reputation where it counted most—at court in Berlin, Petersburg, and Versailles, and in aristocratic circles everywhere. Modern materialism's advance Voltaire deemed a catastrophe for the *philosophes*' future, though it would damage him less than the rest, he joked sourly, as he expected to die shortly and would soon discover who was right concerning the

[29] Akkerman, *Studies*, 33 n. 7; Klever, *Spinoza classicus*, 67 and Pina Totaro's notes in Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ed. Pina Totaro (Naples, 2007), 501, 585–6, 621.

[30] G. J.Vossius, *De Theologia Gentili, et Physiologia Christiana sive De Origine ac Progressu Idolatriae* (new edn., 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1668), i. 38.

[31] Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, i, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, 99; on this point see also Barbour, "Moral and Political Philosophy: Readings of Lucretius," 161–2.

[32] Haskell, "Religion and Enlightenment," 198.

[33] Pomeau, *Religion de Voltaire*, 290–1.

soul's composition and immortality—Plato or Spinoza, Saint Paul or Epictetus, Christianity or Confucianism.[34]

Closely coupling Spinozism with Epicurus and Lucretius was a central feature of Voltaire's late stance but, by the 1770s, also typified the stance of those, like Lichtenberg, the Göttingen scientist and *litterateur*, among the great prophets of self-emancipation of the *Aufklärung*, who, while pronouncing Lucretius and Spinoza the twin towering heroes of the human spirit, kept their rejection of the political and social status quo strictly private. While circumventing the Spinozists' scheme to transform society and politics, Goethe and Lichtenberg endorsed Spinoza's non-providential, evolutionary, and self-creating conception of reality, the stance Voltaire consistently, and in many writings from the late 1760s onwards, expressly repudiated. Even if, for those following Diderot and d'Holbach in opposing Voltaire's one-front war against priestcraft, Lucretius' philosophy was insufficient, *Spinosistes* at the time could readily agree with Lichtenberg that it was Spinoza who "den grössten Gedanken dachte der noch in eines Menschen Kopf gekomen ist" [thought the greatest (system of) thought that has yet entered a human head].[35]

Eighteenth-century French theological *antiphilosophie* too often viewed eighteenth-century philosophical atheism and materialism as a single philosophical tradition with a high level of inner cohesion reaching back to ancient times, albeit not to Stoicism (which retains divine Providence), and still less Platonism or Aristotle, but specifically Epicurus and Lucretius. To Counter-Enlightenment thinkers, no less than Voltaire and the radicals, the continuities of Epicureanism with Spinozism seemed manifest, reflected in biology as well as metaphysics. For Epicurus and Lucretius denied that a knowing benevolent God had designed men, animal, and plant species or directed Creation generally. Human, animal, and plant organs, it was axiomatic for Lucretius, cannot be explained as things designed to perform their functions. His poetry grounded a conception of naturalism abolishing all teleology wholly distinct from most schools of philosophy and during the Enlightenment one wholly incompatible with Newtonian physico-theology and "argument from design", as well as Locke, deism, and Rousseau, the entire moderate as well as the "religious" Enlightenment. Coupling the names of Lucretius and Spinoza thus seemingly made eminently good sense and became a stock feature of the culminating attacks on philosophical materialism in France and Germany during the 1770s and 1780s, before the Revolution. To Aimé-Henri Paulian, professor of physics and mathematics at Avignon, son of a Protestant minister and a convert to Catholicism, originally from Nîmes, author of *Le Véritable Système de la nature* (2 vols., Avignon, 1788), where he tries to refute d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* (1770) comprehensively, d'Holbachian materialism was essentially a recapitulation of ancient materialism.

[34] Voltaire to marquise Du Deffand, 21 Oct. 1770, in Voltaire, *Correspondence*, xxxvii. 40; Naville, *Paul Thiry D'Holbach*, 113.

[35] Lichtenberg, *Schriften und Briefe* i. 705.

The *Système* did contain some modern ingredients, Paulian recognized; it relied on views of biology only recently developed by Diderot. By conjoining science and social theory closely together, the *Système de la nature* (1770) capped all previous efforts to overthrow existing structures of authority, religion, and the state by maintaining that promoting men's worldly happiness is the sole valid criterion in evaluating the legitimacy of laws and government.[36] With this synthesis, the *Système*, held Paulian, distilled into one malignant concoction all that is most contrary to God, faith, piety, and morality encountered in "Diderot, Voltaire, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, Epicurus and Lucretius."[37] Philosophic roots of great antiquity fed the entire process, a tradition based partly on ancient thought, especially Lucretius, and partly modern ideas, especially "the Jew Spinoza," "le premier impie," asserts Paulian, echoing Bayle, who dared openly present atheism "d'une manière systématique."[38] As for the anonymous authors of the *Système* and daughter texts it spurned, it was an outrage that these "Apôtres du mensonge," the book's authors, had not been arrested and severely punished.

3.2. EPICUREANISM VERSUS SPINOZISM

From the 1670s onwards, the close affinities between Lucretius and key elements of Spinozism were routinely commented on by observers. Fear and superstition moved men to believe in divine intention, Epicurus and Spinoza both agreed, but this harms mankind and morality, making men divide along religious lines, with every individual thinking up "from his own temperament," as Spinoza puts it, "different ways of worshipping God, so that God might love them above the rest, and direct the whole of Nature according to the needs of their blind desire and insatiable greed."[39] Men naturally assume nature does nothing in vain and that final ends characterize all that happens around us. Final ends explain men's way of viewing things and seemingly justify enforcing beliefs, dogmas, and divisions, helping organize power relations and allocation of rank, possessions, and wealth. Human misery, consequently, is universal but distributed unevenly, structured by dogmas of belief and notions of rank even though all the rival theologies are fed exclusively by ignorance, aided by religious authority, credulity, and fanaticism. Human betterment is achievable but only by defeating credulity and religious authority, a truly uphill task. The way to counter this evil, according to Epicureans, is to found a hidden proselytizing movement that draws individuals into "the Garden," a clandestine movement, creating a hidden underground—a clear affinity between Epicureanism and Radical Enlightenment, at

[36] Paulian, *Le Véritable Système* i, preface, pp. 1 and p. 179 and ii.162.
[37] Paulian, *Le Véritable Système* ii. 162, 271–84, 300, 325, 382.
[38] Paulian, *Le Véritable Système* i. 57–60, 263, 335 and ii. 149–50, 325–7.
[39] *The Collected Works of Spinoza* ed. and trans. Edwin Curley, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1985), 439–42.

least as the latter developed in its earlier stages, down to the 1770s.[40] In their respective ethical schemas, both Epicureanism and the underground culture of the *cercle spinoziste* placed a special emphasis on the importance and value of friendship. Here, then, was a cluster of affinities subsumed later by Diderot, d'Holbach, and Helvétius in what came to be called "la nouvelle philosophie," *la philosophie moderne*, or *philosophisme*, that segment of the Enlightenment that evolved into the ideological motor of the Brissotin "Revolution of reason" in 1789.

Yet, what was not common to Epicureanism and Radical Enlightenment was perhaps even more threatening to defenders of religion and the status quo. For no aspect of the new eighteenth-century materialism seemed more menacing to theologians and the conservative-minded, before 1789, than the promise resounding in d'Holbach's and Helvétius' mature works, and the notorious radical text the *Histoire philosophique* (1770), calling for rectification of what they alleged was mankind's unnecessary wretchedness and the distress of the poor.[41] Here, we encounter the greatest difference between Epicureanism, including Early Modern Neo-Epicureanism, and Radical Enlightenment: Epicureanism was unsuited to form the basis of a revolutionary subversive philosophy like Diderot's, d'Holbach's, and Raynal's aiming at overturning how society as a whole manages the most important issues, at challenging the existing social and political status quo, whereas Spinozism was so adapted. For Epicureans, what is principally wrong with society can be corrected by human effort but only discreetly, on a permanently unseen, inconspicuous, and tranquil individual or minority group basis. Their stance implied the possibility of a secluded, localized revolution changing how a few view the universe, enabling hidden groups to form that transform how these elect conduct their lives. But the scope of emancipation offered did not stretch far, scarcely reaching beyond the isolated small group or individual. Epicureanism thereby left the bulk of mankind to their delusions and their misery.

What was needed to ground a Radical Enlightenment nurturing a wider revolutionary impulse was a system equipped with a more combative political thought apparatus, more political and revolutionary in character, less willing to leave the delusions of the majority unchallenged, geared to society as a whole, offering a wider recompense to those whom the status quo render deprived and unhappy, and a more combatative stance toward official theologies and presiding philosophical systems. In his *Pantheisticon*, Toland equates his own "Pantheism with Spinozism," while countering Lipsius' reconciliation of Christianity with Stoicism, contending that authentic ancient Stoicism equated God with nature, removing all notion of divine providence as a benevolent guiding force.[42] Tolandists and "Spinozists" hence both resorted to underground methods, like the Epicureans, but aimed to work toward goals offering tangible prospects of amelioration to all. By 1770, their subversive

[40] Brown, "Politics and Society," 190–1; Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," 175–6.
[41] Polignac, *L'Anti-Lucrèce* i. 288.
[42] François, *Observations* ii. 157, 159; Leask, "Stoicism Unbound," 238.

activism, and promise to help the wretched, was starting to worry theologians, deists and conservative atheists alike.

The *Système de la nature* (1770) exerted a huge impact, acknowledged Voltaire, writing to Madame Du Deffand, in October 1770, chiefly due to its power to attract the socially aggrieved. Due to its ominous, beguiling promise, the *Histoire philosophique,* with its unmistakable revolutionary rumblings, resembled, in Voltaire's view, the bogus financial schemes of John Law (1673–1729), the Scottish adventurer whose grandiose project for issuing bank-notes in France had crashed sensationally in 1720, causing vast loss, despair, and scandal. The new political and social doctrine propagated by Diderot, d'Holbach, and Helvétius which Voltaire and even his atheist ally d'Alembert firmly rebuffed, promised much, including alleviation of the suffering and drudgery of the poor, which according to Diderot and d'Holbach is an avoidable consequence, the malignant outcome of ignorance, deception, fanaticism, imposture, priestcraft and vested interest preying on humanity at large, a poisonous mix concocted by theologians allied to kings and courtiers.

The affinities between Epicureanism and Spinozism, then, were striking; but equally there existed concrete differences between the Spinozist and Epicurean accounts of how and why "error" prevails in the world, and how to rectify the harm. Lucretius' explanation of why men trust in the supernatural power of the gods to direct human affairs, in Book Five of *De rerum natura* (lines 1160–1240), focuses squarely on the origin of belief in supernatural forces. But the cultural, social, and political circumstances of Lucretius' age differed vastly from those of Early Modern Europe. In the war-torn, divided Roman republic in which he dwelt, Lucretius needed to be particularly discreet concerning the possible political implications of an imported Greek philosophy that might attract the suspicion of the Roman Senate and authorities, as the philosophy of Epicurus indeed did. Due to its originally suspect, marginal status in Rome, Epicureanism, unlike other ancient Greek schools of thought, actually increased its emphasis on passivity, non-participation in the public political sphere, preaching withdrawal from mainstream society so as to safeguard its veiled "garden," a protected reserve for the hidden sect of adherents sharing convictions contradicting those of the multitude and living together in *amicitia*, a shuttered off harmony and friendship, forming the greatest divide between early modern Neo-Epicureanism and Spinozism.[43] Roman circumstances reinforced this tendency; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so did Inquisition repression and the Counter-Reformation.

While both Epicureanism and Radical Enlightenment stress the ubiquity and power of "superstition," sharing a common detestation of tyranny, state militarism, and war,[44] superstition's ability to mobilize religious authority and dogma to control belief, restrict freedom of thought and expression, utilizing dogma, theology, inquisitions, indexes, church councils, and formal condemnations of heresy as instruments

[43] Brown, "Politics and Society," 179–80, 188–90, 196.
[44] Salem, "Peut-on définir les principes," 39–40.

of public condemnation and humiliation together with law, education, moral exhortation, and politics, and not least to dominate higher learning and restrict "freedom to philosophize," had, by Spinoza's time, vastly expanded its capabilities since ancient times. By 1650, "superstition" hence needed analyzing to a greater extent in terms of social and political thought than in Lucretius' day. New forms of persecution had directly impacted on Spinoza's own family and Jewish associates in Portugal and Spain. The persecuting fanaticism of the Inquisition and a Europe of pitiless confessional strife during the Wars of Religion were viewed by Spinoza as far more grotesque, more menacing deformities of humanity, morality, and good governance than Roman imperial administration and justice in Lucretius' time. The prevailing belief system of his day hindering the "happiness" of the individual and of society was now a far more powerful, larger, and more damaging apparatus than anything known in the ancient world. State power allied to what the ill-informed and uneducated think had become a more elaborate, organized, and institutionalized belief-control system than existed even in Renaissance Italy, an apparatus capable of penetrating and breaking up every private philosophical "garden" and crypto-religious network of the kind Spinoza's Sephardic parents and relatives cultivated underground in Portugal and France. Absolute monarchy joined to ecclesiastical sway, being now a system harder to escape from than formerly, had become a doctrinal colossus that it was no longer feasible simply to evade: it needed to be intellectually and practically massively assailed.

Spinoza's account of the hegemony of "error" and fear, and its rule over the empire of misery, became both broader than that of Epicureanism and more geared to confronting a wider range of intrusive and intolerant forms of credulity and dogmatism. Rejecting final ends and teleology consequently came to be more directly associated with Spinoza than Epicureanism or Averroism, as did active pursuit of toleration, freedom of thought and expression, and promotion of the "common good," and hence more connected too to political activism and reform, resisting tyranny and calling for a secular state. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza not only affirms unequivocally that "Nature has no end set before it and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions," but that this crucial dimension of truth remains altogether hidden from most men. If he too presents "truth" as a masked, underground tradition, a reality long clearly grasped since ancient times but only by "very few," the price we pay for our fears and for delusion preventing men's grasping the truth—the fact that most are disposed to reject and violently suppress the truth—had escalated so that its destructive effects amounted to a more complex, more structured oppressiveness and general blindness than prevailed in ancient times, a universal disposition toward unreasoning irrationality damaging humanity more broadly, encouraging war and inequality, hindering science and education, promoting fanaticism, strife, ecclesiastical authority, and tyranny—oppressive power relations constantly feeding greed and thirst for power, drives equally hegemonic in ancient times, but now possessing a much wider reach so that the institutions sanctioned by

religious authority constrained men everywhere and could no longer be contemplated with equanimity.

Neither Lucretius nor Spinoza supposed they could persuade more than a handful of their fellow men. But Lucretius follows Epicurus in deriving all human ills directly or indirectly from fear, especially fear of death, focusing markedly more than Spinoza on urging men that death is not to be feared and that plagues such as crime, lust, and envy are all aggravated by fear of death. This tendency lent primacy to the quest for security and stability, helping affix Epicurean political thought, as with Hobbes, to the need for a strong, stable state and an indifferent, pragmatic attitude regarding the specifics of law and governance, besides quietly segregating the Epicurean moral order, their "garden," from the public sphere rather than fusing moral striving with political commitment and participation.[45] Where Epicurus and Lucretius identify anxiety and apprehension as the prime source of superstition, Spinoza's *Ethics* provides a broader psychological analysis of credulity, hatred, and prejudice, leaving more scope, especially for the natural drive for ascendancy and advantage over others. Epicureanism in short was subversive intellectually and religiously but not socially or politically. Where both Epicureanism and Spinozism reject religious authority, the first did so inconspicuously without publicly challenging and offending the priesthood, whereas the latter sought ways to grow more vocal, effective, and public, striving to challenge and topple rather than simply disregard religious authority.

Hence, one does not find in Lucretius the same preoccupation with discrediting censorship, heresy-hunting, and forms of despotism utilizing belief as their justification as one encounters in Holland's great philosopher.[46] Spinoza's thought represents a more urgent, explicit spur to intellectual subversion allied to political engagement than did the other strains of clandestine philosophy flourishing in the seventeenth century, so that only Spinoza's framework was fit to serve as a durable, operative basis for a Radical Enlightenment not just wholly rejecting religious authority but also promoting equality of the right to be "happy" by forging political rights and democratic republicanism. Epicureanism could not fulfill such a function, and here Hobbes stood decidedly closer to Epicureanism than Spinoza or the radical underground.[47] Shaftesbury, no Spinozist but a radical enlightener in tendency, considered Hobbes a firm adherent of Epicureanism, expressing hostility to both Hobbes and Epicureanism especially because of their passive, evasive view of civil society and the public sphere.[48] Admittedly, the principle that *homo homini lupus* [man is a wolf to man] is less prominent and fundamental in Early Modern Epicureanism generally than in Hobbes while the idea of natural sociability as the foundation of the state is less alien to Epicureans; but the Epicurean strand interested in establishing a strong state to act

[45] Paganini, "Hobbes, Gassendi," 113, 123–4; Brown, "Politics and Society," 179–80, 190, 196; Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," 163–4, 175, 184.
[46] Lucretius, *De rerum natura* iii. 40–93, 830–977.
[47] Paganini, "Hobbes, Gassendi," 113, 121, 124; Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," 208–13.
[48] Tortarolo, "Epicurus and Diderot," 386; Israel, "Leo Strauss," 24–6.

as a shield protecting the community still implies a political sphere that is "radically individualist," withdrawn and non-participatory.[49] By contrast, Spinoza's political thought stems from the idea that general amelioration is possible and actually occurs, via a gradual rise from despotic forms of society based on fear, to forms allowing freedoms closer to the "state of nature," climbing, where the difficulties are surmounted, towards the republic based on "freedom," a process that involves gradually replacing "fear" as the prime instrument of statecraft with "reason" and the "common will": "for a free people is led more by hope than fear, while a subjugated people is led more by fear than by hope; the former seeks to engage in living, the latter simply to avoid death."[50]

Meanwhile, there were also other major, fundamental differences between Epicureanism and Spinozism as underground sects rendering the latter again more active and better equipped to promote Radical Enlightenment. It is striking that Neo-Epicureanism, like ancient Greek Epicureanism itself, was far less concerned with analyzing and studying nature than Spinozism: it lacked the commitment to scientific enquiry and mathematical precision paramount for Spinoza and his circle. Here especially Bayle's judgment seems valid: "I believe," he wrote in his *Dictionnaire*, "that Spinoza is the first to reduce atheism to a system, and turn it into a body of doctrine, tied together and integrated according to the maxim of the geometers: but beyond that his system is not new," he added, pointing to the similarity of Spinoza's doctrine that "God and the world are just one being" to the Stoic conception.[51] Epicurus' philosophy, after all, stressed pursuit of *ataraxia*, that state of inner tranquility and detachment assiduously cultivated by both Epicureans and Stoics which they conceived as stemming from the philosophical life and, in the Epicurean case, from abandoning delusions about the gods. In Lucretius it is not gradual collective progress in knowledge and science, nor pursuit of mathematics, nor any cumulative development or new criteria impacting on the world of culture and philosophy, that expands their grasp of basic truth for the enlightened few withdrawing from society to their sheltered retreat in "the Garden." What ameliorates our world for the Epicurean philosophical outcast elite, favoring a successful quest for individual happiness for some, was the philosophical breakthrough of one particular genius, Epicurus, who with unparalleled insight, and unmatched grasp, all at once revealed everything necessary to men.[52] Remaining above active politics, "Lucretianism" was later one source, notes Charles Taylor, of Nietszchean and other nineteenth-century atheistic "immanent Counter-Enlightenment" reacting to the collapse of the 1848 revolutions by becoming wholly disillusioned with society and its prospects.[53]

The centrality of *ataraxia* in Epicureanism meant this tradition ultimately lacked any sense of mankind possessing the power to "shape and fashion our world, natural

[49] Paganini, "Hobbes, Gassendi," 124, 126–7, 131–3.

[50] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, 62–3; Williams, "Spinoza and the General Will," 118–19.

[51] Bayle's judgment circulated widely during the eighteenth century, being quoted verbatim for example by Jean-Baptiste Gaultier, in 1746, in his book against Pope's *Essay on Man*, Gaultier, *Le Poëme de Pope*, 100.

[52] Lucretius, *De rerum natura* i. 62–79.

[53] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 599.

and social," as it has been put, "actuated by some drive to human beneficence."[54] Epicurean "friendship," unlike Spinoza's, was strictly non-political. Real "Lucretians" during the early modern age, observed Taylor, were figures like St. Evremond, Fontenelle, or Temple, standing aside from both religious faith *and* awareness of any need to forge a beneficent new order. The Anglo-Irish Epicurean Sir William Temple (1628–99) perfectly combined early modern drawing on Epicurean moral philosophy with turning his back on research into the sciences.[55] La Mettrie, despite zeal for science and his eschewing the atomism of the Epicureans, also belongs to the category of non-radical Neo-Epicureanism rather than Radical Enlightenment. While his anti-Stoic moral philosophy and view of the individual in relation to society were Epicurean, the reason he is excluded from the Radical Enlightenment's ranks is his political passivity and conservatism. His Epicurean outlook exuded a static quality, offering no prospect or project of reform promising to ameliorate the world or make it a more hopeful place than it was in his day for most. Rather, La Mettrie's writings reflect Epicurean aversion to active involvement in the public sphere, recommending those adhering to his recipe for individual happiness to avoid accepting public offices and functions as far as possible. While striving to influence those who rule, he had no wish for a broader impact via the press.[56] He broke with Epicurean tradition only in one respect—his impatience with ruses and stratagems to conceal one's philosophical as distinct from political views. He was unEpicurean in urging fellow *philosophes* to revolt against the prevailing system philosophically, urging true *philosophes* to be free in their actions as well as their writings: "montrons y la fière indépendance d'un républicain" [let's show there the fierce independence of a republican].[57] But this was his sole genuinely "republican" propensity.

3.3. METHODS OF SUBVERSION

Leibniz, writing around 1680, concluded that "there are two sects of naturalists fashionable today that have their sources in antiquity," one "revives the opinions of Epicurus;" the other, which he contrasted with the Neo-Epicureans, proclaimed "a mechanical necessity to all things" and a single "God who "has neither understanding nor will." This rival modern philosophical stream he calls "nouveaux stoïciens" [new Stoics], according a prominent place in it to "Spinoza's views," though, like Bayle (who likewise linked Spinoza to the Stoics rather than the Epicureans), he also noted a significant link between *Spinozisme* and Averroism."[58] The differences between the two kinds of "naturalists" Leibniz considered essentially philosophical; yet, arguably

[54] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 27, 248, 267–8.
[55] Wilson, *Epicureanism*, 34–5; Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," 176.
[56] Thomson, *La Mettrie et l'épicurisme*, 373, 378.
[57] Thomson, *La Mettrie et l'épicurisme*, 380.
[58] Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, 281–2; Laerke, *Leibniz lecteur*, 977.

more fundamental than any metaphysical differences was that neither ancient Epicureanism, nor Averroism, nor Italian Renaissance Neo-Epicureanism, nor Italian Renaissance political thought generally, fought to transform the political and social system. Here, his first stream, Radical Renaissance, differed fundamentally from his second, which was in fact Radical Enlightenment.

It was typical of Averroism and Neo-Epicureanism to adopt a quiescent political stance and eschew confrontation. Humanists of the pre-Machiavelli era, it has been importantly remarked, mostly "avoided confrontations over constitutional forms, preferring to direct their reforming energies at improving the virtues of the ruling class. Their reforms were generally about governors, not governments." The one notable exception, the sole Italian Renaissance political writer before Machiavelli to contrast republicanism and monarchy at any length, expressing far-reaching dissatisfaction with the prevailing political order, was Aurelio Lippo Brandolini (1454?–1497), whose book of political theory he submitted to Lorenzo de Medici in manuscript around 1494, but never published. No writer, correctly observed Brandolini, ancient or modern, had, prior to himself, attempted to study and compare republics and monarchies systematically. But he was the exception that proves the rule: the Renaissance saw no way to combine republicanism with general amelioration: his unique study led him to reject republicanism in favor of monarchy, claiming autocrats and monarchs protect the poor and weak more effectively than oligarchic republics like Florence.[59]

That profound divergences between Renaissance anti-Christian philosophical underground and post-1650 Radical Enlightenment were no less crucial historically than the affinities is well illustrated by the *Theophrastus Redivivus*, among the most important mid-seventeenth-century Western clandestine manuscripts. Dating from 1659 and composed seemingly in France, this clandestine text offered a non-Spinozist Neo-Epicurean subversive outlook, rooted in a pre-Spinozist "philosophical atheism" encompassing some elements of the subsequent radical tradition but not others.[60] It comprehensively denies all the dogmas of religious faith, a process it terms "throwing off the yoke" [*iugum excutere*].[61] Although the ancient philosopher Theophrastus (*c*.371–*c*.287 BCE), Aristotle's successor as the director of the Peripatetic School in Athens, was not actually an Epicurean, he influenced Epicurus' views on cosmology and was a professed atheist.[62] What is radical, or rather "radical Aristotelian," in *Theophrastus Redivivus* is the strict separation of morality from belief in God and religion, elimination of divine providence, and rejection of all religious authority. But the text is patently Epicurean rather than quasi-Spinozist in evincing little interest in scientific enquiry (unlike the real Theophrastus) so that here the text is *not* radical. Where the real Theophrastus was a true Aristotelian scientific researcher, seeking the causes of natural phenomena by examining evidence, Epicurus and Lucretius—despite being strict naturalists, viewing thunder, lightning, meteors, and

[59] Brandolini, *Republics and Kingdoms*, 4–5; and Hankins's introduction to this text.
[60] Paganini, *Introduzione alle Filosofie clandestine*, 8–24; Palmer, *Reading Lucretius*, 42.
[61] Paganini, "Early Modern Atheism," 28. [62] Taub, "Cosmology and Meterology," 121–2.

all potentially frightening natural phenomena as of purely natural origin, and not the work of gods, and providing lists of all possible plausible natural explanations—showed scant interest in discovering which plausible explanation actually pertained in each case. What mattered to them was alleviating anxiety and fear, not investigating the specific cause.[63] Unlike the real Theophrastus and the *cercle, Theophrastus Redevivus* adheres to a skeptical approach not just to belief and theology but also scholarship and science. Far from presenting nature's laws as revealed by science as our chief verifying principle, *Theophrastus Redevivus*, like William Temple afterwards, sought to downplay, even discredit pursuit of science and "philosophy."[64]

Very different was Spinoza's approach to "superstition." Especially where religious authorities claim "the judgments of the gods" far surpass men's ability to understand, for him they are propagating an elaborate political as well as metaphysical deception. This kind of delusion alone, held Spinoza, "would have caused the truth to be hidden from the human race for all eternity, if mathematics, which is concerned not with ends, but only with essences and properties of figures, had not revealed to men another standard of truth. And beside mathematics, we can assign other causes also [. . .] that were able to bring it about that men—but very few in relation to the whole human race—would perceive these common prejudices and be led to the true knowledge of things."[65] Enhanced awareness of the power of science and philosophical reason based on science was therefore among the factors in the later seventeenth century causing the *cercle spinoziste* to part ways with Lucretius and the Epicureans in key respects: science made it more plausible that the web of deception could be successfully punctured and discredited as "deception." But for Spinozists, unlike Epicureans, there were also urgent political and social considerations affecting the well-being of all requiring the prevailing general body of delusion to be more actively challenged, even if challenging and attempting to undermine imposture, something Epicureans purposely avoided, entailed great individual risk and could proceed only surreptitiously.

Theophrastus Redivivus locates the roots of the "true" moral order exclusively in Nature and society, like both Neo-Epicureans and the post-1650 Radical Enlightenment, pronouncing its social values superior to those proclaimed by religion. Here it is radical. But while insisting injustice reigns on Earth, and using this as an argument against belief in God and religion, and identifying religion as essentially a political instrument, *Theophrastus Redivivus* remains chiefly concerned with the individual's moral development and attitudes without explicitly denouncing the prevailing social hierarchy and political order.[66] Here, *Theophrastus* diverges in the usual manner of the Neo-Epicureans from the radical tendency initiated by the *cercle spinoziste*. It manifests nothing like the confrontational republican and reformist tendencies of

[63] Taub, "Cosmology and Meterology," 122–4.
[64] Gengoux, *Un athéisme philosophique*, i. 135–55; McKenna, "Épicurisme et matérialisme," 77–8.
[65] *The Collected Works of Spinoza* ed. and trans. by E. Curley, i. 441–2.
[66] Paganini, *Introduzione alle filosofie clandestine*, 10–12, 14; Gengoux, *Un athéisme philosophique* ii. 767–9.

Johan and Pieter de La Court, Van den Enden, Bouwmeester, Meyer, and Koerbagh, or even, to take a later example, Helvétius, reflecting rather the political passivity of Hobbes. The *Theophrastus*'s Averroism and Neo-Epicureanism hence neither challenged absolute monarchy's pretensions nor demanded liberty of expression and toleration. Nor, like Averroism and Neo-Epicureanism more generally, does it evoke any real sense of philosophical "reason" being an advancing, cumulative, and investigative force attacking and eventually gaining the power to vanquish "superstition," ignorance, and tyranny.[67] Liberty of thought and expression do not figure as political goals to be doggedly fought for.

Admittedly, by the seventeenth century early modern Epicureanism had evolved from what has been dubbed fifteenth-century *individualethischen Epikureanismus* [individual-ethical Epicureanism] to an Epicureanism more orientated toward society and with a political face, culminating in Hobbes.[68] But even there, post-Renaissance Early Modern Epicurean tradition with a political dimension constituted a partly concealed and wholly quiescent underground, expressing dissatisfaction with the existing social and political order but adjusting to it via Epicurean quiescence, and the double truth affectations the latter gave rise to. During the age of Greek philosophy and ever since, noted d'Holbach, there existed some enlightened men but such was the tyranny of ignorance, credulity, and superstition that until recently even the "most enlightened" could communicate only in veiled terms and "by a cowardly complaisance" often shamefully mixed "lies with truth."[69] "Universal prejudices" [*les préjugés universels*] so powerfully repressed even the finest minds, over such long spans of time, that many despaired utterly of humanity; very few could or were bold enough full-frontally to combat "les erreurs universelles." Far from being overly optimistic, as twentieth-century critics often allege, pre-1775 Enlightenment radical thinkers often tended to be tentative, even pessimistic about the future—like Voltaire, Frederick, and Hume, on the moderate side.

"What does it matter," if a thinker "has particularly daring ideas", asks one critic of the Radical Enlightenment thesis, where "he or she shrinks from implementing them in practice?"[70] Such a view ignores both the ploys and ruses resorted to, to oppose religious, political, and cultural repression, and the deeply intimidating realities coercing those who, like Toland's early eighteenth-century "pantheists," saw little alternative but to embrace two doctrines, a private one concerned with truth and an external, public one necessary to placate the authorities and the people, the one "internal, or philosophical, altogether conformable to the nature of things and therefore to the truth itself," the other concealing a "truth" so unpalatable and intolerable to most people that it had to remain under wraps.[71] This kind of double-speak, apparent

[67] Gengoux, *Un athéisme philosophique* i. 69–84, 104, 112; Paganini, "Hobbes, Gassendi," 136–7. Paganini, *Filosofie clandestine*, 149-67; Paganini, "Enlightenment before the Enlightenment," 186–7.
[68] Mulsow and Schmitz, "Eigennutz, Statuserhaltung," 53–4.
[69] D'Holbach, *Le Bon Sens*, 316; Mori, *L'Ateismo*, 30.
[70] Chisick, "Interpreting the Enlightenment," 50. [71] Toland, *Pantheisticon*, 96, 110.

conformity to the ordinary, decried by d'Holbach, was profoundly characteristic of the Epicurean tradition and arguably also Hobbes.[72] Those making no effort to undermine the system formed the underground networks fomenting quiescent, hidden abjuration of the sort inspired by Epicurus and Lucretius. But by the early eighteenth century, these rubbed shoulders with more conspiratorial, active elements often in the same clandestine philosophical "societies," those of the sort Toland conjures up in his *Pantheisticon* (1720), where he designates his thought "pantheism," equating it with Spinozism as a "secret philosophy" but one diffused only among minuscule numbers of adherents exceptionally fervent for truth and to philosophize, adherents gathering solely in "their private assemblies and societies where they feast together," hidden from the great mass of mankind which they see as sunk in ignorance, and from the "scrupulously pious," from the "lying and superstitious fictions of men" and "spirit-haunted enthusiasts," above all sheltering together from the fury and violence of the "superstitious" multitude.

The atheistic philosophical undercurrent, abjuring belief in a divine providence governing men's affairs, prevalent in Italy and France before 1660, was hence predominantly Neo-Epicurean and avoided challenging the prevailing status quo. Pure Neo-Epicureanism pervaded the clandestine philosophical literature until the 1650s, but rapidly receded during the late seventeenth century as the systems of Spinoza and his following became the clandestine intelligentsia's prime tools and reference points. It was the *cercle spinoziste* in Holland that first forged a republican system systematically undermining religious authority and all teleology, openly challenging these belief systems in society and linking underground philosophy to reformist activism and propagating democratic values. Removing miracles and divine providence more comprehensively than Hobbes, Spinoza and his circle stepped beyond ancient and early modern Epicureanism and Averroism by tying the assault on religious authority to political engagement, a combination largely lacking previously, and adopting Galileo's decidedly non-Epicurean mathematical science as the overriding, exclusive verifying criterion, the sole authority for deciding what is and is not "true," while fusing this with Descartes's revolutionary principle that all physical reality is governed by a single coherent set of physical laws.

These crucial structural innovations explain why "Spinoza" and "Spinozism" became more central to the subsequent development of the Radical Enlightenment than Epicurus or Lucretius and why Spinoza's name retained a stronger negative resonance and rhetorical menace in Enlightenment controversies than those of Epicurus, Lucretius, Averroes, Machiavelli, Bruno, Vanini, Hobbes, Sidney, or Bayle, from the 1660s right through to the 1848 revolutions, after which Radical Enlightenment was displaced by socialism as chief opponent of the prevailing status quo. Sporadically, "Epicurus" and "Hobbes" played a not dissimilar rhetorical role as generalized foes of God and man in anti-radical polemics, but only Spinoza and "Spinozism" were

[72] Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," 208–13.

routinely invoked by theologians and moderate enlighteners to fight irreligious foes of the existing order everywhere and continually down to the mid- nineteenth century.

Radical Enlightenment defined as rejection of religious authority and the supernatural linked to rejection of the existing order and promoting an active democratizing republicanism was not especially optimistic regarding the future. Its adherents mostly eschewed short-term perspectives when expounding expectations for human amelioration. Conscious of the density of the "darkness" everywhere gripping humanity since Lucretius' time, the coterie of Diderot and d'Holbach, unlike Marxism, in the next century, issued no guarantee of general salvation or amelioration even for the long term. It is this that kept the Epicurean dimension relevant. Thus, Lichtenberg deemed Spinozism the only correct philosophy but was by no means sanguine about the chances of elevating philosophy, morality, and higher learning sufficiently to ameliorate humanity. Rather, he viewed the much trumpeted "improvements" and supposedly enhanced "humanity" of his own time, including "unser Eifer in der Philosophie aufzuklären" [our zeal in philosophy to enlighten] as mostly superficial and ineffective, more empty bombast and fashion than reality. Yet Lichtenberg and the radical-minded of the late eighteenth century also saw something ultimately compelling in what they perceived as their legacy to the future—higher, truer, and more reliable criteria of verification than those of the churches, universities, and academies—a body of philosophy with its methodology rooted in science. Despite the slowness of our steps, concludes d'Holbach at the close of his *Système social* (1773), the evidence proves there is a gradual progress of "la raison humaine." If several ancient and modern philosophers found the courage to embrace reason and experience alone to frame their thought, rejecting all theology, breaking free from "des chaines de la superstition," it was Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Strato who first lifted the veil of prejudice and delivered "la philosophie des entraves théologiques." Unfortunately for mankind their systems were too devoid of mystery, wonders, and marvels, "trop simples, trops sensibles," for most men so that everything long remained befogged in the "conjectures fabuleuses des Platons, des Socrates, des Zenons."[73]

Lucretius built a bridge between Hellenistic Greece and the eighteenth century that materially contributed to overturning the premises of the *ancien régime*. But basic human rights, sweeping social reformism, and the ideology of the "Revolution of reason" derived predominantly from the Radical Enlightenment or what the French Revolution (prior to Robespierre and the Terror) called simply "la philosophie moderne." A close linkage between materialism and radical political and social reformism needed to be introduced before Radical Enlightenment could gather momentum; for only a materialism negating divine providence and final ends tied to an activist democratic republicanism could account for how and why human society had become fundamentally disordered, wrongly organized to the disadvantage of the majority, while claiming this could be rectified, converted into a state of

[73] d'Holbach, *Système social*, 551–64.

happiness for all, by philosophy. If Voltaire considered the materialist philosophies of Diderot, d'Holbach, and Helvétius just weaker echoes of Spinoza's system, they had, he also recognized, become distinctly more dangerous. "La nouvelle philosophie," if not defeated quickly, he assured Grimm in a letter intended also for the eyes of d'Alembert and Condorcet, of October 1770, would result in "une révolution horrible."[74]

Epicureanism then both contributed to and remained a recognizable later strand of the Radical Enlightenment. By injecting a strenuous reformist activism, including crypto-republican thought, Helvétius, despite his moral philosophy being steeped in Epicureanism, later became one of the main sources of the radical tradition.[75] He was not alone in doing so. "I too am an Epicurian," Thomas Jefferson, a self-declared "materialist," assured William Short (1759–1849), in October 1819.[76] A fellow Virginian who had been his deputy and protégé while Jefferson served as United States ambassador in Paris in the late 1780s. In his reply, Short too professed to being an "Epicurean." Having participated along with Jefferson and Lafayette in the Paris discussions preceding the drafting of the French "Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen" in 1789, unlike Jefferson Short adhered consistently to radical views also with respect to race, being a founding member of the *Amis des Noirs*, the abolitionist society Condorcet, Lafayette, and Brissot established to advance the cause of black emancipation, in 1788. An ardent admirer of Franklin and Lafayette, whom Jefferson later designated his "adoptive son," Short continued sending Jefferson detailed private reports about French developments after the latter left France, returning to America, in October 1789. Jefferson and Short both deemed individual and collective "happiness" to be what Jefferson called "the aim of life."

In line with ancient Epicurean tradition, Jefferson and Short rejected Revelation, miracles, atonement and *supernaturalia* of every sort, viewing what happens on earth not as the will of any god but the outcome of human deed and effort. However, neither was genuinely Epicurean in viewing the American and French Revolutions as closely linked parallel movements that constituted the great leap forward in the history of humanity (until Robespierre and the Montagne in their view utterly perverted the French Revolution). To them, the Montagnard phase of the French Revolution (1793–4), with its intolerance and rampant populism, was a catastrophe, popular madness rooted in deception of the kind Machiavelli condemned in the Savonarola movement. Short was quicker than Jefferson to condemn Robespierre and the Terror. But Jefferson too, like all enlighteners, eventually denounced Montagnard intolerance, authoritarianism, and populism emphatically. The Montagnards Short loathed for their suppression of free expression and freedom of the press, and

[74] Voltaire to Grimm, 10 Oct. 1770, in Voltaire, *Correspondance* xxxvii. 112; Pecharroman, *Morals, Man, and Nature in the Enlightenment*, 20 n.; Robinet, *Dom Deschamps*, 79.

[75] Force, "Helvétius as an Epicurean," 107–9.

[76] Jefferson to Short, Monticello, 31 Oct. 1819, in Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, 1430; Scherr, "Thomas Jefferson," 92.

systematic violation of all human rights; to him, as to Jefferson, they were the Revolution's great betrayers. The concepts that powered America's and France's great leap forward, the two self-declared Virginian "Epicureans" concurred, sprang from a particular tendency in Western thought and sub-category of the Enlightenment—a stream of thought combining rejection of religious authority in the public sphere with a passionate democratizing republicanism and stress on universal and equal human rights. Where the two Virginians were more strictly Epicurean was in their joint need to conceal certain features from the public, their unwillingness to carry their common anti-Scripturalism into the open.

Jefferson possessed at least five different Latin editions of Lucretius' great poem, *De rerum natura*,[77] and, like Spinoza, professed to have little time for Plato's "foggy conceptions" and "mysticisms incomprehensible to the human mind." He harshly rebuked the Stoics and Cicero, despite some good things in their thought, especially disapproving of "their calumnies of Epicurus and misrepresentations of his doctrines." For Epicurus' moral and metaphysical doctrines, however, America's leading radical voice evinced only praise. "I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us."[78] For the revolutionary age beginning in America in the 1770s, infused with its Jeffersonian quest for universal and equal human rights, there was indeed much in Epicurus' teaching of lasting value. Unlike Aristotelian virtue and other pre-Hellenistic ethical systems, Epicurus' moral doctrine not only focused on the worldly self, and pursuit of happiness in this world, but was universalist, strictly separate from the city state and all religion, offering salvation on an equal basis to all, something seemingly capable of being shared by everyone, including slaves, women, and barbarians.[79] Recognizing this, Jefferson joined a line of French High Enlightenment thought reaching back to Diderot, d'Holbach, and beyond.

By undermining accepted notions of reality, encouraging views of "God" as identical to nature, demolishing the sphere of the supernatural, and basing its moral philosophy on the principle of "happiness" to which all are equally entitled, Radical Renaissance contributed to the heterodox ferment from which *spinozisme* as a broad tendency in Western thought followed by late Enlightenment egalitarian ideas- and eventually universal and equal rights, arose.[80] By helping corrode privilege, "divine right of kings," and ecclesiastical sanction of the existing social order, Radical Renaissance extensively contributed to the groundwork from which democratic republicanism was to emerge. But at the same time, Radical Renaissance lacked several key ingredients indispensable for what has been called the *rupture irrévocable* that so fundamentally transformed Western thought in, and from, the 1660s and 1670s.[81]

[77] Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 262–3.
[78] Jefferson to Short, Monticello, 31 Oct. 1819, in Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, 1430–3.
[79] Salem, "Peut-on définir les principes," 30–2.
[80] Paganni, "L'Apport des courants," 99; Wilson, "Epicureanism," 280; Force, "Helvétius as an Epicurean," 105, 116–17.
[81] McKenna, "Épicurisme et matérialisme," 75.

4

From Radical Reformation to the *cercle spinoziste*

4.1. SOCINUS AND THE SOCINIAN REVOLT

Tying rejection of religious authority to democratizing republicanism in the wake of the Dutch *cercle spinoziste* undoubtedly provided a broader, more lasting platform for social, moral, and ecclesiastical reformism and activism (beside scientific enquiry) than existed earlier. It was better adapted for making and following through a comprehensive challenge to the existing order than the earlier clandestine mix, or any of the separate strands, of Epicureanism, skepticism, eclecticism, and the Averroist, Machiavellian, and Hobbesian legacies, or any of these trajectories separately. For in 1650, the biggest insufficiency, or gap, in the armory of the philosophical–theological underground viewed as a challenge to the existing order was still the absence of a clear strategy for comprehensively discrediting and replacing the dogmas, arms of authority, and hierarchies of the past. Radical Reformation rejecting Luther and Calvin as well as Catholicism did offer a counter-culture of group subversion undermining the prevailing religious, social, and legal status quo in a way that Neo-Epicureanism did not: a vigorous activism, the appeal to equality, and a recipe for attacking the sway of kings, hierarchy, and priests. Even so, Radical Reformation of itself proved an inadequate basis for comprehensive change especially through being unable to free the moral order, law, education, and politics from theology, theocracy, and divine providence.

During the sixteenth century but continuing patchily in part of Europe through the seventeenth, Radical Reformation, the second main foundation upon which the Radical Enlightenment eventually arose, exerted a wide impact. Radical Reformation constituted, just like Radical Renaissance, a generally decried and despised fringe movement; but it proved much more willing and able to engage in direct confrontation with the existing order owing to its deep religious motivation. Attempting to translate belief into action and concrete outcomes, its advanced strains of "Protestantism" broadened and supplemented the impact of Radical Renaissance by greatly intensifying and expanding rejection of the dogmas of the medieval church along with the entire dogmatic Christology, Trinitarian theology, and intolerance of Luther,

Calvin, and the Anglicans, in this way becoming (and remaining) a key source of inspiration and reinforcement for many. Radical Reformation included the Socinians, a resilient, defiant fringe where the Christian ideal stood almost entirely free and independent of institutionalized ecclesiastical authority; it demanded a "divine truth" based on "reason," universal peace and tolerance, offering a sturdy Christian utopianism rejecting ecclesiastical sway that was essentially social and moral. Those segments of the Radical Reformation that championed "rational faith," virtually excluding mysteries and largely disregarding miracles, proved ready to fight every obstruction, demanding a broad irenicism while remaining inimical to all "priestcraft" and persecution.

Certainly aversion to the authoritarianism and political conservatism of Luther and Calvin (as well as the Catholic Church), reaction greatly encouraged by the Radical Reformation, did lead directly here and there to such intense disillusionment with religious tradition generally as to generate a renewed, intensified turn to Epicureanism and rejection of a knowing creator God, revelation, and immortality of the soul. In the case of the Lyon-based humanist Bonaventure des Periers (*c*.1510–*c*.1543), author of the atheistic text *Cymbalum mundi* (1537), for example, and the "sect of atheists" reportedly thriving in Lyon, in France, in the 1530s and 1540s, we see a direct convergence and overlapping of Radical Reformation and Radical Renaissance.[1] Even so, only a more systematic and philosophical call to refashion the world by altogether repudiating religious authority such as the Radical Enlightenment offered, eliminating the supernatural, ending theocracy, secularizing government, extending toleration, and basing social and legal principles on a secular morality of reciprocity and equality, grounded in the politics of republican democracy, could fully meet the necessary conditions for a comprehensive emancipation simultaneously freeing men from religious authority and monarchy tied to aristocracy and social hierarchy.

Although the term "Radical Reformation" itself was first coined only in 1957, by Harvard theologian and Unitarian minister George Huntson Williams (1914–2000), the topic as such emerged earlier and has been studied at least since the 1890s. A general picture began to appear with the first trans-Atlantic history of the Anti-Trinitarian tradition, *Socinianism and its Antecedents* (1952), and other studies, by another Unitarian minister, Earl Morse Wilbur (1866–1956). Williams followed up with his comprehensive survey of the topic, *The Radical Reformation* (1962), depicting the category as a mix of diverse fringe groups and free spirits, including the circle of Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525) and the revolutionary Anabaptists who, summoning the poor to rise and redistribute the wealth of the rich, seized Münster in 1534–5, groups already earlier prominent in Marxist accounts of the sixteenth century, and renowned among those interested in the origins of the modern revolutionary traditions. But Müntzer's and the armed Anabaptists' militancy, a fervent millenarianism calling on artisans and peasantry for support, and adhering to Trinitarian doctrine,

[1] Mothu, "Athéisme et politique," 99–104, 116–18; for a helpful discussion of the range and significance of the term "Radical Reformation," see Eire, *Reformations*, 250–64.