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Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century

J. G. A. Pocock*

THE study of past political ideas is an activity which may be undertaken for at least three methodologically distinguishable types of reason. For the historian it is primarily, I think, the study of the language used in a particular society to discuss political problems, and of the light thrown, often inadvertently, by the use of that language upon the character of that society and the events taking place in it. For the political scientist it is—somewhat more abstractly—the study of the rise and the role of an organized political language in a society's political activity, or in the political activity of society in general. Lastly, the political philosopher studies the ideas of the past with a view to seeing which of them are worth using, rephrasing, criticizing, or employing as the foundation of other propositions in the making of statements about politics abstractly considered.

It is in the first of these characters, that of the historian, that I wish to appear in this paper. I aim at saying something about a current of political discourse that ran through the life of the English-speaking peoples in the eighteenth century, and at eliciting from the relevant material a few propositions about the social and intellectual world in which those peoples, and especially the English themselves, may be said to have lived. It should be clear already that I shall be dealing with that vexed yet favorite topic of the relation of ideas to social reality, but I shall be doing so in tones of extreme caution. The slogan that ideas ought to be studied in their social and political context is, it seems to me, in danger of becoming a shibboleth; too many of those who pronounce it assume, often unconsciously, that they already know what the relations between ideas and social real-

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ity are, and this can lead to much coarse and uncritical thinking. Most commonly it takes the form of a rather crudely applied correspondence theory; the ideas under study are assumed to be characteristic of some faction, group, class, or type to which the thinker allegedly belonged, and it is then explained how the ideas express the interests, hopes, fears, or rationalizations characteristic of that group. The danger here is that of arguing in a circle. It is in fact often very difficult to identify without ambiguity the social membership of an individual, still harder that of an idea—consciousness being the contradictory thing it is—and one tends to buttress the assumptions one is making about the social position of the thinker with the assumptions one is making about the social significance of his ideas, and then to repeat the procedure in reverse by a thoroughly deplorable perversion of critical method. All this flows, if we analyze it, from the making of unacknowledged assumptions about the relation of ideas to social reality; and it is precisely because that relation is a real and important one that we ought not, as it seems to me, to be making assumptions about it so much as hypotheses. Empirically speaking, the more I reflect about the possible relations between a society's ideas and the different facets of its structure and activity, the more complex, two-faced, and contradictory those relations seem to me to become; and if we are to go in for the sociology of ideas we ought surely to do so as scientifically as possible, making as few assumptions as we can that are not capable of being tested. But before we need embark on this difficult exercise there is, fortunately perhaps, another kind of inquiry that can be carried on: and that is to ascertain, by normal critical interpretation, what the ideas were that were in use at a particular time, what in fact they said and implied, and on what commonly accepted assumptions and methods they were based. To embark on a sociology of ideas without an accurate and extensive knowledge of the ideas' primary meaning and secondary implications is a dangerous venture even if we believe that only the sociological approach will bring us to their true significance; and assuredly, a systematic survey of the ideas used for certain purposes in a certain period can be peculiarly destructive of the clichés of intellectual history. There is a Namierism of the history of ideas as there is of the history of Parliament, and it consists of identifying the concepts, assumptions, and languages actually involved in given periods and areas of human life. These birds can be as crook-talon'd as any other fowl that come to the historian's net, and I have sometimes thought that it would be fun to challenge the pro-

fession with a work entitled "The Structure of Political Ideas in the Eighteenth Century," for it is meaningful to say that there was one.

What I propose to do is investigate the significance in the eighteenth century of a current of ideas that stems mainly from James Harrington, but can be traced additionally to the seventeenth-century theorists studied some years ago by Z. S. Fink under the name of the "classical republicans."[1] These men—Milton, Andrew Marvell, Algernon Sidney, Harrington himself, and a number of lesser figures—were impressed by the stability of Venetian constitutional forms and through them by the Greek and Renaissance Italian theorists of mixed government, of whom Polybius was the most representative among the ancients and Machiavelli—the Machiavelli of the *Discourses*—among the moderns. The English "classical republicans" have reappeared in more recent research as the key figures of Caroline Robbins's *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman;*[2] only here, it is important to note, they bear a new collective name, that of "the Whig canon." The great value of Professor Robbins's book is that it illustrates, with much learning, how regularly recourse was made, throughout the century, to a group of writers essentially the same as Fink's Venetian theorists. These were the classics presented by Boswell to Paoli, studied by John Adams in Massachusetts, and praised by Wordsworth in a famous sonnet as "the elder Sidney, Marvell, Harrington, young Vane and others who called Milton friend." Young Vane, I suspect, owes his place in the sonnet largely to the exigencies of meter; Henry Nevile, Andrew Fletcher, John Trenchard, or—little as Wordsworth might have cared for the idea—John Toland the deist, all had a rather better claim as transmitters of the tradition. But Professor Robbins has documented so fully the continuity of classicism in the Whig mind from the end of republicanism to the beginnings of democratic radicalism that from her work alone it is clear that the textbook account of Augustan political thought as *Locke et praeterea nihil* badly needs revision. Her big book suffers, I will suggest, from only two real deficiencies. Because she identifies the ideas she studies with a chain of intellectual groups aris-

[1] Z. S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth Century England* (Evanston, 1945).

[2] Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development, and Circumstances of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II Until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

ing to the left of Whig statesmen and constantly criticizing them in the name of their own official ideals, she does not take account of the role in the history of these ideas of men like Bolingbroke, and so does not see that they can often better be understood in a Court-Country context than in a Tory-Whig or a Whig official-Whig intellectual one. Secondly—again perhaps because she is mainly concerned with the transmission of these ideas from one group to another—she does not do all that might have been done to study their assumptions or consider them as a commentary on English politics which entailed certain intellectual consequences for those who adopted it. Something can be done, I believe, to remedy these deficiencies, if we go back to the fountainhead—that is, if we go back to Harrington, who is in a special sense the central figure among the "classical republicans" of "the Whig canon," and trace from his time the descent of certain ideas, the uses that were made of them, and the changes which they consequently underwent. That is what I propose, in a cursory way, to attempt; but to engage in the interpretation of Harrington is to become involved in current academic controversy, and I fear I must say a word about that first.

Because Harrington declared that a shift in the social distribution of power had made its effects felt in his time, he has always been a target for the interpretations of those interested in relating ideas to contemporary social reality; and there has been a natural tendency to try and connect Harrington's ideas about what was happening in the seventeenth century with the views on the same subject held by the historian who is seeking to interpret Harrington and the seventeenth century simultaneously. Perhaps because the interpretation of the seventeenth century is not a task I have ever presumed to attempt, this has always seemed to me a rather dangerous proceeding. I should prefer to find out what Harrington thought was happening and then to compare it with what I think was happening, though there is of course no harm in testing to see whether elements of one's interpretation are present in Harrington's thought, as C. B. Macpherson has lately done.[3] Anyway, there are three recent interpretations of Harrington to which I must now allude; one is Macpherson's and a second, I am afraid, is my own. But the first that must be mentioned is that of H. R. Trevor-Roper in his renowned essay on *The Gentry*.[4] Here, of course, he presented Harrington as embodying the

[3] Crawford B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962).

[4] Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, *The Gentry, 1540-1640* (London, 1953).

consciousness of the declining mere gentry, cut off from office and so from wealth and power, and as writing *Oceana* in 1656 in order to provide his fellow *hobereaux* with the consoling myth that "the gentry have all the lands." This seems to me entirely misleading, both as regards what Harrington actually said and as regards his motives for saying it, but I mention this interpretation for the interesting reason that I shall shortly be pointing to a time, some forty years after Harrington wrote, when his ideas were actually used in much the way that Trevor-Roper describes, but had to be somewhat sharply modified in order to be so used. Trevor-Roper's interpretation, furthermore, though it is full of somewhat doubtful methodological assumptions, has the considerable merit of showing these assumptions up; that is, while curiously Marxian in its insistence on viewing Harrington's ideas as a piece of class-consciousness, it does raise in arresting language the question of what class Harrington was attached to, and thus makes possible the radical suggestion that he was not attached to any class with such psychological completeness that his ideas were a simple rendering articulate of their collective social unconsciousness. I therefore found that Trevor-Roper's contentions had a really liberating effect when I came to put forward my own interpretation of *Oceana*,[5] which was based not on Harrington's place in the social structure, but on his use of the intellectual vocabulary of his times. I contended that Harrington saw the "changes in the balance of property," which he said had begun in England with the advent of the Tudors, not so much in terms of the transfer of land ownership in consequence of buying and selling and other forms of economic activity, as in terms of changes in the legal obligations of land tenure, and that what he was interested in was the transition from a broadly feudal pattern, in which the typical freeman was the military tenant of some lord and obliged to fight in his quarrels, to a pattern of independent tenure, in which he was a freeholder who need fight in no one's quarrel but his own. From this I concluded that Harrington was not much interested in economic activity and that the power whose distribution in society he was trying to chart was essentially the possession of land that gave a man independence, this independence being in the last analysis measured by his ability to bear arms and use them in his own quarrels. Harrington's

[5] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Eng., 1957), chap. 6.

democracy was a republic of freeholders owning their own lands and weapons—"Englishmen with swords in their hands."

The third interpretation is that of C. B. Macpherson: he argues that English economic and consequently social relationships were in the mid-seventeenth century becoming increasingly founded on entrepreneurial activity, and that Harrington discerned enough of this transition to make it possible to say that, in the last analysis, he depicted the relationships between men as relationships of the market. Macpherson concedes that Harrington did not see very much of this, but contends that he saw enough of it to bring him under the rubric of Marxist interpretation; so that Macpherson's argument tends to consist of an unending retreat upon previously-prepared positions. It is expressed partly in the form of a correction of my own earlier interpretation of Harrington; and there is no doubt that he does succeed in showing that Harrington knew that land might be farmed for profit, that there was such a thing as a land market, that a cottager might prefer to sell his labor for wages rather than seek to enlarge his exiguous holding, that the growth of towns provided a market for the produce of the land, and so on—all things which my desire to emphasize the tenurial aspect of Harrington's thought may have led me to suggest did not figure in his theories. But the point is not whether Harrington knew that these things were going on—why should he not?—but whether he founded any of his key ideas upon them; and Macpherson's attempt to show that Harrington's system will not work unless entrepreneurial behavior in landowners is presumed to be at its basis really comes down to his interpretation of a single passage—that in which Harrington says that even in the unlikely but possible event of his agrarian law bringing all the land into the permanent possession of five thousand proprietors, it would not be in their interest to "exclude the people," whatever exactly that may mean. Macpherson argues that this passage only makes sense if we presuppose that the five thousand would be anxious to maintain an open market in land, and thus, he says, we find that at bottom Harrington's landowners form an entrepreneurial community to whom the value of land is what it will fetch at market. But assuming Macpherson's interpretation to be correct here—I am not sure of this—there is still a great deal of Harrington's thought which he has not shown to be grounded on assumptions of entrepreneurial behavior, and has more or less conceded not to be so grounded. I think these aspects of Harrington can be interpreted in line with my previous analy-

sis, and with Macpherson's concessions to that analysis, so that to a large extent his interpretation and mine are not so different as might appear.

In the first place, Harrington's notion of the power which the man who has property exerts over the man who has none does not entail any particular description of the economic relations between the two men, or of the economic process in which the two are engaged. All that is necessary to know is that the one is independent and the other dependent on him; the one is master and the other servant, and the only image of the English political economy which Harrington need have had in order to express his theory of power is one which showed it as consisting of households or families, themselves polarized into masters and servants.

We may observe this by considering the following propositions from his posthumously-published *A System of Politics,* into which he digested his theory in the form of aphorisms.

I, 13. The man that cannot live upon his own must be a servant; but he that can live upon his own may be a freeman.

I, 14. Where a people cannot live upon their own, the government is either monarchy or aristocracy; where a people can live upon their own, the government may be democracy.

I, 15. A man that could live upon his own may yet, to spare his own and live upon another, be a servant; but a people that can live upon their own cannot spare their own and live upon another, but (except they be not servants; that is except they come to a democracy) they must waste their own by maintaining their masters or by having others to live upon them.

I, 16. Where a people that can live upon their own imagine that they can be governed by others and not lived upon by such governors, it is not the genius of the people; it is the mistake of the people.

II, 4. If a man has some estate he may have some servants or a family, and consequently some government or something to govern; if he has no estate he can have no government.[6]

The important consequence is that Harrington's economics and his politics were alike essentially Greek, and that all he knew about English agrarian society was at the service of a fundamentally Aristotelian theory of citizenship. Like the Athenian analysts, he saw the citizen as the head or potential head of a household, and the noncitizen or servant as he who

[6] John Toland, ed., *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other Works . . .* (London, 1737), 496-497.

lacked that potentiality. The danger to a commonwealth from its servants, he said, was external rather than internal; human society consisted first of the commonwealth, the citizens, those whom possession of property had made independent and capable of having dependents—just as the Aristotelian citizen qualified for public power by his capacity for exercising private power within his household—and secondly, of those whom lack of property rendered incapable of independence and so of citizenship. But if Harrington was as conservative as Henry Ireton in his insistence that property was the prerequisite of political rights, he was also as democratic as Thomas Rainsborough in his willingness to extend citizenship to the poorest that was not a servant. A cottager who keeps himself above the subsistence level by laboring for wages is not excluded by any property qualification from appearing at the muster of Oceana.[7] The employer-wage earner relationship is not a determinant of power or of rights until it becomes a relationship of independence and dependence, of master and servant; and it is not thought of as being that in itself.

Harrington's citizen may or may not be an entrepreneur, but he is primarily a freeholder. One of many reasons why land, not trade, is the necessary background to Harrington's thought—why he is unable to give a convincing account of how master-servant relationships determine the distribution of power in Holland or even Venice[8]—is that his ideas hinge so greatly on the contrast between an England in which the ordinary proprietor was the military tenant of a feudal magnate and one in which he is free to bear arms in his own or the commonalty's quarrel. The right to bear arms, and the propertied independence enabling one to provide one's own, become the tests of citizenship in Harrington's England as they had been in Athens or Rome; Oceana is a dispersed *polis,* or rather a dispersed *comitia centuriata,* in which the county assemblies are at once

[7] Such a person is described *ibid.,* 166, where he is clearly not a servant, and the argument is that he will not use his political power to bring about a complete leveling of estates. However, he is not to be altogether trusted in war (p. 84).

[8] It is never quite clear to what degree the power of the Venetian nobility consists in their land (*ibid.,* 105, 137). Holland and Genoa are the only states where money is acknowledged to be more important than land (pp. 245-247), but though there is an account of the relation of Amsterdam to agriculture in the Dutch economy (pp. 300-301), neither Dutch nor Genoese government is ever considered in detail, nor is there any account of the relation of master to servant, aristocracy to democracy, in a mercantile economy. It seems probable that Harrington thought the only difference between a landed and a business household was that the former was the more stable and the easier described.

assemblies of the electorate and musters of the militia; the citizens are exercising by their ballots the freedom they manifest in their arms, and casting their votes in the course of their military drill.[9] In this utopian manner Harrington conveys what was to be perhaps his chief gift to eighteenth-century political thought: the discovery of a means whereby the county freeholder could equate himself with the Greco-Roman *polites* and profess a wholly classical and Aristotelian doctrine of the relations between property, liberty, and power. This was to make Harrington—I shall further suggest later—a major figure (if a very late one) in English political humanism.

If Harrington's doctrine of social power did not entail any particular theory of economic activity, there was the less need for him to explain any major shift in the distribution of power as the result of a shift from one mode of economic activity to another. This accounts for the ambiguity—or what appears to us the ambiguity—of his description of the change from an aristocratic to a popular balance in English history. He describes this as the result, in the first place, of Tudor legislation which emancipated the various classes of tenant from feudal dependence on their lords, but at the same time he emphasizes that the lords in consequence began to sell their lands and that the dissolution of the monasteries greatly increased the amount of land open to what he calls "the industry of the people." A wave of intensified land-selling therefore helps bring about a redistribution of land and power, but this does not mean that Harrington meant us to infer that there was at the same time a change to a mode of land exploitation in which buying and selling were of an importance they had not hitherto reached. Macpherson seems to concede this, and looks elsewhere for evidence of Harrington's awareness of the pervasiveness of market relationships between men—and by "elsewhere" I mean "outside Harrington's cardinal contentions and deep down in what I am tempted to call their subconscious implications."

But I have dwelt on this point for a particular reason. I am proposing to trace the use and development of Harrington's ideas after Harrington, and we shall come to a time when his view of English history did provide

[9] See the speech of Hermes de Caduceo, *ibid.*, 99: "We have this day solemnized the happy nuptials of the two greatest princes that are upon the earth or in nature, *Arms* and *Councils;* in the mutual embraces wherof consists your whole *Commonwealth*; whose councils upon their perpetual wheelings, marches, and countermarches, create her armys; and whose armys with the golden vollys of the Ballot at once create and salute her councils."

the basis for an increased awareness of the growing importance of monetary relationships—but, as we shall see, in a somewhat unexpected way and only after they had been so sharply modified, as compared with what he had meant by them, as almost to merit the use of the term "stood on their head." In fact, Harringtonian doctrine had to be partly transformed before it could be used in the way Trevor-Roper says it was used at its inception, and before it could mean at least one of the things it ought to mean before Harrington can occupy his proper place in a neo-Marxist scenario. The men who carried out this transformation of Harrington I shall call neo-Harringtonians.

The restatement of Harrington's doctrines began about 1675—in many ways an interesting date in the history of English ideology—and the point at which it began was located in the immediate vicinity of the first Earl of Shaftesbury. That statesman's intellectual activities, like most things about him, are difficult to analyze in detail, but it is known that he was a patron of political intellectuals, including at this time Locke, and something of one himself; and it is striking to find, so close to these two great men, the beginnings of so many of the characteristic themes of opposition ideology for the next century and longer. The sources on which I base this claim are: Shaftesbury's speech in the House of Lords upon Sherley *v.* Fagg, dated October 20, 1675; the tract called *A Letter from a Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country,* of which a copy is said to have existed in the handwriting of John Locke; one or two other lesser tracts of the same tenor and date (all these are printed in the *State Tracts in the Reign of Charles II*); and two years later, in 1677, Andrew Marvell's *Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England.* To take Shaftesbury's speech first, it opens with a dramatic assurance to the Lords that "our all is at stake," and a little later we find the following passage:

My Lords, 'tis not only your Interest, but the interest of the Nation, that you maintain your Rights; for let the *House of Commons,* and *Gentry of England,* think what they please, there is no Prince that ever Governed without *Nobility* or an *Army.* If you will not have one, you must have t'other, or the Monarchy cannot long support, or keep itself from tumbling into a *Democraticall Republique.* Your *Lordships* and the *People* have the same cause, and the same Enemies. My Lords, would you be in favour with the King? 'Tis a very ill way to it, to put your selves out of a future capacity, to be considerable in his Service. . . .[10]

[10] *State Tracts . . . in the Reign of Charles II . . .* (London, 1693), 59.

Now the opening sentences of this image of the Lords as a *pouvoir intermédiaire* are straight Harringtonian doctrine—or are until we start looking beneath the surface. Harrington's entire theory of monarchy can be reduced to two propositions: first, that the King's agents and servants must be supported either upon the land, as a feudal aristocracy, or about his person, as praetorians or janissaries; second, that whichever of these methods is adopted, relations between the military class and the King will be so prone to tensions that monarchy can never be a stable form of government.[11] The actual passage in *Oceana* to which Shaftesbury seems to be alluding is one in which Harrington says that once Charles I found that the House of Lords had collapsed as a political support—a collapse which Harrington explains in the long-term historical context of changes in landownership—he had no recourse but to try and govern through an army, but had no better fortune with this for much the same historical reasons.[12] But to regard this as a direct source for Shaftesbury's argument raises in acute form the question: what was Shaftesbury doing quoting Harrington to the House of Lords in 1675? His author had still a year or two to live, though he was by now much enfeebled in body and mind and had been a state prisoner for some time in 1662. But not only might the Lords have regarded him as a dangerous subversive; according to the doctrines of *Oceana,* neither they nor their House should have existed any longer, or been a political force if they had. The choice should indeed have lain between a "democratical republic" and military government—something very far removed from what Shaftesbury was saying. It is easy to make the obvious reply that Shaftesbury no doubt assumed that few if any of their lordships had read *Oceana* or would recognize the source of his ideas; but he must have thought they would be receptive to the ideas he was trying to put across, and of these we already know, first, that they required to be expressed in Harringtonian concepts, second, that they entailed a view of the state of England in 1675 in some respects the antithesis of Harrington's predictions. What exactly was Shaftesbury trying to convey? Part of the answer may be found slightly later in the same speech:

The King governing and administering Justice by his House of Lords, and advising with both his Houses of Parliament in all important matters, is the Government I own, am born under, and am obliged to. If

[11] See, e.g., Toland, ed., *Harrington Works,* 52-53, 70-72 (*Oceana*).
[12] *Ibid.,* 70.

ever there should happen in future Ages (which God forbid) a King governing by an Army, without his Parliament, 'tis a Government I own not, am not obliged to, nor was born under.[13]

And if we turn to the *Letter from a Person of Quality*—a pamphlet so close in thought to Shaftesbury's speech that it certainly emerges from the same stable—we find this:

. . . it must be a great mistake in Counsels, or worse, that there should be so much pains taken by the Court to debase and bring low the House of Peers, if a Military Government be not intended by some. For the power of *Peerage* and a *Standing-Army* are like two Buckets, the proportion that one goes down, the other exactly goes up, and I refer you to the consideration of all the Histories of ours, or any of our neighbour Northern Monarchies, whether standing forces, Military, and Arbitrary Government came not plainly in by the same steps, that the Nobility were lessened; and whether whenever they were in Power and Greatness, they permitted the least shadow of any of them. . . .[14]

The thought is plainly the same. Here we are in at the birth—with Harrington playing at least an umbilical role—of that concept or bogey of the standing army which was to figure so prominently among the political ideas of the next century. I put the birth of the bogey in 1675, rather than under the Protectorate or at the Restoration, for a reason; but first let me underline how paradoxical it was that it should have been Harrington whom both Shaftesbury and the Person of Quality employed to father their concept of the standing army's baleful role in politics and history. For though Harrington was certainly author of the doctrine that kings must govern either through a nobility or through an army, and though he made Olphaus Megaletor—the Cromwell-figure of *Oceana*—renounce all thought of ruling through a permanent military force, he had little real conception of the standing army as the later seventeenth century was coming to understand the term. What he had in mind was praetorians and janissaries—whom he thought incompatible with any stable monarchy—not a permanent professional force maintained by the administration and supplied out of the public exchequer. His notions of public finance, so far as they can be discovered, simply did not admit of the idea that the state could organize itself so as to bear this burden, or

[13] *State Tracts in the Reign of Charles II*, 60.
[14] *Ibid.*, 55.

make the upkeep of a professional army anything but pure loss. "A bank never paid an army," he wrote, "or paying an army, soon became no bank"[15]—words true enough of Renaissance government, but which Michael Godfrey was to die to prove obsolete. Harrington did not think that an army could be planted on any permanent footing other than land; it must either be quartered on the people—which meant a choice of tyranny or rebellion—or settled on the land, which meant the establishment of military colonies (in conquered territories) or of a feudal knighthood (in domestic government).[16]

The establishment of military rule, he thought, would be fatal to liberty, but also fatal to authority; it could not lead to any stable system of government at all.[17] Consequently, he can never have ascribed to it the historical role which the Person of Quality assigns to the standing army when he talks of it rising upon the ruins of the nobility in "our neighbour Northern Monarchies" and threatening to do the same in England. The reference to "neighbour Northern Monarchies" is a plain allusion to the idea of a common "Gothic" pattern of free government, which had been or was being subverted everywhere but in England, and the standing army is seen as the historical agent of that subversion. But Harrington, though he believed in a common "Gothic" pattern, did not see it as either free or stable. He considered it an uneasy alliance between monarchy and feudal aristocracy, a perpetual prey to disorder and civil war; and because he thought it inherently unstable, he had no need to assign sophisticated historical causes to its ultimate disappearance. It had abolished itself; the Tudor kings had brought about a redistribution of land in order to undermine their nobility, and in so doing had undermined themselves. A question which Harrington glanced at was why it seemed to be lasting longer in France.[18] But the Person of Quality has to explain its disappearance, and present the standing army as an agent of historical change, because he looks on the "Gothic model" as free, stable, and natural. To him it is not the disorderly feudalism of Harrington, but the ancient free government of England by King, Lords, and Commons in which all but a few *esprits forts*—such as Harrington—firmly believed. He is dwelling on the Lords as a threatened essential of this system, but it

[15] Toland, ed., *Harrington Works,* 243 (*The Prerogative of Popular Government*).

[16] *Ibid.,* 71-72 (*Oceana*).

[17] *Ibid.,* 521 (*Political Aphorisms,* Nos. 95-100).

[18] *Ibid.,* 271-275 (*The Prerogative of Popular Government*).

could just as well have been the Commons, and was to be, repeatedly, in thought of this order. In short, Harrington did not believe in the ancient constitution, but Shaftesbury and the Person of Quality, twenty years later, did. They chose, however, to present their ideas in Harringtonian form, and the essence of neo-Harringtonianism lies in the drastic revision of Harrington's historical doctrine which this necessitated.

So far as one can see, the appeal of Harrington's doctrine to them was that it was admirably suited to the expression of ideological opposition to the idea of a standing army, even though the construction of such an ideology had been no part of Harrington's intentions. The standing army —though I will repeat that it was nothing but a bogey in political reality, at any rate after 1689—is one of the seminal historical and political ideas of the period; and it is relevant to the present inquiry to raise the problem of the bogey's origins. The textbook account of the matter gives the obvious explanation, that it lay in the painful memories of Cromwellian rule; and so plausible does this seem that I would not attempt to deny that there must be much truth in it somewhere. But there are some inconvenient bits of evidence; and though by mentioning them I raise a problem I cannot solve, it will nevertheless illuminate my theme if I do so. Let us glance back to the Person of Quality; he says that he cannot believe that the King himself meditates military rule: "he is not of a temper Robust and Laborious enough to deal with such a sort of Men or reap the advantages, if there be any, of such a Government; and I think, he can hardly have forgot the treatment his *Father* received from the Officers of his Army . . ." and here we might expect rehearsal of the calamitous events at Holmby House, Hampton Court, Carisbrooke, and Whitehall. But the sentence goes on "both at *Oxford* and *Newark;* 'twas an hard, but almost an even choice, to be the Parliament's *Prisoner,* or their *Slave*"[19]—words which, as far as I can see, can only allude to the angry scenes between Charles I and Prince Rupert's officers which followed the surrender of Bristol; there is nothing about the experience of Cromwellian rule in the rest of this pamphlet. Now it would certainly be possible, by treating this as a *pièce d'occasion,* to find local and particular reasons why the Person of Quality should have wanted to present the standing-army threat as emanating from the King's courtiers and ministers, conspiring against his relations with his Houses of Parliament; and we could point to these as showing how the fear of a standing army

[19] *State Tracts in the Reign of Charles II,* 55.

remembered from Cromwell's days became transferred to the image of a standing army serving the King. There may well be something in this; but the fact remains that the memory of Oliver, his colonels, his purges, his major-generals, received curiously little emphasis in the first forty years or so of standing-army doctrine—of which there is a great deal. In 1698, it is true, the third volume of Ludlow's very anti-Cromwellian memoirs[20] was published with a preface linking it to the current controversy over William III's guards; but that controversy was already in full swing and well provided with its familiar concepts, among which that of Cromwellian rule was far from dominant. By about 1714, the debate about renewing the Mutiny Bill, which enlivened almost every year of an eighteenth-century parliamentary session, began to see Cromwellian precedents brought forward in force; but there is not much of it earlier. An elaborate ideology grew up about standing armies, and generally speaking it is based, not on allusions to the Cromwellian experience, but on the idea already expressed for us by the Person of Quality and seen to be the foundation of neo-Harringtonian doctrine: namely, that standing armies appear in history about the end of the fifteenth century and are one of the instruments whereby absolute monarchies subverted ancient Gothic free government. Into this highly generalized picture it was hard to fit Cromwell and the New Model, and one may wonder whether it arose merely out of the fear of them. The reason why we invariably meet the standing army in this guise, however, is a simple one: it invariably appeared as the Person of Quality presented it, as a danger emanating from the court, a conspiracy of evil counselors and corrupt ministers against the happy relationships of King, Lords, and Commons. The standing army was a bogey intended for country gentlemen, part of a hydra-headed monster called Court Influence or Ministerial Corruption, whose other heads were Placemen, Pensioners, National Debt, Excise, and High Taxation. The term linking all these was "Court," and while it may be, as Trevor-Roper has argued, that country gentlemen about 1656 saw the Protectorate as a form of court rule, to post-Restoration audiences it appeared anomalous, atypical, a usurpation representing nothing in the workings of the traditional constitution. If you wished to

[20] *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Esq; Lieutenant General of the Horse, Commander in Chief of the Forces in Ireland, One of the Council of State, and a Member of the Parliament Which Began on November 3, 1640 . . .*, 3 vols. (Vivay, 1698-99).

denounce the court there was little reason to denounce the Protectorate as part of it; and there was a well-established terminology for denouncing the court in which allusions to the Protectorate played no great role. Of that terminology the standing army was part, and there is consequently a discontinuity between the memory of actual rule by an army—a memory which I agree must have been present—and the way in which the concept of rule by an army was actually used. There may be ways of bridging that discontinuity, but I shall not attempt to find them here, since my concern is with the further history of the neo-Harringtonian ideology.

That this was an ideology intended to make country gentlemen discontented with the court is evident from the whole story of its development. Shaftesbury's speech and the *Letter from a Person of Quality* are both aimed at the Lords rather than the Commons, and are concerned with an alleged plot by evil counselors to substitute military for parliamentary rule; but if we turn to Marvell's *Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* (1677), a work of comparable political standpoint, we find ideas aimed at the Commons backbencher and his constituents, in which the threat from the court is one of corruption rather than dictatorship. Marvell paints a clear picture[21] of the three elements of a Namier-type Parliament as seen through the eyes of a disgruntled independent member. There are the placemen, including military officers, whose allegiance is to their employer the Crown rather than to Parliament and whose sole business is to support the increase of government expenditure and "the depression of civil authority." There are the office seekers, into whose ranks honest country members are constantly drawn, and who are both exposed to court corruption and a source of corruption to others. Their crime in Marvell's eyes is that they are loyal to their factions and leaders rather than to Parliament as a whole, and in a passage interesting to the student of Harringtonian ideas he compares them to the retainers of the fifteenth century: "they lift themselves streightways into some Court faction, and it is as well known among them, to what Lord each of them retaine, as when formerly they wore Coats and Badges." Last of all there is the "salt . . . that hath hitherto preserved this gross body from putrefaction," the independent gentlemen proof against corruption and loyal only to the country, one another, and themselves. But it is characteristic of the opposition "Country" ideology which Marvell is helping

[21] Andrew Marvell, *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England* . . . (London, 1677), 74-81.

to found that he believes that only short and frequent parliaments can preserve these men of worth from corruption, whether by place, place seeking, or too much familiarity with one another, so that they too become a faction in their own right. There was to be much writing on this theme of the need for frequent parliaments, and a recurrent note is the necessity to keep the independent member politically virgin by isolating him from too much contact with power, its exercise, its pursuit, or even its opposition. "All power corrupts" might have been a Country motto, and the barrenness of Country ideology came from its insistence on regarding Parliament as a collection of men who had no more to do with power than exercise a jealous suspicion of it.

If we now summarize the main outlines of the "Country" vision of English politics as it appears in a multitude of writings in the half century that follows 1675, we may attempt to see what is Harringtonian, or rather neo-Harringtonian, about it. Society is made up of court and country; government, of court and Parliament; Parliament, of court and country members. The court is the administration. The country consists of the men of independent property; all others are servants. The business of Parliament is to preserve the independence of property, on which is founded all human liberty and all human excellence. The business of administration is to govern, and this is a legitimate activity; but to govern is to wield power, and power has a natural tendency to encroach. It is more important to supervise government than to support it, because the preservation of independence is the ultimate political good. There exists an ancient constitution in England, which consists in a balance or equilibrium between the various organs of government, and within this balance the function of Parliament is to supervise the executive. But the executive possesses means of distracting Parliament from its proper function; it seduces members by the offer of places and pensions, by retaining them to follow ministers and ministers' rivals, by persuading them to support measures—standing armies, national debts, excise schemes—whereby the activities of administration grow beyond Parliament's control. These means of subversion are known collectively as corruption, and if ever Parliament or those who elect them—for corruption may occur at this point too—should be wholly corrupt, then there will be an end of independence and liberty. The remedy for corruption is to expel placemen, to ensure that members of Parliament become in no way entangled in the pursuit of power or the exercise of administration, and to

see to it that parliaments are frequently elected by uncorrupted voters.

The standing army appears in this context as an instrument of corruption rather than of dictatorship. Army officers in Parliament are placemen, and they encourage the growth of a military establishment outside parliamentary control. The threat of rule by the sword is there, but it is muted. But fortunately the independent polity possesses in itself a counterpart to the standing army, which should render it forever unnecessary. The essence of the standing army is its long-service professionalism, which is what makes it a sinister interest and a potential uncontrolled branch of government. But there is an ancient institution known as the militia, whereby the public defense is exercised directly by the independent proprietors appearing in arms at their own charge. If the armed force of the nation is embodied only in this form, there can be no threat to public liberty or the public purse; and the proprietor's liberty is guaranteed as much by his right to be the sole fighter in his own defense as by his ultimate right to cast a vote in his own government. To defend the militia against a standing army is the same thing as to defend Parliament against corruption. Here are two passages from Shaftesburian tracts printed in 1675, which might be duplicated from many later publications:

A *standing Parliament* and a *standing Army* are like those *Twins* that have their lower parts united, and are divided only above the Navel; they were born together and cannot long out-live each other.[22]

And:

The same might be said concerning the only Ancient and true Strength of the Nation, the *Legal Militia,* and a *standing Army*. The *Militia* must, and can never be otherwise than for *English Liberty,* because else it doth destroy *itself;* but a *standing Force* can be for nothing but *Prerogative,* by whom it hath its *idle living* and *Subsistence*.[23]

Now if we look for what is most purely Harringtonian in all this, we shall find it, I think, in the associated ideas of propertied independence and the militia. Harrington's theory of citizenship, I contended earlier, was that property conferred two things: independence, and power over those who depended on one's property for their subsistence; and the citi-

[22] *Two Seasonable Discourses,* in *State Tracts in the Reign of Charles II,* 68.
[23] *A Letter from a Parliament Man to his Friend, ibid.,* 70.

zen displayed his independence, and exercised it, by appearing in public with those arms which were his own and which he need use only in his own or the public quarrel. In Harringtonian thought, then, the commonwealth and the militia were one and the same; but where Harrington contrasted the republic of armed proprietors with the feudal combination of monarchy and aristocracy, the neo-Harringtonians contrasted it with the professional army maintained by the executive power. (In these terms, of course, the New Model was not a standing army; it never found an executive power capable of maintaining it.) But whether in 1656, 1675, or later, the ideal of citizenship is the same. It is, as I have said, essentially Greek; and from this point of view, what Harrington contributed to English thought was an intellectual device whereby the country meeting, which looked so similar whether its purpose was to elect knights of the shire or to take sides in a civil war, could be equated with a Greek or Roman civic assembly—*comitatus* with *comitia*—and be robed in all the dignity of classical citizenship. Harrington, it seems to me, helped create the political mood of the eighteenth century in a number of ways. With his emphasis on the role of property, he helped create the ideal of the independent man, which was one of the few subjects on which the age allowed itself to become fanatical—"I am the man," said the seditious undergraduate to the Oxford proctor, "that dare say God bless King James the 3d and tell you my name is Dawes of St. Mary Hall. I am a man of independent fortune and therefore am afraid of *no one* or *no man*"[24]—and by equating the freeholder with the *polites* or *civis,* he helped make the eighteenth century what it notoriously is, the most classical-minded of English centuries. In political thought, indeed, I should like to suggest that the humanist Renaissance came late to England, and that it was Harrington and the neo-Harringtonians who gave it its true form. Tudor political thought is Christian, medieval, and slightly Machiavellian; Puritan political thought is a battleground between the apocalyptic and the secular; but once the medieval hierocracy was smashed and the Puritan impulse exhausted, and the *communitas* needed a new vision of itself in radically secular terms, then Renaissance humanism could perform its true function of holding up the classical mirror, in which could be perceived what was enduringly human in a world of instability and disorder. Harrington performed this task, proclaiming the return to Eng-

[24] W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1958), 170.

land of what he called "ancient prudence," and this is what I meant by describing him as among the first of English political humanists. There seems to me a close parallel between the story of Harrington and the neo-Harringtonians and the story traced by Hans Baron in his study of the Florentine Renaissance. In a time of crisis, the Florentine humanists urged their city to find strength and assurance in embracing directly the classical model, even if this involved a repudiation of the medieval past; and so did Harrington. But as the immediate crisis passed, it was found that pure classicism did too much violence to the image of the city's continuity, and the classical ideals had to be rephrased to make room for the great writers of the *trecento;* just so, I suggest, did the neo-Harringtonians rephrase their doctrine to bring it into line with that idealization of medieval law and government we call the ancient constitution.

But the classicizing influence of Harringtonian ideas upon English thought was not exerted solely through the identification of freeholder with citizen. To understand their effect more fully, we need to look into the implications of the idea that by preserving their independence against the court, Parliament and its extension the country were preserving what was called "the balance of the constitution." The idea of mixed or balanced government in England was of course not new; one has to think only of the Answer to the Nineteen Propositions, with its doctrine of sovereignty vested in a kind of equipoise between King, Lords, and Commons; but older than any expression of this doctrine in English constitutional terms, and present by implication, in some degree, whenever such an expression was formulated, was the Polybian doctrine of the mixed constitution, which the Renaissance had revived and Machiavelli transmitted to the many countries where he was read. According to this doctrine, each of the three pure forms of government, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, would if existing alone be destroyed by excess of its own qualities; it would be replaced by its own perverted form and that by one of the pure forms, itself doomed to excess and replacement; and so on in an unending cycle. Only a mixed or balanced constitution, combining the qualities of all three pure forms, could hope to escape the doom of degeneration through excess; but as excess was in this model the only cause of change in political systems, it was seriously contended that a perfectly balanced combination of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy ought to last forever. The immense prestige of Venice among some

theorists of this school was based on their belief that she had attained this immortal equilibrium; that was the meaning, to them, of the epithet Serenissima. But most admitted that even the most perfect equipoise could only be maintained through human care and attention, and since that was fallible, some theoretical attention had to be paid to the cause and cure of degeneration in the balanced constitution. In Machiavelli, the most influential of the Renaissance transmitters of Polybius, the technical term for this sort of degeneration is "corruption." It arises when the balance is disturbed, typically through the encroachment of one of its three constituents upon the others; and since, in Machiavellian thought, stability in the political system is a precondition of morality in the individual life, corruption is a moral as well as a political phenomenon. But as it is the degeneration of what would otherwise be perfect, the remedy is a return to first principles, a redefinition of the balance in its original rigor; for such is the only kind of reform possible on a static-cyclical view of history.

Ideas of this kind were in use in England, and applied to the English constitutional system, well back into the sixteenth century. But if Machiavelli was the chief transmitter of Polybius, Harrington was the chief translator of Machiavelli into English political, legal, and historical terms. He admired Venice and thought Machiavelli the greatest of post-classical political theorists; the constitution of *Oceana* is meant to be the constitution of an "immortal commonwealth"; but in his doctrine of the agrarian —the need for the distribution of power to be proportioned to the distribution of land—he supposed that he had hit on the principle which made the Polybian cycle historically intelligible and showed how it might be applied to the successive phases of West European and English history. This involved treating English history as a record of instability and successive degenerations, but also showed how this instability might be escaped for the future. The neo-Harringtonian contribution was to reverse this image, and reconcile Harrington with the historical complacency of the English, by arguing that the ancient constitution was itself an example of the Polybian-Harringtonian mixed constitution.[25] But it was that Country ideology whose beginnings we have studied in 1675;

[25] The key work here is Henry Nevile's *Plato Redivivus* . . . (London, 1681). Nevile carried out the formal task of refurbishing Harringtonian doctrine and bringing it into line with ancient-constitution doctrine, and Miss Robbins has traced his influence on her "Commonwealthmen"; but the borrowing of Harrington's ideas for country-party purposes began earlier, and in the way I have described.

how their doctrines might be expressed in terms of a simplified version of English land tenure and English history.

The ideas earlier expressed in the Answer to the Nineteen Propositions became increasingly important in the reign of William III: that is, the idea of the constitution as a sharing of power between King, Lords, and Commons, and the idea that its underlying principle was that of a balance between these three. Since Polybian concepts were already common, we do not need to invoke Harrington to explain for us why King, Lords, and Commons were identified with monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and the balance of the English constitution with the balance of Sparta, Rome, or Venice; when Disraeli, long after, talked about a "Venetian oligarchy" he was criticizing Whig England in its own terms and using a language as old as the Civil War or older. Nor do we need Harrington to explain for us why it was that the King in this model balance became identified with executive power, the Commons with legislative authority, and the Lords with the bridge between the two, thus launching English constitutional theory on the slippery slope which led from Polybius to Montesquieu. But the neo-Harringtonian contribution was that country ideology whose beginnings we have studied in 1675; and it was here that Harrington was caused to exert his significant influence on eighteenth-century thought.

The central Harringtonian idea is that property confers independence, and the central idea of the Harringtonian balance is that power must not be so distributed that it encroaches on the independence of property. In neo-Harringtonian hands this was transformed to read: the English constitution consists of an ideal balance between the powers of the Crown and those of Parliament, which stands for property and independence. But the Crown has not only a tendency to encroach, but a means of doing so. This particular means is what we collectively term influence, but its enemies, corruption; and it is important to realize that the word "corruption" in the eighteenth century is very often being used in its Machiavellian sense, as well as in the vulgar sense of bribery. That is, it is used to denote a disturbance of the balance of the constitution, with the demoralization of individuals and the public that is supposed to go with it; and the gloomier critics of public morality found it easy to suppose that the nation as a whole might soon be corrupt, and to ask with Machiavelli whether there was any way out. But the Crown would have been precipitating corruption even if it had "influenced" Par-

liament by means other than the suborning of individuals—not that the "Country" critics envisaged any other way of doing it—because, in "Country" theory, the balance of the constitution depended on the complete separation of Parliament and administration. It was for the Crown to govern, and for Parliament to exercise a jealous surveillance of government; "corruption" would follow if the Crown discovered any means at all of attaching members of Parliament to it in the pursuit of its business. Both Court and Country, in eighteenth-century constitutional debate, believed that the constitution consisted in the balance maintained between its parts; but the "Country" theory maintained that the balance was to be preserved by preserving the parts in independence of each other, while the "Court" apologists—nearer as they usually were to constitutional reality—contended that the balance was between parts that were interdependent and must be preserved by keeping the interdependence properly adjusted. Both schools of thought, true to their Machiavellian premises, believed that when there was corruption it must be dealt with by a return to the original principles (or original balance) of the constitution, but the Country pamphleteers were of course usually to be found in the posture of insisting that there was corruption and that it ought to be reformed forthwith, and it is consequently they who are responsible for importing into eighteenth-century thought the notion that the basic principles of the constitution—held to consist of some kind of balance or separation of powers—were known, as well as ancient, and that recourse could and should be made to them whenever there was need. This had some interesting intellectual consequences; and in exploring them, we shall be able to see more clearly just what it was that was Harringtonian, as well as Machiavellian, about the Country ideology.

Seventeenth-century ideas were to a significant extent oriented around the conception of the ancient constitution—that is to say, the conception that the existing constitution was ancient and perhaps immemorial. I have tried to show in another place[26] that this belief arose because the constitution was identified with the common law and the common law with custom, which was by definition immemorial; and I have also tried to show that there was a philosophy of custom—a view of institutions as based purely upon immemorial usage and experience, with no conscious beginnings and nothing more to justify an institution than the presumption that, being immemorial, it must on innumerable occasions have

[26] Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law,* chaps. 2 and 3.

proved satisfactory—which was expressed in detail by seventeenth-century lawyers and, a century later, powerfully affected the thought of Edmund Burke.[27] This philosophy of custom lay at the back of belief in an ancient constitution, though it was not necessarily entailed by every expression of that belief. However, the ancient constitution was supposed to be immemorial, and its merit consisted in the antiquity of its usage rather than in any rationalization of its principles. Now the essence of neo-Harringtonianism lay in its reconciliation of Harrington's vision of a balanced commonwealth of proprietors with the older English vision of the ancient constitution, and one result of this somewhat uneasy marriage was the importation of Polybian and Machiavellian ideas into the way in which Englishmen thought about their constitution. The seventeenth century saw the constitution as ancient; the eighteenth, as ancient and balanced. Those eighteenth-century Englishmen who were dissatisfied with their constitution and wanted to reform it typically presented their proposed reforms as involving a return to the constitution's original principles—a doctrine not characteristic of opposition thought under the first four Stuarts and involving attitudes rather fundamentalist than prescriptive, rather reactionary than conservative. The pamphlets and politicians who made use of the Country ideology were adopting the posture of a radical right; but their terminology and ideas were extensively borrowed by the radical left when one began to appear in George III's reign.

Mr. Robert Shackleton has argued[28] that Montesquieu obtained much of his doctrine of the separation of powers from Bolingbroke, when the latter was at the height of his press campaign against Walpole. Professor Butterfield has commented on the Machiavellian elements in Bolingbroke's ideology, notably in his call for a return to the original principles of the constitution.[29] But I know of no study which emphasizes the extent to which Bolingbroke was the last and most spectacular of the neo-Harringtonians, though in his writings of the *Craftsman* period—in both the *Dissertation on Parties* and *Oldcastle's Remarks on the History of England*[30]—may be found a full-dress interpretation of English politics

[27] J. G. A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution—A Problem in the History of Ideas," *The Historical Journal,* III (1960), 125-143.

[28] Robert Shackleton, "Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, and the Separation of Powers," *French Studies,* III (1949), 25-38; and *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 1961), 296-301.

[29] Herbert Butterfield, *The Statecraft of Machiavelli* (New York, 1956), 135-165.

[30] Both these appeared in serial form in the *Craftsman—Oldcastle's Remarks* in 1730-31 and the *Dissertation* in 1733-34.

and history from the neo-Harringtonian point of view, with both its plausibility and its contradictoriness strongly brought out. The term "neo-Harringtonians" may be best employed to denote specifically the group of intellectuals who were active around and after the year 1698. They included Henry Nevile, an intimate of Harrington himself, who may have had a hand in the original *Oceana* and who lived till 1694; Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, the Scot who had been out with Monmouth and ended his days opposing the Union; Walter Moyle, nearly the only one of all these idealizers of the country gentleman who had estates and spent some of his time on them; John Toland, the Irish deist through whom we can link the neo-Harringtonians with the circle round Robert Viscount Molesworth in Dublin; John Trenchard and his younger collaborator, Thomas Gordon, who was active till nearly 1750.[31] Trenchard and Gordon were responsible in the 1720's for two periodicals, the *Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters,* through which the ideas of this school passed to the American colonies;[32] it is the deist rather than the neo-Harringtonian aspect of their influence that has been studied in America, but the Country language was spoken on both sides of the Atlantic, as Professor Bailyn of Harvard shows in his recent book.[33]

Now the essential difference between Harrington and the neo-Harringtonians was that Harrington dismissed medieval politics as incoherent and saw his commonwealth of freeholders as coming into existence only after 1485, while the neo-Harringtonians identified it with the ancient constitution. When they sought to convert Harrington's language to their own uses, therefore, there were bound to be clashes between the two diametrically opposed versions of history involved, and this is particularly noticeable when the neo-Harringtonians permit themselves to speak as if there had been a relatively recent transfer of effective landownership into gentry hands—a view of course incompatible with the antiquity of the House of Commons. It is this idea that "the gentry have all the lands" which led Trevor-Roper to say that Harrington was supplying consolatory myths to a gentry starved by exclusion from office. Now certainly *Oceana*—that extended city-state, as I have called it—presents a vision of a republic of proprietors governing themselves with-

[31] Miss Robbins gives a valuable account of them all.

[32] Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York, 1953), 141-146, 492.

[33] Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776,* I (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

out permanent officeholders living at their expense; but if Harrington had been a simple dreamer of dreams for the country in its opposition to the court, one would have expected to find something about the court in his works—about its expense and corruption, about how it ceased to be a historical necessity—and there is not nearly enough. He regarded pre-Civil War England as an unstable monarchy governing through a landed aristocracy, and no more; "office" in his works is a French phenomenon. But the neo-Harringtonians were Country ideologists in the full sense of the term, avowed enemies of a court which they denounced for governing through influence and standing armies and for boosting the expenses of government in the form of high taxation, national debts, and (yet again) influence and corruption. In short, they seem to fit the Trevor-Roper pattern a good deal better than Harrington does; only the court they denounce is not the overdeveloped but underfinanced Renaissance court of the Crisis in Government, but a mercantilist court rapidly advancing in the arts of administrative bureaucracy and government credit and finance—things which Harrington not only did not denounce but was certain could not exist.

The neo-Harringtonians, furthermore, were making an open attempt (as Harrington had not) to win support from country gentlemen discontented with the progress of court government. But in order to do this the first ideological necessity was to abandon Harrington's radical revision of accepted English historiography and restore to its central place among their concepts that ancient constitution in which all country gentlemen believed; for, as Ireton had shown himself aware at Putney, the antiquity of the constitution was the antiquity of their titles to estates and position. If Harrington had been a simple Country ideologist he might have done this for himself, instead of leaving it to Shaftesbury, Nevile, and the Person of Quality, but the neo-Harringtonians, down to and including Bolingbroke, were entangled in some interesting dilemmas by their determination to make this revision. They presented the medieval period of English government in terms of the commonwealth of independent freeholders envisaged by Harrington—this was in line with the established belief that the House of Commons was older than the Conquest—and this exposed them to the attacks of those who knew, like Harrington and the Levellers on the far left or Robert Brady and his friends on the far right, that medieval government had been an affair of feudal aristocracy. But on the other hand it compelled them to present those

things to which they were hostile—finance, bureaucracy, the standing army—as corruptions of an original balance, and so as historical innovations occurring at the end of the Middle Ages. They had to find causes for these innovations, which led to the paradoxical consequence that the reactionary neo-Harringtonians were in several respects more original historians than the radically independent Harrington; and since the innovations for which they had to account all added up to the single concept of government by money, the antithesis I have just drawn seems to me to tell against Macpherson's thesis that Harrington was peculiarly aware of the rise of the market.

To take the second of these two aspects of their thought first, I have argued that in order to explain Harrington's conception of power and citizenship, it is unnecessary to take account of economic relationships more complex than those of master and servant, independent and dependent. A fairly strong case can be made for holding that this was all that the neo-Harringtonians either found it necessary to envisage or regarded as desirable, which is more than I would say of Harrington; that is, that their scheme of social preferences was pre-capitalist in the sense that it stopped short at the master-servant household economy and did not envisage a society of investors and wage-laborers. Fletcher of Saltoun proposed[34] to deal with the poor of Scotland by a scheme of legally-regulated servitude, to forbid any proprietor to buy more land than he could work with his own servants and to compel those who farmed less to sell the profits of their land for a fixed sum to those who farmed up to the stated maximum—which hardly sounds like a scheme for capitalist agriculture. Admittedly, Fletcher was a Scot and it is well to regard eighteenth-century Scotland as a land foreign to England; but Trenchard and Gordon, in their vehement and repeated objections to Church of England charity schools, are voicing hostility both to High Church educational activity and to social mobility; they want the children of the poor left in the servant class where they belong.[35] These are indications—I would not put it more strongly—of a neo-Harringtonian preference for an economy of masters and servants, defined mainly in agrarian and traditional terms, which would go neatly with their general program of conceiving eighteenth-century Britain as an Aristotelian pol-

[34] *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher, Esq.* (London, 1732), 121-175 ("Second Discourse Concerning the Affairs of Scotland").

[35] See *Cato's Letters,* passim.

ity (a democracy of the independent, an aristocracy of the leisured and well-born, a fixed hierarchy of the independent and dependent). But whatever their social preferences—and I repeat that most of these idealizers of propertied independence were coffeehouse intellectuals living by their wits—their theory of political power, and the version of history to which it gave rise, were neither feudal nor capitalist, but humanist and Aristotelian.

Their Harringtonian interpretation of the ancient constitution led them to present the "Gothic" political structure of England and Europe in the Middle Ages—playing down its aristocratic aspects—as a freeholder's commonwealth in which every man owned the means of his independence and fought for his own liberty, and the King had to seek the consent of the freeholders or their representatives in assembly. But this had visibly ceased to be true of most of Europe and was supposed to be in danger in England, and the theory of the corruption of an original balance compelled them to present those things to which they were hostile—that is to say, all that was symbolized by the terms "Court" and "corruption"—as historical innovations, and to date and explain them. When we turn once more to Andrew Fletcher, we find that in a work of 1698 entitled *A Discourse of Government with relation to Militias,* he gave the following four causes for the decline of Gothic government: the revival of learning, the invention of printing, the invention of the compass, and the invention of gunpowder. (None of them is in Harrington.) In fact, it seems to have been Fletcher and writers like him, about 1700, who invented what I am tempted to call the schoolbook interpretation of history. Why did they do so? To account for the decline of Gothic liberty at the hands of the court, or—as the schoolbook calls it with approximately equal penetration—the rise of absolute monarchy. Of Fletcher's four causes, three are supposed to explain the spread of tastes that could be satisfied only by spending money and the rise of a commercial prosperity that provided the money to spend, and the fourth—gunpowder—symbolizes the rise of the standing army, the means, that is to say, whereby the King could govern by spending money on professional soldiers and need not rely on the support of the free armed proprietors who were his subjects. (Once again, we see that the standing army was conceived as a bureaucratic rather than a Cromwellian phenomenon.) In short, he is talking of the rise of government by money, the thing Harrington believed impossible. The framework of his thought is neo-

Harringtonian; he is opposing the administrative bureaucracy of the court to the independent and virtually ungoverned freeholders of the country; but his interpretation of European political history—for all its preconceptions and naïveties—represents an advance, in terms of historical explanation, over anything of which Harrington was capable. Fletcher really is talking about the rise of the modern state and the effect of money upon society; but he is not doing so out of a bourgeois consciousness, or out of an increasing awareness of the "market" or "entrepreneurial" element in social relationships. What moves him is an increasing—and hostile—awareness of the importance of money in government: of public finance, of the professionalization of army and bureaucracy, of the inducements which a well-financed court bureaucracy can offer the subject to co-operate. And this awareness grows out of an ultimately mythical idealization of the role in politics of propertied independence, a kind of radical Aristotelianism which is Harringtonian.

Awareness of what was called the Court—what we might term mercantilist government—and a theory of its role as a "corruption" or historical innovation, can be found growing on both sides of the Court-Country dichotomy among early eighteenth-century pamphleteers. If writers like Fletcher emphasized the rise of government by money because they regarded it as corrupting the earlier balance of the constitution, writers at the other end of the lists emphasized it too, because they wanted to argue that the old "Gothic" mode of government was no longer possible. Charles Davenant, for instance, whose usual place is in histories of economic thought, turned from being a furious Country pamphleteer to supporting the government and the approaching War of the Spanish Succession. This involved him in a defense of standing armies, and he is to be found contending that the days are gone when one army defeated another because it was braver or more patriotic; nowadays, that army wins whose financial resources enable it to stay in the field longest, and so there must be permanent military establishments and a system of finance to pay for them.[36] Both Fletcher and Davenant accept the same historical scheme: first the Gothic commonwealth of freeholders, then finance, the standing army, and their governmental consequences; but what Fletcher rejects as corruption, Davenant accepts as the foundation of a new order. There are clearly grounds for the hypothesis that it was awareness of the

[36] Charles Whitworth, *The Political and Commercial Works of that Celebrated Writer Charles D'Avenant* ... (London, 1771), I, 13-16.

changing role of government, not awareness of the role of the market in shaping social relationships, that brought increased awareness of the role of commerce and finance as historical determinants; a Marxist might say that this was a mercantilist rather than an entrepreneurial consciousness, if that were not probably revisionism.

But, if only because Davenant accepts historical change where Fletcher desires to reverse it, his consciousness of history is one degree more sophisticated. The same can be said, and said with interesting implications, of those Court writers who defended against the Country ideologists, notably Bolingbroke, the idea of the Crown's exerting a lawful influence over Parliament and thus preserving the interdependence of the parts of the balance. Their work seems to occur late in the history of neo-Harringtonianism and its opponents, and after the effective termination of Bolingbroke's political career: between 1741, when there appeared *A Letter from a Bystander to a Member of Parliament;* 1743, when the Earl of Egmont published his *Faction Detected by the Evidence of Facts;* and 1748, when Bishop Samuel Squire produced *An Historical Essay upon the Balance of Civil Power in England.* The argument of these three writers is in one major respect the same: that under the Gothic mode of government the King possessed an influence over the conduct of Parliament men which arose from his being supreme feudal landlord, and which he exerted either immediately or through the mediation of tenants in chief, but that this has now disappeared with the abolition of feudal tenures and must be replaced by influence of another character if the balance is to work smoothly. The Civil List thus becomes historical successor to the feudal prerogative, and is justified in thoroughly Harringtonian terms. But it is to be observed that in pleading this case the Court writers have reverted from neo-Harringtonianism to the ideas of Harrington himself; they are presenting the medieval period as one of feudal government in which the King ruled with an aristocracy, and power was exercised through the binding force of dependent tenure upon every man. Such a view of history was of course incompatible with the idea of an ancient, independent House of Commons, that is to say with the idea of the ancient constitution itself, and the Court writers were perfectly well aware of this. As far back as the 1730's—to go no further—the authors waging battle with Bolingbroke—Lord Hervey, for instance, in his *Ancient and Modern Liberty Stated and Compared* (1734) and the editorial writer of the *London Journal,* the paper sponsored by government to oppose the *Craftsman*—had shown themselves ready to revive

the feudal interpretation of medieval history, drawing both on Harrington and on Robert Brady and the Spelmanist writers of the 1680's, and to argue with them that there had been no ancient constitution and that the whole "principle of reference to antiquity" (as Burke was to call it), whether in search of the precedents of immemorial law or in Machiavellian quest of the original principles of the constitution, was intellectually baseless. Liberty and the balance of the constitution, they said, were modern, not ancient; rooted in nature, not history; the discoveries of reason, not usage. And government, they were further inclined to argue, was a matter of implementing certain obvious necessities; there must be authority, just as there must be liberty; and in opposing the idea of necessity to that of elaborate classical principle, they drew near to, and at times drew upon, the notions of the *de facto* Tories of the immediate post-Revolution years, who had seen in the doings of 1688 not the assertion of principle but (as one of them put it) "utmost necessity, and these are terrible things."

To find the conservative party repudiating history, and the opposition appealing to it, sounds rather strange to our Burkean ears. But these were pre-Burkean conservatives and pre-Jacobin reformers. The conservative, it is worth remembering, defends things as they are—in the present tense. When the adversary by whom he is faced is a fundamentalist reactionary, advocating a return to things as (he says) they once were, it is not surprising that the conservative should argue, first, that things in the past were not as the adversary supposes, second, that the whole idea of appeal to the past is out of order. He can achieve the former by means of historical criticism, which is just as likely to be a conservative as a radical technique. The latter he can achieve in either of two ways. Like Hooker and Burke, he can appeal to tradition, to the constant and continuous transformation of past into present, and to the principle of *plus ça change;* or he can have recourse to a hard-headed empiricism, which scouts the whole notion of history as a court of appeal and insists that in any situation you need pay attention only to what your own hard head tells you are the permanent necessities of any situation. These two arguments are not as different as they might appear. The ancient Chinese philosopher Hsun Tzu tried to unite them,[37] and in that Oakeshotten isle of

[37] See J. G. A. Pocock, "Ritual, Language, Power: An Essay on the Apparent Political Meanings of Ancient Chinese Philosophy," *Political Science* (Wellington, March 1964).

Albion they are, of course, found in many combinations. But if we may look on the constitutional debate of eighteenth-century England as a dialogue between a Country interpretation which blended Machiavelli and Harrington with the ancient constitution and a Court interpretation addicted to historical criticism and *de facto* empiricism, then it is strange to see, standing at the end of the spectrum, that figure of many complexities, Edmund Burke. For Burke was neither Court nor Country; he thought the British government, in its attitude on the American question, as insensible to history as the parliamentary reformers of 1780-84 with their demand for a return to the original principles of the constitution; and against both pragmatist Court and fundamentalist Country he marshaled a traditionalism which, as I have tried to show elsewhere,[38] rested directly on, and appealed openly to, that philosophy of custom which ultimately underlay the concept of the ancient constitution. Though Burke's interpretation of the events and ideas of 1688 has some elements of *de facto* Tory thought about it, he is in large and significant degree the apologist of the ancient constitution in something like the seventeenth-century sense of the idea; and it is only because the history of eighteenth-century ideology has not yet been studied in depth that we do not really know how far back he had to go in order to do this, or how unfamiliar his language on this head was to his hearers.

The effect of the material I have reviewed must, I think, be subversive of some widely accepted and some vigorously argued views on the character of English political thought between the revolutions—between, that is to say, about 1675 and 1776. The period between Locke and Hume—even, to narrow it down, the period of the first two Georges—was not, as is sometimes thought, a period of contented silence in political and constitutional speculation. There was much noise in Grub Street and the coffeehouses, and the debates of Court and Country, even if they had much about them which was fictitious from the point of view of the practical politician and his practical historian, were expressed in a highly individual language and recorded a highly individual view of English politics and English history, replete with awareness of historical change. Nor was this period one in which Locke's *Two Treatises* were deemed to have said the last word on all political questions and to have annulled constitutional antiquarianism and the appeal to the past. If one follows out the history of Professor Robbins's "Whig canon," it is often hard to

[38] See n. 27 above.

see how the prestige of Locke stood in relation to that of Milton, Marvell, Sidney, and the rest of them; and if one follows out the history of neo-Harringtonian ideas and their opposites, it is remarkable to observe how much could be said by their aid which did not necessitate reference to Locke at all. Though Locke supplied a theoretical background to the constitution, he did not write or think within the changing framework of commonly accepted ideas about the constitution, and it is arguable that in the eighteenth century he was a writer largely for those who were situated somewhat outside the established order and wanted to appeal against its practice to its somewhat remotely perceived principles—Anglo-Irishmen, Americans, Dissenters. Nor again, does an unhistorical attitude to politics occur, in this perspective, at all where we should expect to find it; if it is Whig it is Court Whig; its bias is conservative, not radical. The thought of the Country school makes both a medievalist and a classicist appeal to the past, and we must wait until late in the 1780's for a radicalism we can call either Lockean or unhistorical; and it may not be fully representative of its time even then. But the ideas of the age governed most fully by the Revolution settlement belong to the Renaissance more than to the *Aufklärung;* if Bolingbroke and his friends taught Voltaire to take no interest in English medieval precedents, that was at most their esoteric doctrine, perhaps even less than that; in public they were neo-Harringtonians, participating fully in the common language of an age which saw the high-water mark in England of the political thought of classical humanism, uniquely blended with antiquarian medievalism. It was a well-watered soil on which the ideas of Montesquieu fell, and out of which some of them grew.

Late in George III's reign we could doubtless detect great changes in English political language. Price and Priestley distilled a Lockean oxygen out of the stream of ideas that had come down to them. The writings of Bentham's first maturity represent a systematic and deeply thought out rejection of nearly everything I have been talking about. Paine rejected both the constitution and its history, though in a manner so reminiscent of Lilburne and Walwyn that one wonders whether he did not belong to the tradition even in his rejection of it. Perhaps more important, there would surely be found a steady if slow decline of the agrarian ideal of propertied independence and the Aristotelian ideal of citizenship founded upon it. But as against that—more precisely, as part of it—there can be traced a major movement of Country ideas into the radical-

democratic tradition; not only much of the Chartist program, but a good deal of its ideology as well, can be shown to possess a history continuous since the days of Shaftesbury. There is room only for one or two corroborative details. James Burgh's *Political Disquisitions,* which link the Wilkesite movement with the Yorkshire Association, are full of quotations from Bolingbroke, centering around the concept of corruption. The Society for Constitutional Information disseminated the writings of Bolingbroke, Fletcher, and Molesworth along with those of the "Whig canon," Locke and the seventeenth-century antiquarians. John Thelwall taught English workmen democracy by lecturing to them on Roman history, using the works of Walter Moyle as a text. And Major Cartwright's ideal of English democracy was founded, to the end of his long and active life, on an ideal of the English militia.[39]

These are not intellectual curiosities, but key points in the long continuous history of a political language and its concepts. Thelwall and Cartwright were eccentric because they expressed central ideas with naïve simplicity. In the same way, the myth of the standing army, the Gothic society of free landed proprietors, and the rise of luxury and bureaucracy, was both the worn coinage of tediously insincere parliamentary debate and one of the seminal ideas of eighteenth-century English historiography. How much of Gibbon's analysis of the Decline and Fall is based on the Machiavellian-Harringtonian antithesis between the free peasant-proprietors and citizen-soldiers of the Republic and the mercenary armies of the Empire, and is not this part of what he meant when he said that the captain of Hampshire militia had not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire? The great achievement of the Scottish school of sociological historians was the recognition that a commercial organization of society had rendered obsolete much that had been believed about society before it; and the *Historical View of the English Government written* by John Millar, a colleague of Adam Smith's, and dedicated to Charles James Fox (1786), is only one of a number of works which show the part which ideas like Andrew Fletcher's, based directly on the antithesis between Gothic and court government, played in the Scottish achievement. Lastly, let anyone who knows the neo-

[39] See his *The English Constitution Produced and Illustrated* (London, 1823), and his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson on the subject in 1824. F. D. Cartwright, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright* (London, 1826), II, 265-278.

Harringtonian version of English history consider the context in which Macaulay sets the seventeenth-century civil wars, and he will find it there: the rise of standing armies, replacing the feudal array of landowning volunteers, set off a struggle between kings and estates for control of the taxation by which these armies were maintained. What I have called neo-Harringtonianism was, then, an important element in the ideas and symbols by which eighteenth-century society set forth its awareness of itself and its history.