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**CHAPTER XI**   
**THE ANGLICIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC**   
**A) Mixed Constitution, Saint and Citizen**

**[I]**

ON 21 JUNE 1642, WITH ABOUT TWO MONTHS to go before the formal beginnings of civil war, two of Charles I's advisers—Viscount Falkland and Sir John Colepeper—drafted, and persuaded him to issue, a document in which the king, not parliament, took the step of declaring England a mixed government rather than a condescending monarchy. *His Majesty's Answer to the Nineteen Propositions of Both Houses of Parliament*, as has been emphatically and correctly asserted blb yCorinne C. Weston, [1](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774432#1) is a crucial document in English political thought, and among other things one of a series of keys which opened the door to Machiavellian analysis. In essence, it asserts that the government of England is vested in three estates, the king, the lords, and the commons, and that the health and the very survival of the system depend upon maintenance of the balance between them. This drastic departure from the thesis of descending authority was both constitutionally incorrect and a disastrous tactical error in royalist polemic; but it was, in a very short time, so widely accepted and so diversely employed as to present us with a clear case of paradigmatic innovation—here, we must believe, was a new formulation of a kind for which many men had been searching for many reasons.

The crucial fact is that the crisis making civil war imminent in June 1642 could no longer be seen as arising from the collision of authority with custom, or prerogative with privilege, but from a far more disruptive series of rifts in what all could now perceive as the nerve center of English government—the conjoined authority of king and parliament. The House of Commons, having forced through much legislation against the king's wishes, were now close to claiming the right to issue ordinances without his consent; they were demanding that con-

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| 1 | See above, ch. X, n. 38. The question of authorship is discussed on pp. 26–27, following Clarendon, who stressed Colepeper's role rather than Falkland's. It may be remarked, however, that Falkland was an intellectual—and a friend of Clarendon's, who disapproved of the document—and that Colepeper was not. |

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trol of the county militia should be placed in their hands, and that they should possess at least a veto over the king's choice of counselors. Faced with these demands, the framers of the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* differed from monarchical tradition, from their colleagues, and in the long run from the king himself, in their willingness to concede that the problem was not one of adjusting descending to ascending authority, but one of sharing specifiable powers, and to represent the government of England as a sharing of power. In this willingness they wrote:

There being three kinds of government among men, absolute monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, and all these having their particular conveniences and inconveniences, the experience and wisdom of your ancestors hath so moulded this out of a mixture of these acts as to give to this kingdom (as far as humane prudence can contrive) the conveniences of all three, without the inconveniences of any one, as long as the balance hangs even between the three estates, and they run jointly on in their proper channel (begetting verdure and fertility in the meadows on both sides) and the overflowing of either on either side raise no deluge or inundation. The ill of absolute monarchy is tyranny, the ill of aristocracy is faction and division, the ills of democracy are tumults, violence and licentiousness. The good of monarchy is the uniting a nation under one head to resist invasion from abroad and insurrection at home; the good of aristocracy is the conjunction of counsel in the ablest persons of a state for the public benefit; the good of democracy is liberty, and the courage and industry which liberty begets. [2](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774433#2)

The king—as his adversaries remarked with glee and his friends with dismay [3](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774433#3) —was here made to describe himself as a part of his own realm, one of three “estates” between which there must be balance and (it followed) proportionate equality. But the implications of the language above reach farther still. Government in England is no longer a direct emanation of divinely or rationally enjoined authority; it is a contrivance of human prudence, blending together three modes of government—the only three that can exist—each of which possesses its characteristic virtues and vices (we have to remember that the words “conveniences” and “inconveniences” were far less low-keyed in seventeenth-century speech than they are now). This blend is a balance, an association in which each partner contributes its particular virtue, while

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| 2 | A modernized text is in Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution*, pp. 21–23. Cf. Weston, Appendix I, pp. 263–65. |
| 3 | The earlier reactions to the *Answer* are studied by Weston, pp. 27–50. |

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inviting the others to check its particular vice. The government of England, in short, without ceasing to manifest the element of monarchy, is being presented as a classical republic; and we catch a glimpse of Machiavelli's imagery of fortune. The three elements constitute a river, that ancient symbol of time: while it runs in its proper channel, bringing richness and fertility, the themes of order and descending grace are still being invoked; but once we hear that the balance is necessary to prevent “deluge and inundation,” the river has become that of fortune, against which princes and republics erect dykes by the aid of virtue.

The framers of the *Answer* were, we shall shortly see, placing themselves in a position to appeal to the Lords against the Commons; but, with a far more lasting resonance, they were intimating that English government was a balance of the only three elements out of which government could be constructed, and that outside that balance lay only disorder. We have seen enough of republican theory by this time to know that such a balance must be one of virtues and of powers. The virtues, and the corresponding vices, of the three components have already been stated; what of the powers? From the words last quoted, the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* goes on:

In this kingdom the laws are jointly made by a king, by a house of peers, and by a house of commons chosen by the people, all having free votes and particular privileges. The government according to these laws is trusted to the king; power of treaties of war and peace, of making peers, of choosing officers and counsellors for state … and some more of the like kind are placed in the king. And this kind of regulated monarchy, having this power to preserve that authority without which it would be disabled to preserve the laws in their force and the subjects in their liberties and properties, is intended to draw to him such a respect and relation from the great ones as may hinder the ills of division and faction, and such a fear and reverence from the people as may hinder tumults, violence and licentiousness. Again, that the prince may not make use of this high and perpetual power to the hurt of those for whose good he hath it … the House of Commons (an excellent conserver of liberty, but never intended for any share in government, or the choosing of them that should govern) is solely entrusted with the first propositions concerning the levies of monies (which is the sinews as well of peace as war)…. And the Lords, being trusted with a judicatory power, are an excellent screen and bank between the prince and people, to assist each against any encroachments of the other[s], and by just

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judgements to preserve that law which ought to be the rule of every one of the three.… [4](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774435#4)

It was, as we already know, a recurrent problem in Aristotelian theory to relate specific political functions to elements defined by their virtues; and in the case of English government, the problem was to prove peculiarly recalcitrant. The legislative power, being lodged in the trinity-in-unity of king-in-parliament, could not be further employed in distinguishing between the powers supposedly allotted to the three elements; and we notice how, in the passage just quoted, it is easier tostate how each may check the excesses of the others than to specify just what powers the lords and commons wield. In stating that the House of Lords is “entrusted with a judicatory power,” however, the framers of the *Answer*, while perhaps intending little more than an allusion to their role in impeachments, have given voice to a durable belief that the lords are peculiarly fitted to arbitrate, to trim the balance, to act as a supreme court of constitutional law or as Machiavelli's *guardia della libertà* (a Giannottian *signore* they cannot be). This in turn appears in retrospect a step toward the later theory which equated “mixed government” with “separation of powers,” assigning to the lords a judicial function while seeking to separate executive, judiciary, and legislative in a way which clearly revealed how Aristotelian analysis was bedeviled by English parliamentary monarchy.

The doctrine that king, lords, and commons together constituted a marvelously equilibrated and gloriously successful distribution of powers was to be endlessly celebrated throughout the eighteenth century; but the purpose of the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* was minatory, not congratulatory; it was intended less to offer a new and generally acceptable theory of the constitution than to warn Englishmen that nothing but the balance of the three estates stood between them and anarchy. In language diminishingly coherent, the document goes on to warn that any surrender to the demand for parliamentary control of the king's choice of counselors will

beget eternal factions and dissensions (as destructive to public happiness as war), both in the chosen, and in the Houses that chose them, and the people who chose the choosers, since so new a power will undoubtedly intoxicate persons who were not born to it, and beget not only divisions among them as equals, but in them contempt of us, as become an equal to them, and insolence and injustice towards our people, as now so much their inferiors, which will be the more grievous unto them, as suffering from those who were so lately of a nearer degree to themselves, and being to have redress only from

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| 4 | Kenyon, pp. 21–22. |

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those that placed them, and fearing they may be inclined to preserve what they have made, both out of kindness and policy, since all great changes are extremely inconvenient, and almost infallibly beget yet greater changes, which beget yet greater inconveniences. [5](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774436#5)

The Machiavellian overtones are audible enough to warn us that there is more here than the familiar rhetoric of anarchy following the destruction of subordination and degree. Similarly in what follows, when we hear that

at last the common people … set up for themselves, call parity and independence liberty, devour that estate which had devoured the rest, destroy all rights and proprieties, all distinctions of families and merit, and by this means this splendid and excellently distinguished form of government end[s] in a dark, equal chaos of confusion, and the long line of our many noble ancestors in a Jack Cade or a Wat Tyler, [6](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774436#6)

it is obvious enough who is to be frightened of whom; but this is not simply the appeal of Shakespeare's Ulysses. The king's subjects are being warned, not merely that they must observe due subordination, but that nothing stands between them and these hcrrors but the maintenance of a balance which men have made. To offend against degree is to offend against a divinely ordered universe, and “the powers above” may “put on their instruments” for some terrible judgment and restoration; [7](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774436#7) but to offend against balance may be to go out into a mindless chaos where nothing reigns except fortune and the treading of the wheel. The theory of the mixed constitution was imported into English political rhetoric in order to naturalize there the Polybian and Machiavellian doctrine of the republic, in which the virtues of all may neutralize the vices from which none is free, but which is historically fragile and may be overthrown at the slightest departure from balance. The alternative and opposite to balance is fortune and may be corruption; but there is an important difference between the Florentine and the English functions of this antithesis. The Florentines opted for the republic because it was in their nature to do so, and found fortune their enemy, virtue and balance their only defenses; but the English, monarchical and customary animals by nature, took up the rhetoric of balance and republic only because their traditional constitution was threatened by disorder in such a form—a dispute over the sharing of power— as to make this an appropriate response. In consequence older levels of rhetoric remained apparent; the language of order and degree was still outwardly dominant, and the suggestion that disorderhad taken the

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| 5 | Kenyon, p. 22. |
| 6 | Kenyon, p. 23. |
| 7 | Macbeth, IV, 3, 278–79. |

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form of fortune was operative but partially concealed within it. All this, as we shall next see, further concealed the naked opposition of *fortuna* and *virtù* to which the logic of republican rhetoric might otherwise have led.

If the citizen's republic collapsed about him, he might be left with his personal integrity so far bereft of social reinforcement in a world of changing particulars that only an act of divine grace might suffice to fortify him; and if this was not forthcoming, his only recourse might be to Machiavellian *virtù* or Guicciardinian prudence in their least comfortable forms. As the Englishman's Ancient Constitution collapsed about him, its fragility was indeed dramatized by presentation in a quasi-republican shape. But not only was it far from occurring to Calvinists and Arminians alike that grace might fail them; their responses were still fortified by the imageries of custom, of degree, and of a universe still both God-centered and monarchical. A simply Machiavellian response was hardly to be expected. Civil War thought is to a large degree casuist; it asks where the individual's duty lies when the legitimate authorities under which he has lived are locked in conflict; and classical republicanism, one way of projecting this problem, was not the only way of seeking to solve it.

In *A Treatise of Monarchy* (1643), the sensitive moderate Philip Hunton, taking his cue in part from the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions*, accepted the premise that England's was a mixed government and indicated how far this was seen as a republic by alluding to the problem—raised for Florentines by the case of Venice—that there was no legislator involved in its foundation. It was marvelous to him, he remarked, that the wits of men in rude and unpolished times could have contrived so delicate a balance. [8](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774437#8) But when he turned to the problems of duty and allegiance raised by the breakdown of balance in civil war, he discovered that there was no ready-made answer. If constitutional law was the fruit of collaboration between three powers, among whom legitimate authority was distributed, there could be no constitutional law which directed allegiance to any one of the three in the event of conflict between them; if any one did possess such an authority, then (Hunton pushes the point far past Giannotti) it lay outside

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| 8 | Hunton, *A Treatise of Monarchy* (London, 1643), p. 44: “what ever more then humane wisedom had the contriving of it, whether done at once, or by degrees found out and perfected, I conceive it unparalleld for exactnesse of true policy in the whole world; such a care for the Soveraignty of the Monarch, such a provision for the liberty of the People, and that one may bee justly allayed, and yet consist without impeachment of the other, that I wonder how our Forefathers in those rude unpolisht times could attain such an accurate composure.” |

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the balance and the latter could never have existed. [9](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774438#9) From this premise, many discussants were to draw the conclusion reached by Sir Robert Filmer (and earlier by Bodin): a mixed government was an anarchy, indeed an absurdity. [10](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774438#10) Hunton, writing as a casuist rather than a polemical theorist, takes another and an equally significant path. Mixed government is legitimate in England, but it has broken down. The individual is consequently without any legitimate authority in the form of positive law, to tell him how to act or what side to choose; but he is under an imperative, moral as well as practical, obliging him to act and choose. He must now employ his judgment as to the facts and his conscience as to the issues, and act as these direct him. [11](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774438#11) It is clear that, as to the outcome, he is in the hand of God and might almost be said to be appealing to that judge.

Hunton's argument has therefore reminded scholars [12](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774438#12) of the “appeal to heaven” which appears in Locke's *Treatises of Government*, some forty years later; but there are differences. In the first place, Hunton presupposes a conscience inhabiting a world of disordered legitimacy, whose fragments may be partly reassembled by a scrupulous casuistry.

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| 10 | Sir Robert Filmer, *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy* (1648), in Laslett (ed.), *Patriarcha and Other Political Writings of Sir Robert Filmer* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949) |
| 11 | Hunton, p. 73: “If it be demanded then, how this cause can be decided? and which way must the People turne in such a contention? I answere, If the non-decision be tolerable; it must remaine undecided, whiles the Principle of legall decision is thus divided, and by that division each suspends the others power. If it be such as is destructive, and necessitates a determination, this must be made evident; and then every Person must aide that Part, which in his best Reason and Judgement stands for publike good, against the destructive. And the Lawes and Government which he stands for, and is sworne to justifies and beares him out in it, yea; bindes him to it.” |
| 12 | A. H. Maclean, “George Lawson and John Locke,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 9, no. 1 (1947), 69–77, and “The Origins of the Political Opinions of John Locke,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1947. |
| 9 | Hunton, p. 69: “To demand which Estate may challenge this power of finali determination of Fundamentall controversies arising betwixt them is to demand which of them shall be absolute: For I conceive that in the first part hereof, I have made it good, that this finali utmost controversie arising betwixt the three Legislative Estates, can have no legall, constituted Judge in a mixed government: for in such difference he who affirmes that the people are bound to follow the Judgement of the King against that of the Parliament, destroyes the mixture into absolutenesse: And he who affirms that they are bound to cleave to the Judgement of the two Houses against that of the King, resolves the Monarchie into an Aristocracie or Democracie, according as he places this finall Judgement. Whereas I take it to be an evident truth, that in a mixed government no power is to be attributed to either Estate, which directly, or by necessary consequence, destroyes the liberty of the other.” See also pp. 28–29. |

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If the conscience seeks to assess the political situation and its immediate past history, it must employ the methods of political and moral prudence to determine what has happened, what might have happened, and what should be done now; and since this presupposes objective standards of morality and law, the conscience is as far from Machiavellian *virtù* in one direction as it is from Locke in another. But in the second place, heaven has not made its will known by prior endorsement of any specific form of authority, [13](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774439#13) so that the individual, taking his stand on conscience in the midst of civil war, may well be appealing—whether or not he draws the sword himself (Hunton goes on to propose means of reconciliation) [14](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774439#14) —to *jus gladii* or *jus conquestus*, to the judgment of heaven as expressed in the outcome of a trial by battle. There was an extensive contemporary literature of this appeal procedure, which Hunton does not use, but to which we may refer at this point. Should the verdict go against him, he may conclude that he has been proved wrong; but if his conscience still assures him that he made a justified choice, he may reflect that the judgments of providence are too deep to be found out. The conquering sword, for its part, may go so far as to claim not only a providential, but a prophetic and apocalyptic authority for what it does with its victory. [15](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774439#15)

Locke's appeal to heaven is an appeal to the sword, but it is lodged by a people, not by a congeries of individual consciences. Hunton clearly does not think of the people as in any way incorporated except by the orders of the republic, or mixed government, which have now broken down and left each man on his own. [16](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774439#16) The republic, we observe, is no covenant, uniting a people by making them one with God, nor is it a social compact incorporating them by rational and non-Sinaitic processes; it is a human construct, blending imperfect elements into an equilibrium, and for Hunton it is a conservative and legitimating device as well. After it comes conscience; but if the people had in any prior sense been incorporated, the appeal to heaven would have been predetermined. Henry Parker, the most formidable parliamentary apologist of the First Civil War, [17](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774439#17) exploits every opportunity offered him by the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* to show that royal authority, being coordinate, is not preeminent; but when he comes to the question of where the individual's allegiance is to lie in

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| 13 | Hunton, p. 4. |
| 14 | Hunton, pp. 77–79. |
| 15 | For this see John M. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 22–28. |
| 16 | Hunton, p. 73 and above, n. II. |
| 17 | On him see W. K. Jordan, *Men of Substance: A Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson* (Chicago University Press, 1942). |

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civil war, he argues that the people are indissolubly incorporated in parliament. There is, says Parker, a “reason of state” which must be kept entirely distinct from anything in Machiavelli (he seems to have thought that Machiavelli had propounded a doctrine under that name). This is nothing other than the natural and rational impulse of any body of persons to become a body politic, or state; it is “reason” of state because for men to act rationally is to act politically; and on the premise that parliament represents the people, their will to be a people can be expressed nowhere but in that body. [18](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774440#18) The individual in time of civil war, then, need not consult his conscience and appeal to the arbitrament of providence. He need only consult his reason, which will direct him to incorporate himself in parliament.

An Aristotelian populism of this kind could plainly have the effect of disrupting mixed government altogether and substituting a democratic sovereignty; but, as with other Civil War writers, [19](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774440#19) the question arises whether Parker had a normal or an emergency sovereignty in mind. He might, that is, have thought of mixed government as sufficiently descriptive of the normal state of affairs, and have regarded “reason of state” simply as that which came into play when the norms had collapsed and the state was obliged to reconstitute itself, reasserting as it did so its claim to the allegiance of individuals. “Reason of state” in that sense would be a far cry from the intelligence of Lycurgus or any Machiavellian *ordinatore;* Parker is no kind of classical republican; but it would accord interestingly with the possibility that, like Hunton, he accepts the mixed constitution in order to say that when it collapses, the individual is alone and must move to reorder his life by the discovery of something in himself. In Hunton's scheme this is conscience; in Parker's a predetermined political rationality; but from “reason of state” it is a short step to *salus populi suprema lex*, [20](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774440#20) a formula whose implications might easily appear premoral. Before moral norms could exist, it might be said, *res publica, populus* or *status* must exist; consequently the first command of reason was that something by one of these names should be, and its institution could not be carried out by acts subject to the norms which it alone could commend. This thought of course lay behind all that Machiavelli had had to say about

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| 18 | Parker, *Observations upon Some of His Majesties Late Answers and Expresses* (1642), pp. 15–16, 22–24, 34. For his denunciations of Machiavelli, see pp. 2, 10, 19, 20. |
| 19 | E.g., Prynne; see Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, 85–118. |
| 20 | Parker, *Observations*, pp. 3–4: “… the transcendent of all Politiques … the Paramount Law that shall give Law to all humane Lawes whatsoever, and that is *Salus Populi*…. The Charter of nature intitles all Subjects of all Countries whatsoever to safetie by its supreame Law….” |

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the nonmoral imperatives laid upon the legislator; but we are upon a rather different path here. The individual, assailed by civil war and seeking to reconstitute his allegiance, is no legislator, since his aim is to subject himself to authority rather than to found and rule a city; but he may visualize himself as forced back into a prepolitical and premoral situation, seeking that in himself which will reestablich order. The entity whose *salus* is *suprema lex* is now not *populus* but ego; he may make a Cartesian discovery that his first movement as an active being must be to assert and perpetuate himself, or a Christian and Calvinist discovery that, having been created to an end unfixed by him, by a being of whom he knows nothing, his first duty is to preserve himself to that end. He may now locate himself in a state of “nature,” antedating society, covenant or revelation, and seek means of constituting an intelligible authority-structure, starting with nothing more than a primal impulse and duty to preserve himself. If he follows this path, he is less likely to emerge as Lycurgus establishing a republic than as the natural man erecting and obeying an artificial Leviathan.

Hobbes, not an English Machiavelli, is the radical master of Civil War political thought; the English individual, when stripped of all protection and legitimation and reduced to the extreme of prepolitical dereliction, was liable to establish himself in the state of nature, not under the dominion of fortune. This is in a sense an index to his resourcefulness, and to the difficulty of stripping him of all means of self-legitimation; but the important difference between Hobbesian and Machiavellian man is that the state of nature is ahistorical and logically timeless, whereas every moment on the rotating wheel forms one of a sequence in time. The *anakuklosis* is wholly secular and time-bound, and nowhere intersects the state of nature; this indeed was a principal reason for deeming it atheistic; but the recourse to the state of nature— capable though it was of being described in terms which struck contemporaries as close to atheism—was a movement out of time, followed by a return to politics and history. Only by invoking a prophetic God could Hobbes make it clear that every moment, even the moment of nature, was in history. [21](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774441#21) But the complex armory of ideas that takes shape along the line leading from Parker to *Leviathan* provides yet another set of reasons why the individual isolated by the collapse of the mixed constitution need not define himself in terms of a Machiavellian polarity.

Mixed government—the term which rendered it possible for the king's subjects to accept the republican tradition—was supposed to

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| 21 | *Leviathan*, Books HI and IV. See Pocock, “Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes,” in *Politics, Language and Time*, pp. 148–201. |

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ensure stability by setting up an equilibrium of virtues and powers. The enemy of balance was fortune, and the enemy of fortune was virtue; in this case, one would expect, the virtue of respecting the virtue of other parties to the equilibrium. But the paradigm of mixed government, though it defined the moment of breakdown as one of individual isolation and dereliction, did not oblige the individual to define that moment in terms of fortune and virtue. In the first place, there were too many alternative vocabularies. Hunton's moment, of conscience and the appeal to heaven, was capable of being developed in the direction explored by John M. Wallace, [22](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774442#22) in which a prudential submission to the will of providence rose to heights of sophisticated and latitudinarian piety; Parker's moment, of reason of state and *salus populi*, in the direction explored by Quentin Skinner, where prudence and providence gave way to the radical naturalism of Hobbes. [23](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774442#23) Others, like William Prynne, dealt with the problem by pitting Ancient Constitution against Elect Nation, and did not employ a quasi-republican rhetoric at all. In the second place, it may well seem that the individual who saw the Civil War as posing a problem in casuistry and allegiance would not affirm his virtue in terms strong enough to expose it immediately to fortune; virtue, when all is said and done, is an ideal of action, not merely of legitimation. To understand how the classical ideal of the citizen came to play its role in Interregnum thinking, we have still some way to go and must travel a route of utterances less apologetic and more activist; but the irreducible conservatism of the period will continue to have something to say to us.

**[II]**

Robert, Lord Brooke, encouraging his officers in 1643 to appear in arms against the King in the name of king and parliament, referred to “that great commonwealthman of the Romans, Cicero,” [24](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774442#24) and such words as “commonwealthman” and “patriot” were indeed used now and again to denote those who could think of king, parliament, and

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| 22 | Above, n. 15. |
| 23 | Skinner, “Hobbes's *Leviathan” Historical Journal* 7, no. 2 (1964), 321–32; “History and Ideology in the English Revolution,” *Ibid.* 8, no. 2 (1965), 151–78; “The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought,” *Ibid.* 9, no. 3 (1966), 286–317, and revised version in Cranston and Peters (eds.), *Hobbes and Rousseau* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1972), pp. 102–42; “Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy,” in G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: the Quest for Settlement, 1646–1660* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 79–98. |
| 24 | Robert E. L. Striver II, *Robert Greville, Lord Brooke* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 68. |

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people as forming a polity in which any part might be resisted and restrained in the name of the whole. But such language, though observably classical in its connotations, was hindered in its development by those other styles of thought we have been studying; there are clearly many grains of salt to be taken with Hobbes's opinion that republican principles, imbibed at the universities and from Greek and Latin histories, helped dispose men's minds to civil war. [25](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774443#25) We have next to look at the languages prevalent in the great radical movements of the late 1640s; and here the crucial utterances are of course those to be found in the manifestos of the officers and soldiers of the army. In these a body of men of diverse social origins, having in common that they had been mobilized into a military society which had just won a civil war of an unprecedented kind, declared themselves to be self-motivated and self-reliant in matters both civil and religious. They were, they said, “not a mere mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of a state,” but were “called forth…to the defence of our own and the people's just rights and liberties.”

And so we took up arms in judgment and conscience to those ends, and have so continued them, and are resolved according to…such principles as we have received from your [parliament's] frequent informations, and our own common sense, concerning these our fundamental rights and liberties, to assert and vindicate…those common ends premised, against…all particular parties and interests whatsoever. [26](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774443#26)

These men, declaring a common sense that the arms they had taken up had engaged them to a common end, were declaring a political selfconsciousness of a kind unheard of in England before. To do so was a revolutionary act, and it is not surprising that the documents employ and transcend every political language available to Englishmen in the attempt to make their statement. There is, for example, the appeal to ancient liberties, radicalized by the imputation that these have not been inherited, as the doctrine of the Ancient Constitution maintained, but have on the contrary been lost, since early but not forgotten times, and must now be restored. [27](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774443#27) There is the appeal to *salus populi suprema lex*, but we shall penetrate deeper into the character of radical thought

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| 25 | Hobbes, *Behemoth* (ed. Tonnies, London, 1889; repr. London, Frank Cass, 1969), pp. 3, 23, 43. |
| 26 | *A Representation of the Army* (14 June 1647); Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty* (London: E. J. Dent, 1950), pp. 403–404. |
| 27 | To neglect this distinction, as is still sometimes done, is to confuse the Ancient Constitution with the Norman Yoke; for the latter, see Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution*, pp. 50–122. Cf. *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law*, pp. 125–27. |

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by citing a document in which this is made in a very different spirit from Parker's; the purpose being now not to make some ultimately conservative appeal to an irreducible principle of legitimation, but to assert that a people is itself and acts as itself before God.

For God hath given no man a talent to be wrapped up in a napkin and not improved, but the meanest vassal (in the eye of the world) is equally obliged and acceptable to God with the greatest prince or commander under the sun, in and for the use of that talent betrusted to him…. For, Sir, should you [Fairfax]—yea, should the whole parliament or kingdom—exempt us from this service, or … command our silence or forbearance, yet could not they nor you discharge us of our duties to God or to our own natures…. And if by any one your Excellency should be suborned that we are transgressors of all order and form, and in that sense to look upon us, we desire to mind your Excellency that the law of nature and of nations, attested in our public declarations and papers, may be an answer to such for the justification of our present expedient. For all forms are but as shadows, and subject to the end. And the safety of the people is above all forms, customs, etc.; and the equity of popular safety is the thing which justifieth all forms, or the change of forms, for the accomplishment thereof; and no forms are lawful longer than they preserve or accomplish the same. [28](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774444#28)

Here “the safety of the people” is no premoral principle of socialization (as in “it is expedient that one man die for the people”). With the words “all forms are but as shadows,” an appeal to “the law of nature and of nations” moves out into the language of apocalyptic *rinnovazione*. One is not merely obliged to preserve one's self, as created to an end; the emphasis is transferred to the end itself and to the “talent” which must be employed in pursuing it. And many readers of these words would interpret “the safety of the people” as indicating not merely the material preservation of the community of endpursuing creatures, but the continued pursuit of that historic end to which a peculiar nation was elect. “All forms are but as shadows” is the language of apocalypse; it suggests that all earthly things shall pass away before the end; it is potentially antinomian, since it may very well indicate that the types are exhausted; and yet it is still Aristotelian in a way that would have made it intelligible to the Thomist Savonarola. The context in which men attain their final end—or recover their *prima forma*, though this concept might not have been antinomian

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| 28 | From the letter to Fairfax, signed by eleven Agitators, accompanying *The Case of the Army Truly Stated* (Oxford, 1647); see Woodhouse, p. 437n. |

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enough for the radical saints of the New Model [29](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774445#29) —is that of apocalypse; the “end” of Aristotelian teleology is still united with the eschatological “end” of prophetic time.

Applying the mode of analysis adopted in the preceding section of this chapter, one might argue that the radical saint was reacting to the same situation as Hunton and Parker. Bereft of all traditional structures of legitimation, Hunton had appealed to conscience and to heaven; Parker had moved in the direction of a pre-Hobbesian naturalism; and it would have been theoretically possible for a Machiavellian to appeal to the confrontation of *virtù* with *fortuna*. Our model suggests, however, that alongside the moments of fortune, of nature and of providential judgment, we may detect—almost as an extension of the lastnamed—the moment of apocalyptic grace; army radicalism, then, would be responding to a moment of acute particularity by adopting one of a limited range of languages by which such a moment might be met. But it is fairly clear that such an explanation would not be adequate. Apocalyptic conviction in the men of the army had helped (like the *virtù* of Machiavelli's new prince) to create the situation which intensified the need for it, and was operating as an independent variable. It presents us with a case, not simply of minds seeking to regularize a delegitimized and chaotic situation, but of a new level of civic consciousness finding means of becoming articulate. The sense of a calling peculiar to the Puritan saint had operated to give these soldiers a sense of the irreducible personality—the “talent” or “nature”—inherent in each one of them. This could be expressed in terms of each man's unique relation, accountability, or duty to God, and also in terms of the radical equality of rights and powers which had been given to each to enable him to perform that duty. So far the Walzerian analysis holds good; and it continues to hold when we add that the calling, as an act of grace, must be thought of as operating upon the individual in time, and that time conceived in such terms must be conceived prophetically or apocalyptically. But if we add, along the lines suggested in the previous chapter, that the English saint was—at the opposite extreme from being alienated from his inherited laws and liberties—involved in them to the point where his calling did not liberate him from them, but liberated him to transform them, a great many points in the analysis will become clear. We can now understand why he felt himself called to restore those liberties to their original form, while insisting that what that original form had contained was the freedom of a people to be both naturally and apocalyptically them-

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| 29 | A thorough antinomian might hold that the state of redeemed man would be higher than that of the Unfällen Adam, not a mere recovery of it; see the article by Rosenmeier cited above, ch. I, n. 5. |

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selves. We can see how the individual's conviction of a radically free natural capacity within himself intensified his ability to engage in radical action based upon radical criticism of his laws and liberties in their inherited form; the Agreement of the People was the antinomianism of the Ancient Constitution. Lastly, we can see that, while we are not yet at a Machiavellian moment in English thought, we are at something comparable to the Savonarolan moment, at which civic consciousness, apocalyptic conviction, and inherited second nature were in a complex relationship. The prophets, furthermore, were armed; they had only to continue to believe in themselves.

The radicals of 1647 may therefore be thought of as standing at a moment—whether one at which a true millennium seemed imminent or, more spiritually, one at which some liberation amounting almost to divinization of human capacities seemed to be taking place—of freedom triumphing over necessity. Where the casuists of allegiance had come in some cases to a timeless moment from which authority could and must be reconstituted, the illuminists of liberty had come to an apocalyptic moment, at which their swords and spirits appeared at the point of remodeling the laws and reinstituting freedom. But at Putney [30](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774446#30) there came to a head their debate with their own commanders, who desired to tell them that they still stood within a structure of continuing necessity from which they were not altogether free to move, and that to be so located was inseparable from the condition even of the saint (as it had necessitated Machiavelli's prophet to bear arms). Ireton, backed by Cromwell, insisted that there must be engagements which no inner conviction entitled men to break, and that there must be structures of positive law, against which the “law of nature” was not a sufficient plea. His chief reason for saying this, he declared, was that the law of nature might decree that each man should have his own, but could not determine what was to be each man's. [31](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774446#31) Property, an affair of particulars—Harrington was to call it “the goods of fortune”—must be distributed by human decisions, not by universal principles.

The Law of God doth not give me property, nor the Law of Nature, but property is of human constitution. I have a property and this I shall enjoy. Constitution founds property. [32](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774446#32)

The individual—Ireton was declaring—must be defined by human society if the latter was to exist; law and property must give him his social rights and personality if law and property were to have any security at all—and without them, what would he be? Yet the social institutions which made men what they were must themselves be of

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| 30 | The full text of these debates is to be found in Woodhouse. |
| 31 | Woodhouse, pp. 54, 58, 60, 63. |
| 32 | Woodhouse, p. 69. |

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human creation; and consequently the individual must be born into, and obliged to, a structure of human law which was not of his making. Since this was England, property and custom supplied the answer to the problem of how this might be achieved. The fabric of common law, within which each man lived and moved and had his being, was a structure defining modes of holding, inheriting, and transmitting land in terms of immemorial custom; and the only individual Ireton would admit to civic participation was one who had inherited—or had acquired the means of bequeathing—a minimum of land in freehold tenure. If it be true, as is contended, [33](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774447#33) that the Levellers meant to exclude from the franchise those who were so far propertyless as to live as servants in other men's houses, that does not bridge the gap between Ireton and Rainborough. For Ireton the land must be freehold, or at least assimilable to the legal concept of freehold tenure; [34](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774447#34) it must be capable of being conceived of as an inheritance at common law, which was itself an inheritance of customs from time immemorial, since there was no other way of anchoring the individual, from birth and at the moments of majority and inheritance, within a structure of law and property he could be obliged and committed to defend. [35](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774447#35) Sir Robert Filmer, inconspicuous in Kent, was working out a way of achieving the same denial of natural liberty by means of a theory of patriarchalism; [36](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774447#36) but Ireton's argument was by far the more widely intelligible.

It should be stressed that the necessity being imposed upon the individual is in an important sense more formal than specific: an obligation to respect *some* system of law and property, rather than *the* specific system now obtaining. Ireton was capable of conceiving and designing far-reaching and extremely intelligent plans of reform, [37](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774447#37) and the social structures which defined men were, as we have seen, themselves to be man-made. But his insistence on an inheritable freehold, a “permanent interest,” qualifying the individual for citizenship by committing him to an inherited structure of obligations, is strong evidence that in the last analysis he desired to anchor the individual in custom, in a law made by men indeed, but by men who could not be identified. His arguments at Putney suggest the ideological explanation of why, a year and a half later, he rejected one of the few opportunities for revolutionary action ever afforded an English statesman. To purge parlia-

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| 33 | E.g., by C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 107–59 |
| 34 | Woodhouse, pp. 57–58. |
| 35 | Woodhouse, pp. 66–67. |
| 36 | See Laslett's introduction to his edition; above, n. 10. |
| 37 | E.g., the *Heads of the Proposals;* Kenyon, pp. 302–308, but the full text in John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State* (London, 1659–1701), VIII, 731–36. |

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ment, instead of dissolving it and calling for elections on a new franchise, was to admit that the army—as led into political action by the senior officers—would always demand legitimation by elements of the traditional constitution, and was purging the House of Commons with no other end than to get a House of Commons which would legitimate its actions. [38](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774448#38) Such an attitude issued logically enough from Ireton's mode of arguing that social structures, laws, and institutions were prerequisite to the political wills of men.

Because the revolution of 1648–1649 had this unfulfilled character, its apologetics took the form of a justification of departure from existing ways—something for which revolutions seldom find it necessary to apologize. A main theme, for instance, of the declaration which the Rump Parliament published following the King's execution, was that the monarchy had failed—not just in the recent crisis, but throughout its history—to provide England with political stability; [39](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774448#39) and since it was necessary in addition to justify the abolition of the House of Lords, this could easily become an argument that the mixed constitution of the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* had failed in the purpose for which balanced governments were designed and must be replaced by a better one. A vehemence of feeling against a hereditary or entrenched aristocracy, moreover, remained part of the content of army radicalism and outlived the Leveller decline. But the defensive tone of the Rump's declaration points toward that of the main theoretical debate of 1649 and the years following: the so-called Engagement controversy, [40](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774448#40) which reveals to us the diversity of directions in which Independent thought must go, once deprived of radical conviction. For the Engagement was little more than an undertaking to be obedient to the government as at present constituted, and the complex and important controversy that ensued was concerned with the problem of granting obedience to a government *de facto* but not *de jure*—one possessed of effective power rather than legitimate authority. In short, the casuist search for authority was now resumed, and it is testimony to the enduring strength of English conservatism under catastrophic conditions that so colorless a theme produced so much thought of major importance.

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| 38 | Kenyon, p. 294; David Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford University Press, 1971). |
| 39 | *A Declaration of the Parliament of England, Expressing the Grounds of their Late Proceedings, and of Setling the Present Government in the way of a Free State* (London, 22 March 1648/9), pp. 6, 14, 17; for the Lords, p. 20. see also *The True Portraiture of the Kings of England* … (London, 1650). |
| 40 | For this see Wallace (above, n. 15) and Skinner (above, n. 23), and Wallace, “The Engagement Controversy, 1649–52: and annotated list of pamphlets,” *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 68 (1964), 384–405. |

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An analysis of the tangled strategy of this debate will carry us in the direction of Hobbes, but it will also furnish us with some of the conditions for a revival of Machiavellian and republican solutions.

Both in theory and in the actual conditions of 1649, rule *de facto* was rule by the sword. To all participants in this debate, the problem to be confronted was that of establishing the exact conditions under which government by human law had broken down and given place to government by human power, and in so doing to determine the modes in which power might be seen as supplying its own justification. The simplest and most obvious strategy was the appeal direct to providence: God's inscrutable will had brought these things to pass, and it was not for his creatures to resist his instruments. But not only was this argument vulnerable to a number of counterattacks; to the highly and diversely articulate minds of the time there were too many tempting directions in which it might be further developed. It was, for instance, no more than a single step from the providential to the prophetic; Cromwell, who repeatedly averred that he could not have put his hand to the work if he had not felt himself called to it, was surrounded by men anxious to interpret his and their roles in the context of prophecies about to be fulfilled and an apocalypse or millennium about to occur. But it is noteworthy—and typical of that divided mind in the saints which was discussed earlier—that, as his power mounted after 1653, Cromwell declined to see himself as any specific actor in the eschatological scenario and repeatedly insisted that his power was but that of a constable; thus marking, in Lamont's opinion, the definitive transition from godly (in the Foxean sense) to “godless rule.” [41](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774449#41) The Protector himself was willing to acknowledge by implication that his authority was *de jacto* rather than *de jure prophetico;* the rhetoric of Davidic kingship, with its shadowings of types to be renewed, might cling to him nevertheless; [42](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774449#42) but his attitude does much to explain why the doctrine that the saints, expecting Christ, now ruled in England remained the asseveration of a minority.

*De facto* argument, strictly speaking, could never adopt the full apocalyptic perspective and remain itself. Apocalyptic had grown antinomian in its willingness to proclaim that all human authority was, or soon might be, overturned and a true *regnum Christi* at hand; and it was only on the assumption that this was not the case, that the downfall of the old and the erection of the new government had occurred

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| 41 | Lamont, *Godly Rule*, ch. 6, pp. 136–62. |
| 42 | J. A. Mazzeo, “Cromwell as Davidic King,” in *Renaissance and SeventeenthCentury Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 183–208, and Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, ch. 3, pp. 106–44. The discussion turns on the interpretation of Marvell's Cromwellian poems. |

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within continuing human time, that the problem of the Engagement was worth debating at all. The appeal to providence was the first move in a strategy for dealing with time; but if the event were not apocalyptic, it would not be unique and would form one of a class of revolutions occurring from time to time—Ascham's *Confusions and Revolutions of Government* is a key title, as well as an important text, of this controversy. [43](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774450#43) If governments fell from time to time, how was authority restored; or, in different yet familiar language, what was the nature of the individual's obligation in this predicament? In a brilliant and patient exploration of the richly textured thought of Andrew Marvell, John M. Wallace has demonstrated that the providential perspective was far from being exhausted at this point; it was possible to develop, with the wealth and complexity of poetic genius, a sense of the individual's implication in events to whose very ambiguity he owed a certain *pietas;* but, in accepting this interpretation of Marvell, it remains important to notice what languages spin off, as it were, at lower levels of his thought and other men's, to express the idea of a radical fracture of legitimacy. If such fractures occurred with any regularity in human affairs, it would follow that every government might be traced to a time when it had been founded not in right but in the sword; and the assertion that all are indeed radically unjust at the outset is found expressed—by Anthony Ascham and Marchamont Nedham among others—in terms which seem at last unmistakably Machiavellian. “This is that circle we so painfully move in,” wrote Ascham, [44](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774450#44) alluding plainly enough to the Polybian *anakuklosis*, though he did not go on to propose either a legislator or a republic as the way out of the pain of which his writings are full; a combination of providence and nature continued to dominate his thinking. Similarly, Marvell—though Wallace's analysis indicates that this is only one dimension of his vision— introduces into his *Horatian Ode* a number of no less unmistakable images of Cromwell as a Machiavellian prince-legislator akin to Romulus in the necessary illegality and ruthlessness of his proceedings, and into his *Ode on the First Anniversary of the Government under … Cromwell* a portrait of Oliver as both a Davidic restorer of prophetic authority and a classical legislator capable of bridging the instabilities of time in a single creative act. [45](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774450#45) David, it is worth recalling, is not

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| 43 | For Ascham, see Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, pp. 30–38, 45–48, 54–58. |
| 44 | *Confusions and Revolutions* (2d ed., 1649), pp. 73–74. Cf. Nedham, *The Case of the Commonwealth of England Stated* (1650), ed. Knachel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1969). |
| 45 | Mazzeo, “Cromwell as Machiavellian Prince in Marvell's *Horatian Ode*” and “Cromwell as Davidic King,” *op.cit.;* Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, chs. 2–3; Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, pp. 144–46; Pocock, “The Onely Politician” (above, ch. X, n. 1), pp. 284–85. |

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unlike Romulus in the ambiguities of his relationships with Saul before his anointing and with the sons of Zeruiah after it; there were points at which the Machiavellian and the prophetic perspectives lay not far apart.

But the moment of the sword, while it could be occupied by prince, legislator or prophet—all types appearing in Machiavelli's gallery— could also be occupied by figures normative in quite another way; we have already seen something of this while treating of Henry Parker. In *jus gentium* it was possible for a conqueror to intervene at this moment, bearing his sword as proof of the judgment of heaven in his favor, so that it was forbidden to oppose him however violent and extrelegal his behavior. The type of this conqueror was not William the Norman so much as Nimrod of the Bible, the primeval despot whose power was not unwilled by God; [46](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774451#46) but to Nedham and other writers the *jus conquestus* could be seen as in the possession of the army collectively, those Englishmen in arms whose conquest proved both their natural and their providential right to rule in circumstances such as these. From this point a single step would of course equate the conquerors with the saints; but another, in a different direction, would lead to *salus populi*, reason of state and the state of nature, in the way which we have already studied and which Skinner, in a series of essays, has shown to be the crucial breakaway from the providential strategy of the *de facto* controversy at its outset [47](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774451#47) —crucial because it supplies the context in which Hobbes completed, published and at one level of perception must have intended *Leviathan* (1651). This work was the most radical portrayal, among all those which appeared during the revolutionary years in England, of the human individual existing at a moment of near-total delegitimation and artificially recreating authority from a state of dereliction; it differed altogether in structure from the Machiavellian vision and may seem to have reduced the latter's role in English thinking to one of secondary importance.

It can be seen, however, that *de facto* argument heightened the importance of some elements of Machiavellism; the prince, the legislator, and the cycle can be observed emanating, so to speak, from the moment of the sword; but the republic was not to reassert itself—as in theory it might have done—simply as a *de facto* device of stabilization. It is one of the more interesting discoveries in all this long story that the classical republic made its appearance in English thought as an activist ideal, at a point where the *de jacto* “moment of the sword”

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| 46 | For these different types of conqueror, see Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, pp. 22–28, 98–102, 132–34. |
| 47 | Above, n.23. |

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came into contact with the radicalism of the army, whose half-realized revolution had precipitated the conceptual and political problem in this form.

A speaker at Putney opposed to the Levellers—Colonel Nathaniel Rich, afterwards a somewhat conservative fifth-monarchist and yet a foe to the Protectorate—had attacked the proposal to give votes to the poor, not only on the ordinary grounds that they would use their power to abolish all property, but also with the rather more realistic argument that to do this would be to give undue weight to a few great men on whom the poor would assuredly be dependent. This had happened at the end of the Roman republic, he indicated, and it would be no use pulling down the king to set up an emperor in his place. [48](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774452#48) The importance of Rich's speech is that it reveals the presence, in the mind of at least one officer, of that classically derived association between republican liberty and a popular army which we have found as a standard theme in Florentine thought, although his attitude toward the prospect is indeed more negative than positive. We now know, however, that it was not beyond the resources of the army's vocabulary to justify their intervention in political affairs by presenting themselves as “no mere mercenary army,” but a body of free citizen-soldiers, a claim which, if made in sufficiently Machiavellian terms, would entail the transformation of England into a popular republic. Such was not the language of Sexby and Rainborough, but it is possible to find a time and place, after the suppression of the Levellers, when such an ideology was energetically disseminated by a writer well placed to reach a wide audience.

The writer in question was none other than Marchamont Nedham, [49](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774452#49) the journalist who shuffled the dominant concepts of the Civil War and Rump years with a brilliance if anything enhanced by what seems to have been a signal lack of sincerity or consistency. He won release

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| 48 | Woodhouse, p. 64: “I remember there were many workings and revolutions, as we have heard, in the Roman Senate; and there was never a confusion that did appear (and that indeed was come to) till the state came to know this kind of distribution of election. That is how the people's voices were bought and sold, and that by the poor; and thence it came that he that was the richest man, and [a man] of some considerable power among the soldiers, and one they resolved on, made himself a perpetual dictator. And if we strain too far to avoid monarchy in kings [let us take heed] that we do not call for emperors to deliver us from more than one tyrant.” |
| 49 | For this reassessment of Nedham's activities, see Pocock, “James Harrington and the Good Old Cause: A Study of the Ideological Context of His Writings,” *Journal of British Studies* 10, no. 1 (1970), 36–39. Also, J. Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961) and Knachel (ed.), *The Case of the Commonwealth*, introduction. |

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from prison for a Royalist phase in his activities by engaging to write, and in 1650 publishing, *The Case of the Commonwealth of England Stated*, an appeal for *de facto* obedience which contains certain Machiavellian elements but recommends submission to a conquering sword with arguments involving extensive reliance on the *pre-Leviathan* works of Hobbes. The Rump regime rewarded him with editorship of a new government weekly entitled *Mercurius Politicus*, which he retained for many years; and in the summer of 1650 he began furnishing it with leading articles at first excerpted from *The Case of the Commonwealth* and later, when this material was used up, with other editorials which did not then appear in book form. These carried him through to mid–1652, and thus cover the period of the Dunbar and Worcester campaigns, when the radical zeal of the regiments—the suppression of the Levellers notwithstanding—seems still to have been at a high level. The note struck by the articles is consistently radical and democratic. The claims of a Presbyterian ministry to *jure divino* authority is denounced as the work of Antichrist; [50](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#50) the commons of Scotland are to be liberated from the power of their chieftains; [51](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#51) and above all, the editorials add up to the first sustained English exposition of republican democracy in classical and Machiavellian terms. What can only be called a democratic government is to be based on the popular possession of arms [52](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#52) and the rapid succession-Nedham calls it “revolution,” as Harrington was to call it “rotation”—of the representatives and magistrates the people elect. [53](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#53) There is repeatedly expressed a bitter mistrust of hereditary aristocracies and of senates which, not being regularly dissolved, come to almost the same thing. [54](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#54) The politics of the Roman republic are presented from a point of view militantly plebeian; Athens—a rare thing at this period—is preferred over Sparta; [55](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#55) and Venice, usually the paragon of mixed governments, becomes the archetype of “standing aristocracies.” [56](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774453#56) Any mode of power in a republic which is not contained within a balance and within

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| 50 | *Mercurius Politicus* 99 (22–29 April 1652), 1553–56; 114 (5–12 Aug. 1652), 1785–89. |
| 51 | *Ibid.*, 65(28 Aug.–4 Sept. 1651), 1033–34; 73 (23–30 Oct. 1651), 1161. |
| 52 | *Ibid.*, 103 (20–27 May 1652), 1609–13. |
| 53 | *Ibid.*, 74 (30 Oct.–6 Nov. 1651), 1173–75; 78 (27 Nov.–4 Dec. 1651), 1237; 79 (4–11 Dec. 1651), 1255–56; 91 (26 Feb.–4 March 1652), 1442 (“revolution”). |
| 54 | *Ibid.*, 70 (2–9 Oct. 1651), 1100–1101; 72 (16–23 Oct. 1651), 1142–43; 73 (23–30 Oct. 1651), 1158; 84 (8–15 Jan. 1652), 1334, 1337; 86 (22–29 Jan. l652), 1365–68; 89 (12–19 Feb. 1652), 1409–13. |
| 55 | *Ibid.*, 71 (9–16 Oct. 1651), 1126; 73 (23–30 Oct. 1651), 1158; 84 (8–15 Jan. 1652), 1335; 88 (5–12 Feb. 1652), 1394; 91 (26 Feb.–4 March 1652), 1445. |
| 56 | *Ibid.*, 70 (2–9 Oct. 1651), 1100; 73 (23–30 Oct. 1651), 1158; 84 (8–15 Jan. 1652), 1338. |

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a rapid rotation of office is, we are told, “monarchical,” whether exercised by one man or a number. [57](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774454#57)

Nedham, writing after the Levellers and deriding them, had hit upon a new mode of expressing democratic ideas in English; one with a long and complex history before it. For our purposes, what matters is that he was describing a *vivere civile e popolare*, based on the classical ideal of the armed citizen and the Machiavellian ideal of the armed and militant people. He was doing this because the appropriate paradigms were available in this form for articulating the claims which the army was still capable of making for itself as a revolutionary movement. With the other side of his none too admirable journalistic personality, he was articulating—still in a fairly democratic form—the doctrine of *de facto* authority made necessary by the army's inability to press its revolutionary claims to the full. In those editorials drawn from *The Case of the Commonwealth*, army and people appear as exercising the *jus conquesthejusconques-tus* to be found in *jus gentium*; [58](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774454#58) but the trend of Nedham's *de facto* arguments would carry him to advocating submission to any power exercising effective authority. When that power was the Cromwellian Protectorate, and elements of the army for which he had written in *Mercurius Politicus* were in opposition, Nedham was to find himself in an awkward position and the history of English Machiavellism was to make a fresh start.

**[III]**

From what we know of the circumstances in which James Harrington's *Oceana* was published during the late summer or fall of 1656, the immediate background seems to have been the increasing discontent of some army circles with the way in which the Protectorate had been developing since 1654. [59](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774454#59) There are shadowy links associating Harring-

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| 57 | *Ibid.*, 72 (16–23 Oct. 1651), 1143; 87 (29 Jan.–5 Feb. 1652), 1385; 92 (4–11 March 1652), 1457–62; 100 (29 April–6 May 1652), 1569–73. The last especially. |
| 58 | *Ibid.*, 17 (26 Sept.–3 Oct. 1650), 277–78; 18 (3–10 Oct. 1650), 293–96; 19 (10–17 Oct. 1650), 309–12; 20 (17–24 Oct. 1650), 325–26; 21 (24–31 Oct. 1650), 341–43; 22 (31 Oct.–7 Nov. 1650), 357–59; 23 (7–14 Nov. 1650), 373–74; 24 (14–21 Nov. 1650), 389–90 (the kings of England); 25 (21–28 Nov. 1650), 407–408; 26 (28 Nov.–5 Dec. 1650), 423–25 (Nimrod and the kings of Israel); 27 (5–12 Dec. 1650), 439–40; 28–30 (12 Dec.–2 Jan. 1651), at large, for the necessity of obedience to the sword; 31 (2–9 Jan. 1651), 503–504, for the body politic originating in subjection; 35 (30 Jan.– 6 Feb. 1651), 567–68, for the danger of a conquering people's losing their liberty; 75 (6–13 Nov. 1651), 1189–91; 93 (11–18 March 1652), 1457–60; 98 (15–22 April 1652), 1540. |
| 59 | For further detail, see Pocock, “James Harrington and the Good Old Cause,” *loc. cit.* |

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ton with former officers and others who disliked the assumption of power by a military leadership, unrepresentative of regimental feeling, which showed no sign of establishing the frequently elected parliaments called for since 1647 and had placed the army under the control of the Protector as chief of the executive power. Rumors may well have been circulating during 1656 concerning the intentions of some Protectoral grandees which took shape, in the spring of 1657, as the *Humble Petition and Advice*, [60](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774455#60) the crucially antirevolutionary step of the Cromwellian decline, with its proposals to convert the office of Protector into a hereditary monarchy and establish a nominated “Other House,” to maintain a balance between the “single person” and unicameral “parliament” of which the constitution was otherwise held to consist. This was plainly a return to the form of government described in the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* fourteen or fifteen years previously, and indeed the words “the three estates” are to be found in the *Petition and Advice*. [61](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774455#61) A bitter opposition, both to the erection of an entrenched aristocracy and to any return to the historic constitution, now became a motif of that surviving republicanism which promulgated the slogan of “the good old cause,” and it may be suspected that an anticipation of what the *Petition and Advice* would contain accounts for the opposition literature of the preceding summer. At all events, it can have been no accident, and must have been a miscalculation, when Nedham, in June 1656, published his *Mercurius Politicus* editorials of 1650–1652 in book form as *The Excellency of a Free State*, with little abatement of their fury against monarchical and aristocratical intrusions—there is evidence that he subsequently regretted this step and the association with *Oceana* it had brought him [62](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774455#62) —or when Sir Henry Vane, about the same time, brought out his *Healing Question*, the only one of these works to be prosecuted by the authorities, in which the army appears as the justly conquering “people of God,” now unhappily divided against itself, and proposals are made for restoring it to its proper function of exercising the rule of the saints in England. [63](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774455#63)

But *Oceana* is one of those works that transcend their immediate context. The book's historical significance is that it marks a moment of paradigmatic breakthrough, a major revision of English political theory and history in the light of concepts drawn from civic humanism and Machiavellian republicanism. The immediate reason for undertak-

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| 60 | Text in Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution*, pp. 350–57. |
| 61 | Kenyon, p. 353 (clause 7). |
| 62 | Pocock, “James Harrington and the Good Old Cause,” pp. 38–39. |
| 63 | Margaret Judson, *The Political Thought of Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969). |

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ing such a revision was the impulse to justify the military republic in England as the rule of a *popolo armato*. The lengthy survey we have been conducting of the modes of articulating political consciousness available to Englishmen is enough to show us, however, that the language of *vivere civile* had a hard struggle to establish itself in the teeth of competing alternatives; and we will not expect to find Harrington, in the role of an English Machiavelli, staging a dramatic conflict between virtue and fortune, or playing the part of an accuser of the brethren, thrusting a sword into the side of English moral consciousness and making it cry out against the wound. That distinction was reserved for Hobbes. Harrington's purposes seem to have been, [64](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774456#64) first, to argue against any return to the traditional “ancient” or “balanced” constitution by showing that it had rested on foundations which had always been insecure and were now swept away; second, as the occupant of what we may term a post-Savonarolan moment, to show that this transcendence of ancient use and custom was rather a secular than an apocalyptic process (we should not forget that it was possible to be both), which did not, however, necessitate a rule of the saints. For the first purpose, he constructed a civil history of the sword, [65](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774456#65) based on a Machiavellian theory which depicted the possession of arms as crucial to both the distribution of power and the exercise of civic virtue; for the second, he developed a theory of citizenship which, in conjunction with the first group of arguments, showed the Englishman as citizen and the English republic as standing nearer to God than any oligarchy of self-selected saints. In the former respect, he threw a bridge of theory over the gap between Ireton's conviction of the necessity of property and Rainborough's assurance of the opportunity of freedom, and found means of depicting the English freeholder as the classical citizen returned to earth from Parnassus; [66](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774456#66) in the latter, he stood back-to-back with Hobbes at a strange and significant moment in the evolution of the Puritan millennial consciousness. In his longterm historical significance, however, he appears in a somewhat different light, and this will be explained in further chapters.

Harrington's work has been described as “a Machiavellian meditation feudalism” [67](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774456#67) Among the pre–1642 generation of English scholars,

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| 64 | The author is preparing an edition of Harrington's political writings, for the Cambridge University Press, to which the reader is referred. See also *The Ancient Constitution*, ch. VI, 124–47. |
| 65 | *Oceana*, “Second Part of the Preliminaries.” References are to Toland (ed.), *The Oceana and Other Works of James. Harrington* (1771); see pp. 57–72. |
| 66 | Traiano Boccalini's *Ragguagli da Parnasso* (Venice, 1612–13) was one of Harrington's favorite sources. |
| 67 | Pocock, *Ancient Constitution*, p. 147. |

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there has been traced a growing understanding of the nature of baronage, knight's service, and dependent military tenures in general, which were seen as periodizing English history, having entered the realm with either the Saxons or the Normans and having faded from dominance over law and society at a subsequent date hard to fix with precision. Historical perception of the knight and vassal of true feudalism tended to merge with the memory—which we have already found expressed in a Machiavellian context by Bacon and Ralegh—of the military power which more recent magnates had based upon their retainers; and this telescoping of images permitted Harrington to think of a distribution of power based on the *feudum* as entering England with the Saxons and leaving it only as the result of legislation devised by Henry VII. [68](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774457#68) It was not new to suggest that the decline of military power in the hands of the nobility had led to important changes in political power, or that it had left the king face to face with his commons. Harrington's crucial innovation—which makes him the true pioneer of civic humanist thought in England—was to erect these perceptions into a general history of political power in both Europe and England, founded on the Machiavellian theory of the possession of arms as necessary to political personality. The Florentines had stressed that if a man bore arms not for himself but for another, he was incapable of citizenship, since the use of arms—the crucial act in asserting both power and virtue—must be at his command if he was to be at the republic's; and they had perceived the transition from Roman republic to empire in terms of the rise and fall of armed individuality. Harrington's acquaintance with English legal antiquarianism permitted him at this point to add a further dimension—one which, as he put it, Machiavelli had very narrowly missed: [69](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774457#69) the bearing of arms, once it was seen as a function of feudal tenure, proved to be based upon the possession of property. The crucial distinction was that between vassalage and freehold; it determined whether a man's sword was his lord's or his own and the commonwealth's; and the function of free proprietorship became the liberation of arms, and consequently of the personality, for free public action and civic virtue. The politicization of the human person had now attained full expression in the language of English political thought; God's Englishman was now *zoon politikon* in virtue of his sword and his freehold.

If the basis of political personality was now to be property, in the real or (less probably) in the movable sense, it was anchored in something more concretely material than the Aristotelian *oikos*, and Harrington showed himself inclined to discount Machiavelli's emphasis on

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| 68 | Toland, pp. 60–65. |
| 69 | Toland, p. 39. |

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| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | a strictly moral corruption, an actual disintegration of the civic personality, as a main cause of the decay of governments. When a government became “corrupt,” he thought, it was less because the citizens had ceased to display the virtues appropriate to it than because the distribution of political authority was no longer properly related to the distribution of property that should determine it. [70](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774458#70) When this happened, it would be found that equals were attempting to behave as lords and vassals, or lords and vassals to behave as equals; and in each case political power, exercised in ways no longer justified by the distribution of objective freedom, must be either forcibly and despotically imposed or (what came to the same thing) weak and failing, destined to be replaced by a distribution of authority geared to the actually existing distribution of land. The classical sixfold typology of constitutions—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, each exercised either justly, with an eye to the common good, or unjustly, with an eye to the good of the ruling part only—could now be modified and become a scheme in which each either was or was not related to the actual distribution of land. Harrington, however, introduced a further distinction between monarchy of the Turkish type, in which one man owned all the land and others held it from him at pleasure, and monarchy of the “Gothic” or feudal type, in which a few held of the king and the many held of the few. This last, he suggested, was not a true monarchy so much as an ill-designed and unstable balance. Feudal rebellions in the Gothic case, and rebellions of the palace guard—janissaries or praetorians—in the Turkish type (to which the later Roman empire had belonged), ensured that monarchy, even in its pure form, never became a truly stable mode of government. [71](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774458#71)  Harrington described property as “the goods of fortune,” [72](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774458#72) and had no particular conception of social laws regulating its distribution. But he did think that it could be redistributed, or that its redistribution might be prevented, by human legislation; [73](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774458#73) and the English conceptual context ensured that he was not so far committed to the notion of *fortuna* that he need present each mode of government as necessarily degenerating into its dysfunctional form, or his sixfold classification as moving inescapably in a Polybian *anakuklosis*. He did, however, hold that only a democracy of landholders—that is, only a society where a *demos*, or many, of landed freemen held land in relative equality—pos-  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 70 | Toland, p. 68. | | 71 | Toland, pp. 37, 50, 65–67, 129–30, 248–52. | | 72 | Toland, pp. 36–37. | | 73 | This point is dwelt upon—I think a little too emphatically—by J. R. Pole in *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1966). |   -387- | |

sessed the human resources (Machiavelli might have said the *materia*) necessary to distribute political authority in the diversified and balanced ways that created a self-stabilizing *politeia;* and such a commonwealth, he contended, might prove theoretically immortal. [74](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774459#74) He also presented a history of political authority in the Western world which did indeed follow a cyclical pattern: Moses and Lycurgus, Solon and Romulus, appeared as agrarian legislators who had established commonwealths of freeholding warriors, but their work had been undone by Roman conquest and the growth of *latifundia;* after the Gracchi failed to prevent this, the Caesars and their client armies had established an unstable monarchy in which land and military powers were shared between the emperor and the senate; the Goths, called in as mercenaries in the oscillations of this system, had taken over the entire empire and established feudal imbalances of monarchy and aristocracy. The “Gothic balance,” or “modern prudence,” Harrington said, though traditionally praised as a political masterpiece—an allusion to the kind of thinking represented by the *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions*— had nowhere been anything more than a “wrestling match” between king and nobility, an instability rendered persistent by the circumstance that each party could neither adjust to the other's power nor become independent of it. [75](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774459#75) In “Oceana”—his lightly idealized England—“modern prudence” had lasted from the Anglo-Saxon invasions to the advent of the Tudors. Henry VII, however—the portrait owes much to Bacon—had played a role very like that which Giannotti had assigned to the Medici; he had emancipated the military tenants (whom Harrington confounds with retainers) from the authority of their lords and, in rendering the latter impotent to harm him in future, had begun the elevation of the former into a landowning people (Giannotti's *mediocri*) over whom monarchy had no hold. [76](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774459#76) It had been reserved for Charles I to discover his own obsolescence; challenged by the power of the commons, he had found the nobility without authority to uphold his and had been forced to attempt rule by an army; but, there being no reservoir of soldiers other than landholding freemen in no way committed to fight for him, he had failed and his monarchy

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| 74 | Toland, pp. 178–80. See Z. S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth-Century England* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1945), and Charles Blitzer, *An Immortal Commonwealth: The Political Thought of James Harrington* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960). |
| 75 | Toland, pp.63, 129. |
| 76 | Toland, pp. 64–65, 364–66. For references to Bacon (both the *History of Henry VII* and the *Essays*), see pp. 32, 64. For Giannotti, see above, ch. ix, n. 5. |

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had fallen. [77](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774460#77) The armed “people” of proprietors now held the field and might repeat the work of Moses and Lycurgus. A cycle was completed, and there was an opportunity for the construction of an immortal commonwealth. Harrington had outdistanced Ireton; he had anchored politics in a history of property, but one consisting of a cyclical series of transformations rather than a mere tradition of inheritance.

In addition, he had completed his theoretical demolition of the claims of the ancient constitution to be regarded either as a structure of use and custom adapted to the genius of the people, or as an exemplary balance of the one, the few, and the many. If he had not shown, like the Levellers, that it was rooted in Norman usurpation, he had depicted it as a phase in a cycle of unstable forms, a system which never had or could have brought peace or order to England. To the extent to which his thought can be seen as growing out of the casuist and *de facto* controversies of preceding years, he was prepared to argue that the incoherence of the old regime had left the choice between king and parliament to the conscience of the individual, and that no man could be justly punished for exercising such a choice; [78](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774460#78) and to readers who might fear, in the tradition of Ascham or Nedham, that all government was rooted in the sword, he had offered a civil theory and a civil history of the sword which led to conclusions far more sanguine and positive than those of *Leviathan*. His *popolo armato* is not the collective Nimrod exercising *jus conquestus* that had been imagined by Nedham, nor is it the mystically selected band of saints envisaged by Vane; the sword here is neither Leviathan's nor Gideon's, but the foundation on which a republican people erects the structure of its civic virtue.

The political individual depicted in Harrington's scheme is still the exponent of civic virtue presupposed—however skeptically—in all Florentine schemes of civic humanism, but we have already seen that Harrington emphasizes less the moral than the material bases of his personality. There is less in *Oceana* about the moral degradation

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| 77 | Toland, p. 65: “… for the house of peers, which alone had stood in this gap, now sinking down between the king and the commons, shew'd that Crassus was dead, and the isthmus broken. But a monarchy devested of its nobility, has no refuge under heaven but an army. Wherfore the dissolution of this government caus'd the war, not the war the dissolution of this government.  “Of the king's success with his arms it is not necessary to give any further account, than that they prov'd as ineffectual as his nobility, but without a nobility or an army (as has bin shew'd) there can be no monarchy. Wherfore what is there in nature that can arise out of these ashes, but a popular government, or a new monarchy to be erected by the victorious army?” |
| 78 | Toland, p. 69. |

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involved in corruption than there had been in the sixteenth century or was to be again in the eighteenth; and the worst thing Harrington's “people” ever has to fear is loss of government, [79](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#79) by which he means less a coercive sovereign than the “orders” or *ordini* which guide men into the opportunities of virtue. As in Machiavelli, the bearing of arms is the essential medium through which the individual asserts both his social power and his participation in politics as a responsible moral being; but the possession of land in nondependent tenure is now the material basis for the bearing of arms. That tenure might entail modes of social dependence other than vassalage Harrington does not seem to have considered; his stress on the importance of arms may have led him to lump together all tenures which did not impose the duty of military service; but if, like Ireton and Rainborough at Putney, he did not explore the vast area intermediate between true freehold and servitude, he combined elements from both their arguments in his. Like Ireton, he insisted on a transmissible and hereditary property in land as the prerequisite of any interest or participation in the commonwealth. Servants, he declared, were no part of the latter and any danger they presented came from without, [80](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#80) as did the danger from foreign enemies. But like Rainborough, he seems to have regarded the economic autonomy of citizenship as including men who worked for wages, so long as they inhabited cottages of their own and were not servants living in other men's houses and families. [81](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#81) Harrington's attitude to the economy has been much debated, and an attempt has been made to show that he thought of land as basically a market commodity, to be bought and sold at a profit, which would make his citizenry a fluctuating and mobile class of entrepreneurs. [82](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#82) But a good argument can be adduced to suggest that his economics were Greek and based on the relations of *oikos* to *polis*. When land was acquired, it was in order to bequeath it: [83](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#83) to found families or *oikoi* based on a security of inheritance, which set the sons free to bear arms and cast ballots in the muster of the commonwealth. As with Aristotle, the end of land is not profit, but leisure: the opportunity to act in the public realm or assembly, to display virtue. We return toward an ethos of civic excellence, in which politics are peculiarly suited to “the genius of a gentleman,” [84](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774461#84)

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| 79 | Toland, p. 469 (*A System of Politics*, IV, 18, 19, 22). |
| 80 | Toland, pp. 77, 138: “The causes of commotion in a commonwealth are either external or internal. External are from enemies, from subjects, or from servants.” |
| 81 | Toland, p. 247, where it is argued that such a man would have no interest in using his voting power to level property. |
| 82 | C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, ch. 6, especially pp. 82–88. |
| 83 | Toland, p. 480 (*System of Politics*, x, 4–5). |
| 84 | Toland, p. 53. |

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but the poor freeholders are not dismissed from the role of the critically applauding Many.

Harrington knew that property might exist in real or in mobile forms, and specifically declared that his general laws concerning the relations of property to power would operate as well in the latter case in the former. [85](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774462#85) But, though he was acquainted with Holland and is said to have served in an English regiment there, he nowhere draws the lineaments of a society whose military and political structure are based upon property in goods and money; the Dutch, rather far from being a classical people in arms, would have given him difficulty if he had. Holland and Genoa—not Venice, be it noted—appear as his types of the wholly mercantile society only in the context of a discussion as to whether “the balance in trade eats out the balance in land.” This proves to be an examination of the impact of usury upon landed property. Holland and Genoa, profit-making societies, clearly have no need of regulations against usury; ancient Israel and Sparta, basing their constitutions upon the distribution of land where the agrarian territory was of limited extent, had to limit the operations of usury rigorously in order to prevent the distribution of real property becoming entangled in a web of debt. [86](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774462#86) For the same reason, the modern Jews should be reestablished in a territory where they could revert to the condition of agriculturists. [87](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774462#87) Oceana, however, is of sufficient extent to permit its merchants the practice of lending upon interest (though not, apparently, to readmit the Jews); the landed system cannot be disturbed by usury and may therefore be stimulated and enriched by it. [88](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774462#88) The Pleasure of bourgeois-spotting scholars at finding Harrington engaged in justifying speculative profit in seventeenth-century England should not obscure the fact that he saw speculation in money as related to the inheritance of land more negatively than positively. The end of property was stability and leisure: it anchored the individual in the structure of power and virtue, and liberated him to practice these as activities. The objection to market profit as the basis of civic personality was its mobility; “lightly come,” said Harrington, “lightly go.” [89](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774462#89) What a man had he might lose; what he was, he might lose at the same instant. The superior man, observed Confucius, was not a utensil; and civic personality was not a commodity.

Should Oceana's volume of trade expand, of course, it might well be necessary for the republic to increase its territorial extent. This may have been one reason why Harrington echoes Machiavelli's insistence that an armed popular republic must be “a commonwealth for

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| 85 | Toland, pp. 38, 228. |
| 86 | Toland, pp. 228–29. |
| 87 | Toland, pp. 33–34. |
| 88 | Toland, p. 229; also 100–101 |
| 89 | Toland, p. 227. |

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expansion”; [90](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#90) but there are some important differences. Both men have in common the idea that a popular republic must place arms in the people's hands, and that these will be for use rather than ornament or ritual. But Machiavelli—affected, like Bruni before him, by thoughts of the Roman conquest of the free cities of Etruria—envisaged the republic in Polybian style as contiguous with other republics and kingdoms, and as necessarily involved in wars with its equals; and the destiny of Rome appeared to him cannibalistic, destructive of other peoples' virtue and ultimately of her own. Of England, however, Harrington wrote: “the sea gives law to the growth of Venice, but the growth of Oceana gives law to the sea.” [91](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#91) Both were islands, insulated by water from the constant threat of enemies at their gates; but whereas Venice had room only for merchants, craftsmen, and mariners, and abstained from empire and democracy through lack of an independent citizenry, England was both island and agrarian territory, capable of breeding an armed people who should be democrats at home and conquerors abroad. The lack of *terra-firma* contacts, moreover, meant that there were no neighbor republics whose liberty and virtue might be subverted and that Oceana might expand without fear of selfcorruption; but Harrington is unclear as to just what this means in the real world. True to the mood in which Marvell had declared that Cromwell, as bearer of the public sword, “to all states not free, shall climacteric be,” he imagines the English republic as hegemon, liberating adjacent Europe from the Gothic (and probably papal) yoke; [92](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#92) but there is an alternative vision, oceanic rather than continental, in which the conquering and land-hungry freemen are seen colonizing an Ireland depopulated of its ancient inhabitants, “where every citizen will in time have his villa.” [93](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#93) (The Puritan army in Ireland was a refuge for antiProtectoral opinions, and several of Harrington's associates and admirers were connected with it.) “There be other plantations,” the passage observes, “and the commonwealth will have more.” [94](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#94) In view of the importance which his thought was later to enjoy in the Thirteen Colonies, it is tempting to say that Harrington visualized the settlement of an empty Ireland carried across the Atlantic; but there is a reference to “the colonies in the Indies,” [95](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774463#95) which may very well be the American settlements, as certain to become independent in no distant time. If it is obscure, however, just where the uncorrupting expansion of Oceana is to take place, it is certain that Harrington, like Giannotti before him, is determined to have the best of both alternatives posed

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| 90 | Toland, pp. 178–85. |
| 91 | Toland, p. 34. |
| 92 | Toland, pp. 185–88. |
| 93 | Toland, p. 103. |
| 94 | Toland, p. 100. |
| 95 | Toland, p. 41. |

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by Machiavelli at the beginning of the *Discorsi*. Oceana was to be a Rome in respect of unlimited expansion, a Venice in respect of perpetual stability, liberty, and virtue. To this end he made his legislator, in a speech of even more than usual length, [96](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774464#96) rehearse the whole Passage from *Discorsi* I, 6, in which the antithesis of Rome and Venice had first been stated, and conclude that Machiavelli had been wrong in contending that the price paid for arming the people had been constant strife between the nobility and plebeians (whose effects had been fatal to the republic when the wealth of empire was the prize contended for). Like Machiavelli's philo-Venetian critics, he argued that civil strife at Rome was the result, not of plebeian turbulency, but of the patricians' hereditary monopoly of office, which was causally unrelated to the arming of the people. Venice had solved this problem by making her aristocracy a body elected by and rotating among the many, and Machiavelli had been wrong in supposing that the disarmament of the people was the cause of her internal peace. [97](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774464#97) Oceana, rising out of the wreck of the Gothic balance and the disappearance of its hereditary baronage, had an insular situation and a landowning and arms-bearing people; she had only to adopt the rotatory aristocracy of the Most Serene Republic, and she could be Venice and Rome in one. There need be no fear of an English Caesar.

The “orders” of Oceana are rehearsed at wearisome length and in Utopian detail. They have as their objective the construction of a scheme of participation for all citizens, based on the frequent assemblies of local communities or “tribes”—a term equally of Greco-Roman or of Hebrew resonance—which in many ways resemble the county assemblies of the traditional English system: not least in their combining the functions of mustering and drilling the county militia and electing representatives to a national assembly. It is actually as they advance and retire in companies of horse and foot that the citizenry cast the “golden volleys” of Venetian ballots which elect members of the assembly and senate of Oceana; Harrington is consciously dramatizing the identity of *milizia* and *polizia*. [98](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774464#98) But the persons elected are less representatives in the proper sense than citizens taking their turn at participation and service, and lot as well as choice enters into the complex, and deliberately Venetian, structures by which the various assemblies and councils are chosen and function. Harrington is not unaware of that aspect of the *mito di Venezia* in which virtue appeared to have been mechanized and men fed into processes which made their behavior intelligent and disinterested whether they so intended it or not—

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| 96 | Toland, pp. 132–44. |
| 97 | Toland, pp. 139–40. |
| 98 | See the speech of Hermes de Caduceo; Toland, pp. 92–94. |

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the Platonic overtones noted in Contarini appear in the last and most systematic of his political writings [99](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774465#99) —but his dominant purpose is the release of personal virtue through civic participation. There is to be frequent rotation—Nedham had called it “revolution”—in office, including the office of representation, not to ensure the supremacy of popular choice so much as to ensure the reality of the individual's participation; he is to take frequent turns at office, and is not to depute or alienate civic function to others. Rotation is Harrington's equivalent—as he thought it was Venice's—for Machiavelli's *ridurre ai principii'*, it is the constant renewal of virtue in and through action, and the astronomical language—“galaxy,” *“primum mobile”* “orb”—he liked to employ in the technical jargon of his utopia carries the suggestion of the self-perpetuation of light, warmth, and life. So too did his invocation of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood.

Rotation is also his solution for the problem of aristocracy. The members of the senate who discharge in his system the functions of the few—it should be noted that, the work of the legislator once done, there is not much role for a one—are regularly elected and regularly retire by thirds. They are defined, that is, less by their quality as a social group than by the political function they perform, which, according to the classical and Renaissance tradition, is rigorously confined to proposing laws and policies among which the people or assembly are to choose. The absolute separation of “debate” from “result,” in his terminology, [100](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774465#100) was Harrington's method of mechanizing virtue, of distinguishing and distributing the elements of the decision process so that men were obliged to act disinterestedly. But to have the few regularly emerging from and returning to the body of the many was his way of demonstrating that there was no need to have an aristocratic class in order to have a functioning few. Some social differentiation, nevertheless, there had to be; the whole Aristotelian technique is built upon the relation of political functions to social characteristics. The senate is to be chosen by the people from members of an equestrian order, for which there is a property qualification of £ 100 per annum; [101](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774465#101) but greater importance seems to be attached to his firm belief that the many can be trusted to know the talented few when they see them. Out of twenty men, he says, six will be of superior ability and the remaining fourteen will follow their lead; there is no need to establish elaborate mechanisms to ensure their selection, and the most important precaution is to ensure that the differentiation of “debate” and

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| 100 | Toland, pp. 43–45, 48, 50–51, 71, 214–15, 416, 418–19. See above, pp. 255–6, 260, for Guicciardini's, and pp. 287–9, 304, for Giannotti's use of the same distinction. |
| 101 | Toland, p. 78. |
| 99 | *A System of Politics*, IV (Toland, pp. 468–70), IX (pp. 478–79). |

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“result” provides for the performance of their proper functions by the six and the fourteen. [102](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774466#102) It is clear that the difference of talent between these two groups corresponds, in Harrington's mind, to a difference of wealth, birth, and standing; the six will be gentlemen, they will have more property, leisure, experience, and tradition than the fourteen. [103](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774466#103) But what matters is that the fourteen are left free to recognize these qualities for themselves, and that no hereditary and not much of a property qualification is imposed to regulate their choice. The concept of deference—to employ a term favored by modern scholars—which we are here meeting for the first time in English republican theory, though assuredly not for the first time in English social thought, is familiar to us from Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini, and the last-named had employed it to distinguish carefully between aristocracy in a *governo largo* and in a *governo stretto*. [104](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774466#104) From Harrington to John Adams, its role in Atlantic thought [105](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774466#105) was to argue that the relations of aristocracy to democracy, crucial in any theory of mixed government, took shape best in a society of relative freedom, mobility, and outspokenness: that aristocracy, although a function of property as well as personality, was a natural rather than an institutional phenomenon, which worked best when it was not entrenched but left to the recognition of the many. An entrenched aristocracy, in Nedham's or Harrington's view, was hard to establish in any way that did not ensure either conflict or corruption; and there was no need to make the attempt.

The coincidence in time between Harrington's writings and those of Vane or Milton or the Fifth Monarchists meant, however, that he had to consider the possibility of another kind of aristocracy, more formidable even than a hereditary order: that of a rule of the saints, an elite of spiritual experience whose qualifications could not, by their nature, be judged by the many. To understand the full depth of this problem we must consider that he had successfully relocated England in a context not of traditional, but of classical time; English history now appeared, more positively than Florentine history had ever appeared to anyone after the early Bruni, part of the rise, fall, and rebirth of republican virtue, and the present moment was one at which England had the opportunity to recreate the commonwealth of armed freemen in such a form as had not existed since the days of Livian Rome. It has been a recurrent theme of this book that the moment of recreating the republic, that society in which men were what they

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| 102 | Toland, pp. 44–45, 236–38. |
| 103 | Toland, pp. 53, 125, 127. |
| 104 | See above, pp. 130–35, 227, 248, 253. |
| 105 | See especially Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), and below, ch. xv. |

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ought to be, was hard to conceive without adding the concept of the apocalyptic moment, or moment at which grace acted in history; arid Harrington is not an exception. Oceana, we are told at one point, is “as the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley”; the legislator chants over her beginnings the full rhapsody of the *Song of Solomon*; [106](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774467#106) which any orthodox Christian would associate with the imagery of the church as Bride of Christ; and we hear elsewhere that the republic is the reign of the Son as the Mosaic commonwealth was the reign of the Father. [107](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774467#107) But this is the moment at which the rule of the saints makes its appearance, to challenge in its own fashion the equality of the citizens before God.

The Elect Nation, that peculiarly English assertion of the priesthood of all believers, had since its first appearances been affirming the primacy of secular authority in a curious and characteristic blend of the languages of laicism and apocalyptic. If the pope's claim to represent the presence of God, acting from the *nunc-stans*, in time was dismissed as false, then the secular community could assume the role of the community of faithful expecting Christ's return in time. The supremacy of secular authority over any spiritually based challenge to its primacy thus became the test of the repudiation of Antichrist, and one by one Romish priests, Arminian bishops, and Scottish presbyters had appeared in the Antichristian role. To the Independents of the sixteen-fifties Rome remained the paradigmatic enemy, but *jure divino* presbyterianism ranked next; when Harrington's legislator—who is in part a portrayal of Cromwell—approaches the end of his labors, it is largely for his victories over a foreign invader, obviously the Scot, that he is commemorated. [108](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774467#108) But a rule of the saints, claiming a spiritual authority, election, or illumination, not accessible to other men, presented a threat to the secular community in its spiritual role that was basically of the same order—hence William Prynne's announcement that Quakers were Jesuits or Franciscans in disguise. [109](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774467#109) In Books in and IV of *Leviathan*, Hobbes had set out to erect a fortification against all these threats together. In his own highly individual way, he had employed the arguments of radical Protestantism to demonstrate the impossibility of any earthly agency's exercising an authority peculiarly derived from Christ between his ascension and his return, or one immediately derived

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| 106 | Toland, p. 188. |
| 107 | Toland, p. 187: “as the kingdom of God the father was a commonwealth, so shall the kingdom of God the son: *the people shall be willing in the day of his power”* Cf. p. 195: “I cannot conclude a circle (and such is this commonwealth) without turning the end into the beginning.” |
| 108 | Toland, p. 199. Antichrist, however, is not mentioned by name. |
| 109 | Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, p. 141 and note. |

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from God between the Mosaic theocracy that had ended with the election of Saul and the theocracy that would be exercised by Christ following his return and the resurrection of the dead. The natural and artificial civil authority of Leviathan, which held the stage meanwhile, had indeed undivided sway over the preaching and interpretation of the prophetic word concerning God's return; but this could be exercised only at the cost of incessant repetition of that word, which swept away all Leviathan's pseudo-spiritual rivals, but located him within a scheme of apocalyptic time and spoke of a day when his authority should be no more because theocracy had returned with the risen Christ. [110](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774468#110)

Hobbes and Harrington—the theorist of absolute sovereignty and the theorist of the commonwealth of participatory virtue—might seem as certain to quarrel as any two ideologues could be; and indeed Harrington is fertile in attacks upon Hobbes's theory of power, his hatred of the Greco-Roman heritage, and his substitution of private and voluntary subjection for public and active virtue. [111](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774468#111) But there is a further, and to them a deeper, sense in which they were at one, having the same enemies. Harrington, like Hobbes, was anxious to prove that the first presbyters and deacons ordained by the Apostles were not consecrated in a priestly succession, but elected in assemblies; [112](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774468#112) and, like most Independents, whether Erastian or congregationalist in their leanings, he desired to prove this against papists, episcopalians, and presbyterians all together. There was a wealth of literature on the subject from which he might have drawn arguments; what held him close to Hobbes must have been the desire of both men to show that the agency electing the presbyters and deacons had been a civil agency, and that—to Harrington at least—the primitive *ecclesiae* had been assemblies of citizens in the Athenian sense of the noun *ekklesia*. [113](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774468#113) The impulse was to prove that the choice of a clergy is a civil choice, carried out by the civil sovereign; and, profoundly as Harrington and Hobbes differed in their theories of sovereignty, a self-sufficient polis or commonwealth is, as Hobbes emphasized, as sovereign over its own affairs as any kingdom subject to Leviathan can possibly be. And the enemies were the same. Harrington's longest polemic on the question of primitive ordination, directed against the Anglican Henry Hammond, is aimed at a

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| 110 | *Politics, Language and Time*, pp. 148–201. |
| 111 | Toland, pp. 35–37, 38–39, 42–43, 45–46, 49–50, 53, 54, 65, 71, 241. |
| 112 | *Prerogative of Popular Government*, Book II (Toland, pp. 304–54); *Art of Laivgiving*, ch. VI (Toland, pp. 398–400); *Leviathan*, Book III, ch. 42 (ed. Oakeshott, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, n.d.), pp. 322–83. |
| 113 | Toland, pp. 48 (“the church or assembly of the people”), 316–17, and *Prerogative of Popular Government*, II, *passim*. |

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passage of the latter's writings, page by page and point by point, where Hammond had been attacking Hobbes. [114](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774469#114)

Hobbes had presented Leviathan's kingdom as occupying the present interval between the direct rule of God exercised in the Mosaic theocracy and the direct rule of God that would be exercised by the risen Christ. He had consequently emphasized the identity of both theocracies and their monarchical character; the authority that God would exercise through the human nature of Christ, he had exercised through his vice-gerents from Moses to Samuel. Harrington, however, insisted that the Mosaic commonwealth had been a true classical republic, and that the authority electing the officers of religion had been that of the people in their orders, as when they elected the officers of state. [115](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774469#115) He did not feel obliged to part company with Hobbes when he said this. The overriding aim was the destruction of any claim on the part of a clergy to independently derived spiritual authority, and a republic could assert civil sovereignty as effectively as could a monarchy. The appeal to theocracy—another mode of denying the independence of a priesthood—would be maintained by repeating, and Harrington does repeat, that a republic, that regime in which all citizens are equal, is that in which they are all equally free under God. Consequently, a republic is a theocracy; it is that realm of which Christ is King. [116](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774469#116) Savonarola had said this long ago, and Vane and the Fifth Monarchists were saying it still. To Harrington, however, their claim was false, since they were claiming for themselves an authority, as an elite or elect, which they denied to other citizens. [117](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774469#117) They were denying the republic, and denying Christ's kingdom by claiming it for themselves. Their role was not far from becoming that of Antichrist.

Even at Sinai, however, the republic had not been a simple matter of revelation. Harrington insisted that the orders of civil society, which it developed and embodied, were accessible to human reason, and that

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| 114 | Toland, pp. 335–54. Henry Hammond, *A Letter of Resolution to Six Quaeres, of Present Use in the Church of England* (1653), in *Works of Henry Hammond* (London, 4 vols., dated between 1671 and 1684; here vol. 1, dated MDCLXXIV). The fifth “quaere” concerns ordination and is answered by an attack on ch. 42 of *Leviathan* (vol. 1, pp. 512–29). Harrington concludes that Hammond's attack has failed, and mentions Hobbes by name, |
| 115 | Toland, pp. 46–48, 75, 99, 147, 166–67 (*Oceana);* 234–41, 272–74, 283–84, 320– 33, 357 (*Prerogative of Popular Government);* 363, 372–98 (*Art of Law giving*). |
| 116 | Toland, pp: 187 above, and 194: “… but a commonwealth is a monarchy; to her God is king, in as much as reason, his dictât, is her soverain power.” Thus Toland; the original (as corrected by Harrington) reads “where God is king.” |
| 117 | Toland, pp. 469 (*A System of Potitws*, IV, 23), 574 (*A Discourse upon this Saying* …), 580–84 (*A Parallel of the Spirit of the People with the Spirit of Mr. Rogers*). |

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God did not act contrary to the intelligible natural order. [118](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774470#118) Where Machiavelli had juxtaposed Moses with the heathen legislators in a way which cannot be stripped of irony, Harrington many times cited a text in which Moses accepted advice on the foundation of civil institutions from his Midianite father-in-law Jethro, a gentile and a heathen. [119](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774470#119) Here, he liked to say, were prophet and legislator, divine word and natural reason, working in harmony. But there is a further sense in which the republic displays a millennial aspect beyond anything to be found in Hobbes. If theocracy was exercised through a direct representation of God in the person of Moses, and is to be exercised through another in the person of the risen Christ, then Leviathan, who is only God's representative naturally and artificially, cannot exercise theocracy and can only expect its return. But if Israel's being a republic made it also a theocracy, then Oceana, the restored republic which is both Israel and Rome *redivivus*, may be in an intelligible sense Christ's kingdom returned. Hence the imagery of the Bride of Christ, and the other apocalyptic significances with which Oceana is invested. Leviathan can only expect Christ's kingdom at the end of time; Oceana may be that kingdom already come, and merging the millennium with the after-world. There is a difference between a mortal god and an immortal commonwealth.

But only a few of the types and shadows attending the serene edifice of Oceana are millennial. We are more likely to feel that Harrington and Hobbes, like Prynne and Marvell, ended by subordinating spiritual experience to political, and paradoxically employed to this purpose the prophetic dimension which their thought could not escape. Hobbes deliberately undermined the possibility of direct religious experience in all but the rarest of cases, and reduced the religious life to obeying Leviathan and acknowledging the power of God and the soterial mission of Jesus. Harrington, following the humanist path, obliterated the saint—while retaining a soterial function for “gathered congregations” [120](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774470#120) —and came close to leaving the practice of civic virtue by citizens as the sole prerequisite for the *regnum Christi*. [121](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774470#121) His

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| 118 | Toland, pp. 214–15, 248, 272–73, 300, 342 (“Neither God nor Christ ever instituted any policy whatsoever upon any other principles than those of human prudence”), 347, 371–72, 401. |
| 119 | E.g., Toland, pp. 48, 74 (“… my Lord Archon, taking council of the commonwealth of Israel, as of Moses; and of the rest of the commonwealths, as of Jethro”); and *passim*. |
| 120 | Toland, p. 55. |
| 121 | Toland, p. 489: “As the natural body of a *Christian* or Saint can be no other for the frame, than such as has bin the natural body of an *Israelit* or of a Heathen; so the political bodys, or civil governments of *Christians* or Saints can be no other for the frame, than such as have bin the political bodys or civil governments of the *hraelits*, or of the Heathens.” P. 490: “The highest earthly felicity that a people can ask, or God can give, is an equal and well-order'd commonwealth. Such a one among the *Israelits*, was the reign of God; and such a one (for the same reason) may be among *Christians* the reign of Christ, tho not every one in the *Christian* commonwealth should be any more a *Christian* indeed, than every one in the *Israeli tish* commonwealth was an *Israelit* indeed.” |

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clergy are to be mere men of learning, interpreting the word of God because they know the ancient tongues in which it was delivered; [122](http://www.questia.com/reader/action/next/100774471#122) Pentecost has almost disappeared. But because of the availability of an eschatological rhetoric which implied the imminence of a millennium or return, Harrington—whatever may be true of Hobbes—avoided speaking of his republic as existing in a rigorously secular time. He did not use the terms *virtù* and corruption, as Machiavelli had used them, in such a way as to depict civic man in a world which neither custom nor grace was stabilizing. That perspective was to return when Harrington's ideas were used in a society no longer millennially oriented.