

Vol. 3 No. 1 Spring 2024

PIETAS

A Journal of Tradition, Place, and Things Divine



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by John Antonio Pascarella

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(with Some New Attributions)
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Benjamin Franklin, by Robert Feke (c. 1746) oil on canvas, Harvard Art Museums

We forget that Benjamin Franklin was once young—see the portrait of forty-year-old Franklin above—and that he introduced a distinctly American conception of *pietas*, or duty. We will return to Franklin’s piety following an introduction to our feature articles for this spring issue.

In our first feature article, John Antonio Pascarella frames the political debate in American universities between promoting free speech and protecting students from hate speech within the context of the ideas that birthed the modern university. In a close reading of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, Pascarella argues that Hobbes’s views on free speech are informed less by his statements about the political order than by his understanding of the liberal education. Hobbes, argues Pascarella, rejected the possibility of philosophy and replaced it with “a political science that subjects intellectual, moral, and religious life to the need for peace through the willfully reductive language of ‘power.’” Far from introducing a liberal free play of ideas, the liberal categories of significant and insignificant speech introduced new limitations on what may be discussed in universities. To understand the current quarrel over free speech on campus, argues Pascarella, one must return to the

parameters introduced by Hobbes in the liberal tradition. And only by a return to a more ancient conception of liberal education, he suggests, can we see outside those limitations.

One of the first great advocates of the freedom of speech in the colonies was Benjamin Franklin, who wrote that Hobbes's idea of human nature "is somewhat nearer the Truth than that which makes the State of Nature a State of Love: But the Truth perhaps lies between both Extreams." In our second piece, Kevin Slack focuses on Benjamin Franklin's writings during what he calls the "crucial decade" of the 1730s. Slack develops scholarship that chronicles Franklin's changing views on the British Empire in decisive steps beginning in the 1750s. He argues that scholars have overlooked Franklin's early comparison of proprietary government in Pennsylvania with that in Maryland in the 1730s. To make his case, Slack includes new attributions to the Franklin canon, two of which are included in an appendix. Combining these new attributions with detailed assessments of Franklin's changing views on concrete political issues, Slack shows the development of Franklin's ideas on political concepts such as sovereignty, lawmaking, delegation, the judiciary, the separation of powers, and ultimately his rejection of both proprietary government and the British Empire itself.

Black leaders in the Reconstruction Era often looked to Benjamin Franklin's teachings on virtue to direct their own efforts to educate the freedmen. Joey Barretta returns to Frederick Douglass's writings on education to provide a thorough account of his educational program. Thus, he offers something new in scholarship, a systematic treatment of Douglass's work on education over his entire career. Douglass's essays that promote industrial training and social mobility in the 1850s and 1860s, Barretta argues, must be read in the context of his broader vision for a comprehensive cultivation of the mind. Barretta turns to a lesser-known 1894 speech, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," which he considers to be especially significant in "understanding the role of education in [Douglass's] political thought" because it reveals "how his work on education developed in the years prior." Understanding Douglass's overarching principles on the highest form of human education shines light on his earlier educational career and emphasis on vocational training.

Our final feature article is by Josiah Lippincott, who examines the origin of the myths forged after World War II that currently underpin what scholars have called the neoliberal world order. Lippincott locates the roots of America's involvement in that conflict in the late nineteenth-century progressive view of foreign policy, which directly led to America's

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involvement in the Philippines, China, and the Far East. Describing itself in clear opposition to the American founders' views of neutrality and diplomacy, those interventions ultimately led to Pearl Harbor by placing American projects for global uplift on a collision course with Imperial Japanese geopolitical interests. The aftermath of the war introduced a new and radically different international arrangement that reduced the once-dominant imperial European powers to secondary players. It was constituted by "American hegemony, free trade, mass immigration, international mediating institutions, and the elevation of democracy, ethnic self-determination, and colonial liberation as guiding principles."

In our book reviews for this issue, Coyle Neal reviews Vittorio Bufacchi's *Why Cicero Matters*, Nathanael Blake reviews Ryan Holston's *Tradition and the Deliberative Turn*, Jacob Wolf reviews Daniel J. Mahoney's *The Statesman as Thinker*, and Oliver Spivey reviews Steven Frye's *Ungessed Kinships*. Many thanks to our authors and reviewers, without whom our journal would not be possible.

* * *

Benjamin Franklin is perhaps the least likely American founder to come to mind when we think of the word *piety*, yet it is a constant theme in his writings. As a young man, he constructed a deist worship service (the first of several attempts), in which, under a section entitled "DUTY," he prayed that he might "be preserved from Atheism and Infidelity."¹ He used the word *atheism* to mean chaos, a world without causes and thus unknowable. As a "lover of Truth," Franklin extolled the "Use of *Logic*, or the Art of Reasoning to *discover* Truth, and of Arguing to *defend* it, and *convince* Adversaries."² In 1750 he described the God of his experiments in electrical fluid: "This affords another Occasion of adoring that WISDOM which has made *all Things* by Weight and Measure!"³ He wrote of the great natural philosopher Sir Robert Boyle: "His knowledge of natural history, and skill in chymistry, were

¹ Benjamin Franklin, "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard Labaree et al., 44 vols. to date (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959–2024), 1:107.

² Franklin, "A Letter to a Friend in the Country," 2:68; *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, 3:414. Franklin's "Standing Queries for the Junto," 1:259, included among the required questions, "Do you love truth for truth's sake, and will you endeavor impartially to find and receive it yourself and communicate it to others?—*Answer*. Yes."

³ Franklin, "Opinions and Conjectures," 4:12.

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very great and extensive; and his piety inferior to neither.”⁴ The life of Boyle, Franklin said, proved “that tho’ *Ignorance* may in some be the *Mother of Devotion*, yet true learning and exalted piety are by no means inconsistent.”

The piety of wisdom proceeded from “a philosophic thought,” a reflection upon death, that likens human life to flowers that bloom and decay:

I pluck’d this morn these beauteous flow’rs,
Emblem of my fleeting hours;
’Tis thus, said I, my life-time flies,
So it blooms, and so it dies.
And, lo! how soon they steal away,
Wither’d e’er the noon of day.
Adieu! well-pleas’d my end I see,
Gently taught philosophy:
Fragrance and ornament alive,
Physic after death they give,
Let me, throughout my little stay,
Be as useful and as gay;
My close as early let me meet,
So my odour be as sweet.⁵

In the face of fleeting existence, Franklin queried what is longest lasting, or most enduring, and he tied piety in wisdom to piety in moral virtue.

Not like the Bloom of Beauty, quickly past;
VIRTUE the Chief: This Men and Angels prize,
Above the finest Shape and brightest Eyes.
By this alone, untainted Joys we find,
As large and as immortal as the Mind.⁶

Among human minds, Franklin agreed that Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke were among the best. He inserted James Thomson’s poem, which asserts that Newton’s glory outshone that of the ancient Greeks, alongside Pope’s epitaph, “Nature and nature’s laws lay hid in night; God said, *Let NEWTON be*, and all was light.”⁷ As for Locke, Franklin writes, “The

⁴ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1749, 3:335–36:

⁵ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:254, quotes Samuel Wesley, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: E. Say, 1736), 77, hitherto “not identified.”

⁶ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:253–54, quotes Samuel Wesley, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: E. Say, 1736), 94, hitherto “not identified.”

⁷ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:251.

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famous John Locke, Esq ...[was] the Newton of the *Microcosm*: For, as Thomson says, He made the whole *internal world* his own. His book on the *Human Understanding* shows it.”⁸ Franklin called Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the “best Book of Logick in the World.”⁹ Locke, he believed, had uncovered not only the principles of mind but also the “first Principles of sound *Politicks*.”¹⁰

But philosophic contemplation was not the only end of man. Piety in Franklin’s writings also included the duty to perfect oneself in virtue. Franklin, who concluded that “Revelation had indeed no weight with me,” understood both faith and reason as means to the same moral end.¹¹ In the first issue of *Poor Richard Improved*, a lengthier almanac appearing in 1748, he offered the following advice: “To lead a virtuous Life, my Friends, and get to Heaven in a Season, You’ve just so much more Need of *Faith*, as you have of less of *Reason*.”¹² Virtue for a naturally social creature expanded beyond any solipsistic notion of self-perfection.¹³ Franklin also prayed that he might “be loyal to my Prince, and faithful to my Country, careful for its Good, valiant in its Defence, and obedient to its Laws, abhorring Treason as much as Tyranny.”¹⁴

While Franklin longed for leisure for philosophic study, he did not live a simple life of contemplation.¹⁵ During King George’s War, he tied the notion of lasting glory to heroism. He contrasted the false idea of a hero—the great robber-emperor worse than either plague or famine—to the “true Hero,” a “deliverer” like King William, who was “one of the right sort of *Heroes*”: “Your *true* hero fights to *preserve*, and not to destroy, the lives, liberties, and estates, of his people.”¹⁶ While “this sort [of hero] is thin sown, and comes up thinner,” modern heroes like the Duke of Cumberland possessed the courage of ancient warriors:

⁸ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:259.

⁹ Edwin Wolf 2nd and Kevin J. Hayes, *The Library of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 2006), 20.

¹⁰ Franklin, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, 3:413.

¹¹ *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Labaree, Ralph Ketcham, and Helen Boatfield (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), 114-15; Franklin, “Dialogue between Two Presbyterians,” 2:30: “Morality or Virtue is the End, Faith only a Means to obtain that End.”

¹² Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:249; he 3:237, advertised the couplet in the September 17, 1747 *Pennsylvania Gazette* as “Faith and Reason.”

¹³ On man’s social nature see Franklin, “Men are Naturally Benevolent as Well as Selfish,” in *Franklin: Writings*, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 200-203; on man’s striving for happiness and perfection, see “Proposals and Queries to be Asked the Junto,” 209-210.

¹⁴ Franklin, “Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion,” 108.

¹⁵ Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, January 27, 1748 and September 29, 1748, 3:272, 318.

¹⁶ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:255.

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Then honour struck the stroke, true love of fame
In each brave breast glow'd with a gen'rous flame,
Not yet extinct in All; the same we view
Boscawen, Warren, Anson, still in you.¹⁷

In addition to courage on the battlefield, Franklin directed the love of fame to other endeavors such as the doctor's "glorious Scene of Action," who, "Cordials and Med'cines gratis to dispense, A beauteous Instrument of Providence."¹⁸ On women, Franklin amended Samuel Wesley poetry to include, "*Housewifery* is Women's noblest Fame":

When great Augustus rul'd the World and Rome,
The Cloth he wore was spun and wove at Home,
His Empress ply'd the Distaff and the Loom.
Old England's Laws the proudest beauty name,
When single, Spinster, and when married, Dame,
For *Housewifery* is Women's noblest Fame.
The Wisest houshold Cares to Women yield,
A large, an useful, and a grateful Field.¹⁹

Perhaps Franklin reserved the greatest glory for founders. He praised "WILLIAM PENN, the great founder of this Province; who prudently and benevolently sought success to himself by no other means, than securing the *liberty*, and endeavoring the *happiness* of his people."²⁰ He follows with a radical statement, "Let no envious mind grudge his posterity those advantages which arise to them from the wisdom and goodness of their ancestor; and *to which their own merit, as well as the laws, give them additional title.*"²¹ Franklin aspired to become one of the great "Lawgivers" by unifying a people.²² His 1747 *Plain Truth*, which birthed an association of over one thousand militiamen, exhorts: "Conscience enjoins it as a Duty on you (and indeed I think it such on every Man) to defend your Country, your Friends, your Aged Parents, your Wives, and helpless Children."²³ It was a social contract: "thus being unprotected by the Government ... We Do hereby, for our mutual Defence and Security, and for the Security of our Wives, Children and Estates, and the Preservation of the Persons

¹⁷ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:253.

¹⁸ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:257.

¹⁹ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:255.

²⁰ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:260.

²¹ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1748, 3:260 [Emphasis added].

²² Franklin, "Form of Association," 3:211.

²³ Franklin, *Plain Truth*, 3:201.

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and Estates of others, our Neighbours ... form ourselves into an Association.”²⁴ The integrity of his “Militia of Freemen,” wrote Franklin, was inspired by ancient Roman virtue.²⁵ “In worthy Minds, the Principles of *Reason, Duty* and *Honour*, work more strongly than the Fears of Punishment.”²⁶ The choice of officers, he argued, should be made by the people and guided by its leaders: “The whole Choice, indeed, may, in one Sense, be said to be in the People, as it takes its Rise from them.... And as every Neighbourhood would be glad of Assistance if attacked, so it ought to be willing to give Assistance where it is needed.”²⁷ The elected “General Military Council” would be “the Common-Band that unites all Parts of the whole Association in one Body.” To transcend “Party Spirit,” Franklin criticized both the wealthy and the Quakers.²⁸ He created the symbols and mottos for the militia units. One depicted three hands—merchant, laborer, and gentleman—united in virtue: “UNITA VIRTUS VALET.”²⁹ Franklin also located unity in a common faith. He coined the motto “IN GOD WE TRUST” and wrote a “Proclamation for a General Fast” for God’s providential aid.³⁰

The formation of a people is achieved by education, the goal of Franklin’s 1749 *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*. He spent much time reflecting on how a liberal education might channel what he called “laudable worthy Ambition,” the subject of his written advice to his “beloved son” William, then twenty-eight years old.³¹ Franklin saw the driving of passion by reason—or “Passions reduced under the Government of Reason”—as the key to “be both good and great.”³² He advised, “It was wise counsel given to a young man, *Pitch upon that course of life which is most excellent, and CUSTOM will make it the most delightful*. But many pitch on no course of life at all, nor form any scheme of living, by which to attain any valuable end; but wander perpetually from one thing to another.”³³ A young Franklin had assessed his own flaws in his 1726 “Plan of Conduct”:

If we would write what may be worth the reading, we ought always, before we begin, to form a regular plan and design of our piece: otherwise, we shall be in danger of

²⁴ Franklin, “Form of Association,” 3:206.

²⁵ Franklin, “Form of Association,” 3:209.

²⁶ Franklin, “Form of Association,” 3:211.

²⁷ Franklin, “Form of Association,” 3:210.

²⁸ Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, November 27, 1747, 3:213.

²⁹ Franklin, “Colors of the Associator Companies,” 3:267–68.

³⁰ Franklin, “Proclamation for a General Fast,” 3:226–29.

³¹ Franklin, “A Letter From Father Abraham to His Beloved Son,” 8: 124, 128.

³² Franklin, “A Letter From Father Abraham to His Beloved Son,” 8: 125, 129.

³³ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1749, 3:341.

incongruity. I am apt to think it is the same as to life. I have never fixed a regular design in life; by which means it has been a confused variety of different scenes. I am now entering upon a new one: let me, therefore, make some resolutions, and form some scheme of action, that, henceforth, I may live in all respects like a rational creature.”³⁴

Franklin’s 1728 religious articles that posited the “First Principles” of religion included Nicholas Rowe’s “Golden Verses” of Pythagoras.³⁵ He recommended the “Golden Verses” as part of a worship service in his *Autobiography* and placed them in his 1758 essay, “A Letter From Father Abraham to His Beloved Son”³⁶:

Let not the stealing God of Sleep surprize,
Nor creep in Slumbers on thy weary Eyes,
Ere ev’ry Action of the former Day,
Strictly thou dost, and *righteously* survey.
With Rev’rence at thy own Tribunal stand,
And answer justly to thy own Demand.
Where have I been? In what have I transgressed?
What Good or Ill has this Day’s Life exprest?
Where have I fail’d in what I ought to do?
In what to GOD, to Man, or to myself I owe?
Inquire severe whate’er from first to last,
From Morning’s Dawn till Ev’nings Gloom has past.
If Evil were thy Deeds, repenting mourn,
And let thy Soul with strong Remorse be torn:
If Good, the Good with Peace of Mind repay,
And to thy secret Self with Pleasure say,
Rejoice, my Heart, for all went well to Day.

In his 1749 *Poor Richard Improved*, Franklin included his own poetic verses on self-examination in imitation of master Rowe. It may be considered the sum of his piety:

³⁴ Franklin, “Plan of Conduct,” 1:99–100.

³⁵ Franklin, “Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion,” 102; on Pythagoras’s “Golden Verses” as part of the worship service, see *Autobiography*, 151, 151n6.

³⁶ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 151, 151n6; “A Letter From Father Abraham to His Beloved Son,” *Papers*, 8:123–31; on authorship, see Kevin Slack, “On the Sources and Authorship of ‘A Letter From Father Abraham to His Beloved Son,’” *New England Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (September 2013): 467–87.

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S "GOLDEN VERSES" (1749)

Wak'd by the Call of Morn, on early Knee,
Ere the World thrust between thy God and thee,
Let thy pure Oraisons, ascending, gain
His Ear, and Succour of his Grace obtain,
In Wants, in Toils, in Perils of the Day,
And strong Temptations that beset thy Way.
Thy best Resolves then in his Strength renew
To walk in Virtue's Paths, and Vice eschew.

To HIM intrust thy Slumbers, and prepare
The fragrant Incense of thy Ev'ning Prayer.
But first tread back the Day, with Search severe,
And Conscience, chiding or applauding, hear.
Review each Step; *Where, acting, did I err?*
Omitting, where? Guilt either Way infer.
Labour this Point, and while thy Frailties last,
Still let each following Day correct the last.

LIFE is a shelvy Sea, the Passage fear,
And not without a skilful Pilot steer.
Distrust thy Youth, experienc'd Age implore,
And borrow all the Wisdom of Threescore.
But chief a Father's, Mother's Voice revere;
'Tis Love that chides, 'tis Love that counsels here.
Thrice happy is the Youth, whose pliant Mind
To all a Parent's Culture is resign'd.

O, well begun, Virtue's great Work pursue,
Passions at first we may with Ease subdue;
But if neglected, unrestrain'd too long,
Prevailing in their Growth, by Habit strong,
They've w[arp]d the Mind, have fix'd the stubborn Bent,
And Force of Custom to wild Nature lent;
Who then would set the crooked Tree aright,
As soon may wash the tawny Indian white.

Industry's bounteous Hand may *Plenty* bring,
But wanting *frugal Care*, 'twill soon take wing.
Small thy Supplies, and scanty in their Source,
'Twixt *Av'rice* and *Profusion* steer thy Course.
Av'rice is deaf to *Want's* Heart-bursting Groan,
Profusion makes the Beggar's Rags thy own:
Close Fraud and Wrong from griping *Av'rice* grow,
From rash *Profusion* desp'rate Acts and Woe.

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Franklin left the final words of his poetic endeavor to John Dryden³⁷:

Hast thou not yet propos'd some certain end,
To which thy life, thy every act may tend?
Hast thou no mark at which to bend thy bow?
Or like a boy pursu'st the carrion crow
With pellets and with stones, from tree to tree,
A fruitless toil, and liv'st *extempore*?
...

Why you were mad[e], for what you were design'd,
And the great *moral end* of human kind.
Study thy self; what rank or what degree,
The wise creator has ordain'd for thee:
And all the offices of that estate,
Perform, and with thy prudence guide thy fate.

The Ciceronian Society

³⁷ Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1749, 3:341-2, citing *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis, Translated into English Verse. By Mr. John Dryden...* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1693), Satire III, "Perseus," 37.

Speech, Power, and Political [Con]Science: *Leviathan's* Liberal Miseducation in Speech

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*Today's universities are at the center of a political debate about speech and education framed as a choice between protecting individuals and groups from "hate speech" or promoting "free speech." This debate has a longer history than many realize, for the relationship between speech and university education forms a vital part of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Rather than approaching this relationship as a political question, this article proposes seeing this relationship in light of what constitutes a liberal education. By carefully reading *Leviathan* from this perspective, one finds how Hobbes assaults the possibility of philosophy with a political science that subjects intellectual, moral, and religious life to the need for peace through the willfully reductive language of "power." Read in this way, one can see Hobbes's legacy in contemporary efforts to combat "hate speech." One also finds, however, hints of the Greek philosophy Hobbes evades by declaring it insignificant for his political science. In tracing Hobbes's attempts to displace philosophic speech with politics, readers see universities' vital need for a liberal education that understands speech's natural purpose is to search for the truth.*

Universities today are focal points of a broader debate about political speech and education. On one side are those like psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett who argue speech "can be a form of violence."¹ Such an argument complements contemporary concerns with curtailing "hate speech," which targets groups or individuals based on race, gender, or religion and "may threaten social peace."² For those drawn to these arguments, universities must regulate speech to create a safe learning environment. On the other side are those like social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who contends the "speech is violence" argument threatens universities immersed in a "conflict between truth and social justice" as the authoritative end

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¹ Lisa Feldman Barrett, "When is Speech Violence?", *The New York Times*, July 14, 2017.

² "Understanding Hate Speech," United Nations, accessed February 12, 2024.

for education and academic scholarship.³ Haidt frames this conflict as one between the philosophies of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. Where Mill’s “free speech” philosophy preserves “political diversity,” Marx’s philosophy concerns “overthrowing power structures and privilege.”⁴ Citing Mill, Haidt argues “viewpoint diversity” is necessary to search for the truth, and universities—which belong to a “productive network of knowledge-producing institutions”—should defend “free speech” to ensure science and society remain liberal.⁵ The common ground shared by Feldman Barrett and Haidt is their positions on speech in universities serve a political vision that originates with a philosopher neither scholar acknowledges: Thomas Hobbes.

Questions within liberalism about speech and university education have a longer history than present debates indicate, and they form a vital part of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. Because universities originated in Medieval Europe, they combined the study of philosophy and religion. At the time of *Leviathan*’s writing, Scholasticism coupled Greek philosophy with Christianity, two things which Hobbes finds are impractical, sources of intellectual and moral error, and causes of war. To free society from the errors of Scholastic university education, Hobbes introduces a teaching on science to produce peace and prosperity. As psychologists and scholars, Feldman Barrett and Haidt hold an unspoken agreement with Hobbes that science and university education must benefit political society. What neither Feldman Barrett nor Haidt realize is how their positions on speech and university education reflect Hobbes’s assault on the possibility of a philosophy liberated from politics.

Hobbes’s concern with speech and universities emerges in the conclusion to *Leviathan*’s first chapter, and it introduces a philosophic problem that allows him to grant government a narrow but substantial power as the text unfolds. Intending to address universities’ role in commonwealths, Hobbes notes the influence of Aristotle’s texts in these institutions and proposes “the frequency of insignificant speech” within them needs to be “amended.”⁶ The disapproval of “insignificant speech” in universities implies Hobbes must define “significant speech” later within *Leviathan* to clarify his teaching, yet this phrase never appears in the

³ Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, “Why It’s a Bad Idea to Tell Students Words Are Violence,” *The Atlantic*, July 18, 2017; Haidt, “2017 End of Year Letter,” *Heterodox Academy*, December 18, 2017; Haidt, “The Two Fiduciary Duties of Professors,” *Heterodox Academy*, September 20, 2022.

⁴ Haidt, “Why Universities Must Choose One Telos: Truth or Social Justice,” October 21, 2016.

⁵ Haidt, “Why the Past 10 Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid,” *The Atlantic*, April 11, 2022.

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994): I.5. All citations from this edition use Curley’s paragraph numbering. Unless otherwise noted, italicization follows this text.

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text.⁷ Hobbes's insistence throughout *Leviathan* on the importance of clear definitions suggests his omission of "significant speech" is deliberate and embodies a definitive characteristic of his political philosophy. Hobbes's initial use of "insignificant speech" provides readers their first demonstration of a rhetorical tactic he deploys throughout *Leviathan*: the power to declare speech "insignificant" is greater and more possible to realize in politics than declaring what speech is "significant."

Hobbes's political grounds for dismissing certain philosophies from universities as "insignificant speech" are evident in *Leviathan*'s penultimate paragraph. Since Hobbes declares his works do not disturb "public tranquility," they are fit for education in the universities, "the fountains of civil and moral doctrine" from which preachers and gentry (i.e., elites) draw teachings they share with the people through sermons and conversation.⁸ The trickle-down effect of university education is another area where Feldman Barrett and Haidt agree with Hobbes about speech's institutional significance. But approaching speech with its institutional and political significance in mind overlooks the philosophical groundwork Hobbes lays to arrive at his conclusion. Only by examining Hobbes's teaching on speech does it become apparent that the "hate speech" versus "free speech" debate in universities emanates from a deeper philosophical problem concerning the relationship between speech and politics.

Approaching *Leviathan* with questions about what constitutes a liberal education provides readers an opportunity to see Hobbes's substantial influence in contemporary debates about speech, university education, and politics. Situating university education in the contest between "hate speech" and "free speech" confines education's horizons to liberal politics. If one pulls back from liberalism and wonders more generally about speech and education, it becomes possible to consider how politics affects them. Ancient Greek philosophy is well-suited for this task, yet it is one of the philosophies Hobbes wants removed from university education. Hobbes's statement that Aristotle's "insignificant speech" is among what needs to be "amended" is the first step in a longer argument that seeks to render Greek philosophy useless to modern politics. Because of his disdain for Scholasticism,

⁷ Whereas "insignificant speech" appears in I.5, VIII.27, and XII.19, the closest Hobbes comes to "significant speech" is "significant and proper language" (XXV.12), "significant terms" (XXX.22), "significant names" (XXXVIII.12), and an allusion to "significant" words (XLIV.21).

⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, "A Review and Conclusion".16.

Hobbes's attack on Greek philosophy advances his amending of Christianity and its moral teachings to serve his political science. In this respect, readers must view Hobbes's teaching on speech as the foundation for subjecting moral, intellectual, and religious life to his scientific vision of politics. While universities are the instruments for realizing this vision, a careful look at the terms of Hobbes's philosophy reveals how his teachings pose an ongoing threat to liberal education.

This article argues for the need to understand that current debates about speech and university education in liberal democracies are evidence of a philosophic problem at the heart of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Though Hobbes speaks in the names of "reason" and "science," his teachings on speech and power contribute to a political science based on persistent fears of war that renders insignificant any education in philosophy or religion that does not produce civil peace. The first section of this article compares recent scholarship on Hobbes, "hate speech," and conscience to older scholarship on speech and universities to recover a sense of his philosophy's revolutionary character. This comparison outlines how Hobbes's philosophy of power permeates science, morality, and religion through speech. This article's second section sketches how Hobbes redefines "philosophy" to displace it with politics, while the next three sections show his assaults on the possibility of a moral philosophy bound to a philosophy or religion outside of his own political science. The common thread running through these sections is attention to the ways Hobbes's accounts of speech, reason, and science serve political governance through the passion of fear by merging moral, intellectual, and religious matters together with the seemingly neutral language of "power." The article's final section returns to universities' reformation in the image of Hobbes's politicized philosophy. Read in this way, one discovers *Leviathan's* greatest legacy may be Hobbes's aggressive marginalization of any speech and education that finds freedom in the pursuit of truth.

SPEECH AND POWER: HOBBS'S PERSISTENT CHALLENGE TO LIBERAL EDUCATION

There are two reasons why returning to Hobbes's *Leviathan* is helpful for grasping the challenge "hate speech" poses to liberal education in universities. First, the "state of nature" narrative is unknowingly present in Feldman Barrett's "speech is violence" argument. She contends exposure to "hateful words" in a "culture of constant, casual brutality is toxic to the

body,” causing “physical harm” through “prolonged stress” from living with constant worries about one’s own safety.⁹ Second, Hobbes’s quiet but formative presence in the philosophy driving today’s concerns with “hate speech” runs deeper than recent scholarship demonstrates. In Teresa Bejan’s exploration of how Hobbes’s teaching on “contumely” prefigures feminist and critical race theory’s work on “hate speech” and social hierarchies, she omits considering the ways his language of “power” contributes to revising what constitutes philosophy and university education.¹⁰ Despite working in different fields, both scholars share the same limitation: they do not see outside the constraints of Hobbes’s philosophy. In considering Hobbes’s relevance for reflecting on speech and university education, there is more to learn from older lines of scholarship that recognize his philosophy’s revolutionary character.

Within liberalism, the attempt to promote “free speech” while protecting individuals from “hate speech” might seem best understood through the lens of religious toleration. Bejan’s interest in Hobbes’s teaching on “hate speech” begins from Jeremy Waldron’s surprise in connecting early modern philosophical accounts of religious toleration to “hate speech.” Though Waldron dismisses Hobbes because he fails to assure individuals of their societal dignity, Bejan reveals dignity is central to his teaching.¹¹ Where Bejan’s interpretation stumbles is its failure to consider why Hobbes’s teaching on dignity begins in a chapter on power (“Of Power, Worth, Dignity, Honor, and Worthiness”).¹² Bejan’s omission is curious given her nod to Critical Race Theory, which holds liberalism embodies “racialized power” and therefore cannot provide a solution to racial problems within current social structures.¹³ Critical Race Theory builds on Critical Theory, a school of thought concerned with how social sciences model themselves on natural sciences to serve “power structures.”¹⁴ Critical Theory’s foundational questions flow from the political and scientific world that Hobbes’s *Leviathan* aims to create, and his philosophy—which Waldron does not view as “liberal”—

⁹ Feldman Barrett, “When is Speech Violence?”

¹⁰ Teresa M. Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2022): 247–64.

¹¹ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 1–2; Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 204, 231.

¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.

¹³ Linda Alcoff, “Critical Philosophy of Race,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman.

¹⁴ Robin Celikates and Jeffrey Flynn, “Critical Theory (Frankfurt School),” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), eds. Zalta and Nodelman.

shaped liberalism. To see Hobbes's philosophy and its consequences outside the confines of liberalism, readers must concentrate on *Leviathan's* textual teaching.

Relying on toleration to navigate disputes about speech within liberalism becomes more of a dead-end upon realizing its compatibility with Hobbes's teaching on sovereign power. Against scholars denying Hobbes a place within liberalism by calling him "absolutist" or "authoritarian," J. Judd Owen argues they ignore two paradoxes in Hobbes's political philosophy: first, the common "arbitrariness" in sovereign power and consent; second, toleration's "secondary or contingent value" in relation to liberalism's "absolutism" regarding "peace, safety, life" as the "fundamental principle" that trumps liberty. The sovereign's right to censor religious speech is consistent with an "Enlightenment liberalism" derived from "Hobbes's vision of a truly rational politics."¹⁵ The advancement of reason and science within liberalism is subordinate to the sovereign power's need to produce peace. But if the sovereign power's establishment is "arbitrary," what keeps reason, science, and education from becoming arbitrary? And is only religious speech subject to arbitrary censorship, or all speech?

Hobbes's treatment of "conscience" seems to confine censorship of university speech to religious matters while preserving individual liberty. Responding to disparate interpretations of Hobbesian education as "unacceptably authoritarian" or "more liberal," Bejan argues Hobbes's "civil science" uses the sovereign's "authoritative determination" of words' definitions to prevent religious "claims of conscience" from subverting laws. In her reading, university students and teachers are free to think whatever they wish, but must teach and study only sovereign-approved doctrines and definitions.¹⁶ Bejan and Owen agree that *Leviathan's* limits on speech's expression do not require "surrender[ing] our right to private judgment, what Hobbes calls 'conscience'."¹⁷ Contrary to these scholars, Johan Tralau proposes "conscience" lacks a "minimal" liberty for Hobbes because it is a "public" and "collective phenomenon."¹⁸ What these interpretations overlook is how "conscience" first emerges in *Leviathan* after Hobbes distinguishes "science" from "opinion."¹⁹ By name,

¹⁵ J. Judd Owen, "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism," *Polity* 37, no. 1 (January 2005): 130–48, at 131–33, 136–37, 140–44.

¹⁶ Bejan, "Teaching the *Leviathan*: Thomas Hobbes on Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 36 no. 5 (October 2010): 607–26, at 614–17.

¹⁷ Owen, "Tolerant Leviathan," 136, 141. See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.37.

¹⁸ Johan Tralau, "Hobbes Contra Liberty of Conscience," *Political Theory* 39, no. 1 (February 2011): 58–84.

¹⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.4.

“conscience” depends on “science” (which itself depends on speech and reason), and science stands alongside honor as matters of power. Because science informs conscience, science exercises intellectual, moral, and religious power in *Leviathan* through speech, powers all bound to the sovereign’s political authority.

Focusing on Hobbes’s teaching on speech—an approach more common to older research—provides a clearer picture of the philosophic revolution he initiates to reform universities. Robert Kraynak uses Hobbes’s historical writings to show how he aims to end “wars among intellectuals” seeking glory and honor in an “entire civilization of academic speech” where universities encourage the “disputative politics” derived from Socratic “political science.”²⁰ Seeing that neither Greek nor Medieval philosophy produced peace and truth, Hobbes sought to undermine the dialectical method in order to search for truths about nature and politics and change philosophy, politics, and religion.²¹ Kraynak’s interpretation suggests philosophy, science, religion, and university education in Hobbes’s thought are subordinate to the political end of preventing war, and contemporaneous scholarship indicates his attention to speech supports this end.²² For Hobbes, universities institutionalize philosophic speech to serve politics. To understand how this institutionalization of philosophic speech threatens liberal education, it is necessary to trace how Hobbes renders Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle’s dialectical philosophy insignificant in his political science.

Within recent scholarship, there remains insufficient appreciation for the moral force of Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and its power to orient speech and education towards political ends while masquerading as a science. Nicholas Dungey contends Hobbes’s scientific materialism creates a linguistic problem in the state of nature that his political philosophy cannot solve.²³ Strangely, Dungey never confronts Leo Strauss’s contention that the foundation for Hobbes’s political philosophy is not modern natural science, but the moral teaching that fear of violent

²⁰ Robert P. Kraynak, “Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization,” *The Journal of Politics* 45, No. 1 (1983): 86–109, at 94–95, 99–103.

²¹ Laurence Berns, “Thomas Hobbes,” in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (3rd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 396–420; Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, Trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952): 140–45, 153.

²² John W. Danford, “The Problem of Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (February 1980): 102–34; Frederick G. Whelan, “Language and Its Abuses in Hobbes’ Political Philosophy,” *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 1 (March 1981): 59–75.

²³ Nicholas Dungey, “Thomas Hobbes’s Materialism, Language, and the Possibility of Politics,” *The Review of Politics* 70 no. 2 (Spring 2008): 190–220.

death is the foundation for reason and science to counter human vanity.²⁴ There is reason to side with Strauss in this dispute, for speech, reason, and science belong to *Leviathan's* broader “philosophy of power” that allows Hobbes to present a precise and “morally neutral” political teaching.²⁵ This presents a paradox, for power’s moral neutrality allows Hobbes to inculcate a fearful moral teaching to avoid war and produce peace through politics. Seeing that current arguments against “hate speech” in universities involve safety and power, there is an apparent renaissance in Hobbes’s moral philosophy.

Returning to the text of Hobbes’s *Leviathan* offers a glimpse into the true philosophic—not political—predicament regarding speech facing universities committed to liberal education. Among Critical Theorists, *Leviathan* lends credence to Michel Foucault’s contention that science holds an “internal regime” produced from “relations of power, not relations of meaning” in language, for power is productive, “forms knowledge, [and] produces discourse.” Treating power as a form of “warlike domination,” Foucault says, “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth,” leaving intellectuals to “battle” over truth and power.²⁶ Though Foucault disagrees with Hobbes’s view of power as both natural and political, the terms of Foucault’s critique of modern science and society are remarkably Hobbesian. While engaging in a more thorough examination of Critical Theory is beyond this paper’s scope, Foucault’s debt to Hobbes suggests a different philosophy is necessary for freeing speech and the search for truth from political power and society. Considering that Jürgen Habermas recognizes how Hobbes’s political science rejects Aristotle’s political philosophy,²⁷ examining *Leviathan* with an eye for where it declares Ancient Greek philosophy insignificant could prove fruitful. To grasp the persistence of Hobbes’s philosophic assault on speech and education freely devoted to truth, readers should approach *Leviathan* with one question in mind: How does *Leviathan* function as a philosophical speech that turns all things into questions of political power?

²⁴ Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, ix, 6–29.

²⁵ Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965): 194–96; Michael Oakeshott, “Introduction to *Leviathan*,” in *Rationalism in Politics* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991): 236.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 112–15, 119, 123, 129, 133.

²⁷ Russell Keat, *The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud, and the Critique of Positivism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 13.

DISPLACING PHILOSOPHY WITH POLITICS

Before exploring Hobbes's path to placing speech, reason, and science firmly in the language of "power" in *Leviathan*'s first two parts, it is helpful to see his displacement of philosophy with politics in the book's last part. From the beginning of Chapter XLVI ("Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions"), Hobbes makes a two-step argument that succinctly demonstrates the power of declaring speech insignificant. First, Hobbes defines "Philosophy" as "the knowledge acquired by reasoning" to produce effects required by human life; this "reasoning" produces "general, eternal, and immutable truth," and never errs when one works with "words he understandeth." Second, Hobbes denies "Prudence," "False Doctrine," "learning taken upon the credit of Authors," and "the authority of books" belong to "Philosophy."²⁸ Hobbes's clever argument simultaneously affirms the necessity for speech in search of philosophic truth while denying certain speech a place in this conversation. The attack on the Ancient Greeks is twofold: "prudence" is essential to Plato and Aristotle's political philosophy,²⁹ and their authority in Hobbes's time resides primarily in their books. This is a defining feature of Hobbes's political science that forms its approach to education: it cannot tolerate or dialogue with any philosophy outside of itself.

Although Hobbes explicitly states speech and reason produce philosophy, he more subtly suggests politics produces reasoning. Philosophic reasoning requires the commonwealth, for "the faculty of reasoning [is] consequent to the use of speech," and there is no "method" in reasoning until the commonwealth produces leisure by freeing individuals from constant procurement of necessities and defending them from their neighbors. From this, Hobbes concludes, "Leisure is the mother of philosophy; and Commonwealth, the mother of peace and leisure."³⁰ Reorder this passage with "leisure" as its middle term and Hobbes's argument is clear: "Commonwealth" (the "Leviathan" and most authoritative political body)³¹ generates philosophy. This compact statement reveals Hobbes's intention to bind philosophy to politics throughout *Leviathan*, though there is a longer road to this conclusion earlier in the text involving speech, science, and power.

²⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.1–5.

²⁹ See Plato, *Republic*, 505b–c, 521a–b, 530c, 582a–83b, 586a–d; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI.

³⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.6.

³¹ Hobbes, Introduction.1.

Despite speech seeming to rest more on nature compared to the ties Hobbes establishes between politics and philosophy, his appeal to geometry deftly moves speech away from Greek philosophy before turning it towards politics. Geometry “is the mother of all natural science.” Compared to Greek natural philosophy’s “insignificant language” which “was rather a dream than a science,” geometrical knowledge allows one to know the workings of nature through motion. Because Plato (“the best philosopher of the Greeks”) required his students to know geometry, only this science is necessary to study nature.³² Through the power of his own speech, Hobbes declares Greek natural philosophy “insignificant.” More importantly, he uses geometry to side-step direct confrontation with Platonic philosophy and direct readers towards natural philosophy’s true foundation: motion, the foundation for sense in *Leviathan*’s first chapter.³³

When Hobbes defines “*philosophia prima*” (first philosophy), his political purpose for using geometry to reform philosophy, science, religion, and university education becomes clear. Because “all other philosophy ought to depend” on first philosophy, Hobbes defines this (in opposition to Aristotelian metaphysics) as “right limiting” of names and definitions to eliminate equivocation and ambiguity in reasoning. Unlike universities and the church that use their first philosophy to scare people “from obeying the laws of their country with empty names,” Hobbes’s first philosophy is “necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience.”³⁴ When “geometry” first appears in *Leviathan*’s fourth chapter (“Of Speech”) to teach the importance of settling definitions,³⁵ Hobbes refrains from claiming his standard for first philosophy is political obedience. As *Leviathan* ends, however, Hobbes declares his geometric and scientific first philosophy is a political tool that exercises authority over education and religion within universities and the church.

Like Greek natural philosophy, Hobbes dismisses Greek moral philosophy for political purposes, characterizing its authors as teaching a subversive “description of their own passions” because they falsely define “good” and “evil” according to the law of their own appetites when “the law ... is the will and appetite of the state.”³⁶ Hobbes merges moral philosophy and law to reject the Greeks; he does this with his conceptions of “will” and

³² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.11.

³³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.1; See also Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 139.

³⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.14, 18.

³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.12.

³⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.11, 31–32.

“appetite,” ideas bound together in *Leviathan*’s sixth chapter, which explores passions (understood as motions) and speech.³⁷ Though Hobbes implies the commonwealth’s laws teach true moral philosophy rather than “vain philosophy” (the result of resolving conclusions before knowing their premises), “true philosophy” holds a tenuous place in *Leviathan*, “For disobedience may lawfully be punished in them that against the laws teach even true philosophy.” To prevent rebellion or sedition, the power to “silence” teachers of “true philosophy” belongs to the civil authority’s power to care for “the public quiet.”³⁸ For the purposes of thinking through speech and university education, what is most instructive here is not Hobbes’s understanding of the commonwealth, but his rhetorical power to speak of “true philosophy,” seem to defend it, and yet reinforce the primacy of politics in the formation and teaching of true moral philosophy. Hobbes wishes to merge truth and politics, but politics emerges as wielding greater power.

Hobbes may present geometry as his means for drawing philosophy and university education closer to nature, but it is truly his instrument for subjecting the study of nature to his revolutionary moral philosophy. Seeing universities’ education concentrated on professions in the Roman religion (relying on the authority of Aristotle’s philosophy), law, and medicine, there is untapped potential for geometry, which formerly was “subservient to nothing but rigid truth.”³⁹ Geometry—discovered prior to Scholasticism, Christianity, and “vain” Greek philosophy—can spur innovation that Christian universities stifled. Unlike the Greeks’ “insignificant” philosophic speech, Hobbes’s “first philosophy” contains words vital to science and the commonwealth’s formation (i.e., his natural and moral philosophy) in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*: “body,” “motion,” “passion,” and “power.”⁴⁰ Readers must view these terms, then, in light of their subservience to producing peace and public quiet through politics.

But what do philosophy and university education lose if they dispense with Greek philosophy? A curious accusation Hobbes levies against the universities and their “vain” moral and civil philosophy is they make “attributes of nature” from “attributes of honor.”⁴¹ Readers should wonder, however, if Hobbes also commits this Scholastic philosophical

³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.53.

³⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.31, 42.

³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.13.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.14.

⁴¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.31

error. Although Hobbes begins *Leviathan* by defining “Nature” as “the art whereby God hath made and governs the world,” his principal concern is how human art “imitates” nature to make and govern the “Commonwealth, or State.”⁴² Hobbes’s scientific posture towards nature and politics is to study *and* govern them. To succeed, Hobbes must ensure his combined natural and moral philosophy forms university education and reaches every subject. Plato and Aristotle’s philosophy, on the other hand, seeks only to contemplate nature and resists “popularizing” philosophy through politics.⁴³ In other words, their philosophy naturally remains free from politics. This contrast suggests Hobbes’s *Leviathan* politicizes nature, philosophy, and education. In approaching Hobbes’s geometric treatment of speech in *Leviathan* Part I (“Of Man”), readers should consider his innovations in forcing nature to embody political motion. These innovations’ educational dangers become more evident in *Leviathan*’s joint treatment of honor and power.⁴⁴

SPEECH, SCIENCE, AND POLITICS

In *Leviathan*’s first five chapters, Hobbes attempts to root speech, reason, and science in his materialistic natural philosophy. These chapters are a prelude to the sixth chapter’s account of the passions, where the contours of his moral philosophy begin to emerge. Though it seems at first glance that Hobbes’s natural science can stand as an independent foundation for his political science, the appearance of passions at key stages in his accounts of speech, reason, and science indicate where he anticipates politics must exercise its power upon speech. According to Hobbes, human thought begins with bodily sensation of external bodies’ pressure; understanding is the imagination of these sensations through speech. A “Train of Thoughts” is “inconstant” without direction from “passionate thought,” but “more constant” when “regulated by some desire.”⁴⁵ Speech forms understanding, and this formation requires passion and desire. If science forms understanding, its speech cannot be

⁴² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Intro.1.

⁴³ Robert Bartlett, “On the Supremacy of Contemplation in Aristotle and Plato,” in *Mastery of Nature: Promises and Prospects*, eds. Svetozar Minkov and Benhardt Trout (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018): 99–101.

⁴⁴ Contrast Danford, “Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” 106–107, 114–17, 125–28 with Dungey, “Hobbes’s Materialism, Language,” 198, 208–209, then see Whelan, “Language in Hobbes,” 60, 66–67. Where Danford shows geometry is essential and problematic for Hobbes’s political science, Dungey neglects geometry’s connection to speech and the state of nature. But neither Danford nor Dungey acknowledges—like Whelan—how honor affects speech.

⁴⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.1–4; II.2, 10; III.1, 3–4.

THE LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH IN HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN*

dispassionate.⁴⁶ The passion driving science goes unnamed in *Leviathan*'s early chapters, but there are clues throughout that speech needs constant guidance from Hobbes's most authoritative political passion: fear.

Hobbes's initial account of "speech" emphasizes its political utility while hinting at the grounds for politics' influence upon scientific speech. "Speech" consists of names humans use to register their thoughts and share them in conversation, without which there is "neither commonwealth, nor society, nor contract, nor peace." Speech's first "special" use allows people to register what causes produce certain effects. Hobbes initially identifies this use of speech as "the acquiring of arts," though he later refines it to "the acquisition of science," which consists in "the right definition of names." Conversely, it is an abuse of speech when words' definitions are non-existent, inconstant, or wrong.⁴⁷ By beginning with speech producing politics, Hobbes seems deferential to the Greeks' understanding of speech. But Hobbes's insistence on constancy in speech in the arts and sciences is a significant difference, especially since he establishes this constancy requires passion and desire. As *Leviathan* progresses, he gradually inverts speech and politics' relationship. By founding commonwealths on the passion of fear and the desire for peace, Hobbes seeks for all speech (including the arts and sciences) to serve politics.

In his introduction to speech's corrective functions, Hobbes traces how political passions insinuate themselves into education and society. With geometry as his model science for the importance of names, Hobbes says those aspiring to "true knowledge" should not "trust to books" of former authors but mistrust them, examine their definitions, and either "correct them where they are negligently set down" or make definitions themselves.⁴⁸ Mistrust is the intellectual posture for scientific inquiry and the grounds not only for correcting previous works but creating new ones.⁴⁹ Complementing this scientific correction of speech is Hobbes's teaching that while it is an abuse of speech "to grieve one another," there is an exception when such speech turns towards "one whom we are obliged to govern; and then it is not to grieve, but to correct and amend."⁵⁰ Bejan cites this passage as evidence of Hobbes's

⁴⁶ Whelan, "Language in Hobbes," 61, 64, 66–70, reads Hobbes as preferring geometry because it is "dispassionate," but he neglects Hobbes's argument for passion guiding thought.

⁴⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.1, 3–4, 13.

⁴⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.12–13.

⁴⁹ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 171–75.

⁵⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.4.

teaching against “hate speech” yet omits its last clause that suggests a link between what it means to “correct” previous authors and governed subjects.⁵¹ Constancy in scientific and social speech flows from a common passion. Since both education and conversation depend on the commonwealth, correction of scientific and grievous speech must embody this passion. The need to “correct” others in science and society means that Hobbes’s treatment of “hate speech” cannot stand independently of his intended political reforms of philosophy and university education.

Hobbes’s definition of “reason” reflects his intention to bind it to politics. With “speech” bound to names, “reason” is the adding and subtracting of the “consequences of general names agreed upon for ... our thoughts.”⁵² Unresolved in this definition is the basis for agreement on names, though names’—and therefore speech’s—need for agreement creates the opening to make politics the necessary condition for reasonable speech.⁵³ This is not an accident, as Hobbes criticizes the Greeks for having “but one word, *logos*, for both *speech* and *reason*.”⁵⁴ Hobbes separates “speech” from “reason” to make both dependent on politics, something the Greek conception of *logos* does not permit. Hobbes’s definitions of “speech” and “reason” thus demonstrate how to “correct” works of former authors to create his own political science.

Immediately after defining “reason,” Hobbes introduces the potential for violent conflict, the solution for which belongs not to nature but politics. When individuals’ false reasoning produces controversy, they must “set up for right reason the reason of some arbitrator or judge ... or their controversy must come to blows or be undecided, for want of a right reason constituted by nature.” Without this judge, people will have their passions “taken for right reason” in all debates.⁵⁵ Though Hobbes prefers governance by reason over passion, he first emphasizes every debate’s potential to become violent. With no natural solution to this violence, people must seek something artificial and powerful enough to oppose the passions of those engaged in anything controversial. This presents a difficulty in Hobbes’s political

⁵¹ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 7.

⁵² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.1–2.

⁵³ See Danford, “Language in Hobbes’s Political Science,” 112, who argues that Hobbes “never satisfactorily resolves” the problem of names’ objective meanings.

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.14.

⁵⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.3.

science that affects his teaching on speech and education: Does it produce rule by reason or passion?

In defining “science,” it looks on the surface that Hobbes’s political science produces rule by reason. But for Hobbes, “Reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us.” It is “attained by industry, first in apt imposing of names, and secondly by getting a good and orderly method in proceeding from ... names ... to syllogisms,” yielding knowledge of causes so that “when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce like effects.”⁵⁶ Reason is not natural in Hobbes’s philosophy; it requires industry and method, both of which are impossible to produce without a commonwealth and passionate guidance.

The relationship that Hobbes envisions for speech, reason, and science advances his efforts to displace classical philosophy with his political science. Compared to philosophers who in their books exhibit “the privilege of absurdity” by not defining their words according to the geometrical method, Hobbes says, “The light of human minds is perspicuous words, but by exact definitions first snuffed and purged from ambiguity; *reason* is the *pace*; increase of *science*, the *way*; and the benefit of mankind, the *end*.” Alternatively, if reasoning rests upon “senseless and ambiguous words,” these produce absurdities, “and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt.”⁵⁷ It should not escape readers’ notice that Hobbes’s rejection of classical philosophy in the name of “science” openly connects absurdities to political unrest, yet refrains from tying “truth” to “the benefit of mankind.” For the sake of peace, people must fear absurdity more than they should love truth. What governs Hobbes’s defense of science and his reformation of speech and reason is fear of political upheaval.

The moral purpose Hobbes sets for his political science appears at the very end of his chapter on speech in a passage that displays the rhetorical power of declaring certain speech insignificant. Anticipating forthcoming speeches regarding passions, Hobbes introduces the problem of “*inconstant* signification” afflicting “the names of virtues and vices.” Diversity in “constitutions of body and prejudices of opinion, gives everything a tincture of our different passions.” This means speeches about virtues and vices reflect “the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker,” which prohibits them from being “true grounds of any ratiocination.”⁵⁸ The mistrust Hobbes encourages towards scientific speech earlier in the

⁵⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.17.

⁵⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.7–8, 20.

⁵⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.23–24.

chapter now extends to moral speech. Hobbes is vague, however, about what makes moral speech “true.” What Hobbes promises in his own speeches about the passions is not inconstancy and diversity, but constancy and uniformity. Although he believes this secures political peace, such security comes at the expense of freedom in thought.

POLITICAL [CON]SCIENCE, POWER, AND HONOR

The problem Hobbes sees in moral speech drives *Leviathan*’s account of the passions, which presents diverse bodily motions as the natural causes for moral disagreements. Through its knowledge of causes and effects, science has the power to remedy this natural moral problem. What is not readily apparent to *Leviathan*’s first-time readers are the ways Hobbes’s natural examination of the passions embodies a preparation for his philosophic teaching on power that allows him to argue only politics can solve a moral problem nature creates. Those concerned with speech and university education today need to learn how Hobbes constructs this argument because his science of power is instrumental for taking questions that belong to a liberal education in philosophy and transforming them into political questions. Through “science,” Hobbes attacks moral philosophy *and* the possibility of forming “conscience” with religion to form a political science that transforms intellectual, moral, and religious questions into matters of power and politics.

Before Hobbes can turn morality into questions of power, he must reduce morality to matters of motion. All voluntary bodily motion is either an “Appetite or Desire” towards something, or an “Aversion” away from something. Continual change within the body produces continual change in appetites and aversions, which makes it nearly impossible that “all men consent in the desire of any one and the same object.” People thus call “good” whatever they desire and “evil” that to which they are averse; there is no “common rule of good and evil” *unless* there is a commonwealth with “the person that representeth it, or from an arbitrator or judge whom men shall by consent set up.”³⁹ For Hobbes’s political science to produce peace successfully, he must lead people to “consent in the desire” for a commonwealth. Questions surrounding “good” and “evil” that naturally emerge in speech and deserve philosophic inquiry become secondary to producing this singular desire for peace through politics. With *Leviathan*, Hobbes displaces the “direct political question”

³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.1-2, 6-7.

concerning what is good and bad (the central question of Greek political philosophy) with the “indirect question of representation” presented in terms of passions, desire, and power.⁶⁰

With Christianity, Scholasticism, and the universities in their service, Hobbes knows moral teachings appear not only in the form of philosophy, but religious conscience. Just as Hobbes's speech within *Leviathan* displaces classical moral philosophy with “science,” it does the same with “conscience.” According to Hobbes, “opinion” consists of discourse arising either without definition, or from definitions incorrectly combined. Opposed to “opinion” is “Science,” the “conditional knowledge” of words' consequences.⁶¹ Both “opinion” and “science” are speech; their primary distinction is that “science” holds set conditions for its definitions. In defining “conscience,” Hobbes alludes to law and politics holding the power to set the conditions for moral speech. “Conscience” forms whenever “two or more men know of one and the same fact.” Hobbes dismisses those who speak of “conscience” as “knowledge of their own secret facts and secret thoughts” as “men vehemently in love with their own new opinions ... [who are] obstinately bent to maintain them ... as if they would have it seem unlawful to change or speak against them.”⁶² If law contains moral instruction in science, it could produce the conditions for a political conscience where knowledge secures obedience to the commonwealth.

From the perspective of Hobbesian political science, all things reduce to the passion for power. Here readers discover *Leviathan's* rhetorical power alongside its philosophical danger. The rhetorical power Hobbes displays in his hostility towards a personal conscience emanates from a seemingly beneficent egalitarianism. While people exhibit differences in “wit” through passions proceeding from different bodily constitutions, education, and customs, “acquired wit” is attainable with the sciences, which are “acquired by method and instruction ... [through] reason ... grounded on the right use of speech.”⁶³ Education in scientific speech, then, can overcome natural differences in wit. Yet Hobbes's explanation that all the passions responsible for producing differences in wit (i.e., desire for riches, knowledge, and honor) “may be reduced to the ... desire for power” presents a philosophical

⁶⁰ Harvey C. Mansfield, “Hobbes and the Science of Indirect Government,” *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 1 (March 1971): 97–110.

⁶¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.3.

⁶² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VII.4.

⁶³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.13–14.

danger.⁶⁴ The political conscience formed by *Leviathan* demands seeing speech and reason as representing the desire for power, which effectively turns all educational questions into political matters.

In *Leviathan*'s tenth chapter, Hobbes uses the language of "power" to elevate politics to the greatest power and thus the highest authority in human life, a feat he accomplishes not with reason but with passion and desire. Initiating this argument is the statement that human power resides in the "means to obtain some future apparent good."⁶⁵ With the primacy of power, Hobbes quietly sidesteps Aristotle's philosophy, which sees "the apparent good" and wonders about the existence of a good by nature.⁶⁶ By emphasizing power, Hobbes renders knowing the good irrelevant. The arts and sciences are also powers, receiving esteem through their relationship to the commonwealth, which is the greatest human power: It makes "the wills" of individuals and factions depend on its singular "will."⁶⁷ Again, Hobbes evades Aristotle's philosophical association of the arts and sciences with speech/reason (*logos*).⁶⁸ What Hobbes accomplishes with "the will" is more subtle, but extremely important for how he undermines speech and reason with passionate politics. Hobbes defines "the will" as "the last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the action."⁶⁹ The will, then, is nothing but passion. If the commonwealth's power resides in being the singular will that governs individuals, arts, and sciences, then it is the power of passion—not speech or reason—that dictates Hobbesian politics and the education it informs.

Hobbes's definitions of "worth," "honor," and "dignity" within his chapter on power build the inescapably political character of moral and intellectual life in *Leviathan* and offer valuable insight into the depths of the challenge that "hate speech" poses to liberal education. What determines the "Worth of a man" is what "would be given for the use of his power." People's worth is manifest in "honoring and dishonoring," and "the public worth of a man, which is the value set on him by the commonwealth, is ... Dignity."⁷⁰ Like the arts and sciences, Hobbes binds "Dignity" to the commonwealth's power. To honor within the commonwealth is to empower; to dishonor is to disempower. While Hobbes's intent is to

⁶⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.15.

⁶⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.1.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a15–22.

⁶⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.3, 14–15.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.3–4, 6.

⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VI.53.

⁷⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.16–18.

use the morally neutral term “power” to prevent honor and dignity from causing war by bringing both under the commonwealth’s authority, his text teaches readers to judge arts, sciences, honor, and dignity according to the political and social power they exercise. “Power” becomes the foundational term to unify intellectual, moral, and social life. Bejan’s interpretation of Hobbes as approaching “hate speech” with concerns for dignity in mind neglects how the dependence of “dignity” on “worth” in *Leviathan*’s text folds both terms into his philosophy of power.⁷¹ Within Hobbes’s political science, social standing and dignity are questions of power, just as the education individuals receive in science, moral philosophy, and religion are questions of power. With *Leviathan*’s help, readers can see how “hate speech” threatens freedom in politics and education: it fuses the assurance of personal dignity with the politically contentious pursuit of power.

Before Hobbes provides more moral content to his philosophy of power, he suggests how speech and science serve his power-based vision of politics. In general, “*Honorable* is whatsoever possession, action, or quality is an argument and sign of power,” whereas “To be honored of few or none, *dishonorable*.”⁷² Honor is implicitly democratic in character; one’s power—even if subordinate to the commonwealth’s greatest power—must be visible to many. Forms of honor within the commonwealth include obedience and agreement in opinion (which signifies approval of some “judgment and wisdom”); the corresponding forms of dishonor are disobedience and “dissent.”⁷³ There is something democratic in Hobbes’s equivocation of “opinion” with “judgment and wisdom.” A similar equivocation occurs regarding speech within commonwealths: “All actions and speeches that proceed or *seem* to proceed from much experience, science, discretion, or wit, are honorable; for all these are powers. Actions or words that proceed from error, ignorance, or folly, dishonorable.”⁷⁴ In speech—the foundation for opinions and sciences—the difference between what things truly are and how they “seem” is irrelevant when viewed in terms of “power.” If everything reduces to “power,” it does not matter if the actions, speeches, arts, and sciences the commonwealth teaches are true; what matters is passionate obedience to its will, exercised partly through honor and dishonor.

⁷¹ Bejan, “Hobbes Against Hate Speech,” 10.

⁷² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.37–38.

⁷³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.20, 30.

⁷⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, X.42 [Emphasis added].

With his chapter on “power” complete, Hobbes can firmly establish morality on its political foundation and encourage his readers to abandon prior moral philosophy. The end Hobbes sets for “manners” in *Leviathan* is living in “peace and unity.” Rejecting the “greatest good ... in the books of the old moral philosophers,” Hobbes defines “felicity” as desire’s “continual progress from one object to another” in the hopes of assuring future desires. Though this definition of “felicity” is like its first appearance in Chapter VI’s account of the passions, Hobbes adds a new dimension in Chapter XI: human life is “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power.” Hobbes’s shift seems tied to Chapter X’s orientation of “power” towards “the apparent good,” for his first definition of “felicity” directly follows the argument that “good” and “evil” are merely “apparent.”⁷⁵ Prior moral philosophy’s use of “the good” is irrelevant to the language of power in Hobbes’s political science that he insists is necessary for peace. Judged unimportant for his political ends, Hobbes’s speech declares learning older moral philosophy is irrelevant for producing peace and unity.

Where prior moral philosophers’ speeches concerning the good both cause wars *and* are impotent to prevent them, Hobbes’s political science promises the power to produce peace. Opposed to the “diversity of passions” and differences in “knowledge or opinion” of causes and effects that produce “contention, enmity, and war” through competing desires for power, the desire for leisure (which includes “knowledge, and arts of peace”) disposes people “to obey a common power.” To save people from those inclined to “reverence of antiquity” to compete for praise, Hobbes presents science’s “perfect understanding of words” as necessary for ensuring no one trusts the errors of others. Where “ignorance of the causes and original constitution of right, equity, law, and justice” leads to perpetual disputes in “the doctrine of right and wrong ... both by pen and the sword,” a political science can undo this ignorance by teaching the knowledge and opinions that direct the desire for power towards peace.⁷⁶ Hobbes’s arguments contain two forceful undercurrents that must rise to the surface in his teachings on speech and university education. First, he continues casting doubt on antiquity and anyone who appeals to it. Second, he remains confident that—with great political power—speech and science can produce peace.

⁷⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.1-2; VI.57-58.

⁷⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.1-3, 5, 17-18, 21.

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In Hobbes's conclusion to the passage cited above, there is a veiled suggestion that no speech—not even mathematical speech—is safe from questions of political power. Despite his assertion that geometrical doctrines about lines and figures are not subject to the same number of disputes as moral doctrines, these mathematical doctrines might be “suppressed” if they were “contrary to any man's right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have dominion.”⁷⁷ Hobbes rests his hopes for political science not on geometry as a model of dispassionate speech and reasoning, but on *Leviathan*'s passionate attempt to teach a politics that can exert power over speech to end wars.⁷⁸ A kindred passion lives today in efforts to combat “hate speech,” but it takes reading Hobbes to learn the nature of these efforts' threat to university education: they will not permit any speech or philosophy to stand free from power and politics.

HOBBS'S ASSAULT ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The two preceding sections are necessary to contextualize how Hobbes's “state of nature” teaching and the “laws of nature” he proposes to avoid this condition form a revolutionary moral philosophy that is no longer seen for the radical teaching that it is. Feldman Barrett's “speech is violence” argument and her appeal to find safety from a brutal culture is an excellent demonstration not only of the power of Hobbes's narrative, but the failure to know how much prior philosophy was subject to assault and evasion to make this narrative seem self-evident. Among the three causes of war in the state of nature is “glory,” which leads humans to use violence for “a word ... a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue.”⁷⁹ What is implicit in arguments against “hate speech” but explicit in *Leviathan* is speech in service of political power and adopted by societies can produce sustainable peace. What working directly with *Leviathan* exposes is the vast extent to which Hobbes's philosophy and his contemporary successors constrain the horizons for moral, intellectual, and political life.

With speech as a natural cause of war, science and politics are the artificial powers that must work upon speech to effect peace. Opposed to the natural equality “in the faculties of body and mind” are “arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon

⁷⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.21.

⁷⁸ See Whelan, “Language in Hobbes,” 66.

⁷⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.6–7.

general and infallible rules called science” that is “not a native faculty.” But speech, arts, and sciences are powerless unless there is a “common power” above them, for the condition without such power is “War.” Only a common power guarantees “Peace”; until then, there are “no arts, no letters, no society ... and continual fear and danger of violent death.”⁸⁰ Science and politics’ joint purpose is prevention of war and production of peace. Hobbes’s expansive sense of “war” has a twofold effect: it compels readers to fear this natural condition, and it spurs them towards creating the common power capable of saving them. This common power must free people from the natural danger of war by forming them under the “infallible rules” of a political science that uses speech to prevent glory-driven wars.

The natural condition of war produces a moral problem for which speech and reason are ineffectual. Hobbes’s solution for this is political empowerment of speech and reason; the rationale and language for this solution unknowingly undergirds arguments against “hate speech.” Without a common power, there is no law, and therefore no justice or injustice. Escaping this natural condition requires the work of passions and reason: in response to the passions fearing death and desiring peace, reason suggests “the Laws of Nature.” Preceding formal definitions of the laws of nature is “The Right of Nature” that underscores power’s primacy in Hobbes’s understanding of liberty, for this right “is the liberty each man hath to use his own power ... doing anything which, in his own judgment and reason” is apt for self-preservation. Here Hobbes reiterates that the “proper signification” of “Liberty” entails lack of external impediments to use one’s power according to judgment and reason.⁸¹ In Hobbes’s conception of “Right” and “Liberty,” power is fundamental; “judgment” and “reason” are secondary. Judgment and reason do not produce power in *Leviathan*; rather, power produces judgment and reason. Under this framework, the formation and regulation of speech and reason inhibits the freedom to raise philosophic questions about politics (“What is justice?”, “What are rights?”, and “What is liberty?”) while transforming them into variants of one political question: Who or what is in power?⁸²

Without some backtracking, it is not apparent how Hobbes’s definition of “liberty” entrenches a narrow sense of human freedom that evades prior philosophy *and* anticipates

⁸⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.1–2, 8–9.

⁸¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIII.13–14; XIV.1–2.

⁸² See Kraynak, “Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization,” 97–98. Hobbes recommends asking “Who benefits?” to discredit seditious doctrines and opinions. This question’s basis is political power, not truth.

the power of a willful politics. In Chapter V (“Of Reason, and Science”), Hobbes counts the use of “free” (including “free subject, a free will”) to indicate anything other than “free from being hindered by opposition” as “absurd” or “insignificant” speech. “Deliberation” (which precedes the “will,” the last appetite or aversion) is “putting an end to the liberty we had of doing or omitting, according to our own appetite and aversion.”⁸³ These arguments foreshadow the commonwealth’s creation: it is the product of will (which by definition is the work of passion, not reason), and its will holds the power to act upon subjects’ judgment and reason through external means.⁸⁴ Hobbes’s attack on “free will” accomplishes two things necessary for his political science’s suppression of freedom in speech and thought. First, it dismisses the validity of Scholasticism’s teachings on “free will.” Second, it demonstrates that the willful power to designate speech “insignificant” in politics is greater than designating what speech is “significant.” “Hate speech” designations exhibit this same power, and those using them evade scrutiny about their philosophical assumptions by passionate insistence on peace and safety.

At the heart of Hobbes’s “Laws of Nature” is a paradox about reason and speech that undermines the role both could serve in liberal education. Though reason discovers the “Laws of Nature,” part of what drives the natural state of war is “everyone is governed by his own reason.” While the first two “laws of nature” teach people to seek peace, defend themselves, and renounce their right to all things as far as others are willing, this is only possible under a “common” and “coercive power” people fear, for “the bonds of words are too weak to bridle men’s ambition, avarice, anger, and other passions.” One cannot rely on generosity, glory, and pride in not needing to break one’s word; thus, when it comes to keeping covenants, “The passion to be reckoned upon is fear.”⁸⁵ Reason must discover the laws of nature vital for peace and preservation, yet individuals’ exercise of reason could produce war. Though reason needs speech, speech is insufficient for preventing war. Left to themselves, reason and speech have no power. But if reason and speech serve a political power that instills fear, they are effectual.⁸⁶ As a text, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* fosters this fear of

⁸³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.5, VI.49–53.

⁸⁴ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 186.

⁸⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XIV.3–5, 7, 18, 31.

⁸⁶ See Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 149–50, who argues that Hobbes “identifies reason with fear.”

living without political power, yet in doing this, it also undercuts speech and reason's natural power to seek things outside of politics.

Three laws of nature that seem to focus solely on social relations also embody the stifflingly politicized intellectual and moral climate that Hobbes teaches is necessary for peace. "Complaisance" insists "that every man strive to accommodate himself to the rest." Much like stones that "cannot be easily made plain" to construct an edifice must be "cast away as unprofitable and troublesome," so "in men's aptness to society, in a diversity of nature arising from their diversity of affections," those human beings who "*cannot be corrected*, [are] to be left or cast out of society as cumbersome thereunto," for in not accommodating themselves to others, they "are guilty of the war" to follow.⁸⁷ "Complaisance" in speech necessitates accommodating one's words to society. Failure in these accommodations demands "correction"; those not amenable to correction have no place in society. In her account of the amenability of "Complaisance" to concerns with "hate speech," Bejan ignores this law of nature's corrective component.⁸⁸ As previously argued, the power of correction in *Leviathan* applies to grievous speech *and* the books of former authors for the sake of political obedience.⁸⁹ For Hobbes, the social necessity of "Complaisance" is inseparable from its educational necessity, and those seeking safety from "hate speech" in university education demonstrate this inseparability.

Two other laws of nature work in tandem to complement "Complaisance" and ensure that the judgment and correction of all speech reflects the commonwealth's ordering of social power. "Contumely" teaches that "no man by deed, word, countenance, or gesture, declare hatred or contempt of another"; "Against Pride" teaches "that every man acknowledge other for his equal by nature."⁹⁰ Bejan also cites these laws of nature as essential to Hobbes's counters to "hate speech" for the sake of preserving "equal dignity" in social hierarchies, but she fails to trace "dignity" back to honor and power in *Leviathan*.⁹¹ Together, the three preceding laws of nature set the conditions for individuals to agree with others in opinion for the sake of establishing their equal power in the commonwealth. The corrective functions of speech Hobbes encourages dictate that *any* speech hostile to individuals' social and political

⁸⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.17 [Emphasis added].

⁸⁸ Bejan, "Hobbes Against Hate Speech," 13.

⁸⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV.4, 13; XLVI.14, 18.

⁹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.20–21.

⁹¹ Bejan, "Hobbes against Hate Speech," 1–2, 10–16.

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power needs either amending or casting out. This is the logic of those who oppose “hate speech” in university education today, extending it to speakers on campus and books they deem unsuitable for their political vision.

To conclude his account of the “Laws of Nature,” Hobbes openly states his philosophic ambition, claiming their “science ... is the true and only moral philosophy. For moral philosophy is nothing but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind.” Where diverse judgments about “good” and “evil” generate “disputes, controversies, and at last war,” Hobbes argues that because everyone agrees that peace is good, “the means of peace ... the moral virtues” are good. Further, previous “writers of moral philosophy” were wrong for rooting the moral virtues “in a mediocrity of the passions” and not recognizing their goodness consists in being “the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living.”⁹² According to Hobbes, moral philosophy’s sole justification is the production of peace, which is impossible without creating a commonwealth according to his political science. Readers not susceptible to the rhetorical power of Hobbes’s dismissal of previous moral philosophers may wonder why he is so sure that peace is the good for all moral philosophy and virtue when that is decidedly not the case in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, a work where “peace” only appears once.⁹³ The truth of Hobbes’s moral philosophy is difficult to discern since he merges it with politics, something he concedes when he says the “Laws of Nature” remain “conclusions or theorems” (not “dictates of reason”) until they become “law ... the word of him that by right hath command over others.”⁹⁴ Surprisingly, the debate over “hate speech” versus “free speech” in university education is downstream from Hobbes’s political assault on moral philosophy. This debate’s interlocutors forget the very thing Hobbes’s political science wants them to forget: that the relationship between speech and education is first and foremost a philosophical question, not a political one.

HOBBS'S LIBERAL MISEDUCATION IN SPEECH

Leviathan’s movement from Part I to Part II—from “Man” to “Commonwealth”—commences with a dramatic shift in the history of political philosophy: Hobbes rejects

⁹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.40.

⁹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b4–6: “Happiness seems to be more in leisure: for we are without leisure so that we might be in leisure, and we are at war so that we might lead to peace.”

⁹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XV.41.

Aristotle's teaching that speech/reason (*logos*)—which holds a natural, moral sense of the good and the just—produces political community.⁹⁵ To complete his rejection of speech and reason as politics' natural foundations, Hobbes teaches the foundation of politics is the “artificial” reduction of individuals' wills “unto one will,” and this becomes the “common power” that governs them.⁹⁶ Hobbes's political science represents the elevation of “will” and “power” over speech and reason as the authoritative forces in politics. Because “the will” is synonymous with passion and desire, Hobbes places politics on highly variable and volatile foundations. The same is true for “natural science,” for its “constant signification of words”—“the foundation of all true ratiocination”—depends on “the will of the writer.”⁹⁷ Awareness of this passionately willful and reductive political teaching is necessary for understanding Hobbes's reformation of university education, the spirit of which persists today.

Hobbes levies two general criticisms against speech and reason being the foundations for politics. First, words have no strength against natural passions “without terror of some power to cause them to be observed.” Second, human beings can cause war by using speech and reason to: compete for honor and dignity; compare themselves with others (hence the private and common good part ways); find fault in governance and “strive to reform and innovate”; misrepresent good and evil; show their “wisdom, and control the actions of them that govern the commonwealth.”⁹⁸ Speech and reason are, at best, ineffectual; at worst, they cause war. With the latter criticism, readers can see the latent influence of Hobbes's laws of nature regarding “Complaisance,” “Contumely,” and “Against Pride”: speech should promote accommodation, avoid contempt, acknowledge others as equals, and foster obedience.

Hobbes's account of the commonwealth's artificial institution tacitly affirms the natural grounds of personhood that his political science and the education it informs ultimately attacks. If each person's natural use of speech and reason without a common power produces war, the subordination of speech and reason to the commonwealth's artificial power produces peace.

The commonwealth's institution occurs when everyone “shall authorize all the actions and judgments of that man or assembly of men, in the same manner *as if they were his own*,

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a1–18.

⁹⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVII.6–13.

⁹⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXXIV.1.

⁹⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVII.2, 7–11.

to the end, to live peaceably amongst themselves.” The commonwealth’s institution requires collapsing people’s natural diversity of passions, actions, and judgments into those of one “Person,” which Hobbes defines as “he whose words and actions are considered either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man ... *whether truly or by fiction*.” For the sovereign to become a “feigned or artificial person,” each “natural person” must give “his own” words and actions to the sovereign.⁹⁹ By artifice, subjects surrender the judgments, words, and actions that are naturally their own to the sovereign. To escape war and produce peace, speech and reason—the foundations of intellectual and moral life—must adopt this artificial, political character.¹⁰⁰

The sixth right of the sovereign contains direct statements on the commonwealth’s intellectual power to conform educational speech to politics, not the search for truth. The sovereign holds the authority “to be judge of what opinions and doctrines are averse, and what conducing to peace.... For the actions of men proceed from their opinions, and in the well-governing of opinions consisteth the well-governing of men’s actions.” With this authority, the sovereign determines “on what occasions, how far, and what men are to be trusted withal, in speaking to the multitudes of people, and who shall examine the doctrines of all books before they be published.”¹⁰¹ Any speech deemed inimical to peace—whether presented by a speaker or written in a book—is subject to political governance. As to whether Hobbes prefers peace or truth, he writes, “And though in matter of doctrine nothing ought to be regarded but the truth, yet this is not repugnant to regulating of the same by peace. For doctrine repugnant to peace can no more be true than peace and concord can be against the law of nature.”¹⁰² The most charitable reading of this passage is that Hobbes places truth and peace on equal footing. But the prior passage elevating peace as the grounds for regulating speech (combined with the later argument that disobeying the laws by teaching “true philosophy” is a punishable offense¹⁰³) suggests peace is more authoritative than truth for Hobbes. Beyond controlling the effects of intellectual diversity, the sovereign strives to remove its causes.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.1; XVI.1–2 [Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁰ See Oakshott, “Introduction to *Leviathan*,” 246–48, 281–83.

¹⁰¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.9.

¹⁰² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XVIII.9.

¹⁰³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.42.

¹⁰⁴ See James Madison’s “Federalist No. 10,” *The Federalist*, eds. George W. Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001), 42–45.

With the sovereign's need to govern intellectual uniformity established, the political character of speech's suppression in universities and its intended constraint on reason becomes clear. Hobbes rejects the notion that "private reason" counts for law, "for then there would be as much contradiction in the laws as there is in the schools." Though the laws of nature are evident to "every one from his own reason," their "interpretation ... in a commonwealth, dependeth not on the books of moral philosophy. The authority of writers, without the authority of the commonwealth, maketh not their opinions law, be they never so true." The legislator's intention is supreme, and it "is always supposed to be equity; for it were *great contumely* for a judge to think otherwise of the sovereign."¹⁰⁵ The "contradiction" produced in the schools' philosophic inquiry is politically intolerable. Writers of moral philosophy hold no authority and provide no proper interpretation of laws *unless* the commonwealth grants it. If moral philosophy provides any true argument against the legislator's equity, expressing this judgment in speech would be "contumely" that dishonors and disempowers the sovereign's authority. Legal and philosophic inquiry is thus inseparable from its political consequences.¹⁰⁶

This intellectual uniformity breeds religious uniformity for political ends. Hobbes counts among "seditious doctrines ... that every private man is judge of good and evil actions." Another "false doctrine" teaches "whatsoever a man does against his conscience is sin," for in a commonwealth "the law is the public conscience"; "private consciences ... are but private opinions," producing only disobedience to the sovereign. A similar dynamic carries into religious worship: "Public is the worship that a commonwealth performeth as one person. Private is that which a private person exhibiteth." Because "the end of worship amongst men is power," and "seeing a commonwealth is but one person, it ought also to exhibit to God but one worship.... And this is public worship, the property whereof is to be uniform." God's attributes derive from "words [that] have their signification by agreement and constitution of men," and these "signs of honor" governing public worship come from the civil laws made by those holding sovereign power; any other signs of worship or honor are contumely.¹⁰⁷ The only moral and religious speech tolerated in *Leviathan* must flow from sovereign power.

¹⁰⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVI.11, 13, 22, 26 [Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Bejan, "Difference without Disagreement: Rethinking Hobbes on Independency and Toleration," *The Review of Politics* 78, No. 1 (2016): 1-25, at 5, 12-13, 18. Bejan incorrectly limits "contumely" to religion, and neglects honor's tie to power.

¹⁰⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXIX.6-7; XXXI.12-13, 37, 39.

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Where such speech would naturally be diverse, for the sake of peace it must become artificially uniform with subjects seeing themselves in the image of one person and power: the commonwealth.¹⁰⁸

Bridging the preceding chapters is an account of the sovereign's duties emphasizing the need for a politically liberal education that protects subjects from war. The sovereign power must procure the people's safety "by a general providence contained in public instruction, both of doctrine and example, and in the making and executing of good laws." Because the commonwealth requires subjects to "use and exercise" their rights, the sovereign "cannot let the people be misinformed of the grounds and reasons of those essential rights.... And the grounds of these rights have rather the need to be diligently and truly taught, because they cannot be maintained by any civil law or terror of legal punishment."¹⁰⁹ Hobbes's teaching is liberal because it limits the scope of the sovereign's care for safety through the use and exercise of rights. It also seems that Hobbes softens his political teaching by favoring "public instruction" over "terror of legal punishment" in maintaining peace. But this education cannot proceed without speech and reason, and fear of war remains education's authoritative passion.

The sovereign's education should be democratic, reaching all aspects of life. In choosing who education should target, Hobbes describes "the common people's minds ... [as] fit to receive whatsoever by public authority shall be imprinted on them." Supposing no faults in the sovereign or its chosen administrators, fostering this education should not be difficult. As for where this education finds its home, most people will not engage in "the deep meditation which the learning of truth" in "natural justice" and "all other sciences" requires; rather, they "receive the notions of their duty chiefly from divines in the pulpit" and discourse with neighbors and acquaintances. Because "the divines ... derive their knowledge from the universities and from the schools of law, or from the books which by men eminent in those schools and universities have published," Hobbes concludes the people's instruction "dependeth wholly on the right teaching of youth in the universities."¹¹⁰ This emphasis on "the common people" adds to the liberal character of Hobbes's political science, even if its

¹⁰⁸ See Owen, "Tolerant Leviathan," 136, 139. My reading suggests Hobbes forms conscience according to power and politics, which undercuts the existence of some liberty of conscience in *Leviathan*.

¹⁰⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX.1-4.

¹¹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXX.6, 14.

education takes advantage of their non-philosophic character. But for those who wish to study truth, justice, and the sciences, their university education must be in doctrines necessary for peace. This liberal political education must absorb religion, directing moral and intellectual life towards worship and obedience of the sovereign power.¹¹¹ Through having the power to define the names that serve as the basis for all reasoning,¹¹² the sovereign uses speech to make fear of war and pursuit of peace education's authoritative concern. This fear trickles down from those employed in secular and religious professions requiring university education to the common people through speech. In turning speech away from truth towards peace through a power-based teaching on individual and governmental rights, Hobbes provides a liberal miseducation in speech.

CONCLUSION

It is to Hobbes's credit that the predominant approaches to today's questions about speech and university education work primarily in terms of advancing some vision of liberal politics, albeit with different emphases. Those seeking protection from "hate speech" maintain Hobbes's commitment to peace and safety, while it may surprise those who promote "free speech" by finding an ally in Mill to hear Hobbesian echoes when he describes the public search for truth with the warlike image of "the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners."¹¹³ Both approaches maintain Hobbes's confidence in public enlightenment and universities' role in realizing it. At the same time, advocates for "hate speech" and "free speech" alike are unaware of how many of their default assumptions about speech, universities, and politics originate in the text of Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

One wonders, however, if those contending over "hate speech" and "free speech" in universities approach speech and education with the wrong question in mind. Rather than asking what education suits liberal politics, should not those interested in speech and university education ask what makes human life free? Instead of searching for speech bound to serve the interests of the current historical, scientific, and political moment, might there

¹¹¹ Bejan, "Teaching *Leviathan*," provides a similar conclusion but without attention to speech.

¹¹² See Whelan, "Language in Hobbes," 61.

¹¹³ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978), 46.

be speech capable of revealing transcendent truths about human nature that do not necessarily serve the ever-changing landscapes of history, science, and politics?

The textual approach to Hobbes's *Leviathan* in this article reflects its author's intellectual formation in a liberal education that included immersive study in the histories of political thought and philosophy. With such an education, it is possible to see the philosophies that Hobbes declares insignificant for his political science and judge his work against theirs. Further, one learns the extensive legacy of Hobbes's *Leviathan*: the open antagonism towards prior authors, the attempt to model political science on a materialistic natural science, the "state of nature" narrative and, perhaps most importantly of all, shifting the language of philosophy and politics heavily towards "power." In reckoning with the terms of Hobbes's philosophy, one sees how he attempts to use university education to reform intellectual, moral, and religious life to serve political power (reforms which are among the central concerns of Critical Theory).¹¹⁴ One also sees new variants of the danger that Hobbes's philosophy poses to liberal education, particularly in Critical Theory-inspired concerns over "hate speech." If the judgment about what speech belongs in university education rests on determinations of who that speech empowers and disempowers in society and politics, how will those judgments not become combative? And if what drives these judgments is a willful and passionate desire to hold power out of fear for safety, will those judgments be anything but infinitely mutable?

An enduring challenge to liberal education that Hobbes's philosophy embodies is the temptation to see speech's fundamental orientation exclusively towards politics, not nature and truth. Hobbes's assault on speech is a brutal rejection of Socrates's "second sailing," the turn to speeches to receive glimpses into truths about the good.¹¹⁵ An education willing to put Hobbes in dialogue with other philosophers could help recover the vital vision that speech naturally looks to more than politics. Hobbes offers an opening to judge his work by this standard when he fears *Leviathan* will be "as useless as the commonwealth of Plato." Hobbes claims, however, that he alone among the philosophers "proved all the theorems of a moral doctrine," and what remains is "convert[ing] the truth of speculation into the utility of practice" through "public teaching."¹¹⁶ Like Plato, Hobbes knows the ties

¹¹⁴ Celikates and Flynn, "Critical Theory."

¹¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 99c-100a.

¹¹⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXXI.41.

between speech, theory, and practice; he also seems to prefer practice informed by theoretical truth. But where Hobbes parts ways from Plato is in speech's purpose: Hobbes forces speech and truth into the image of politics, while Plato uses speech to see politics in light of the search for truth, a more naturally grand and beautiful horizon.¹¹⁷ By constraining speech to escape war, Hobbes closes off the possibility of the naturally liberal education in speeches to which Plato points, one that sees through the limits of politics to desires, pleasures, and goods beyond political life.

¹¹⁷ See Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-IX; Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 140-42, 151-53, 164-65; *Natural Right and History*, 199-202.

The Crucial Decade: Benjamin Franklin's Political Theory in the 1730s (with Some New Attributions)

Kevin Slack

Benjamin Franklin applied the Whig ideas he held as a youth in Boston to Pennsylvania politics. His political theory developed in the 1730s and 1740s as he began to consider the rights of the colonies in relation to one another. He clarified his views on lawmaking power, the separation of powers, delegation, prerogative, the judiciary, and proprietary forms of government. This article will return to Franklin's early reports on Massachusetts and Ireland before providing new scholarship on some hitherto unattributed essays that show his critique of the injustices of Maryland's proprietary regime. In the 1750s he used these arguments against both the Pennsylvania proprietor and the British Empire.

Recent scholarship has interpreted Benjamin Franklin as a lawgiver in the ancient sense—one who shapes the constitution of a people—and it has rehabilitated his reputation as a Whig theorist in the 1750s.¹ Less, however, is said about his political views during the crucial decade of the 1730s. Yet, as J.A. Leo Lemay and Carla Mulford have argued, Franklin contributed to the rise of civic life in Philadelphia while he was engrossed in politics.² His writings are informed by a political theory grounded in particulars—as opposed to authoritative treatises written by leisured men of often little political experience. He used his press to criticize gubernatorial instructions and British prohibitions on colonial trade, support the natural rights of conscience, speech, and press, defend his political mentors, and shape the 1737 and 1741 elections. This article, building on Mulford's thesis that Franklin's views on empire changed in the 1750s, will propose that his consideration of Maryland's government in the 1730s was a decisive factor. Moreover, it will look to Franklin's writings to trace the

¹ On Franklin as lawgiver, Kevin Slack, *Benjamin Franklin, Natural Right, and the Art of Virtue* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 162–63; Timothy Brennan, “Teaching by Examples: Rousseau's Lawgiver and the Case of Benjamin Franklin,” *Political Theory* 52, iss. 3 (June 2024): 348–73. On Franklin's “early modern liberal” principles, Carla Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 5–14, 191–205; James H. Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746–1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 143–44; Lemay, *The Canon of Benjamin Franklin 1722–1776* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 132–34; *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, 3 vols. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006–9), 3:635–36, 576; Douglas Anderson, *The Radical Enlightenments of Benjamin Franklin* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), ch. 6; Steven Forde, “Benjamin Franklin's ‘Machiavellian’ Civic Virtue,” in *Machiavelli's Liberal Republican Legacy*, ed. Paul Rahe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 144; Lorraine Smith Pangle, *The Political Philosophy of Benjamin Franklin* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 140–55.

² Lemay, *Life*, 2:154–69, 214–32, 322–57; Mulford, *Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, 75–141.

development of his ideas of prerogative, the legislative power, delegation, and governmental form. Several of those writings are hitherto unattributed. They include thoughtful 1738–1739 satires, which warn Pennsylvanians of the threat of Maryland’s proprietary form of government to equality and liberty; the 1740 “Yearly Verses,” which appeal to republican principles to criticize Quaker pacifism; a 1741 clarification of republican principles; and finally, a 1752 article extending the critique of proprietary government to the British Empire.

JUSTICE AND EQUITY

Benjamin Franklin’s earliest political ideas were shaped by writers such as John Wise, who published with Franklin’s brother James and wrote the first natural law treatise in the colonies. James’s *New England Courant* lampooned the Puritan establishment and the New Charter party in Boston, and Ben’s Silence Dogood held distinctly Whig views. Ordering James’s arrest for mocking the authorities, the Massachusetts Assembly denied him a trial and the right to habeas corpus. Ben condemned it as “highly *unjust*,” an *ex post facto* violation of Magna Carta and English liberties; James was entitled to “a Grand Jury, and a fair Tyral.”³ Ben appealed to two sources of authority, the “Light of Nature and Laws of Justice,” the sources of “*the strict Rules of Justice and Equity*.”⁴ Both *ius strictum et ius aequum*, or justice and equity, share the Latin root *aequus*. “The end of Humane Law,” he wrote, “is to fix the boundaries within which Men ought to keep themselves.”⁵ Strict justice (*aequalitas*) provides the clear, predictable certainty of a general law, while equity (*aequitas*) or fairness refers to unique and individual cases, made by judicial decision at common law.

Franklin often used the phrase “natural equity and justice” in his arguments for right.⁶ Equity pointed to the limits of the law, which contained “Obscurities and Uncertainties”;

³ Benjamin Franklin, *Franklin: Writings*, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 47.

⁴ Franklin, *Writings*, 48, appealed to both law and Whig authors. Anthony-Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001), 3:190–91, applied “stated and fix’d Rules of Equity and Justice” to distinguish “*Free Government*” by law from “*Tyranny*, and *absolute Dominion*”: “no People in a Civil State can possibly be free, when they are otherwise govern’d than by such *Laws* as they themselves have constituted, or ... have *freely* given consent.” See James Tyrrell, *Biblioteca Politica: Or, an Enquiry into the Antient Constitution of the English Government* (London: Printed for D. Brown, 1718), vii.

⁵ Franklin, *Writings*, 48.

⁶ Franklin, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard Labaree et al., 44 vols. to date (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959–2024), 4:190: “tho’ [the proprietors] may conceive themselves under no Obligation by Law, they are under the much stronger Obligations of natural Equity and Justice”; 5:45; 11:118: “consistent with justice and equity”; 11:211: “Reasonableness, Equity and Justice of Laws, human and divine”; 11:239: “Justice ... founded in Reason and natural Equity”; on equity as a science rooted in common sense, 11:284.

where it conflicted with positive law, equity ought to rule.⁷ Franklin connected equity to the Whig conception of natural law or universal justice: equal individuals possessed a natural right to the fruits of their labor and the honor of their merits. He appealed, for example, to “natural Rights and Liberties,” such as the freedom of conscience, when opposing religious orthodoxy in 1735.⁸ Importantly, Franklin addressed the *grounds* of natural law, or the “Laws of our Nature,” and explained how unaided human reason formulates the “great Laws of Morality and Virtue”: “the Knowledge, and our Obligations to the Practice of the Laws of Morality ... are discoverable by the Light of Nature; or by reflecting upon the human Frame, and considering it's [sic] natural Propensities, Instincts, and Principles of Action, and the genuine Tendencies of them.”⁹ The end of moral virtue is happiness—the perfection of one's nature—and the end of government the protection of freedom and the common good.¹⁰ Franklin's view of natural law informed his political project of republican government.

While the principles of natural law were true, i.e., beneficial considering human happiness, without divine enforcement—and Franklin saw no evidence of this—they did not constitute a law properly speaking: “Where there is no law, there can be no Transgression.”¹¹ Human heroes, or lawgivers must step in, using the “*Knowledge of Mankind*, a Science the most Useful of all Sciences,” to create religious, moral, and civil laws that enforce these useful maxims, making them genuine laws.¹² Hence Franklin composed a “Doctrine to be Preached,” which included an infinite God who punishes vice in an afterlife.¹³ While moral virtues were “beneficial to us, in their own Natures,” the concept of an afterlife provided a strong incentive to practice them.¹⁴ Considering that some “cannot have Faith in Christ,”¹⁵ Franklin added his own teachings of virtue, to be enforced by the law of honor and shame,

⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 11:210; see 11:211. On equity as a guiding maxim, see Slack, *Benjamin Franklin*, 147–48.

⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 2:66; 11:350: “the natural and legal rights of the colonies”; 11:437: “equity and justice.” On freedom of thought and press, 1:27–30; conscience, 2:66, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (hereafter *PG*), April 6, 1738, May 18, 1738.

⁹ Franklin, *Papers*, 2:105.

¹⁰ On happiness and perfection, Franklin *Papers*, 1:261–62; see *PG* July 16, 1730: “the great Law of Nature, or Reason of Things; in conformity to which Law or Reason, the happiness of all intelligent beings consists”; July 23, 1730, 2.

¹¹ Franklin, *New England Courant*, February 4, 1723; see *Papers*, 2:119, 5:472.

¹² Franklin, *Writings*, 194, refers to laws of shame. The “procedure of the *supream Judge of all the Earth*, (who cannot but do right) which is the most perfect Rule for *Humane Gods* to copy after,” according to that “*Light and Law* they were favour'd with.” Compare his treatment, 2:105, of “*Revelation which God made to us by the Light of Nature*,” i.e., human reason, with John Wise, *A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches* (Boston, 1717), 31–36.

¹³ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:212; 3:413: The “CHRISTIAN RELIGION” was “Excellen[t]... above all others antient or modern” because it taught Christ as a universal “Lawgiver” (2:56); see 2:70, 72.

¹⁴ Franklin, *Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1964), 115; he prints this argument, *PG* July 16, 1730.

¹⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 9:105.

and he developed a political theory and drafted laws that approximated the laws of nature by rewarding virtuous and punishing vicious behavior.

Franklin's earliest writings distinguished between right and power. Where power is the exercise of force, right is by either law or prerogative (the "Power to act according to discretion, for the publick good, without the prescription of the Law and sometimes even against it").¹⁶ The Crown's prerogative was necessary for preservation (necessity knows no law), while the rule of law best secured liberties. A fifteen-year-old Franklin typeset Henry Care's *English Liberties, or the Free-born Subject's Inheritance*—the "Whig Bible"—that included Magna Carta and other fundamental documents. Care said law must refer to general, promulgated protections; law was the means to attain the end, which is justice, or right.¹⁷ He focused on the historical origins of the rights of Englishmen to make a foundational claim: "It is called Right, because it is the best Birth-right the Subject hath; for thereby his Goods, Lands, Wife and Children, his Body, Life, Honour and Estimation, are protected from Injuries and Wrong."¹⁸ The root of all law (*lex*), wrote Care, was "*ligando*, to bind" into one people.¹⁹ The foundation of all political relations is an exclusive people: what distinguished Englishmen from all others, or what made them Englishmen.

Care's exposition of Whig thought in layman's terms defended the lawful authority of Parliament against kingly prerogative.²⁰ "Each man [has] a fixed fundamental Right born with him, as to the Freedom of his Person, and property in his Estate, which he cannot be deprived of, but either by his Consent, or some Crime."²¹ The people by petitions and Magna Charta, he argued, limited the king's prerogative, both at common law and in civil laws by Parliament, whose members should neither "have Dependency upon the Court" nor vote to "please the Prerogative Party."²² Kings conceded to legal protections against "arbitrary government" in acts that "tied up [their] own Hands," removing the power to raise certain

¹⁶ John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, §160.

¹⁷ Care, *English Liberties, or the Free-born Subject's Inheritance* (Boston, MA: J. Franklin, 1721), 26–27; on the importance of Care to Franklin, Lemay, *Life*, 174; Mulford, *Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, 51–53.

¹⁸ Care, *English Liberties*, 27: "A greater Inheritance descends to us from the Laws, than from our Progenitors."

¹⁹ Care, *English Liberties*, 3.

²⁰ See Lois G. Schworer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care: Restoration Publicist* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 25.

²¹ Care, *English Liberties*, 2. Care, 57–58, attacked the violent kings who by prerogative imposed "a General Tax on the People, without their Consent in Parliament"; "The late King James" acted "by pretense of Prerogative" (110).

²² Care, *English Liberties*, 24–25, 126. Judges, 26, had voided exemption made by "Prerogative."

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taxes without consent, prorogue the assembly, form a star-chamber, and create monopolies.²³ An English subject was entitled to “due Process of Law,” secured by his representation in Parliament and participation in the “lawful Judgment of his Peers.” Without the rule of law, the subjects’ “Lives, Liberties and Estates [were] liable to be disposed of, at the Discretion of Strangers appointed their Judges, most times mercenary, and Creatures of Prerogative.”²⁴

Franklin observed and reported on the conflict between prerogative and legislative power in Massachusetts. As Silence Dogood in 1722, he declared himself a “mortal Enemy to arbitrary Government and unlimited Power” born of class distinctions.²⁵ Silence similarly converted legal claims to transhistorical, “sacred” claims.²⁶ Franklin praised those who led the people “in Manly Exercises for the Defence of their Liberties” under English law against (here citing Care) “*the meer Will of the Prince*.”²⁷ So too he adopted Care’s view of the body politic as a unity. Franklin stated in 1729 that the basis of politics was therefore opinion—a preference for one’s own over others: only upon this basis could one even proceed to discuss the plural interests involved.²⁸ Opinion is rooted in affection and “common Sense” or sentiment—love.²⁹ Franklin appealed to the “Common Good,” “Common Justice,” “one mind,” and “publick Spirit.” He frequently encouraged young men of zeal and love of country to public service.³⁰ He used the word *nation* for a distinct people, *dominion* and *state* for a political body, and *sovereignty* for the exercise of its power—the king is sovereign in the execution of laws. Subjects’ perception of justice was crucial. The key to retaining a common spirit was constructing moral and social laws that honored those who benefitted all.

The king received his sovereignty from the people. Perhaps Franklin gave his clearest statement on lawmaking authority in 1735: “A civil Society may lawfully indeed make what Laws it pleases for its Defence, Preservation and Welfare; It is not accountable for such Laws to any superior earthly Power; it has no other Master here besides the Consent of the

²³ Care, *English Liberties*, 24–25.

²⁴ Care, *English Liberties*, 200–201; “Judges ... made by Prerogative” are chosen “by corrupt Ministers” (202).

²⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:13; on class, 1:9; See Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 50, 52.

²⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:27.

²⁷ Franklin, *New England Courant*, February 4, 1723, 1.

²⁸ On Franklin’s distinguishing “Englishmen,” *Papers*, 1:160, 161; see William Penn, in Richard Jackson, *An Historical Review of the Constitution and Government of Pennsylvania* (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1759), 45–46. On opinion, see *Papers*, 1:160: What one *thinks* is right, *Writings*, 49, *Papers*, 1:263, 4:234, 11:106, is the basis of rule.

²⁹ Franklin, *Papers*, 6:161; on affection see “Extract of a Letter from West Jersey, Sept. 1. 1751,” *PG* March 17, 1752, 1; *Papers*, 6:83, attaching “Loyalty and the most sincere Affection” to defense of the province, 9:94, 16:325.

³⁰ See Franklin, *Papers*, 3:418–19; *PG* September 10, 1730, 1, 2.

Plurality, or the Will of one or more whom the Plurality has appointed to act for the Good of the whole Body.”³¹ In Franklin’s contractarian theory, both the state of nature—defined by an absence of promulgated laws, a common executor, and impartial judges—and an original compact were not metaphysical abstractions but historically true.³² The Pennsylvania Charter was an example of “an original compact.”³³ Humans who migrate to a wilderness or who live outside a properly functioning government may consent to create an association that mutually secures their natural rights to life, liberty, and property, and affords additional privileges and duties.³⁴ Defending John Locke and Algernon Sidney’s contract theory, Franklin looked to history to demonstrate the “first Principles of sound *Politicks*”: “the Advantage of Civil Orders and Constitutions, how Men and their Properties are protected by joining in Societies and establishing Government; their Industry encouraged and rewarded, Arts invented, and Life made more comfortable: The Advantages of Liberty, Mischiefs of Licentiousness, Benefits arising from good Laws and a due Execution of Justice, &c.”³⁵

There is a tension between law and equity, as the good of the “whole” must be maintained against the interest of a part. Franklin asks in 1732, “If the Sovereign Power attempts to deprive a Subject of his Right, (or which is the same Thing, of what he thinks his Right) is it justifiable in him to resist if he is able?”³⁶ This tension plagued colonial relations. In Franklin’s view, “The King is the Sovereign of all” over the American colonies and his many dominions.³⁷ Repeating the colonial assemblies’ arguments from the 1720s, he later argued that *province* properly referred to a “conquered” country and so did not apply to the American settlers.³⁸ To maintain the equal rights of the king’s dominions, colonial assemblies appealed to their rights as Englishmen under common law; where this failed (because they

³¹ Franklin, *Papers*, 2:72.

³² Franklin, *Papers*, 16: 305–306, 318–19: “does not “all History show the contrary?... Did not the Saxons desert their Native Country when they came to Britain? Is it not Tyranny in any Government to make Prisoners of its Subjects, and is it not contrary to their Rights?... And Compacts they are and ever were”; 17:333–34.

³³ Franklin, *Papers*, 7:361–62; Jackson, *An Historical Review*, 13: “The Laws agreed upon in England were ... an original Compact between the Proprietary and the Free-men, and as such were reciprocally received and executed.”

³⁴ On social contract, Franklin, *Papers*, 1:160 (see 1:28); 2:72; 3:199; 3:413; 9:74.

³⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 3:413. Franklin, 16:319–20, later argued that John Locke and Algernon Sidney helped to write the Carolina and Pennsylvania charters; on the truth of this claim, see 16:320n4.

³⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:263.

³⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:361: “so many Separate Corporations in one Common Wealth”; 17:321; see 16:325: “Britain is not an Emperor. They are Parts of the King’s Dominions...”

³⁸ Franklin *Papers*, 16:323–24; he did frequently use the customary term *province* earlier.

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were not subjects of the realm of England) they appealed to legal rights in their charters.³⁹ In 1721–1722, colonial assemblies and agents argued that the Indians were not simply conquered: English settlers induced by legal encouragements had at great risk purchased the land from Indian tribes and then settled and improved it to benefit to the mother country.⁴⁰ For doing so, the settlers received additional charter liberties to those they already possessed as Englishmen. Moreover, their labor and improvement of the soil gave them a right to it.⁴¹

THE CRUCIAL DECADE

Franklin's earliest writings addressed two key political issues: paper currency and legislative power. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1723 to witness the first emission of paper currency under Governor William Keith. After his return from London in 1726, he observed the battle between Keith, who worked with the assembly, and Hannah Penn, who with James Logan sought to reclaim proprietary control by tying the governor to the council and stopping the reissues. Courting popular support, Keith aspired to disenfranchise Penn and become royal governor. After Keith was replaced by governor Patrick Gordon in 1726, he organized political clubs to campaign for assembly.⁴² With the return of recession in 1728–1729, he pushed for more paper money and tacitly approved of street gangs who intimidated hard money legislators. Franklin contributed to this debate in his April 1729 pamphlet *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper-Currency*. Speaker David Lloyd led the assembly that approved a £30,000 money bill supported by the popular party, and Gordon signed it.⁴³ The economy quickly improved, and Gordon attributed the tranquility of the province largely to the bill.⁴⁴

³⁹ Franklin, *Papers*, 16:316, 17:320; *Archives of Maryland*, ed. Hall, Steiner, and Dennis (Baltimore, MD: Historical Society, 1914), 34:442: "Maryland's "Statutes and Acts of Assembly" are "Subject to the like rules of Comon Law or Equitable Construction as are used by the Judges ... in England"; repeated at 44:70.

⁴⁰ *Archives of Maryland*, 34:441–42: "This Province is not ... a Conquered Country," but a "Collony of the English Nation encouraged by the Crown to Transplant themselves ... at their Own Expence and Labour." They have not "forfeited any part of their English Liberties." "The Christian Inhabitants purchased great part of the Land ... from the Indians" and "the Lord Prop[rietary]." *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, ed. Gertrude MacKinney and Charles F. Hoban, 8 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: 1931–35), 2:1413: the assembly motioned to "preserve to such Persons as have settled Lands in Right of the Society their Improvements, they making appear their Right."

⁴¹ Jeremiah Dummer, *A Defence of the New-England Charters* (London: Wilkins, 1721), 12, 15.

⁴² One club was for gentlemen; the Tiff Club was for tradesmen, for whom Franklin, a "Leather Apron," wrote a mock history (*Papers*, 1:9, 126). Gary B. Nash, *Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 153–55: "Leather Aprons, the Mob, the Scumm."

⁴³ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3:1963–64.

⁴⁴ Katie A. Moore, "America's First Economic Stimulus Package: Paper Money and the Body Politic in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1715–1730," *Pennsylvania History* 83, no. 4 (Autumn 2016): 548.

Franklin's essay on paper-currency began with *the* fundamental question of politics, the "true Interest of one's Country."⁴⁵ Contrary to portrayals of Franklin as either a pluralist or relativist, the very concept of a people's true interest logically presupposed the existence of a *people* in the first place. The dilemma was that its true interest was hard to know; indeed, most individuals were moved by prejudice and partial interests, distorting their opinions. Franklin distinguished between appearances and truth: between what "appears to be in their particular Interest" and the "true Interest," and he weighed the different interests to show how his solution would benefit all parties.⁴⁶ At the end he clarified *which* country he referred to: "every one of us ... [should] bend our Minds to the Study of *What is the true Interest of PENNSYLVANIA.*"⁴⁷ A paper currency, he argued, was necessary because it "encouraged and advanced" trade: "There will be a much greater Demand for that Produce; which will be a great Encouragement of Husbandry and Tillage, and consequently make Land more valuable."⁴⁸ He proudly took credit for the idea of tying paper currency, emitted with interest through a land bank, to the value of labor and land.⁴⁹ "The Improvement of Land" was both a source of value and a defense of the colonial claim to ownership: one "hath earned his Bread with the Sweat of his Brows."⁵⁰ So too would it promote the growth of the country and empire: "A Plentiful Currency will encourage great Numbers of Labouring and Handicrafts Men to come and Settle in the Country," and these men "are the chief Strength and Support of a People." Conversely, a lack of currency induces settlers to leave.

On a second key political issue, Franklin immediately used the newly renamed *Pennsylvania Gazette* to report on the political dispute between Massachusetts Governor William Burnet and the assembly. It was really a commentary on Pennsylvania's recent fight over legislative power. James Logan had argued that the legislative power was divided among three branches, while Speaker Lloyd argued the assembly possessed the whole. Burnet, also governor of New York and New Jersey, had arrived in 1728 in Boston and started a quarrel by stating that the strength of the British constitution rest on the mutual dependence of the three legislative branches: king, lords, and commons. In Massachusetts, he argued, the

⁴⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:141, 176.

⁴⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:146; on the different interests, and their "mutual Advantage and Satisfaction" via trade, 145–48.

⁴⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:157.

⁴⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:143.

⁴⁹ See Franklin, *Papers*, 16:286: "First advanced by B. Franklin."

⁵⁰ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:143, 144.

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governor was an officer of the king and (as in England) part of a civil list granted life tenure. He presented instructions demanding a permanent salary of at least £1,000. The assembly voted £1,700 for colonial expense but did not make it permanent, and Burnet rejected it as a violation of his instructions.⁵¹ The assembly claimed its rights under Magna Carta and the charter, but Burnet replied that he was affirming the practice in the House of Commons, which defended “the Rights of the Crown” against “the Invasions of the Representatives.”⁵² The assembly disagreed: “How insignificant the other Branches of the Legislature here must be, if an Instruction to a Governour must be a Rule to the General Court.”

Burnet warned the assembly that, by the king's request, Parliament—to whom it was subordinate—would make the final determination. The Board of Trade had concluded that the assembly's desire to “bring the Governour appointed by His Majesty over them, to a Dependence upon their Good Will for his Subsistence ... would ... tend to the lessening of his Authority, and consequently of that Dependence which that Colony ought to have upon the Crown of Great Britain, by bringing the whole Legislative Power into the Hands of the People.”⁵³ He accused the assembly of using its power of the purse to tempt him to disobey his instructions and withhold allowances from the judges and secretary; he needed “due Support” to free him from this dependence. Scholars often overlook that Burnet threatened the assembly with the “Displeasure of the Legislature of Great Britain”: “that you may not be deceived by ... your Agents, I will give you an Account at Length of what was done by that Legislature to the Kingdom of Ireland.” Foreshadowing of the 1766 Declaratory Act, he cited the 1719 Declaratory *Act for the Better Securing the Dependency of Ireland*, which “hath been, is, and of Right ought to be subordinate unto and dependent upon the Imperial Crown of Great-Britain.” Colonial rights came from Parliament and the king-in-council, who could remove them at will. Franklin printed the assembly's response. Claiming “the true Interest and Welfare” of the people, it denied a governor could levy fees “without Law.”⁵⁴

Burnet died and was replaced by former agent, Jonathan Belcher, who obeyed the instructions he had just challenged. Franklin wrote, “It seems, that People have for these Hundred Years past, enjoyed the Privilege of Rewarding the Governour for the Time being,

⁵¹ *PG* October 2, 1729, 2. Massachusetts agents Wilkes and Belcher related that parliamentary action was unlikely. The assembly published their letters, and Burnet accused it of “Libel,” certainly of interest to printer Franklin.

⁵² *PG* October 9, 1729, 1.

⁵³ *PG* October 9, 1729, 1.

⁵⁴ *PG* October, 9, 1729, 3: specifically, “an Ordinance of the Governour and Council of New York.”

according to their Sense of his Merit and Services,” and few governors had complained.⁵⁵ While Belcher contested it, the assembly “thought it an Imposition, contrary to their own Charter, and to *Magna Charta*; and they judg’d that by the Dictates of Reason there should be a mutual Dependence between the *Governor* and the *Governed*, and that to make any Governour independent on his People, would be dangerous, and destructive of their Liberties, and the ready Way to establish Tyranny.” The governor’s proper dependence, Franklin suggested, included giving the assembly control over the appointment and pay of administrators and officers. He praised “the Assembly (as the Love and Zeal of that Country for the present Establishment is too well known to suffer any Suspicion of Want of Loyalty) who continue thus resolutely to Abide by what *they Think* their Right, and that of the People they represent.” This is what, said Franklin, defined Englishmen: that “ardent Spirit of Liberty, and that undaunted Courage in the Defence of it, which has in every Age so gloriously distinguished BRITONS and ENGLISHMEN from all the Rest of Mankind.”⁵⁶

Franklin printed Belcher’s reply that he acted on the “king’s orders” and that the assembly’s “method for supplying the Treasury was ... unwarrantable,” thus threatening the *quo warranto* proceedings used to repeal colonial charters.⁵⁷ Franklin recriminated that Belcher was not a “*Patriot*.”⁵⁸ In the Junto meetings, Franklin took a more radical position, championing the New England assemblies against both their governors *and* the king. Belcher, he said, was a potential “hero” who promised to secure New England’s “freedom and support her laws” but then betrayed her when appointed governor.⁵⁹ In Nicholas Scull’s Junto Verses, Belcher says, “The King Commands it and obey they must, Yet they maintain what their forefathers held, Nor *to their monarch* will their freedom yield.”⁶⁰

THE IRISH IMMIGRANTS

Burnet and Belcher threatened to reduce Massachusetts to the dependency of Ireland. As Mulford shows, Franklin used the plight of the Irish in the *Gazette* as a reference point for imperial problems of trade and migration.⁶¹ The comparison of Ireland with other British

⁵⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:160; The assembly depended on the king’s approval of “all Acts and Laws.”

⁵⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:161: “native Fire and Intrepidity”; he, 3:202, used the same description of the “BRITISH RACE.”

⁵⁷ Franklin printed Burnet’s instructions in October and Belcher’s reply in *PG* July 8, 1731.

⁵⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:176.

⁵⁹ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:177n8.

⁶⁰ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:177n8 [Emphasis added], is nicknamed Bargos in the Junto Verses; see *PG* October 8, 1730.

⁶¹ Mulford, *Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, 92–104.

colonies led him to compare the Sugar islands with the Northern colonies. Pennsylvania's true interest related to the separate dominions, each containing its own parties and interests.⁶² "Letters from ... Ireland," Franklin reported, "give us fresh Instances of the miserable condition which the lower Sort of People are in. The Poor are almost starving for Want, not being able to get either Oatmeal or Potatoes."⁶³ The next month he reported on "the unhappy Circumstances of the Common People of Ireland; That Poverty, Wretchedness, Misery and Want are become almost universal among them."⁶⁴ Franklin traced such misery to its *political causes*. Irish lands formerly used for farming and employing the poor were converted to pasture, and now insufficient grain was grown for human subsistence. "At the same Time the Trade and Manufactures of the Nation being cramp'd and discourag'd, the labouring People have little to do, and consequently are not able to purchase Bread at its present dear Rate: That the Taxes are nevertheless exceeding heavy, and Money very scarce." He tied bad policies to *governmental form*: "gripping avaricious Landlords exercise ... the most merciless Racking Tyranny and Oppression." He added examples of failed English policies: starving tin workers in Cornwall; the impressment of sailors; the horrific conditions of debtors' jails.⁶⁵

Bad laws drove out subjects and weakened the realm. "Swarms" of Irish immigrants fled their land and came to the American colonies despite the inhospitality they received and the lethal treacheries of the voyage from incompetent, unscrupulous merchants.⁶⁶ A Presbyterian minister from Antrim reported that his "Flock [had] mostly gone for America." This mass exodus caused Irish land values, even those close to the city, to plummet "20 or 30 percent."⁶⁷ It also led to a loss of trade, the "total decay" of the "Linen Manufacture," and a "dangerous Superiority of our inveterate Enemies the Papists" who wanted the vacant lands. The landlords' memorial stated that 4,000 tenants had emigrated since spring, and that 20,000, "many of them Freeholders" and linen manufacturers there, had pledged to go.⁶⁸ Instead of changing the laws, the landlords proposed greater tyranny. "*The Landlords not yet finding*

⁶² *PG* October, 23, 1729 points out how the Whig and Tory parties direct their papers to different conclusions.

⁶³ *PG* October 16, 1729, 3.

⁶⁴ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:162.

⁶⁵ *PG* October 2, 1729, 2, reported a press gang stealing a man away from his new bride; February 20, 1734, 1, argued impressment violates Magna Charta and "the common Rights of all Englishmen"; November 24, 1729, 1, praised the House of Commons for exposing the "Villainy, Extortion, and the highest Cruelty and Barbarity" of the English jails.

⁶⁶ *PG* November 20, 1729; in "The Palatines' Appeal," *PG* February 15, 1732, Franklin reported the exploitative and murderous situation of redemptioners who stole, held hostage, and starved those whom they transported.

⁶⁷ *PG* November 20, 1729, 1.

⁶⁸ *PG* November 20, 1729, 2. The lords wanted the Protestant ministers to persuade the people not to desert.

in their hearts to induce the People to stay by Humanity and good Usage, have been thinking of Means to compel them." They forwarded a law to tie them to the land: to "restrain his Majesty's Subjects from transporting themselves and their Effects to Places beyond the Sea."

In 1729, 4,000 Irish migrants arrived in Philadelphia, increasing crime and social disorder. Governor Gordon had supported a law against "those Crowds of Forreigners," particularly to "prevent the Importation of Irish Papists & Convicts."⁶⁹ The assembly passed a "duty on Forregners & Irish Servants ... imported into this Province," soon replacing it with an "Act for imposing a Duty on Persons convicted of heinous Crimes, and to prevent poor and impotent Persons being imported into the Province." Even industrious immigrants threatened unity; they turned "an English Plantation ... into a Colony of Aliens."⁷⁰ Franklin noted the welfare required to feed the poor, and "it was astonishing to behold their Impenitency, and to hear their profane Speeches."⁷¹ He listed runaway Irishmen and Negroes alongside the migrants. As scholars have noted, Franklin directed his moral uplift to this "Lower Sort," including his edits on an essay on swearing and his commentaries on the dangerous effects of alcohol.⁷² With the Irish in mind, Jonathan Swift published his satirical *Modest Proposal* in 1729, the same year as Daniel Defoe's *Humble Proposal*. Defoe argued that wool was the key to British trade.⁷³ Franklin agreed, and he proposed Defoe's solution of manufacturing "worsted, or woolen yarn" in Ireland.⁷⁴ It would ease immigration pressures from migrants seeking relief from the "Oppression of Landlords and tithesmen."

Ireland's economic situation was part of broader imperial trade policy. The agents of Barbados asked Parliament to restrain the trade of the northern colonies in order to force them to pay more for the sugar and molasses they needed to make rum. In 1731 Franklin reported the "ill Consequences that may attend the passing the Bill ... for Restraining our northern colonies from carrying Horses and Lumber to the Foreign Colonies."⁷⁵ The piece asked the reader to consider "what is really conducive to the publick Good, and what is

⁶⁹ *Colonial Records*, 16 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jo. Seaverns & Co., 1852), 3:360; *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3:1984.

⁷⁰ *Colonial Records*, 3:342.

⁷¹ *PG* November 20, 1729, 2.

⁷² November 12, 1730, 1; *Papers*, 1:278; on drunkenness, see Lemay, *Life*, 2:149-53.

⁷³ W. Cunningham, "The Repression of the Woollen Manufacture in Ireland," *The English Historical Review* 1, no. 2 (April 1886): 277-94; Defoe, *Compleat English Tradesman* (London: Printed for C. Rivington, 1726), 388-407; Franklin, *Papers*, 4:72, said he was educated "as a tradesman"; Mulford, 95-96, treats Defoe's influence on Franklin.

⁷⁴ *PG* September 18, 1735, 1; June 12, 1735, 2.

⁷⁵ *PG* July 1, 1731.

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design'd with a View to the promotion of particular Interests." The northern colonies suffered from a trade imbalance that negatively affected Great Britain. Trade restraints were justifiable if protecting home manufactures or their security in foreign markets, as was the case with wool. But restraining northern colonial exports would only allow the British sugar planters to raise the price of sugar, while the French would acquire horses and lumber from Spain and dampen colonial trade. Nor did British sugar planters need protection—they failed to undersell the French planters because the latter "live more frugally and manage better." To restore the "Balance of our Trade," the author proposed "Liberty for the Importation even of the French Muscovado Sugars, chargeable with the same Duties as our own."

Like Franklin, the author argued that virtuous subjects were the source of the empire's strength, and he focused on the interests of its parts: "the northern colonies ... earn their Living much more hardily than the Islanders," and "far from oppressing them with such a Prohibition, it would be much more the Interest of the Nation in general, to encourage their Industry and give them all the Liberty of Trading that can consist with our own Convenience." Northern colonial trade with foreign plantations supported industries in navigation, shipbuilding, and fisheries. Their commerce in skins and furs siphoned money from Europe that they used to purchase British manufactures. The bill, Franklin wrote, was stalled in the House of Lords, but "the Northern Colonies may be assured of being vigorously attacked by Barbadoes and the southern colonies, the next Session of Parliament."⁷⁶

Barbados's agents lobbied for a bill to discourage trade. In June Franklin printed the "mortifying News" that if it were passed, "it [would] be a heavy Stroke upon us"; in the next two years he printed at least sixteen articles on the issue.⁷⁷ Eventually Parliament passed the 1733 Molasses Act and other acts restraining colonial trade: the prohibition of exportation of American hops to Ireland; the prohibition of exportation of hats from America; requirements for American merchants to first port in England before traveling to the Continent; prohibitions on the taxation of slaves and convicts.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *PG* July 1, 1731, 4; Franklin, July 7, 17, 1731 printed the case of the sugar planters and the "Northern Colonies."

⁷⁷ See Lemay, *Life*, 2:216.

⁷⁸ See *PG* March 27, 1735, July 31, 1735, January 31, 1738, February 28, 1738, March 7, 1738, and August 17, 1738.

TENANTS IN IRELAND ... AND MARYLAND

Franklin's 1729 positions on both paper-currency and legislative power brought his talents to the attention of Pennsylvania leaders: it "struck the principal People, occasion'd the Paper and the Manager of it to be much talk'd of, and in a few weeks brought them all to be our Subscribers."⁷⁹ Franklin's writings not only identified him with Lloyd's Popular or Quaker Party, Proprietary Party men such as Speaker Andrew Hamilton shifted their stance to favor paper money.⁸⁰ The next year Franklin became a member of the Mason's Lodge, where he met William Allen (who became Hamilton's son-in-law in 1734), a wealthy contributor to almost all of the Junto's projects. Hamilton did business with Franklin as an attorney, purchasing blank forms, and he used his influence to secure him the printing of the new bills of credit, materials for the loan office, the *Votes and Proceedings*, and the assembly bills.⁸¹

Franklin wrote and published politically controversial pieces. He later said, "Having been from my Youth more or less engag'd in Publick Affairs, it has often happened to me in the Course of my Life to be censured sharply for the Part I took in them."⁸² Both the Keithians and prominent Quakers assailed Hamilton in multiple pamphlets.⁸³ After Hamilton's falling out with Governor Gordon, the most vicious piece came from Quaker merchant Isaac Norris, Sr., who anonymously disdained the "lower sort of People," attacked Hamilton's character, and opposed his reelection in 1733.⁸⁴ In response, Franklin published an interview with "my Friend" Hamilton that exposed and ridiculed Norris, declared he was moved by ambition, "private resentment," and jealousy, and attacked his character: he was a greedy liar.⁸⁵ Hamilton had defended the "inestimable Blessing of Liberty, which the People here

⁷⁹ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 1:159n3.

⁸⁰ Keith's eight assemblymen boycotted the 1727 session to create turmoil; Lloyd, Jeremiah Langhorne, and Andrew Hamilton, who called Keith a threat to "the Constitution of the Province of Pennsylvania" (*Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, ed. Craig W. Horle et. al, 3 vols. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992-2005), 2:424) continued to meet without a quorum. On Keith as leveler, see Moore, "America's First Economic Stimulus Package," 544-45.

⁸¹ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:174; 1:172.

⁸² Franklin, *Papers*, 21:415; on political affiliations, Lemay, *Life*, 2:214. On risk-taking, see Lemay, *Life*, 1:417-18, 2:325-27; 3:403, 445, 460, against the view of William S. Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 26 that Franklin avoided risk and maintained "strict neutrality."

⁸³ *The Triumvirate of Pennsylvania: In a Letter to a Friend in the Country* (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1725); *The Life and Character of a Strange He-Monster* (London: 1726); see Katherine D. Carter, "Isaac Norris II's Attack on Andrew Hamilton," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 104, no. 2 (April 1980): 139-61.

⁸⁴ Norris, *American Weekly Mercury* (hereafter *AWM*), October 18, 1733, 1, portrayed Hamilton as drunken, lying, proud, and vengeful, yet possessing "great Power" to turn citizens against the proprietor; he aspired to seize all powers in government (2): "there is not a Court which he does not Rule and Direct, by himself or by those he calls his Friends," as well as the "Assembly (considering he has got all the publick Money in his Hand)."

⁸⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:334-35, 338; on outing Norris, 1:336-37.

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enjoy in a greater Degree than most of their Neighbours,” but Norris had threatened the people’s constitutional liberties.⁸⁶ If elected, Hamilton promised to secure both paper money and the privileges of the lower classes.⁸⁷ He lost his seat but was reelected in 1734. Franklin defended Hamilton from the *American Weekly Mercury*’s constant attacks against his growing influence, deist views, position in the 1735 Zenger trial, and role in the border dispute with Maryland.⁸⁸

The Pennsylvania-Maryland border dispute was the most important political problem in the 1730s. Both colonies claimed the contested border lands, only tentatively forestalled in a 1732 agreement.⁸⁹ It invited Franklin’s reflections on the common problems of both proprietary colonies: economic depression and insecure property rooted in currency and land policies. The Pennsylvania land office did not keep accurate records, and poor surveying led to conflicting claims between proprietary gifts and settlers’ titles.⁹⁰ Laws defining legal boundaries and the percent of proprietary land withheld per acre were vague. Settlers’ inability or refusal to pay or collect quitrents left Penn in immense debt. He negotiated to sell the colony, threatening greater insecurity to settlers’ claims.

The fundamental theoretical issue in both proprietary colonies was prerogative power. In 1728 Governor Benedict Calvert, consulting with Lord Baltimore, rejected the Maryland Lower House’s prescribed Oath of Justice as “intended to affect his Majesty’s Royal Prerogative, in several of its Branches as well in those reserved peculiarly to his Sovereign Person, as in those delegated to, or rather deposited and trusted by the Charter to the Lord Proprietary.” In Pennsylvania, Penn had adopted a different view, “There were but two Sorts of Government: Will and Power; or, Condition and Contract. That the first was a Government of Men, the second of Laws.”⁹¹ “The fundamental Laws of England,” he said, were “abhorrent of Will and Pleasure.” However, when faced with necessity, Penn claimed prerogative powers greater than the assembly and even looked to Maryland as the model:

⁸⁶ Hamilton, *Papers*, 1:337, accused Norris, Sr. of supporting the council veto against the assembly. “The People of Pennsylvania know a Man can lose neither Life, Liberty, nor Estate, but by the Judgment of twelve Freemen.”

⁸⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 1:338: “you shall see ... Paper-Money, but Russet Shoes enough.”

⁸⁸ Lemay, *Life*, 2:154–63; *True Copies of: ... Agreement between Lord Baltimore and Messieurs Penn...* (Philadelphia, PA: B. Franklin, 1734): “Shewing for what Reasons the Lines were not mark’d out within the Time appointed...”

⁸⁹ *PG* May 10, 1732; July 31, 1735, reported the Penns’ request for an adjournment to try their case at equity.

⁹⁰ See Alan Tully, “Proprietary Affairs in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1726–1739,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 82, no 2 (1978): 95–96.

⁹¹ Jackson, *Historical Review*, 45–46.

“Let the Government know that they are to follow the example of Maryland and the other provinces in reference to their submission to authority in all cases of Government.”⁹² Penn ordered his governor to prevent the assembly from debating, amending legislative bills, retaining a clerk, and taking information, since it was not a court of record. The assembly protested that Penn’s claim to prerogative power conflicted with its “large Privileges” tied to the inducement of their settlement and the rights guaranteed as Englishmen and stipulated in their charter.⁹³ The deputy governor could not make laws without “the approbation & Assent of the Freemen in provincial Council & Assembly,” else it would “give up the Power of making Laws, creating Courts of Justice Raising Monies and their severall other Rights to the Will and Pleasure of the Governour.”⁹⁴

The difference between Pennsylvania and Maryland, recognized Franklin, was between Pennsylvania’s strong assembly secured by a “Right of the House to adjourn” and Maryland’s proprietors’ right to “Dissolution and Prorogation.”⁹⁵ Lloyd debated Logan in the 1720s over the frame of government itself, whether it consisted of a strong legislative power or a “balance of power” that included the rights of a lieutenant governor and council. The assembly, even though constrained by the charter to only a veto power, claimed the same powers as Parliament. Lloyd pressed for a strong unicameral legislature with all the rights of an English parliament to protect the privileges of English subjects under common law and “natural equity”; Logan’s view of council, he claimed, was “irreconcilable with the Charter, and a Check upon the Legislative, altogether unconstitutional and illegal”—it was the claim of “*Proprietary* Will and Pleasure.”⁹⁶ Conversely, Logan interpreted the charter to mean that the council had legislative powers: the proprietors could include instructions and suspending clauses and require the governor to have conciliar assent to veto bills.

In Franklin’s view, Keith’s appointment by the Penns, who secured his obedience with a bond, had reintroduced a second important question of the delegation of lawmaking power.⁹⁷ Lloyd had argued that a deputy had all of the powers of the agent, thus a proprietor could not appoint a lieutenant governor in his stead and then by secret instructions restrain him

⁹² Roy N. Lokken, *David Lloyd: Colonial Lawmaker* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1959), 34. In 1689 Penn ordered Governor Blackwell to cancel all laws enacted after August 1684.

⁹³ Jackson, *Historical Review*, 53.

⁹⁴ Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 39.

⁹⁵ Jackson, *Historical Review*, 31, 50.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *Historical Review*, 80.

⁹⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:34–39; Jackson, *Historical Review*, 79; it imposed “Conditions of Government on the Deputy.”

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from the full powers of the office, nor could a deputy transfer his lawmaking authority to another body. This delegation violated the notion of a deputy and weakened the lawmaking power.⁹⁸ Penn's instructions therefore deprived the colonists of their rights in assembly.

Pennsylvania's strong legislature had introduced prudent economic policies, in contrast to Maryland's proprietary form. Franklin compiled and edited a March 20, 1735 article on Maryland's £90,000 paper currency law. He found its premise to be great "*entertainment*": "the most probable Means to enable the People to live, and to destroy such unmerchutable Tobacco as serves only to clog Markets and depreciate the best, is to establish a Paper Currency, upon a sinking Fund."⁹⁹ Maryland destroyed tobacco, as did Virginia, to improve its quality in order to increase foreign demand, diminish its quantity to increase its value, regulate its sale, and prevent fraud.¹⁰⁰ But it made the province dependent on trade in tobacco without encouraging other forms of commerce, thus depressing trade. Franklin highlighted the flaws of Maryland's currency scheme: it hindered trade, favored the landlords, and drove out its settlers. As in Ireland, the inhabitants have been "obliged to desert their Habitations."¹⁰¹ "His Lordship the Proprietary" was in absolute control of the scheme, appointing its trustees and directing their investments, and he exempted himself and the clergy from payment in the new currency.¹⁰² He used funds to build a jail and repair public buildings, but also to purchase land and materials for Governor Samuel Ogle's new house.

1735-1736: THE COURT OF EQUITY AND POLITICAL THEORY

The fight over legislative power extended to a longstanding disagreement over judgeships on equity courts and the appointment of court clerks in Pennsylvania.¹⁰³ The charter had given Penn and his heirs "full power and authority to appoint judges, justices, magistrates and other officers whatsoever"; but the governor, assembly, and board of trade in England could not agree on a court of equity. Penn had guaranteed a jury trial to the colonists, but claiming

⁹⁸ Jackson, *Historical Review*, 42.

⁹⁹ *PG*, March 20, 1735, 1.

¹⁰⁰ See George Webb, *The Office and Authority of a Justice of the Peace* (Williamsburg, VA: William Parks, 1736), 337. The bills would be loaned out at 4 percent interest. A new duty on tobacco would be used to purchase "Bank-Stock" in England, "so as Interest upon Interest may be made as much may be."

¹⁰¹ *An Act for Emitting and Making Current, Ninety Thousand Pounds ... in Bills of Credit*, in *Laws of Maryland, Enacted At a Session of Assembly ... 1732* (Annapolis, MD: 1733), 5.

¹⁰² Franklin wrote, "But the Dues of the Clergy and of the Church, and the Proprietor's Dues, it will not pay."

¹⁰³ Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 30, 33; on the issue of courts in Maryland, see *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, 1727-1729 With Appendix of Statutes, 1714-1726*, *Maryland Archives*, 36:13-18.

prerogative power he used the Board of Property as an equity court to settle disputes over property, claims, and back rents.¹⁰⁴ The assembly replied that the proprietor's right to appoint officers, clerks, and justices violated the separation of powers: "The Justices by and before whom our Causes against him should be tried, are of his own Appointment; by Means whereof, he becomes Judge in his own Cafe, which is against natural Equity."¹⁰⁵ In May 1720, recognizing the need for an equity court and succumbing to Keith's charm, the assembly unanimously resolved (without passing a law) to support his proposal to create a "court of Chancery or Equity" consisting of himself and the council.¹⁰⁶ In the 1722 Judiciary Act it also restructured the judiciary to include a supreme court, appointed by the governor, along with courts of quarter sessions.¹⁰⁷ Franklin had already criticized the governor's power over appointments and officers' fees, and his gazette now challenged the equity court.

In 1735 the New York assembly resolved against Governor William Cosby's faction's use of its chancery court to vacate a land grant. Andrew Bradford's *Mercury* (on the side of the governor) and Franklin's *Gazette* (on the side of the assembly) printed different accounts. Andrew Bradford printed an article arguing that Pennsylvania's chancery court was approved by legislative resolution and therefore different from New York's: chancery courts were necessary for the "Recovery of ... Right" against the "Rigour of the Common Law"; they have their origins in "Antiquity and Dignity" dating to the Saxons; and they secure justice because they are governed by superior men.¹⁰⁸ In other words, "Their Birth, Education, and their high Station set them above ... all Temptations in the Administration of Justice."

In the *Gazette*, "R. Freeman," presumed at the time to be Franklin, argued against Pennsylvania's chancery court.¹⁰⁹ Freeman recognized the need for an equity court but disputed the legal origin of the court as a violation of Penn's second charter. Moreover, it subverted the "great end of all Government": "to prevent the Abuse of Power."¹¹⁰ He challenged the idea that a man's rank or status frees him from temptation. A consideration of human nature shows that "Men don't commonly make use of all the Friends and Interest

¹⁰⁴ See Tully, *Forming American Politics*, 25; on Penn's defense claiming prerogative, Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Jackson, *An Historical Review*, 60–61, see 54.

¹⁰⁶ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2:1334–35, 3:2309–10: affirmative votes required support of the two eldest councilmembers.

¹⁰⁷ William Lloyd, *The Early Courts of Pennsylvania* (Boston, MA: the Boston Book Company, 1910), 92–98.

¹⁰⁸ *AWM* December 18, 1735, 1–2.

¹⁰⁹ "R. Freeman" was assailed in *AWM* as "Mr. F (courting vulgar Applause)" and "religious Mr. F"; on his identity, see Anna DeArmond, *Andrew Bradford* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 97–98 and Lemay, *Life*, 2:226.

¹¹⁰ "R. Freeman," *PG* December 24, 1735, 2.

they have, to get themselves appointed Governors, merely for an Opportunity of doing good to the People they are to govern." To this end, Penn "agreed to lay aside the elective Provincial Council, and to vest the legislative wholly in the Governor and the Representatives of the Freemen of the Province met in General Assembly." Courts of equity, concluded Freeman, must be established "by a law; and both the Proceedings and Costs of that Court so regulated, as that every Man may know how he is to proceed, and what he has to pay." This should extend to "Solicitors, Sheriffs, Lawyers, Clerks, Registers, and all others entitled to Fees for any Services done in that Court."¹¹¹ In February 1736 the Pennsylvania Assembly eliminated the chancery court as "a violation of the Charter of Privileges" and gave regular courts jurisdiction over cases in both equity and law. As a matter of "Right," it determined that a "Court of Equity" must be created by "an Act of Assembly." It was a conflict of interest that the "Supream Magistrate of the Province, who has so much Power, sit in any Court of Judicature, with Persons of his own appointment, to determine private Property."¹¹²

The Pennsylvania Assembly's resolution led to a newspaper war between Bradford and Franklin that included an important exchange in colonial political thought. Writing for the *Mercury*, "A. Truman" argued that "as great Calamities ... have fallen upon the People and Constitution of Britain, from such popular Schemes, than from any Acts of Prerogative."¹¹³ It was followed by Norris Sr.'s anonymous article, presented as an excerpt from French history, that blamed Hamilton and Logan for conspiring to set the proprietor against Governor Gordon and fomenting a border war with Maryland. Norris accused Hamilton of encouraging his "wench" daughter to "leav[e] some of the non-naturals ... under [the governor's] *portico*," where it rotted in the "heat of the Summer sun," to initiate a political feud; the next issue, borrowing from *The Life of Sejanus*, foretold the ambitious Hamilton's grisly demise for his treachery.¹¹⁴ In reply, Franklin enlisted the help of radical republican John Webbe, filling his papers, almost weekly, with natural law arguments, both defending

¹¹¹ "R. Freeman," *PG* December 24, 1735, 3.

¹¹² *Pennsylvania Archives*, Colonial Records, *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, 16 vols. (Harrisburg, PA: 1838-53), 4:42, 43, 45. Such combination of powers impeded "an impartial Administration of Justice."

¹¹³ "A. Truman," *AWM* January 6, 1736, 1-2, February 24, 1736, 1; see DeArmond, *Andrew Bradford*, 98-100.

¹¹⁴ *AWM* February 24, 1736; *AWM* March 2, 1-2, 1736, loosely follows Pierre Matthieu, *The Powerfull favorite: or the life of Aelius Sejanus* (Paris, 1628): 115-17, 111-14, 120-38, with much original content; *AWM* June 10, 1736 unites the characters of d'Ancre and Sejanus, borrowed from *Fog's Journal*, December 27, 1735, no. 373.

Hamilton and providing a theoretical basis for just forms of government.¹¹⁵ Webbe was a planter, lawyer, and conveyancer from Kent County, who practiced in both Maryland and Pennsylvania. His Philadelphia office was on the northeast corner of Fourth and Chestnut, one block from Franklin's printing office.

Writing as "Z," Webbe likened government to architecture; its foundation was the equality principle, from which proceeded "the common rights of Mankind": "Freedom is the Birth-right of every Man. We are all born naturally equal."¹¹⁶ He appealed to the authority of reason or the "*Laws of God and Nature*" as opposed to divine right of kings.¹¹⁷ An original compact or government was made by consent between the people themselves. Man only "relinquishes part of his natural Liberty" in a social contract that in return provides "Protection from Injuries, Security of Property, mutual Defence, & etc.," else "the Compact is void."¹¹⁸ In Z's argument for popular sovereignty the people are "infallible," so long as they "remain in their proper Sphere, unbyassed by Faction, nor deluded by the Tricks of designing Men."¹¹⁹ The executive promises to enforce the law and rules for the "publick Good," but "the Parliament [by majority rule] are the only Judges whether those Conditions are performed."¹²⁰ With absolute power, it made kings like Charles I and II, limited the king's veto and judicial appointment powers, interpreted all law, and was unconstrained by prior parliaments: "The power of Parliament is so great, that ... they could do anything but turn a Man into a Woman."¹²¹ The British constitution was best: it retained the advantages of chaotic Athenian democracy—which was better than French tyranny—without its inconveniences. Z tied political liberty to a people's moral character. If the executive "superstructure" becomes too strong or large, then the people lose virtue and become a mob.¹²² Freedom, he argued, educated citizens in virtue; it required reason, sensibility, and sociability.

Writing in the *Mercury*, "Anti-Z" and "Zoilo-mastix" responded that Z (and Franklin) had forwarded an impious, "*loose Republican Scheme*" that tended to revolution.¹²³ Anti-Z,

¹¹⁵ See Lemay, *Life*, 2:154–63, for attributions on the first hostile exchange between the two in 1732, which began when the elitist Webbe mocked American country lawyers and deists, such as Hamilton and Franklin.

¹¹⁶ "Z," *PG*, April 1, 1736, 1; *PG*, April 15, 1736, 3; *PG* April 22, 1736, 3.

¹¹⁷ "Z," *PG* April 1, 1736, 1; April 15, 1736, 3: "Principles ... agreeable to Reason and the eternal Nature of Things."

¹¹⁸ "Z," *PG* April 15, 1736, 3.

¹¹⁹ "Z," *PG* April 1, 1736, 1.

¹²⁰ "Z," *PG* April 15, 1736, 3.

¹²¹ "Z," cites Burleigh, *PG* April 15, 1736, 4.

¹²² "Z," *PG* April 22, 1736, 3.

¹²³ *AWM* April 8, 1736, 1; May 13, 1736; on attacks on Franklin, *PG* June 3, 1736, 1.

THE CRUCIAL DECADE: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S POLITICAL THEORY IN THE 1730s

comparing abstract theory to practice, argued government was founded on “*tried and approved Customs*”: the compact was a charter the Crown gave to the proprietors and from whence proceeded colonial privileges.¹²⁴ Anti-Z, finding Charles II an outlier, argued the best regime was a mixed regime, a “Ballance betwixt the Prerogatives of Governors and the Liberties of the People.”¹²⁵ This “*Composite*” or “happy Mixture” reflected the blend of those of “inferior rank” and the “*necessary Prerogatives* of their Superiors.” The only thing that distinguished the American colonists from a Roman mob was inherent inequality: a class of elites has a moral sense, whereas the vulgar are suspicious, without sense or goodwill. Anti-Z argued that if a mob had become too powerful, it was because it had overrun the checks upon it. He accused Z of being vulgar himself, of possessing neither the intellect nor the virtue to manage the people. As another author in the *Mercury* pointed out, if Parliament were supreme, then all its laws must be just and Z’s disagreement with it made him a traitor.¹²⁶

Hamilton was reelected Speaker in 1736, and he and William Allen rewarded Franklin with the assembly clerkship. Franklin became one of the foremost legislative experts in the province, to the point that he would later direct the assembly’s proceedings and write its bills and replies to the governor. The next year he was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia, a position that would allow him to retire from printing. Governor Gordon died in August 1736, and James Logan, president of the council, became acting governor until August 1738.

“A.B.” WRITES “Dear NED”: CRITIQUING MARYLAND’S PROPRIETARY GOVERNMENT

Under Logan, defense became the key issue in the violent border dispute with Maryland in 1737. In 1734 (the same year Franklin proposed a militia) Baltimore petitioned the king to obtain the three lower counties. Maryland loyalist Thomas Cresap settled territory west of the Susquehanna, where he demanded that German settlers abide by Maryland surveys. In response, Thomas Penn ordered the issue of land warrants to settlers in the same territory. Until 1738, “reports from the frontier were filled with news of destroyed livestock, harassed residents and assaults in the name of arrests.”¹²⁷ German settlers who had sworn allegiance to Maryland now offered it to the Pennsylvania council. In September 1736 Maryland governor

¹²⁴ “ANTIZ,” *AWM* April 8, 1736, 1; “ANTIZ,” *AWM* April 22, 1736, 2-3.

¹²⁵ “ANTIZ,” *AWM* April 8, 1736, 1.

¹²⁶ “*To Mr. Z.*,” *AWM* June 17, 1736, 1.

¹²⁷ Tully, “Proprietary Affairs in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1726-1739,” 99.

Samuel Ogle deployed 300 militia to the contested border, where they were stopped by a Pennsylvania sheriff with 150 volunteers at Wright's Ferry.¹²⁸ In response Logan funded the Pennsylvania militia and magistrates to execute justice and secure the region.¹²⁹

During the border crisis, Franklin and Logan discussed the "State of Nature"; Logan later concluded, "Ever since I have had the power of thinking, I have clearly seen that government without arms is an inconsistency."¹³⁰ The state of nature referred to problems humans faced when living together without a properly functioning government. Posing as a Pennsylvania pacifist, in September 1737 Franklin defended Logan and Hamilton by ironically protesting against the Pennsylvania Assembly for helping those countrymen who had been:

imprison'd, fin'd, &c. by the Government of Maryland. Now what Business had we with those Inhabitants? None surely; unless we consider them as they are Fellow-Countrymen and Members of the same Common-Wealth, united together with us as Parts of the same Body; which Way of Thinking is absolutely wrong, for we ought to look on one another ONLY as TENANTS to the Proprietor and leave it to him to take Care of us or neglect us—as *he pleases*.¹³¹

The piece condemned the proprietary view of free citizens as tenants and savaged Isaac Norris, Jr., who attacked Franklin in the *Mercury* and opposed his reappointment as clerk.¹³²

Norris's elitist balance of power theory grounded government on a tension between the one, few, and many. Franklin published lengthy articles that provided a historical account of prerogative power, which he tied to the proprietary form in Maryland.¹³³ While the ancient Saxons' distribution of goods and land according to merit on the battlefield originated the modern concept of right as attached to property, the English Constitution retained some defects, and government must "always be conformable to the circumstances." Thus William Penn, denied "liberty of conscience" at home, established a new government, a "MUTUAL COMPACT" based on "the principles of reason and equity."¹³⁴ To guard against despotism, "The *WHOLE* legislative power was lodged, where it is always safest lodged, in the hands of

¹²⁸ Doutrich, "Cresap's War," 96.

¹²⁹ Franklin printed Logan's proclamation, *PG* September 23, 1736; see Lemay, *Life*, 2:325.

¹³⁰ Franklin, *Papers*, 2:185; 3:219.

¹³¹ "To the Freemen of Pennsylvania," *PG* September 29, 1737, 3-4; on authorship see Lemay, *Life*, 2:325, 561.

¹³² Lemay, *Life*, 2:327; Norris, "Verses," *AWM* October 20, 1737; on opposition to Franklin, *Autobiography*, 171.

¹³³ "X," *PG* November 17, 24, December 1, 8, 1737, praised Hamilton and condemned Bradford.

¹³⁴ Lemay, *Canon*, 92-93, disagrees with Aldridge that Franklin may have written the "important essay" on government in *PG* March 30, 1738, 1-2.

the People; and the laws They enacted were to be executed ... by Magistrates of their own chusing." Thus, "Those amongst us, who ... cry up the necessity of reducing the form of this government to the *British Model*" were in error. Pennsylvania's freedom of conscience and opinion, even in "jarring parties," had trebled the province's population, promoting England's interest, while its neighbor "*M[arylan]d*, harrassed by a petty-Tyranny and an ignorant vicious Clergy, daily decrease in their numbers."

The 1738-1739 *Gazette* featured a series of four letters, in five articles, from "A.B." to "Dear NED."¹³⁵ Given quite some space (the first was 2,202 words) they were evidently political satire, but scholars have been uncertain of their authorship and intention. In the satire, the operation of government is likened to a "stupendous Machine," put in motion by the "*Grand Architect*," consisting of three wheels, a "grand maître," a "petit maître," and a third "inconstant wheel." The motion of the machine's second and third wheels is an illusion. There is only the appearance of free government, when in fact all motion is caused by the prerogative power concentrated in the first wheel. Francis Davy first attributed the "A.B." letters to Franklin. He identified the grand maître as the proprietor, the "Petit Maitre" as the governor, and the machine as the Pennsylvania assembly. Lemay initially agreed, noting the author was a clever satirist influenced by Swift. But he changed his mind after considering that the new lieutenant Governor George Thomas did not arrive until June 1, 1738, and that Franklin's patrons, James Logan and Andrew Hamilton, would be, respectively, acting governor and Speaker. Lemay consulted Tully, who concluded that the "Grand Maitre" was James Logan, the "Petit Maitre" was Andrew Hamilton, and the inconstant wheel was "Jeremiah Langhorne."¹³⁶ Franklin, they concluded, would not have satirized his own patrons.

The solution is that the A.B. letters are a satire of *Maryland's* proprietary government under Charles Calvert, 5th Baron Baltimore, comparing his "TENANTS" to the freemen of Pennsylvania. The first letter, dated March 1, 1737 and printed May 4, 1738, continues Franklin's 1737 political remarks, written during Cresap's War and his subsequent arrest for murder.¹³⁷ It followed the March 19, 1738 depositions of Cresap and Charles Higginbotham,

¹³⁵ *PG* May 4, July 6, October 12, 1738, March 29, April 5, 1739 (hereafter abbreviated A, B, C, D, and E).

¹³⁶ Francis Davy, "Benjamin Franklin, Satirist," Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 1958), 161, 54; Lemay, *Canon*, 93-94; Tully, it seems, looked to the pamphlet *The Triumvirate of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1725), which accused those same three of defrauding the proprietor. DeArmond, *Andrew Bradford*, 112, agreed.

¹³⁷ See *PG* February 3, 1737; Paul Doutrich, "Cresap's War: Expansion and Conflict in the Susquehanna Valley," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter *PMHB*), 53, no. 2 (April 1986): 89-104; Charles

and preceded the June 30 “Depositions on Maryland’s outrages” in Pennsylvania territory, and an article on Baltimore’s challenge to the Penns’ claim to the Lower counties.¹³⁸ The second A.B. letter confirms the satire is of Maryland’s government and also identifies each of the wheels; the same day that it appeared, the *Mercury* printed the “*Speech of His Excellency, Samuel Ogle Esq; to the Upper and Lower Houses of Assembly, of the Province of Maryland,*” identifying the “Grand Maitre” as Ogle, the “stupendous Machine” as the Maryland Assembly, the “petit maître” as the president of the Council, Colonel Richard Tilghman II, and the “inconstant Wheel” as Speaker of the House, Daniel Dulany, Sr.

The “A.B.” letters were likely written by Franklin and John Webbe. Comparing A.B.’s with Webbe’s writings, we find thematic similarity in the mockery of country lawyers; fixation on “Rules of *Grammar*”; comments on future historians looking back on contemporary events; a penchant for name-dropping.¹³⁹ Stylistically, Webbe tended to write treatises, but several times he attempted satire.¹⁴⁰ We find similar analogies to vegetation and weeds, “secret Springs” and “Seeds,” and scatological references to body and soul—the “upper and lower Air-Pipes”—that equate speaking with flatulence.¹⁴¹ Webbe’s job as a conveyancer required his experience at court and gave him a knowledge of proprietary proclamations, resurveys, surplusage, and legal precedent.¹⁴² The political theory regarding Maryland government is identical: the comparison of government to “Architecture”; the architect’s neglect of ancient wisdom; the aspiration of American planters to aristocracy; prerogative power as a structural problem in Maryland’s government; concealment of the true operations of government; unchecked prerogative power encroaching on all others, creating despotism.¹⁴³

Desmond Dutrizac, “Local Identity and Authority in a Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s,” *PMHB*, 115, no. 1 (January 1991): 35–61.

¹³⁸ *Pennsylvania Archives*, First Series, ed. Samuel Hazard, 12 vols. (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1852–56), 1:535ff., 555; on Baltimore’s challenge, *PG* August 17, 1738.

¹³⁹ On country lawyers and drinking at court, D2, “Z.Z.,” *AWM* February 8, 1732; on Westminster Hall, A2, C1, *The American Magazine; or, A Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies* (Philadelphia, 1740/1) (hereafter *AM*), 29; on derision of Billingsgate lawyers, *AWM* May 11, 1732, *PG* April 29, 1736; on grammar, A1, B1, D2, *AWM* May 11, 1732, *PG* April 8 and 29, May 27, 1736, *AM* 19; on historians, B1, B2, *AWM* November 6, 1740.

¹⁴⁰ Webbe, *AWM*, February 8, 1732; *PG*, May 6, 1736; on satire in colonial Maryland, see Frank Shivers, *Maryland Wits and Baltimore Bards: A Literary History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), ch. 2.

¹⁴¹ On vegetation, A1, B1, compare with Webbe, *AWM*, February 8, 1732 (“more offensive Weed,” “Weedlike Lawyers” who must be “lopp’d off”), *AM* 36 (“popular Root”); on Springs, A1 (“the principal Springs and Wheels were well cleaned and greased”), B1, *AWM*, March 30, 1732; on scatological humor, B1, *AWM* April 27, 1732; Webbe was criticized (*AWM* June 3, 1736) for using the words “Whores, Bawds ... Pimps” (*PG* April 29, 1736).

¹⁴² See C1–2, D2; *AWM* February 8, 1732.

¹⁴³ On government and architecture, A.B. writes of the “Grand Architect” (D1); compare with Webbe, *PG*, April 1, 1736, *Papers*, 2:267, *AM* 36–37; on rejection of ancient wisdom, A1, *AWM* March 30, 1732; *PG* April 22, 1736; on

Yet several clues, outside of his decision to print and prominently feature them, link the articles to Franklin. The letters seem to be beyond Webbe's skill, suggesting Franklin's own hand, for he had a history of such collaborations.¹⁴⁴ As Verner Crane pointed out, Franklin not only frequently used the pseudonym A.B., he used it when referring to Pennsylvania-Maryland relations.¹⁴⁵ The satire, along with the phraseology, is reminiscent of Franklin's other writings.¹⁴⁶ He frequently used the analogy of a machine with springs to describe government, but more relevantly compared it to the motions of wheels.¹⁴⁷ In 1764 he gave the same description of Pennsylvania's proprietary government:

There seems to remain then but one Remedy for our Evils ... which had been tried with Success by other Provinces; I mean that of an immediate ROYAL GOVERNMENT, without the Intervention of Proprietary Powers, which, like unnecessary Springs and Movements in a Machine, are so apt to produce Disorder.¹⁴⁸

A.B. cited some of Franklin's favorite authors—Butler, Swift, Defoe. *Hudibras* appeared for sale that month in the *Gazette*. Franklin, more so than Webbe, used A.B.'s scatological humor, even sexual suggestion, as in such phrases as “without a Rag to your Ar[s]es”; comparing the Council to a hotbed of “warm Dung”; “those of a middle Character are as rare as Hermaphrodites”; the description of how the grand maître and petit maître “rushed

aristocracy, A1, *AM* 37; on prerogative power used to justify gubernatorial appointments and officers' fees, A1, A2, *AM* 39–41, 61; on despotism and “Arbitrary Power”, D1, *AM* 39–41; on “PREROGATIVE” power, or rule by “WILL AND PLEASURE,” A1, A2, B1, B2 C1, E2, *AM* 29, 55, *PG*, April 1, 1736; on “Appearance” of sharing power with the council A1, *AM* 41; on being judge in one's own case, C2, *AM* 44–45.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin wrote the “Busy-Body” with Joseph Breintnall, 1:114, helped in “The Colonists' Advocate,” contributed to George Whately's *Principles of Trade*, and wrote new liturgies with Lord Le Despencer and David Williams.

¹⁴⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 8:162n4, 162n5.

¹⁴⁶ See these examples, with more in footnotes below. A1: “The Difference in opinion arises no doubt from different Circumstances,” compare with Franklin, *Papers*, 2:83: “As Men [possess] ... different Constitutions, Capacities, Genius's ... a Difference in Opinion is inevitable”; D1: “founded in this *unchangeable* Maxim, that *the greatest Glory of a Man, is to acknowledge himself in an Error*”, *Writings*, 253: “Readiness to give up a *loved Opinion*...is as a great a Glory ... as we are here capable of attaining”; A1: “transplanted into this warmer Clime,” *Papers*, 1:161: “when transported to a Foreign Clime”; D1: “a Self-Denial too powerful for human Nature,” 2:19, *Autobiography*, 148; C2: “tend to the universal Improvement of Mankind,” *Papers*, 2:238: “Improvements” for the “Benefit of Mankind.”

¹⁴⁷ See Franklin, *Papers*, 1:62–63, on God's government: “an ingenious Artificer” framed a “Machine or Clock, and put its many intricate Wheels and Powers in ... Dependence on one another,” yet included “other Wheels endu'd with an independent Self-Motion”; 5:443: when “public measures are generally grievous or even distasteful to the people, the wheels of Government must move more heavily”; Franklin to Louis-Guillaume Le Veillard, September 5, 1789, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Albert Henry Smyth, 10 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905–7), 10:35, described the new Constitution as a “Machine”; Franklin to Charles Carroll, May 25, 1789, *Writings* (Smyth), 10:7 calls the American government a “grand machine,” whose “effect” is the nation's happiness; Franklin likely included the description of Governor Keith in *Historical Review*, 73: “one Master-Spring kept the whole Machine of Government, for a considerable Period of Time, in a more consistent Motion than it had ever known before.”

¹⁴⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 11:162; on the “Seeds” of “Dissolution” inherent in proprietary government, see 11:159.

into each others arms with *bare Breasts*, and by a well timed Motion of bodily *see-saw*, held forth a Type of the Regularity of their Sorrows, and in *sympathetick* Sighs and Groans.”¹⁴⁹ A.B.’s characters show a complexity more akin to Franklin’s writing, using different voices for the grand and petit maîtres—Ogle a vulgar tyrant, and Tilghman his abject sophister.

Franklin also had personal motives for collaborating on the letters. As the clerk, he knew that his association with a lengthy political satire would *improve* his popularity among those who despised Baltimore and Ogle. As a defender of both Logan and Hamilton, it rebutted Norris’s charge that they were to blame for the border war.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Franklin aspired to publish a general magazine that would include similar satires and require the help of correspondents. The composition of the letters is likely Franklin’s, while the political commentary in the third and fourth letters included Webbe’s vantage as a Maryland lawyer and conveyancer. Franklin used the A.B. letters to continue his argument against the appointment of officers and chancery judges in the 1735–1736 *Gazette* and 1737 satire of Maryland settlers as “*TENANTS*.” While Franklin had distinguished between free Englishmen and Irish tenants starving under “Tyranny,” here he warned Pennsylvanians of the unimpeded prerogative of Maryland’s governors under its proprietary form.

The significance of the A.B. letters is their practical application of republican principles. They employ Franklin’s argument of right—in settling the land by their own expense, the colonists had earned additional liberties.¹⁵¹ They also present a constitutional argument: While the Crown’s prerogative power was necessary for preservation, Baltimore used it to threaten colonial rights. Maryland’s separation of powers, for example, in its chancery court, failed to constrain the proprietor, proving to be mere parchment barriers. Rather, the solution lies in a strong legislative power like Pennsylvania’s assembly, which secured liberties by rule of law and control over finances and judicial appointments. In a satire of Maryland’s government, A.B. showed the legal mechanisms by which rights were violated and exposed the effects of the belief in superior rank by which its gentlemen claimed the right to rule.

Franklin’s own preface, which introduces the A.B. letters and specifies its political nature, references three writers of importance to Franklin: Mandeville, Swift, and Shaftesbury,

¹⁴⁹ B1; on Franklin’s vulgarity, Lemay, *Life*, 1:181; *Papers*, 1:127: “rake into the Dunghill Lives of vicious Men.”

¹⁵⁰ *AWM* February 24, 1736; on authorship of this satire, see DeArmond, *Andrew Bradford*, 100.

¹⁵¹ Franklin, *Papers*, 3:260: “additional title”; 5:450; 6:147: “Adventurers” received land on “Terms on which they were to hazard their Lives”; 6:299: “British Subjects, by removing to America ... at the Hazard of their Lives and Fortunes ... do not thereby lose their native Rights” but receive “*additional* Liberties”; 8:41; 13:22; 14:110–11; 17:333–34.

whose “*penetrating Virtuoso*es” are needed to peer into the satire, reminiscent of the “*chimerical Realms of Mandeville or Gulliver*.”¹⁵² Shaftesbury had questioned whether Mandeville’s realm of pure, private interest, here compared to Maryland’s proprietary government, could achieve the public good. A.B. answers by contrasting Pennsylvania’s protection of “Civil Liberty,” “Religious Liberty,” “Security of ... Property,” and “Trade” with the problems of Maryland: lack of a paper currency for legal tender; exorbitant and numerous officers and fees; government filled by “Discontents and Timservers,” and unequal treatment according to “Ranks and Degrees of Men.”¹⁵³

Most importantly, Maryland’s political problems may be traced to a *structural* flaw in the design: prerogative power, stunted in Britain after the Glorious Revolution, had taken root.

What need I mention other Cause than prerogative, a Vegetable stunted in its native Soil, and about a half Century ago, transplanted into this warmer Clime, hath here brought forth the truly *Golden* Fruit, here cherished by the warm Dung and Hotbed of COUNCIL OF STATE, it buds forth the blooming WE, and grows luxuriant with the spreading Branches of OUR WILL AND PLEASURE.

In 1728, Maryland’s “inconstant wheel,” Speaker Dulany, wrote, in response to Baltimore’s veto of a bill that would have placed all Marylanders under full English statute law, a treatise defending the natural rights of the freeborn citizens of Maryland. Yet he later accepted Baltimore’s appointments to the Council and the lucrative posts of Receiver General, Judge of Admiralty, and Commissary General.¹⁵⁴ The busyness of the Council and the Speaker only conceals that all motion is the governor’s, under instruction from the proprietor, whose “real Motion ... is powerfully attractive of Gold and Silver.” Baltimore, the “*Grand Architect*,” used prerogative power to create the machine and “swell” the exchequer.¹⁵⁵

Claiming prerogative power, Baltimore by proclamation outside of the legislature established officers to assess and collect quitrents, and their payment in officers’ fees. Thus, the powers of government were accumulated into the same set of hands, with officers appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the governor.¹⁵⁶ A.B. writes:

¹⁵² Franklin, *Papers*, 2:381, appeals to “Virtuosi or ingenious Men.”

¹⁵³ A1; on different treatment according to “Rank,” see Franklin, *Papers*, 5:48–49.

¹⁵⁴ Dulany, *The Right of the Inhabitants of Maryland, to the Benefit of the English Laws* (Annapolis, 1728); A2.

¹⁵⁵ A2; D1: the proprietor has “secur’d with Privacy” the “Keys of the *Treasury*.”

¹⁵⁶ See Charles Barker, “Property Rights in the Provincial System of Maryland: Proprietary Policy,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 2, no. 1 (February 1936): 54–55.

Imagine to your self that in *Westminster Hall* you saw my *Lord Chancellor* descending from his Bench to plead as an Advocate at the Bar of the *King's Bench*; and then the *Lord Chief Justice* of that Court ... becoming an Advocate in the Court of *Chancery*. Imagine farther, that you saw them both descending from their high Courts, and acting as Lawyers and *Pettyfoggers* before *petty Justices of a Quarter Sessions of the Peace*.¹⁵⁷

Ogle served as both governor and chancellor. A.B. writes of Dulany: “[S]uppose you should see the *Register of Chancery*, whose profits and fees grow due as well from the Number as the Length of Proceedings, taking upon himself to act as *Attorney & Lawyer*, or *Counsellor*, in that Court ... & when commenced, lengthening out Bills, Answers, Copies, Orders, Decrees, Injunctions, and a thousand other Particulars.”¹⁵⁸ One must have a rosy view of these officers indeed, “imagin[ing] the least Avarice or Corruption in him, who hath no ... Pride or Foppery to gratify, no luxurious or costly Tables to furnish at the Expense of the Publick, and out of the Labour and Sweat of the Poor and Laborious.”¹⁵⁹

No contemporary reader could have mistaken the target of A.B.’s second letter. The same day the *Mercury* printed the Maryland proceedings—the three speeches by Ogle, Tilghman, and the Speaker—the *Gazette* printed only Tilghman’s speech within A.B.’s remarks. The letter was a hatchet piece, written in a style Franklin liked to use—long quotations interspersed with witty, acerbic commentary. Before the speech, A.B. introduces Tilghman as a “*Vox et pretera nihil*,” who spent “Six long hours” in the “Hot-Bed of Council of State” to sweat out his popular sentiments and infuse his soul with excrementitious vapors of prerogative power. In his speech, Tilghman thanks Baltimore for the King’s recent order to stop violence on the border with the “Neighbouring Government” of Pennsylvania, as well as for his “Benevolence towards his Tenants.” Tilghman accuses the Penns, and explicitly Logan, of starting the border war by financing the defense of Pennsylvania settlers, whom he describes as conjuring squatters. A.B. mocks Tilghman’s incoherent speech, which casts aspersions upon Pennsylvania only “to hide [Maryland’s] own Poverty and Rags.”

¹⁵⁷ A2; Franklin, *Papers*, 20:393, includes “pettyfogging Lawyers” adding, “Attorneys Clerks and Newgate Solicitors will do for *Chief Justices*, especially if they hold their Places *during your Pleasure*.”

¹⁵⁸ In August 1733, Baltimore appointed members of the Council, including Tilghman and Benjamin Tasker, justices of the peace; Tasker held offices of president of the council, receiver general, and judge of the prerogative court.

¹⁵⁹ A2; see Franklin, *Papers*, 2:334: “*You drudge, and sweat, and labour here, Old Boy, But we the Fruit of your hard Toil enjoy*”; 16:209: “Merchants ... make great estates by American folly.... [W]ares for *exportation to the Colonies*, maintain ... every one with his country-house and equipage, where they live like Princes on the sweat of our brows.”

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In the third letter, A.B. writes that he must describe the practical effects of prerogative power, lest his satire be like painting the notion of “Colours upon the Imagination of a Man born blind.”¹⁶⁰ He promises “to give full Scope and play to [his] Inclination and Talent for *Panegyrick*” to show the tenant-like status of Marylanders in the “*High Court of Justice*.”¹⁶¹ By this method the reader may see that Maryland’s “Refinements of *Equity*” and “Improvements in the *Law*” are mere words that disguise how its government actually works.

To increase the number of taxable lands, Baltimore extended the use of surveys from special warrants to include common warrants also. Surplus land, that occupied by landholders beyond the amount stipulated in the original grant, had long irritated the proprietors. But Maryland’s first Land Law of 1699 had limited the proprietary power over surplus land arising from error and fraud in the early surveys by declaring that boundaries should be respected if long established. The proprietor objected he was denied his rightful ownership of escheat, vacant, and surplus land, as well as back-taxes on improved lands.¹⁶² In 1725, Baltimore proclaimed that if tenants were not even on their payments, he would “recall his former acts of favour as to the land warrants granted as aforesaid and the certificates of resurvey made thereon.”¹⁶³ To encourage discovery of fraud against the proprietor, he proclaimed in Annapolis on June 14, 1733 that enterprising tenants may take out special warrants to resurvey others’ lands; if surplus was found, they might sue for rights. Those who failed to take out a patent within two years from the date of the warrant would “be subjected to the loss of their rights, in favour of the first discoverer.”¹⁶⁴ Warrants based on the 1733 proclamation were issued between 1735 and 1738 and created a great deal of confusion.¹⁶⁵

A.B. inserts a proclamation, parodying Baltimore’s own, to show how the proprietary interest was opposed to the common good—by executive proclamation, private property was appropriated by a ruling class operating under the guise of law. The lord of the manor declares that the “Tenants,” who settled Maryland at their own expense, and “became Adventurers into this Our Manor at the great Peril of their Lives and Fortunes, were

¹⁶⁰ C1; compare Franklin, *Papers*, 32:364: “like calling upon a blind Man to judge of Colours.”

¹⁶¹ C1; Franklin, *Papers*, 1:118, mocks half instead of complete satire: “for there is no Satyr [that a “pretty Gentleman”] Dreads half so much as an Attempt towards a Panegyrick”; A.B., B1, calls Tilghman a “pretty Gentleman.”

¹⁶² See John Kilty, *The Land-holder’s Assistant* (Baltimore: G. Dobbin and Murphy, 1808), 189.

¹⁶³ Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 191–2; in January 1730 Tasker was the first to take a warrant to resurvey land, receiving it as payment.

¹⁶⁴ Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 194.

¹⁶⁵ Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 197, 135. The first warrant was issued in January 1735 and the last on July 12, 1738.

notwithstanding a most unrighteous Generation, and did most wickedly defraud US of great Part of OUR Lands.”¹⁶⁶ The lord declares on escheats that the descendants, despite the “express Words of their Leases, and Antientness of their Titles, and the Length of their Possessions,” wrongfully dare to defend their rightful ownership. Overturning the law that secures the landholder, the proprietor proclaims that, like the king, he is exempt from any statute of limitations: “It is Our Will and Pleasure, that all Our said Tenants” will surrender their old leases to “Our own Officers,” who will determine the quantities of land in the leases, payment, interest, time, and arrears of rent, and who may make new leases of the detained land under new conditions. Any litigation over the terms of a lease will be decided not by an impartial jury, but rather by the “*Steward of Our said Manor*, whom for this Purpose *We* have appointed *Our Judge in Our High Court of Justice*, there to be made void and of none effect.” The “Discoverers” of such detained lands, A.B. suggests, are also the officers, who grant themselves the same by decree in the high court of justice.¹⁶⁷

Maryland’s system of appointing administrators and judges to enforce proprietary orders incentivized corruption. Suppose, writes A.B., “the Steward of this Manor to be a Person of undoubted Honour and Integrity,” and endowed with all the virtues, “and a greater Hero in the Atchievements of Politicks, than ever Don Quixote was, in those of Arms and Chivalry.”¹⁶⁸ Given such power, such a one could not resist acting for the “Benefit of his *Constituent*, always remembring by whose Bounty he is paid, and how soon and sudden, and by whose Authority his *Stewardship* may be ended.” While the legislature, and rule of law, is meant to check the power of government officials, the proprietary “System of *Jurisprudence*” is without “Restraint of any Laws, but those of his own Conscience.” The proprietor that appoints judges at his own pleasure becomes the judge in his own case.

In the final letter of April 5, 1739, A.B. concludes with a Hogarthian satire, using three proceedings from a “High Court of Justice” “not many months ago” to demonstrate the effects of Baltimore’s 1733 proclamation.¹⁶⁹ Entering the courtroom, he finds a table littered

¹⁶⁶ C1; for Baltimore’s proclamation, see Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 200–201.

¹⁶⁷ C2; on the power of “chancellor and judge” to “determine and direct” rent, see Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 193.

¹⁶⁸ Franklin had recently “Imported” Don Quixote (2:206n6), sending two copies to John Ladd, June 12, 1738, 2:206.

¹⁶⁹ E1; Kilty, *Land-holder’s Assistant*, 200; this proclamation negated the clause “*more or less*,” which was commonly inserted into the original grants or surveys, and was said to deprive the proprietor of “great quantities of land.”

with “Bottles and Glasses”—judges tipping as they dispense justice.¹⁷⁰ We may, passing over the humorous and legal points of the satire, concisely summarize: in the first case of surplus, Baltimore’s proclamation is held as law, denouncing as fraudulent and overturning an ancient lease; in the second, the proprietor is exempted from his own proclamation, denying his promised restitution in a case where holdings are surveyed as less than in the lease; in the third, a man possessing two farms, one with surplus land, the second with less stated on the lease—exactly the same amounts—is both stripped of surplus *and* denied restitution. To accomplish this, the lawyer invents legal distinctions, and the judge acts out deliberation, first on one side, then on the next, until Tilghman, who happened to be in court that day, stood up slowly and solemnly, and hemming three times, reminded the court of their duty, indeed their “Conviction,” to trust all to the proprietor’s prerogative power.¹⁷¹

A.B. stresses the difficulty of change, given the structure of Maryland’s proprietary machine, which leads to systematic corruption: after the “*Machines* [are] shattered to Pieces,” “just the same [are] erected in their Stead, to the everlasting Reputation of the *Grand Architect*.” The contention between the Upper and Lower Houses, which ended in prorogation of the Assembly, did not solve the problem.¹⁷² While the 1738 Assembly had many new members, all government officers were appointed by the proprietor. Representatives who went to Assembly, suggested A.B., were coopted by offers of government office or found their lawmaking powers undone by proprietary proclamations.

A.B. begins by comparing the governments of Pennsylvania and Maryland; he concludes that the “inevitabl[e]” result of Maryland’s proprietorship is an inability to solve foreign and domestic problems: “the Improvements of our Lands; the encrease of our People, the flourishing of all Arts and Sciences amongst us, and more especially of *Political Learning*, so necessary to preserve us, from the attacks of our *Foreign Enemies*, whether of the *French* and *Indians* on the one side, or the *Pirates* ... on the other.” Instead of protecting the citizens’ property, Baltimore funded military excursions into Pennsylvania, commissioned brigands as officers, and unjustly took “Prisoners of War.” Rule by prerogative led to the breakdown

¹⁷⁰ D2; A.B.’s first case may be a burlesque of *Dulany v. Jennings*, argued in Court of Chancery, February 1738, with Governor/Chancellor Ogle presiding, argued by Attorney-General Dulany and Edmund Jennings, Secretary of the Province and member of Council; or, as the re-quoting of Tilghman’s speech suggests, the entire account is fictional.

¹⁷¹ Compare A.B., D2, on prerogative claims to power over the dead, to Franklin, *Papers*, 20:395; A.B. compares the judge to Plautus’s Gripus—Franklin’s source in “Silence Dogood,” No. 11, 1:37, hitherto “not found,” is Plautus, *Cistellariae*, Act II, Sc.1, Ln.22; Tilghman’s “speech” is excerpted from his prior address to Ogle.

¹⁷² *Archives of Maryland*, 40:vii–iii.

of government. In the May 1739 session, despite the looming war with Spain, the Lower House refused to continue, as requested by the Council and governor, a bill to raise arms and ammunition that was set to expire. Seizing on a political opportunity, it passed a bill, rejected by the Council, that fixed officers' fees, and sent Ogle a list of grievances along with an address to the King, to be presented if the proprietor did not give satisfaction.¹⁷³

THE YEARLY VERSES of the PRINTER'S Lad (1739–1740)

The A.B. letters appeared during a time of external threat from Maryland and political “unanimity” in Pennsylvania, but Thomas Penn failed to seize the moment for leadership, and he soured relations after the resolution of the border dispute.¹⁷⁴ While the assembly pushed for another emission of paper currency, Penn called in back rents, raised quitrents, and increased land prices. He refused to pay for Indian presents and negotiated the notorious 1737 Walking Treaty. He instructed the new Governor George Thomas to veto any bills that allowed payment in paper currency instead of sterling or its equivalent. The resolution, made in the first ever recorded vote, was that the proprietors would allow the emission and payment in paper currency in return for an allowance of £11,110.¹⁷⁵ Franklin praised the act as beneficial to the common man,¹⁷⁶ but in November 1738 (just months after the last A.B. letter) the proprietors issued a proclamation that all who possessed warrants, surveys, or bare improvement rights must pay arrears by March 1, 1739 or face legal proceedings and eviction. Those who had followed the prior informal proceedings were denied titles. It angered those in the country: some even attempted to destroy the land office records. Pennsylvania's proprietary form had begun to resemble that in Maryland. Penn's tension with the assembly spilled over into the issue of defense, which reemerged with Britain's declaration of war on Spain on October 19, 1739. Hamilton stepped down as Speaker that year; he was replaced by moderate Quaker John Kinsey. By order of Penn and ultimately the king, Governor Thomas needed to raise an army for defense, but the assembly refused to consider the petition, even as Spanish privateers threatened colonial shipping.

¹⁷³ The first ever division votes were recorded; for grievances, see *Archives of Maryland*, 40:xii.

¹⁷⁴ Tully, “Proprietary Affairs in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1726–1739”; on Penn's failure, 100–102.

¹⁷⁵ See Lemay, *Life*, 2:332, Tully, “Proprietary Affairs in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1726–1739,” 103–105.

¹⁷⁶ *PG* September 17, 1738, 3.

Insecure property and war with Spain informed the *Gazette's* 1739 "Yearly Verses."¹⁷⁷ In common practice, the post-boys would send out an annual work of poetry, the better quality of which would encourage a healthy tip. Joseph Brientnall had written the verses before, but in 1741 we find he is too "fatigued with business" to do so. Hence Joseph Rose, son of Aquila Rose and apprenticed to Franklin in 1730, and lead apprentice of the print-shop in 1741, wrote to Jacob Taylor to procure them.¹⁷⁸ It is likely this letter evinced a problem from the previous year, and that it was "MASTER" Franklin, himself an able poet, who had written verses for 1739–1740 but declined to do it the next year. A comparison of the three yearly verses shows three different writing styles, suggesting three different authors: Brientnall, Franklin, and the author of 1740–1741. Brientnall, whose 1738–1739 "The spreading of NEWS" captured an aspect of local life, evokes "Mercury, the God of Eloquence," a more elegant performance than the poet of 1739–1740. Despite suspicions of his deism, he was a Quaker in good standing, hence unlikely to have critiqued Quaker pacifism and attributed God's providence to human prudence—themes that, along with the inefficacy of prayers alone, warnings about disputation, a spirited defense of liberty and property, and the right to the fruits of one's labor, are indisputably Franklin's and appear in the 1739–1740 "Verses."¹⁷⁹ This poet, like Franklin, is not guilty of Elizabeth Magawley's criticism of Breintnall: "too labour'd and prolix / And seldom, on the Wing, knows where to fix," but writes directly and purposefully, with a moral theme, in parable form—unlike the perfunctory, classical performance of 1740–1741.¹⁸⁰

In the "Verses," rights were threatened by both proprietary interests and Quaker pacifism. The poem begins with the theme of proprietary government: "By annual Services Estates are held, / The Rent unpaid the Tenant is expell'd"—it was a commentary on Penn's harsh new land policy. But, pointing to a more pressing issue, the duty to defend the province, it then criticizes the Quakers in Pennsylvania that prevented preparation for war

¹⁷⁷ "THE YEARLY VERSES of the PRINTER'S Lad, who carrieth about the *Pennsylvania GAZETTE* to the Customers thereof," *PG* December 27, 1739.

¹⁷⁸ "Joseph Rose to Jacob Taylor, November 11, 1741," *PMHB*, 3 (1879), 114–15; see Lemay, *Life*, 2:397.

¹⁷⁹ Compare Brientnall's piece on local life to his "Description of one single Street in this City," *AWM* June 19, 1729; Stephen Bloore, "Joseph Breintnall, First Secretary of the Library Company," *PMHB* 59, no. 1 (1935): 45–47; on Breintnall's deism, Frederick B. Tolles, "A Note on Joseph Breintnall, Franklin's Collaborator," *Philological Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1942): 247.

¹⁸⁰ Elizabeth Magawley, "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania," *AWM* May 6, 1731; see David Shields, "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania: New Light on the Rise of Belles Lettres in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1720–1740," *PMHB* 109, no. 2 (April 1985): 101.

with Spain: “The War’s begun with Spain.—but who will fight?” The post-boy, hesitating on such a controversial topic, claims he knows not what to write, but then like Franklin reintroduces the theme in a parable. He describes “Two loving Neighbours, but unlike in Sense; (For one rely’d alone on Providence).” The first “By Arms prepar’d, and Locks on ev’ry Door” seeks to teach the second, who protects his house by “a Fence Divine.” “Of’t had these Neighbours been in deep Dispute, / But neither could the Other yet confute.” Franklin had proposed a militia in 1734, asking his readers, “Whether they who are against fortifying their Country against an Enemy, ought not, by the same Principle to be against shutting and locking their Doors a Nights? Whether it be not just to shoot an Enemy who comes to destroy my Country, and deprive the People of their Substance, Lives, and Liberties, as to ... (being either Judge or Juryman) ... condemn a Man to Death for breaking open a House, or taking a Purse?”¹⁸¹

In the poem, the first neighbor, to convince the second that God alone would not protect him, sneaked into his house and stole his pewter and “all his loose laid Treasure.” The second neighbor, like Job, reflecting on “so great a Cross,” “Refuses Meat, grows thin; his Looks are pale.” After the first neighbor, out of pity, restored the stolen goods and bade his neighbor bolt his door in the future, the second believed the whole ordeal was a trial of faith, and “Resolv’d more firmly to rely on [providence].” When real thieves enter the neighborhood, they are unable to penetrate the bars of the first neighbor’s house, hence stealing everything in the second: “And rifl’d ev’ry Place, and left him Poor, / Who thought himself in Providence secure.” The second neighbor now blames the first for his loss.

Like the poem’s vigilant neighbor, Logan and Franklin tirelessly attempted to educate the Quakers in God’s providence. It was because, as Logan wrote, the “sole end of government ... is the Peace and Security of the People,” that he “advised the people of Pennsylvania to stand up manfully against the Marylanders on the border.”¹⁸² At the yearly meeting following war with Spain, he in vain tried to convince those Quakers, twenty-seven of thirty assemblymen who from conscience opposed defense, to step down. Arguing that French soldiers would take “Pride in deflouring *Quaker* Girls,” Franklin compared Quaker

¹⁸¹ Franklin, *Writings*, 224.

¹⁸² James Logan to Samuel Ogle, May 18, 1737, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, Colonial Records, *Minutes of the Provincial Council*, 4:79; *History of York County, Pennsylvania*, ed. John Gibson (F.A. Battey Publishing Co., Chicago, 1886), 49.

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pacifism, which he called “*mistaken Principles of Religion*,” to “the Man, who sat down and prayed his Gods to lift his Cart out of the Mire.”¹⁸³ Rather, he believed, “Conscience enjoins it as a Duty on you (and indeed I think it such on every Man) to defend your Country, your Friends, your Aged Parents, your Wives, and helpless Children.”¹⁸⁴ In the *Gazette*, he wrote, one must not “*desert the Tender and Helpless*, by Providence committed to [his] Charge.” God has provided man with the tool, prudence, to accomplish what is right, if he would but use it, and unite the “Force of *Reason, Duty*, and *Religion*.”¹⁸⁵

Political unity could be achieved by a correct understanding of God's providence. In the poem, resolution is made when the first neighbor, like a true friend, helps the second in his need—but not before a lesson. He asks, “[What] Virtue or good Reason can there be / In baiting Hooks for Vice and Robbery?”¹⁸⁶ There is indeed providence, he says, but it is in following principles of natural law: our “eldest Law” to preserve both ourselves and the “Fruits of Labour,” provided “we thereby do Injury to none.” True religion requires political action. God is displeased if we fail to protect the fruits of our “honest industry” and “Freedom,” that is, “if [we] can.” Only if in spite of “prudent Care” humans fail, does the poet appeal to justice in an afterlife: “The last Great Day must equipoise the Scales.”

DISPUTE BETWEEN THE UPPER AND LOWER HOUSES IN MARYLAND (1740/1)

In a final letter by “A.B.,” “State of the Late Dispute between the Upper and Lower Houses in Maryland” (1740/1),¹⁸⁷ Franklin used republican principles to defend Pennsylvania's proprietary constitutional form—an issue on which he later changed his mind—against Webbe's theory of popular sovereignty.

The hypothesis that Franklin worked with Webbe on the “A.B.” letters helps to explain first the ensuing bitter conflict between the two, which, Lemay writes, “provides more revealing information about Franklin's character than almost any other event in the period

¹⁸³ Franklin, *Writings*, 224.

¹⁸⁴ Franklin, *Papers*, 3:201.

¹⁸⁵ *PG* November 19, 1747, quoting Sallust; *Papers*, 3:201; on prayer and prudence, 3:202, 204: “if ... it please GOD to inspire us with the necessary Prudence and Vigour”; “GOD ... inspire us with Prudence in this time of DANGER.”

¹⁸⁶ On Pennsylvania's wealth as a temptation to invasion, see Franklin, *Writings*, 224, *Papers*, 3:191–92.

¹⁸⁷ A.B., “State of the late Dispute between the Upper and Lower Houses in Maryland,” *The General Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, for all the British Plantations in America* (Philadelphia, PA: B. Franklin, 1740/1) (hereafter *GM*), 189; “To the Publisher of the American MAGAZINE,” *AM* 98.

1736–47.”¹⁸⁸ Webbe advertised in the May 10, 1739 *Gazette*, the month following the last “A.B.” article. After Colonel Spotswood, in October 1739, ordered Franklin to prosecute Bradford for delinquency to pay, Franklin hired Webbe to file suit. It had been Franklin’s great ambition to write in imitation of Addison, Steele, Trenchard and Gordon, and the *General Magazine*, which he proposed to co-edit with Webbe, was the vehicle for both this and a greater end: to become the center of an American colonial culture. In Franklin’s proposed contract with Webbe to edit a general magazine, Franklin, who owned press and type, would receive the first half of revenues, and then split the remaining half with Webbe. Insulted by what he thought unfair terms, in November 1740 Webbe took the idea to Bradford to launch their own journal and began advertising in the *Mercury*.¹⁸⁹ Accusing Webbe of stealing his idea, Franklin printed, weekly, in the November–December 1740 *Gazette*, “This Magazine, in Imitation of those in England, was long since projected; a Correspondence is settled with Intelligent Men in most of the Colonies, and small Types are procured, for carrying it on in the best Manner.”¹⁹⁰ To beat Bradford, Franklin aggressively rushed his own product, forewent subscriptions, cut the cost, and ultimately sank the project. Webbe recriminated, “Of what Composition, then, is the Soul of that Man, who, having contrived to make a Property of his Friend, will afterwards charge him with a Violation of Trust.”¹⁹¹ “Friend”—this is not the stuff of mere business contracts: it concerns a plan that Franklin and Webbe had discussed for several years, born of their 1738–1739 collaboration.¹⁹²

Second, a previous collaboration helps to explain Webbe’s criticism of Franklin’s plan for a magazine: as one without content, requiring only the skill of a “common Soliciter.” Webbe believed that he would have provided both the blueprint and “the Superstructure”—that Franklin lacked the requisite understanding and skill.¹⁹³ Such a task would require the “Study of polite Authors” and the inclusion of ornate and logical “Transitions” that “cost no

¹⁸⁸ Lemay, *Life*, 2:299–309; see *Papers*, 2:263; David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America* (Hill and Wang, 2005), 112–4.

¹⁸⁹ Webbe’s advertisements appeared almost weekly in *AWM*, November 13–January 29, 1740/1 and at the end of the following year, December 10, 1741–January 28, 1741/2.

¹⁹⁰ Franklin, “Advertisement for the General Magazine,” 2:264; Webbe “The Detection,” 2:268, admitted that Franklin had the idea “long under his Consideration”; Franklin ran the ad weekly 13 November–4, 25 December.

¹⁹¹ Webbe, “The Detection,” in Franklin, *Papers*, 2:269.

¹⁹² Webbe, *Papers*, accused Franklin of violating his “natural Right” to reputation “every Week” in the *Gazette*, “a universal Maxim in Equity” (2:268) in the unfair contract, and “all Rules of Honour, and the Laws of Humanity” for invoking the deceased Spotswood (2:280). Franklin’s “sneaking Villainy” deserved the “Gibbet” (2:266).

¹⁹³ Webbe, *Papers*, 2:271.

small Pangs to the Writer in the Production.” Webbe not only accused Franklin of planning to snip out excerpts and slop them together, but supposed Franklin’s “*ignorant, stupid* Performance” would be *merely* satirical. It would be “humorous and comical, but extremely improving, and highly suitable to the Taste of Petty-Chapmen” who purchase scribblings in bulk: discounts for buying “*large* Quantities of Paper” filled “with *large* Quantities of Wit.” Webbe limited Franklin’s ability to writing satire, falling short of true political analysis.¹⁹⁴

Third, it helps to explain Franklin’s offer to Webbe, as well as exonerate the terms of his proposal. Webbe commented concerning Franklin’s views of him “in the Capacity of a Writer”: “Tho’ I had wrote much, too much, in his *Gazette*, yet [Franklin] never favoured me with a Specimen of his Skill that Way, so as to form any certain Judgment of it, before his late Advertisement.”¹⁹⁵ By “too much” Webbe may be referring to his older 1736 articles on government, but more likely he refers to the “A.B.” articles from the previous two years. Webbe’s earlier articles, though demonstrating theoretical insight, general agreement with Franklin’s politics, prolific output (even if borrowed), and ability to spark controversy, were not good enough to merit such an offer.¹⁹⁶ Rather Franklin approved of Webbe’s role in the “A.B.” collaboration: it improved his view of Webbe and provided him a correspondent in Maryland politics for a magazine providing reports, analysis, and satire of colonial leaders. Franklin’s proposed contract also seems more reasonable.¹⁹⁷ The “A.B.” letters contain Webbe’s views, but Webbe was not a satirical writer, or a good one. Franklin possessed the materials and type, and he planned on spending time correcting and editing Webbe’s work.

Finally, it explains a final exchange between Franklin and Webbe—a letter submitted by “A.B.” to both Bradford’s *American Magazine* and Franklin’s *General Magazine*, with a ridiculing preface printed in the latter to reveal its intention as an attack on Bradford’s magazine. In the *American Magazine*, Webbe’s extensive commentary on Maryland government picked up almost exactly where the “A.B.” letters had left off, from the April session of 1740. Noting threats that included slave revolt, restless Roman Catholics, and war with France, Governor Ogle urged the assembly to act in unity against Spain. The Lower House responded with recalcitrance and suspicion, lest amidst the distraction its grievances

¹⁹⁴ Webbe, *Papers*, 2:267, called himself a “Writer,” Franklin a “*meer* Printer” and a mere wit, *AWM*, April 3, 1732.

¹⁹⁵ Webbe, *Papers*, 2:279.

¹⁹⁶ Webbe’s plagiarism was noted (*AWM* April 8, 1736, *PG* April 20, 1732); in the 1732 exchange, Webbe authored some fifteen articles, Franklin wrote eight; he wrote at least eight pieces for the *Gazette* between April 1–June 3, 1736.

¹⁹⁷ Compare with Waldstreicher, *Runaway America*, 112–14.

about Proprietary prerogative power be ignored. It passed a bill emitting £2,636 to encourage enlistment in the expedition against the Spanish West Indies, and a second bill raising three pence per hogshead of tobacco for purchasing arms and ammunition. But the Upper House failed to pass the latter because it continued for one year, not to the end of the next session. Answering the Lower House's demand for a set date, the Upper House passed a nine-year tax, but the Lower House rejected any longer than three. Neither house would yield, and the act expired. Webbe provided acute analysis, tracing the division to a principled difference over the right of the legislature to limit prerogative power: were the act continued, the governor might prorogue all meetings until the end of the session, independent of legislative control. Webbe argued that the breakdown in government could be traced to a structural flaw—the unchecked prerogative power of Maryland's proprietor, who, via the governor, absolutely controlled the Upper House.

The letter by "A.B.," responding to Webbe's "Abstract," appeared in both of the March 1741 magazines. Hence readers could compare Webbe's analysis with a conflicting treatment in the *General Magazine*, which included this prefatory statement:

YOU will receive the inclosed the Copy of a Letter sent to Mr. Bradford to be published in his Political State of the British Colonies; but as his Candour and Impartiality cannot be depended upon, I desire you will print it in Yours, as soon as Possible; and thereby do Justice to the Injured, and convince the World of the Usefulness of your Magazine.

Clearly intending to sabotage Bradford's magazine, A.B. reminds the reader of Bradford's promise to give all opinions a "fair and publick Hearing at all Times," meaning that if Bradford does not print the letter, and it appears in Franklin's magazine, then it reveals Bradford's dishonesty, and if Bradford does print the letter, then he includes criticism of Webbe's commentary, perhaps losing readers.¹⁹⁸ Claiming to allow the reader to judge for himself, A.B.'s letter printed long extracts from Maryland's *Votes and Proceedings* to show how inaccurate, boring, and biased Webbe's analysis and writing was—one may as well read the documents themselves. The tactic, as well as some late edits made by Franklin to the letter, strongly suggests Franklin's hand: no reader would send such a submission or expect

¹⁹⁸ Bradford and Webbe may have suspected Franklin: to A.B.'s accusation of "willful Misrepresentations," they replied, "How far such general Attacks on the moral Character of any Writer may be justifiable, we shall Submit to the Determination of the Reader"; compare Webbe's similar remarks, 2:273.

it to be printed. A.B.'s phraseology is much like Franklin's, as is the method used—quotations interspersed with biting commentary, pinpointing logical fallacies, and culminating in a final blow. A.B. also points out the *American Magazine's* undue focus on Maryland, accuses it of poor political analysis, and provides an alternative interpretation to what he alleges is an unfair assessment.¹⁹⁹

A.B. first attacks the factually inaccurate "Mistakes and Misrepresentations" in Bradford's coverage of the Maryland Assembly's dispute.²⁰⁰ Webbe had boasted of his skill in both writing and commentary, but A.B. derides his "loose, rambling and perplexed" "Discourse on the Maryland Government" as driven by prejudice, a "strong desire to asperse [it] and [its] Constitution." A.B. dismissed Webbe's explanation for the dispute, instead blaming it on a misunderstanding between the two houses. Webbe, he says, infers facts not evident in the proceedings, for example, that the quarrel dates three years' back, and that it was principled in nature. Rather Webbe's analysis confused "two distinct Propositions": "whether or no the Lower-House stood their own Offer" to pass a tax with a fixed duration. Each house, misinterpreting the meaning of a clause relating to the duration of the tax, also confused the other's intentions.

A.B. secondly attacks Webbe's underlying constitutional argument. Webbe argued for the legitimacy of an upper house in Britain, but not under proprietary government, because appointed by legislative act. A.B. shows that Webbe is ignorant that Maryland's Upper House *was enacted* and further undermines his "Arguments against the Upper-House" by finding its correlate in other colonies: "[Y]ou cannot muster up even so much of the Appearance of Candour as to acknowledge, that any of His Majesty's Councils in the other Colonies [like New Jersey] have a distinct legislative Power from the Governor" and are "jointly entrusted with the King's Negative Voice."²⁰¹ Moreover, Webbe argued that the king

¹⁹⁹ A.B., *GM* 196, 190, accuses Webbe of bias and inaccuracies; Franklin, 190, as editor removes the word "honest"; capitalizes "EITHER," 196; and alters words, 200, to attack Bradford and paint Webbe as more radical: "especial[ly], as you seem to have called upon a Gentleman, who is much abler to set this Affair in a true Light than I can pretend to do"; Webbe, *AM* 99, italicizes one of A.B.'s remarks for rhetorical purposes; on Franklin's tactic, see *Papers*, 2:37ff., 5:42ff.; on ridiculing Webbe's focus on grammar, and pinpointing logical fallacies, *GM* 196, 198: "I should readily have acknowledged the Justness of your Conclusion, whatever I thought of your Premises. But as you have formed your Argument, I cannot perceive, by any Rule of Logick that I am Master of, how it concludes any thing at all."

²⁰⁰ *GM* 196–97.

²⁰¹ *GM* 197–98.

has the same interest as the whole, but the proprietor's "private Interest frequently clashes with that of the Community." A.B. accuses Webbe of sloppy logic—the proper questions are:

Whether the Governors of *Maryland*, under a Proprietor, have it more in their Power, to pursue their own private Interest, to the Prejudice of that of the Community, than the Governors of the same Colony had, when it was more immediately under the Crown? Or whether, in Fact, they have done so? Or whether a Crown or Proprietary Government can carry the Powers of Government higher to the Oppression of the People? And, when the People are in Reality oppressed, in which Case can they meet ... speedy Redress?

A.B.'s criticism of Webbe on political form leads to a final assault on his political principles.

Franklin knew, from the "Z" articles, that Webbe's principles were radical. In 1736 he tempered Webbe's claims to popular sovereignty by printing "R. Freeman's" defense of the British constitution. A.B. challenged Webbe's position of popular sovereignty ("*Vox Dei est Populi Vox*") over the executive's veto, pardoning power, and the judiciary with the principle that *the measure for just government was not popular sovereignty, but the protection of rights*—Webbe never resolved the potential conflict between majority rule and the end of the social contract.²⁰² The defense of representative government, as Franklin often argued, was that it best secured those rights; proprietary and charter colonies, A.B. argued, had greater liberties than royal colonies: "[I]t is very certain, that the People under the Proprietary and Charter Governments in *America*, have some Favours and Indulgences, that it would be difficult for the other Colonies to obtain."²⁰³ Webbe argued that the governor, by appointing officers, controlled the Upper House, but A.B. responded: "[M]ight not these same Places, whose Charms you seem to think no Man in these Parts can resist, tempt the Gentlemen of a Lower-House as well as those of an Upper? And would it not be more dangerous to the People, to have their own Representatives corrupted, without any Body to call them to an Account...?" Whether or not an upper house is "best in a Proprietary Government," A.B. writes, is only a point for "Consideration," and not to "enter more fully into the Dispute."²⁰⁴

A.B. does affirm that Maryland has a political problem—not its proprietary form, but the breakdown in the separation of powers: "One of the greatest Grievances the Country labours under ...[is] *The Establishment of the Officers' Fees*." A.B. (like Franklin) adds that the

²⁰² *AWM* April 1, 1736, 1; April 15, 3–4.

²⁰³ *GM* 3:198–9; on defense of representative government, see Franklin, *Papers*, 5:444.

²⁰⁴ *GM* 3:200.

problem of officers' fees is exacerbated by their payment in tobacco instead of "Paper Currency; but this the Lower-House of Assembly themselves chose." Hence, in one page A.B. undermines Webbe's constitutional position, then preempts Webbe's argument against prerogative power. Even here, A.B. appears moderate—"one may venture to affirm," "some People think." By taking such a position, Franklin appeared impartial and attacked Webbe as a radical—a sly move considering his own contacts among the Pennsylvania proprietaries.

Franklin's and Webbe's political dispute ran much deeper. Webbe's argument for popular sovereignty conflicted not just with proprietary government but also with democracy, which he called "the worst Sort of Republics."²⁰⁵ He argued for a supreme legislature, but in a class-structured society, led by elites. Webbe's aristocratic sympathies emerged in his 1732 praise of British custom, which Franklin lampooned. In 1740, Webbe jabbed Hamilton and Franklin for irresponsibly supporting the "*Licentiousness* [not liberty] of the *Press*":

[T]ho' an Opposition to arbitrary Power is always right ... yet the Circumstances ... have been but too often wrong. Therefore it is to be wished, if any People should happen to ... mak[e] such publick Remonstrances, as contended for by Zenger's Council to be their undoubted Right; that the Management of them might always be reserved for Men of Skill and Address. It is not for every puny Arm to attempt to wield the Club of *Hercules*!²⁰⁶

Meanwhile, Franklin, believing that true genius was nourished by republican government, had democratic sympathies. Protection of English liberties lay in the equality principle—the rule of the "middling Sort"—as opposed to a feudal regime in which the "*better Sort*" governed the "*lower Sort*."²⁰⁷ Because humans were proud—and gentlemen the proudest of all—they seldom questioned their opinions, contentedly living off the fruits of others' labor: "*You drudge, and sweat, and labour here, Old Boy, But we the Fruit of your hard Toil enjoy.*"²⁰⁸ Franklin supported a strong legislature—with power over both officers' appointments and the purse—along with an upper house performing the role of an executive council, and a gubernatorial veto power to check majority tyranny. Webbe's aristocratic

²⁰⁵ "Z," *PG* April 1, 1736.

²⁰⁶ *AWM* November 6, 1740; "ANTIZ," *AWM* April 22, 1736, also attacked Webbe's elitist sentiments.

²⁰⁷ "Pensylvanus," *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 25, 1756. Franklin, *Papers*, 3:199, appealed to the "middling People" for defense; in 1740 as "Obadiah Plainman" (attributed by Aldridge, supported by Lemay, *Canon*, 96–102, 131, 134–35), he had recently defended the religious worship of the "*meaner Sort*" against "BETTER SORT."

²⁰⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 2:334.

sentiments led him to misjudge the uneducated Franklin, confusing his feigned humility and preference for satire with ignorance—especially of political theory and the “polite Authors.”

Franklin’s defense of proprietary government was soon tested. After Governor Thomas’s April 17, 1740 declaration of war speech, Franklin wrote an optimistic commentary that “*even in Pennsylvania*” troops would be raised for the assault on Cartagena.²⁰⁹ But the Quaker Party refused. To obtain his troops, Thomas allowed indentured servants to enlist, freeing them from their contracts, to force the assembly to pass a defense bill. The frail Andrew Hamilton petitioned the assembly to raise a bounty for volunteers. However, the assembly’s £3,000 bill prohibited the use of funds until the indentured servants were returned: it made the governor choose between troops or money, and then halved his yearly allowance. In October Thomas appealed to the Board of Trade, arguing the Quakers must be excluded from office. The letter not only opposed the Quakers on defense, it argued against the paper currency system, free trade, and Pennsylvania’s home manufactures that undercut British production. The colony, he believed, existed for the sake of the mother country. Thomas opposed the frame of government that gave the assembly the power to adjourn and limited “his Majesty’s just prerogatives” by coercing the governor to assent to bills for his yearly allowance (Thomas received no funds for 1741). Reminiscent of Burnet and Belcher, he demanded a fixed salary. Franklin printed both Thomas’s letter, galvanizing public sentiment against him in the 1741 elections, and the assembly’s reply that insisted on the people’s rights.

The “battle of the stairway,” in which Quaker Party members would block opposing voters from ascending the staircase, erupted the next year in the 1742 election day riots that changed the political landscape. William Allen was allegedly behind a scheme to bring in sailors armed with clubs to remove the Quaker supporters, and they did so violently. As the older Quakers pacifists were beaten, a new generation—those like Isaac Norris, Jr.—watched with indignation, and they found allies in the German immigrants in the country. They would later support (as in 1745) money for “the king’s use,” or defense. It prepared the way for Franklin’s political career as the founder of the Association, leader of the Quaker Party for defense, and ultimately crusader against Pennsylvania’s proprietary form of government.

²⁰⁹ *PG* April 17, 1740; see Lemay, *Life*, 2:333.

"EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM WEST JERSEY, SEPT. 1. 1751"

The crucial decade of the 1730s shaped Franklin's notions of government and laid the groundwork for his political life as leader of the Association, Quaker Party, and assembly in the late 1740s and 1750s. Though he had defended Pennsylvania's proprietary government for its protection of rights as superior to Maryland's feudal system, he later changed his mind when he became convinced that it was itself an "odious Feudal System."²¹⁰ Penn claimed the royal charter granted him both prerogative and legislative power and made demands reminiscent of Baltimore: "Checks on the Disposition of Publick Money" and a "Governor's Negative" as a "Check on the Assembly's Grants."²¹¹ He wanted more executive officers with higher salaries for gentlemen of superior rank: tax assessors, defense commissioners, military officers, and judges serving at his pleasure.²¹² Franklin, holding that government was a compact among equals, condemned the treatment of one part as superior to another. Applying this principled view, he rejected the proprietor's claim to superior rank, diminished his claim to prerogative power, and absorbed the lawmaking function into the assembly.

Against the proprietor's claims to prerogative power, in 1753 Franklin upheld the equal "Rank" of the Assembly, arguing that the charter was a grant of "*additional* Liberties and Privileges" to the settlers: the "Terms of [the] Charters" delineated, and even limited, prerogative.²¹³ Indeed, to form a colonial union, "some prerogative may be abated to extend Dominion."²¹⁴ He wrote in 1754, "Instructions from the Crown to the Colonies ... should never Aim at extending the Prerogative beyond its due Bounds, nor abridging the just Liberties of the People."²¹⁵ Franklin rejected the proprietor's prerogative altogether, reserving the power to legislative delegation.²¹⁶ In the 1754 Albany Plan, he secured each colony its own self-governance, omitted representation for the gentlemanly class in an upper house,

²¹⁰ Franklin, "Queries and Remarks," November 3, 1789, in *Writings* (Smyth), 10:57; Franklin, *Papers*, 11:303.

²¹¹ "Pensylvanus," *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 25, 1756, 5.

²¹² "Pensylvanus," *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 25, 1756, 5: entice "Men of *Sense* and *Ability* ... from *other* Places.... [I]f the Fees were higher, it would be better worth a *Gentleman's* while..." Franklin, *Papers*, 7:151; on British "Schemes of an Administration" to raise "new Revenues in creating, by Places and Pensions, new Dependencies," 21:418.

²¹³ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:48-49, 40.

²¹⁴ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:361; 16:319 "to enjoy *Liberty* of Conscience, and Freedom from tyrannical Acts of Parliament, [the colonists] went to a Country where neither the Power of Parliament nor of Prerogative had any Existence, and where the King, on the Condition that they would continue to own him as their Sovereign, was contented to limit the Pretensions of his Prerogative by solemn Charters."

²¹⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:332; on eliminating the aristocracy, see 5:403.

²¹⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 3:210, initially preserved the governor's prerogative; on legislative delegation, 6:300, esp. 11:136.

and confined prerogative power in the Council to foreign affairs and defense. After proprietary demands (in both Pennsylvania and Maryland) in the midst of war for exemption from taxes, Franklin concluded, “This is not merely Vassalage, it is worse than any Vassalage we have heard of ... it is even more slavish than Slavery itself.”²¹⁷ He appealed to principles of natural law: “To dispose of their own Money, by themselves or their Representatives, is ... a natural Right, inherent in every Man, or Body of Men, antecedent to all Laws.”²¹⁸

Franklin wished to eliminate the gentlemanly class and reduce the proprietors to landholders, subject to the laws passed by a governor and assembly. In 1756 he described the people and their principles: they are “generally of the middling sort,” “chiefly industrious Farmers, Artificers, or Men in Trade,” and “they enjoy and are fond of Freedom, and the meanest among them thinks he has a Right to Civility from the greatest.”²¹⁹ Yet these principles are threatened: “They see with Concern in a neighbouring Province [Maryland], the vast Sums levied from the groaning People, and paid in exorbitant Fees to numerous great Officers, appointed by the Proprietor, who in return treat the poor Planter with Haughtiness and the Artifice with Contempt.... Our People therefore dread the Growth of Proprietary Power.” The people, not the gentlemen, better conserve the constitution, which has led to their flourishing: “Assemblies more rarely misuse their Powers than Governors, their Interest and that of the Publick being one and the same.” The legislature better secures the rights of the people because it reflects their interests. “Elections by private Ballot, are fairest, and best show the free Inclination and Judgment of the People.” Chosen annually, its members are more accountable, which thus discourages bribery, heavy taxes, and bad laws. A second legislative house or “Council is by long Experience found unnecessary.”

Certain constitutional rights follow: In 1753 Franklin argued that Thomas Penn’s secret instructions and suspending clauses, by constraining his governors, were an unjust delegation of lawmaking authority.²²⁰ Only “Representatives of the People ha[ve] the Right of disposing of the People’s Money, granting Salaries, and paying Accounts.”²²¹ This included sole appointment to some offices, and a share in others. The proprietors had neither rightful veto

²¹⁷ Franklin, *Papers*, 6:162; writing as “A.B.,” Franklin also opposed Maryland’s proprietary government, 8:162-68.

²¹⁸ Franklin, *Papers*, 6:517-18; On claims to rights by charter, as Englishmen, and as a “natural right,” *Papers*, 7:136-42.

²¹⁹ “True State of the Disputes,” *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 25, 1756, 5, reprinted in the appendix below; on authorship, see Ralph Ketcham, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966), 95.

²²⁰ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:34-41.

²²¹ “Pensylvanus,” *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 25, 1756, 5; See Franklin, *Papers*, 11:302.

over “the disposition of public Money” nor consent to governmental appointments, else the assembly could not send (or pay) an agent “to represent [its] Grievances” in England. The assembly claimed the right to choose military officers, subject to the governor’s commission. But it was also constrained by its view of limited government that limited administration: “An Increase of Offices and of Fees to be paid by the People, is an increase of Burthen, to no Purpose; an Impoverishment of the Inhabitants, and weakening of the State.” Hence the people are “attach’d to the Assembly,” and are “jealous of its priviledges and Independency, as knowing that their own Freedom and Happiness, and the Publick Welfare, depend on the Support of those Privileges, and that Independency.” However, “if the Proprietor’s Influence” increased, the Assemblies will be “render’d dependent and subservient to his Pleasure, [and] it may as well be left to him to make the Laws.” If directed by the intrigues of an elite class, the assemblies would become “Instruments of Oppression.”

In 1753 Franklin reconsidered the rights of Pennsylvanians under royal and proprietary charters, and he later led the assembly’s efforts to replace proprietary government with a royal charter.²²² The very attempt presumed an original compact, securing rights, made with the king. This was not just that “the King is a much better Landlord” than the proprietors, it was a protest against *any decisions* made from “three Thousand Miles Distance,” including royal instructions.²²³ Richard Jackson’s *An Historical Review of the Constitution and Government of Pennsylvania*, “which appeared in London in June 1759 under Franklin’s guidance and sponsorship,” focused on the fundamental issue of “prerogative”: it would, said Franklin “prepare the Minds of the Publick; in which the Proprietors will be gibbeted up as they deserve, to rot and stink in the Nostrils of Posterity.”²²⁴ The work framed the dispute between the people and proprietors in the language of social contract and “natural equity” that Franklin had first used as a young man in Boston.²²⁵

Franklin’s changing view of proprietary government informs our final consideration, an extract from a letter by “Publicus” in the March 17, 1752 *Gazette*, which, extending the concerns of colonial freedom under proprietary rule, warned that the British also viewed the

²²² Franklin, *Papers*, 5:40, 8:157-58, on the known risks to Pennsylvania liberties, 8:25.

²²³ Franklin, *Papers*, 6:197; 5:40, 57.

²²⁴ Franklin, *Papers*, 7:374; on “Franklin’s assiduous propagandizing” 7:255; on success, *An Historical Review*, 438.

²²⁵ Franklin, *Papers*, 8:96, 11:239, 284, 350; on “natural right” to frame the debate, *Historical Review*, 13, 403-24.

colonists' as "Tenants." It reappeared the next month in the *Virginia Gazette*.²²⁶ Franklin had published his own pieces as "extracts" before, and the internal evidence suggests that Franklin wrote it: the phraseology is similar, and the argument identical, to that in the 1760 *The Interest of Great Britain Considered*, or *Canada Pamphlet*; indeed, every line but one finds an exact parallel in Franklin's writings.²²⁷ The article's importance is that it ties Franklin's 1751 *Observations* to the later *Canada Pamphlet*, and its concluding threat of revolution.

In the 1751 *Observations*, Franklin, looking to demographic changes, provided maxims that would foster imperial growth. Lemay argues that Franklin foresaw a shift of power to America, and warned against British policies that might hinder colonial growth, and hence affection for the Mother Country. That year Franklin compared the British practice of exporting felons to sending rattlesnakes to the colonies or dropping turds on American tables.²²⁸ In the 1760 *Canada Pamphlet*, Franklin participated in the debate over Great Britain's terms of peace after the French and Indian War, challenging the idea that Britain should keep the lucrative sugar islands of Guadalupe and return hard-won Canada to the French—preserving a "balance of powers," which included a check upon colonial expansion. Franklin measured foreign policy not by a balance of power, but by a hierarchy of goods, foremost the right to self-preservation, from which the derivative right to security proceeds. This hierarchy of human flourishing—security, increase, trade, wealth—had as an end the highest modes of culture.²²⁹ "Britain and her Colonies," Franklin argued, "should be considered as one Whole, and not as different States with separate Interests."²³⁰ For the British Empire to keep the sugar islands was to place the economic interests of a part against the *preservation*, not just the interests, of the colonies, and hence the good of the whole. The balance of power could only be maintained by American deaths on the frontier—"massacring

²²⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, April 24, 1752; collections cite the *Gazette*, and attribute an unnamed "London Newspaper"—*New Jersey Archives: Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey*, ed. William Nelson, series 1, vol. 19 (Patterson, NJ: The Press Printing and Publishing Co., 1897), 139–40; John Doyle, *English Colonies in America: The Colonies Under the House of Hanover* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1907), 5:122, see n1.

²²⁷ On Franklin's printing his essays as "extracts" around the same time (June 12, 1751, September 5, 1751), Lemay, *Life*, 3:597; on similarity with the *Canada Pamphlet*, compare "Publicus" on encroachment of trade to Franklin, *Papers*, 9:62; on the northern colonies "naval force" and its effect on trade, 9:87, 71, 78; on consumption of English manufactures, 9:87; on comparison of trade between northern colonies and West Indies, 9:87; on fisheries, 4:230–31; on Spain's decline, 9:85, 4:232–3; on privateers, 4:233; on French strategy for the next war, 9:69; on the mother country's relation to her children, 4:229, 9:75; on the fishery as a "Nursery" for Seamen, 20:526, 28:604.

²²⁸ See Lemay, *Life*, 3:240–64, 219–30, 635–36; on the *Observations* and Americanism, 2:155–64.

²²⁹ See Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1954), 66; Franklin, *Papers*, 6:468; 1:320–21.

²³⁰ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:332; the colonies were, 5:361, "so many Separate Corporations in one Common Wealth."

men, women, and children.”²³¹ Whereas in 1751 he prescribed maxims for growth, in 1760 he concluded with the *limits* of empire, considering the limits of human affection: “Good-natured persons ... can sympathize sincerely with the grief of a lady on the sudden death of her favourite bird, and yet can read of the sinking of a city in Syria with very little concern.” Franklin’s satirical prescription for the “Egyptian policy”—killing every third or fourth child to curb the colonial population—was a not-too-subtle warning of American independence.²³²

The 1752 article, which prefigures Franklin’s 1760 argument, supports Lemay and Mulford’s position that Franklin early on considered the potential break from Britain.²³³ Publicus argues that, considering the interest of the whole in terms of trade, Britain should negotiate for Canada over the Sugar Islands. The Northern Colonies consume far more British manufactures and employ far more seamen than “all the Sugar Islands put together.”²³⁴ The rise of colonial naval power with their increase in trade should be considered in light of the ambitious, guileful French strategy for the “next War” in the Americas. Yet the British constraints on colonial trade—including those on printing presses that kept the colonists in ignorance—intentionally sacrificed colonial rights to native commercial interests. British claims to prerogative as set against colonial rights placed it in the same position as the Pennsylvania proprietors.²³⁵ The conclusion: if the mother country treats its subjects not like children—with the presumption that they will be educated—but “merely as Tenants ... Labourers, or ... Slaves,” the colonies “must of Course by Degrees lose all true Respect and Affection.”²³⁶ It is perhaps Franklin’s earliest threat of revolution.

²³¹ Franklin, *Papers*, 9:93.

²³² Franklin, *Papers*, 9:94.

²³³ Lemay, *Life*, 3:240–64; Mulford, *Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, 142–82, 262.

²³⁴ Compare Franklin, *Papers*, 9:85, “the trade between the different parts of these British islands, is greatly superior to that between England and all the West-India islands put together.”

²³⁵ On claims to royal prerogative, 8:293–95.

²³⁶ Franklin, *Papers*, 5:332: royal instructions should be “just and reasonable, and rather savour of Fatherly Tenderness and Affection,” else the “people lose their Respect”; 11:299; in reference to Britain, 16:325: “They us’d to call her by that endearing Appellation [mother]; but her late Conduct entitles rather to the Name of Stepmother”; 21:418: “losing our Respect and Affection.”

Appendix: New Attributions to the Franklin Canon

Two of the eight writings attributed to Franklin in the article above are printed below. The remaining six may be easily accessed in the free online archives at Hathitrust. A third article, attributed by Ralph Ketcham (see above, 76n219), is difficult to find and so also included below.

THE YEARLY VERSES OF the PRINTER'S Lad, who carrieth about the Pennsylvania GAZETTE, to the Customers thereof.

JANUARY 1, 1740.

By annual Services Estates are held,
 The Rent unpaid the Tenant is expell'd:
 And I, subjected by my Tenure, pay
 A new struck List of Rhymes on New-Year's Day.
 Sure, if I miss, to have an empty Purse,
 And to displease my MASTER'S, which is worse.
 But never was I puzzled heretofore,
 So much the last Year's News to number o'er:
 I'm out of Sorts, and know not what to write;
 The War's begun with Spain,---but who will fight?
 Unfitted for this Talk, a Tale I'll tell,
 In Hopes the Substitute may do as well.
 Two loving Neighbours, but unlike in Sense;
 (For one rely'd alone on Providence)
 Resolv'd the first, his Household to secure,
 By Arms prepar'd, and Locks on ev'ry Door;
 Th' other ne'er to be upon his Watch,
 But 'gainst Temptations, and his Doors to latch,
 To keep out Winds and Rain, or Dogs and Swine;
 From Thieves defended by a Fence divine.
 Off' had these Neighbours been in deep Dispute,
 But neither could the Other yet confute:
 The first then thinking how with honest Guile
 He could his Friend to Reason reconcile,
 Goes in the Dead of Night, his Pewter takes,
 And Prize of all his loose laid Treasure makes.
 The Loser in the Morn perceives his Loss,

Reflects full sorely, on so great a Cross;
Refuses Meat, grows thin; his Looks are pale;
And loud he would, but durst not loud bewail:
His Nieghbour saw, and pitying did restore
The Goods purloin'd, and bade him bolt his Door.
But he still thinking Providence was near,
That try'd his Faith by such a simple Fear,
Resolv'd more firmly to rely on him,
And more and more to merit his Esteem.
Not long, alas! he liv'd in this Resolve,
Seasons and Things in Motion quick Resolve;
Thieves desp'rate, came within the Neighbourhood;
They try'd a House, and there the Bars withstood;
They came to this (and here a Latch was all)
An Entrance gain'd to Kitchen and to Hall;
And rifled ev'ry Place, and left him Poor,
Who thought himself in Providence secure.
Thus miserable grown, he sought his Friend;
Have you said he contriv'd to speed my End;
I'm robb'd of ev'ry useful valu'd Thing,
Except my Bed, which no Repose can bring.
Quoth he, what I can spare I will bestow
To help your Need, but not to make you owe;
To me this dire Misfortune is not due,
I once for Caution kindly cozen'd you;
The Warning miss'd its Aim, yet I'm your Friend,
And would your Thinking with your Living mend:
What Virtue or good Reason can there be
In baiting Hooks for Vice and Robbery?
As Preservation is our eldest Law,
In which the Wise have yet observ'd no Flaw,
It well becomes us to secure our own,
While we thereby do Injury to none.
Can Providence be pleas'd to see us lay
The Fruits of Labour to be stole away?
If at my Face a Rogue should clench his Fist,
Is it Religion if I don't resist?
Believe me Friend 'tis not--nor God we serve,
By feeding Villains while our selves may starve.

PIETAS

An honest Industry becomes a Man,
And to preserve his Freedom if he can;
But if with all his prudent Care he fails
The last Great Day must equipoise the Scales.

The PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE, March 17, 1752

Extract of a Letter from West-Jersey, Sept. 1. 1751.

SIR,

“The French since the last Peace, have been so much encroaching on the Trade and Territories of our British Northern Colonies, that we are anxious to hear of the Success of our Negotiations at Paris. As I have had some Opportunity, I have done all in my Power that our Commissaries be well informed, as I have been particularly applied to for that Purpose. I am fully persuaded that the Northern Colonies are of much greater Consequence to the Naval Force and Trade of Great Britain, than the Sugar Islands, though it seems that there has been much Pains taken to make it appear otherwise.

There is no Comparison in the Quantity of the English Manufactures, that are annually consumed in the Northern Colonies, and in the Sugar Islands. Besides, the West India Trade is a perpetual Destruction of Seamen, whereas the Northern Colony Trade, and the Fishery especially, is a continued Nursery for their Increase; and therefore it is my humble Opinion, that an exclusive Fishery alone, would be of more Benefit to the Nation than all the Sugar Islands put together; for whatever Nation has the greatest Naval Force will always command the Trade. This is evident from the Case of Spain, which has decayed in its Trade and Naval Force, ever since their Settlement of their numerous Southern Colonies. The French were made very sensible in the last War, of the Naval Force of the Northern Colonies, though it had no other Support but that of private Adventurers. The French think our Ministry will suffer a thousand little Injuries at a Distance, rather than go into another War, for they reap more Advantages by a Peace, which gives them fresh Opportunities to make Encroachments, in Order to lay Foundations to carry on the next War more to their Interest. I have heard it reported, that Printing-Presses are by all Means to be discouraged in our Colonies; I am amazed at it; I wish it may not be true. That the Colonies ought to be kept in Ignorance, is not the just Sentiment of a Mother Country towards its Children, but of a Mother Country towards its Servants. Love us, encourage and educate us as Children, and we shall always give you the Honour, Love and Obedience, that is due to a Parent. But if you begin to consider us meerly as your Tenants, your Labourers, or your Slaves, we must of Coarse by Degrees lose all true Respect and Affection for you. I am, dear SIR,

Your most humble Servant,

PUBLICUS.”

SUPPLEMENT to the PENNSYLVANIA JOURNAL, No. 694.

A TRUE STATE of the Disputes now subsisting in the Province of Pennsylvania.

March 24, 1756.

Mr. BRADFORD,

AS Party Flame seems again encreasing among us, when we hoped it was well nigh extinguished, and some of our own People, as well as Strangers, scarce know why we are so angry with each other; give me Leave, by the impartial Channel of your Paper, to offer a short Account of the Cause of our present Disputes; which Account, if a just one, may explain the Conduct of the several Parties, and render the Measures they respectively take to gain their Ends intelligible.

The People of this Province are generally of the middling sort, and at present pretty much upon a Level. They are chiefly industrious Farmers, Artificers, or Men in Trade; they enjoy and are fond of Freedom, *and the meanest among them* thinks he has a Right to Civility from the greatest. They see with Concern in a neighbouring Province, the vast Sums levied from the groaning People, and paid in exorbitant Fees to numerous great Officers, appointed by the Proprietor, who in return treat the poor Planter with Haughtiness, and the Artificer with Contempt; while both must stand Cap-in-hand when they speak to the Lordlings, and *your Honour* begins or ends every Sentence. Our People therefore dread the Growth of Proprietary Power, and are for holding fast those Privileges that tend to ballance it or keep it down.

At present, the Representatives of the People having the Right of disposing of the People's Money, granting Salaries, and paying Accounts; the sole Appointment to some Offices of Profit, and a Share in the Appointment to others; and not subject to Prorogations of Dissolutions at a Governor's Pleasure, they are of Course a respectable Part of the Government. And as they are to be chosen annually, the common People whose Votes are so frequently necessary in Elections, are generally better treated by their Superiors on that Account. Besides as Assembly-men may so soon be chang'd and mix'd again among the People, it is scarce worth the Proprietaries while to bribe them with an Office, nor worth theirs to accept of it, to oppress their Constituents with unnecessary heavy Taxes, or other burthensome Laws, since a Post may fail while the Burthens continue, and they come in to bear their Share of them. Hence the People are commonly attach'd to the Assembly, and jealous of its Priviledges and Independency, as knowing that their own Freedom and Happiness, and the Publick Welfare, depend on the Support of those Privileges, and that Independency.

On the other Hand, as the Proprietary has the sole Power of disposing of many Offices of Profit and Honour, and a Share in the Disposition of others; as he can favour his Dependants in the Grants of Lands, and oblige them by Pensions; he must necessarily with the Aid of such Influence obtain a strong Party among us, tho' his Personal Virtues were out of the Question. This Party however is not the strongest; some few Things are yet wanting to encrease it, and diminish the other; as, first, a Power in the Proprietor, or his Deputy, to check or obstruct the Disposition of Publick Money, by a Negative, if he does not like the Person employ'd in any Publick Work or Service. This would make the Tradesmen, and all that supply or serve the Government, as obsequious to the G—r and his Friends as those are who enjoy Offices under them. Secondly, A Power to refuse *every Officer* nominated by the Assembly, who has not taken Care to make himself agreeable at Court; thus to lessen the

Influence of the Representative Body. Thirdly, An Establishment of *more Offices* of Profit solely in his own Disposition, that he may actually oblige more Persons, and create more Expectants. Fourthly, An Increase of Fees in the Offices already established, that the Desire of obtaining those Offices may be stronger. Fifthly, A general Militia Law that shall give the sole Power of appointing military Officers to the Governor; to engage a great additional Number of Dependants by that Distribution of Honours. Sixthly, A numerous Legislative Council, solely of his own Appointment, to become a third Branch in the Legislature, with a Negative on Laws propos'd by the Assembly, that so Gentlemen of Fortune, who have not Merit sufficient to recommend themselves to be chosen Representatives, may be oblig'd to him for a Share in the Government; and at the same Time screen him from the Odium of refusing reasonable Laws. Seventhly, A Power to adjourn, prorogue or dissolve the Assembly at Pleasure, or to keep them Sitting against their Will; that so they may be snubb'd or sent packing when they are refractory, and disobedient to Proprietary Instructions; or may be wearied into a Compliance by long Sessions, a kind of Banishment from their respective Habitations.

Were these Points gained, 'tis thought the Proprietary Power would be strong enough to bear down all before it.—I do not pretend to be in the Secret of Affairs, Mr. *Bradford*, but it is reported that the G—r has positive Instructions to obtain them one by one, by all possible Means, as favourable Occasions offer. And it is not to be supposed that all who abet the Design, act from the sordid Motive of private Interest. I, who see and converse with many People of all Ranks, have an Opportunity of hearing Variety of Sentiments, and can assure you, that there are some who wish from mere Principle that these Measures may take Place. They say they have studied Politicks in learned Authors, and are convinc'd that our Constitution is defective in those Particulars; that the People have too much Power, the governor too little; hence the *lower Sort* are not respected enough to the *better Sort*; hence the Laws are lax, and the Execution of them more so. That in every well fram'd Government, there ought to be Checks on the Disposition of Publick Money, to prevent Misapplications; that the Governor's Negative would be a proper Check on the Assembly's Grants. That our Offices are too few; for if we had more, we might encourage more Men of *Sense* and *Ability* to come from *other* Places and fill them; and if the Fees were higher, it would be better worth a *Gentleman's* while to accept of them. That the appointing Militia Officers is an inherent Right in the Governor; and that the People are not fit to be trusted with any Share in it, being ignorant of the necessary Qualifications of an Officer, and easily byass'd to a wrong Choice: At least, if they are, from Favour, allow'd to chuse, it ought not to be by *private* Ballot but by *open* Election; for so those in Power may have an Opportunity of knowing who does and who does not vote as he should do, and by that Means influence a better Election. That a Legislative Council is absolutely necessary for the better and more weighty Consideration of proposed Laws, and is moreover agreeable to the British Constitution, as similar to the House of Lords. That no popular Assembly ought to meet, or sit, or continue, but at the Governor's Pleasure, lest they should carry on Designs against the Government, or promote Rebellion. Nor have the Appointment of any Officers least it increase their Influence, and strengthen their Hands. That the Proprietor is a very good Man, has a sincere Love to the Country, is a true Friend to the Constitution, and if he aims at a few Alterations in it, 'tis for its Improvement only, and for the Sake of Order, internal Peace and better Government. These are the Principles by which *the most thinking Persons* of that Side justify their Conduct. If I have misrepresented them, they can set me right; but I believe I have not, for I am an impartial Man, Mr. *Bradford*.—Now let me tell you what the other Side says.

They say, Sir, that all the Powers in Possession of the Assembly are necessary to the Publick Welfare. That the flourishing of this Province beyond its Neighbours, is a Proof of the Goodness of its Constitution, under which we long lived happily, and in which no Flaw was ever found till these Tinkers attempted to mend it. That Assemblies more rarely misuse their Power than Governors, their Interest and that of the Publick being one and the same. That our Public Business is as well transacted with *few Offices* and *small Fees*, as in other Governments with more and larger. That an Increase of Offices and of Fees to be paid by the People, is an Increase of Burthen, to no Purpose; an Impoverishment of the Inhabitants, and weakening of the State. That the People ought to chuse their own Militia Officers, to be commission'd by the Governor, for they know their Neighbours Loyalty, Courage, and Abilities, better than the Governor can know them; and, if they have not this Privilege, they are in a worse Condition than common Soldiers in the King's Troops, who may chuse under what Captain they will inlist. That if the Proprietor's Influence over the Assembly is so increas'd, as that they are render'd dependent and subservient to his Pleasure, it may as well be left to him to make the Laws, Assemblies thenceforth will be Cyphers; they will be worse than Cyphers, they will become the Instruments of Oppression. That if no Officer can be appointed, or Money appropriated, without the Proprietor's Consent or his Deputy's, we cannot so much as chuse an Agent to represent our Grievances at Home on any Occasion, or pay him for his Services. That a Check in the Governor's Hands on the Disposition of public Money, may prevent right Applications as well as Misapplications, and in Fact more frequently does so in other Colonies That tho' a Council of Advice may be useful, a Legislative Council is by long Experience found unnecessary; and they cannot be similar to a British House of Lords, while they are removeable at the Proprietor's Pleasure. That there is no Danger of Assemblies sitting to hatch Rebellion; they are all loyal, and take the legal Qualifications. That Elections by private Ballot, are fairest, and best show the free Inclination and Judgment of the People; and that if Persons in Power, and those who are called *Gentlemen*, will take care to increase in Virtue as they do in Wealth, they can never fail of sufficient Respect from the People.

Yesterday I visited an old Citizen who has been long confin'd with the Gout. He is thought to be well acquainted with our Affairs, and one that sees as far into a Millstone as the Man that picks it. As we talk'd of the present Politicks and the News of the Day, pray Mr. L— says I, what can be the Meaning of these strange inconsistent Appearances? All that Part of the People who lately join'd as one Man in Petitioning the Assembly for Money and a Militia Law to defend the Country, are, now these Points are in some considerable Degree obtain'd, dividing among themselves and growing as angry with each other as they lately were with the Quakers; and moreover, those who objected vehemently against all Associations for Defence, are now as violently pushing an Association. But why should they differ if both Parties are pursuing the same End, the common Defence? Cannot each pursue its own Measures quietly, and without interfering with the other? I'll tell you, my Friend, says he. The Cause of Difference lies deeper than you seem to imagine. The old Assembly are odious to the Grandees; they have been long disobedient to the Proprietaries; the Petitions for Money and a Militia Law were just and reasonable, but the Request was increas'd to a clamorous Demand by the Proprietary Party, who imagined the House would not or could not grant the Petitions, and hoped thence to bring them into Disgrace with the People, and get a Set of the Proprietor's Friends elected in their Places. When an Association was proposed instead of a Militia Law, these cry'd aloud, *No, no, we will have no Associations*. When a Militia Law was unexpectedly obtain'd, the next Step was to damn it, as imperfect,

insufficient and impracticable; and endeavor if possible to prevent the Execution of it, that some Pretense might still remain for a Clamour against the Assembly; and those very Gentlemen who were lately for having a Law cramm'd down our Throats to lay a heavy Tax on the People for Defence of the Proprietary Estate, and exempt the Proprietor from paying any Part of that Tax, and suffered their Country to be delug'd in Blood before they would advise the G—r to consent to the Thing that was fair and reasonable; these very equitable Gentlemen now exclaim against the Militia Act as partial and unjust, tho' it leaves every Man to his Liberty.—The Act however was likely to be executed, notwithstanding all Opposition; many Companies form'd themselves throughout the Country pursuant to the Law, hoping to procure an Amendment of such Defects as should on Tryal be found in it. The People thus uniting under the Law, having no Party-Views, but merely intending the Defence of their Country, those moderate Men for their Officers; and as these were not likely to answer the By-ends of the Proprietary Party; and People were daily joining the new Militia; it was determin'd if possible to break it; and from a long continu'd steady Refusal to associate for Defence, or take any one Step of a military kind, they all of a sudden tack about, and cry out, *We will have an Association*. This Association, however, is not intended, as the Querist insinuates, merely *to do no earthly Thing*. It is to draw the People from the Companies and Regiments formed, or forming, under the specious Pretense of greater Liberty; discourage their Officers, and break those Companies and Regiments to Pieces; and on their Ruins form a Party against the next Election, strong enough to chuse a Set of Men who will do as they are bid, and give up to the Proprietor and his Friends all the Points they have so long aimed at obtaining—It behooves them, they think, to push this Matter now, with Vigour. The *Sixty Thousand Pounds* melts apace. A new Tax Law will soon be necessary, as a Fund to sink an additional Sum. If the War continues, many such Laws must follow one another. In the next, if possible, the Proprietary Estate, and all located unimprov'd Lands must be exempted and other Laws made to keep the Populace in due Subjection. Therefore all possible Means are to be used to establish this new Association. Dear Sir, says I, you seem too uncharitable. Why do you judge so hard, as to suppose such deep laid Designs in the Proposers of this new Scheme. I imagine they intend no more than to meet and divert themselves with learning the Exercise, as it is a manly Accomplishment, and may qualify them better to serve their Country on Occasion;—many of them I am confident have no Connection with the Proprietor or his Affairs.—That's possible says he, doubtless they have drawn in many well meaning People. I go but little abroad, converse but little of late, and I may be mistaken. But I'll tell you, Sir, some Signs by which you may judge for yourself. Straws and Feathers are light Matters, but they can shew us which way the Wind blows. If you find among the Chief Promoters of the Association ALL THOSE who thought the Proprietary Exemption reasonable; if the Proprietary Councillors and Pensioners, the great Land-jobbers, the Secretaries and under Secretaries, the Officers of the Land-Office, the Surveyors, the Prothonotaries and Clerks of Courts, all that are deeply in Debt to the Proprietor, or to his zealous Friends; and, in short, all his and their Dependents from the ***** down to the trading ninepenny Justice (a brave Soul here and there excepted); if circular Letters are sent to all these throughout the Country, prescribing their Duty on the present Occasion; if the true disinterested Friends of the People are particularly attack'd, and every dirty Engine employ'd to abuse and blacken their Characters; then I am in the Right, depend on't, and take your Measures accordingly. What Measures do you means, said I. He reply'd, I may probably not be alive at the next Election; let me now give you a little Advice. I know you have an Esteem for the *Quakers*, and think them an honest, sober, industrious People, and

in general good, Common Wealth's Men. So far you are in the Right; and I must acknowledge that it is but doing them Justice to say, that no set of Men have ever shewn themselves more tenacious of true Liberty, or of the proper Rights and Priviledges of the Subject, than the Quakers. But let not this good Opinion of them carry you too far. There are among them a few, otherwise valuable Men, who still retain the much controverted Principle, *That an Enemy ought not to be resisted, or a Country defended, by Force of Arms.* Chuse none such into the Assembly in Time of War; for they may greatly obstruct all necessary Business of that Kind, and draw down the Anger of our Superiors and the Resentment of the Publick on the whole Body. Besides it is really unnecessary; for, if from the Experience you have had of the *Quakers* Management of publick Affairs, you incline to continue them as Part of your Representatives, you may find amongst them, as well as amongst others, many sensible and moderate Men who have not those religious Scruples. On the other Hand, beware how you chuse any of the Party whose Views I have been describing to you; for they will take such Care to secure their Seats, that you will never after be able to get them out of the Saddle, how ill soever you may like their Riding. If you are not otherwise sure of your Men, obtain from every Candidate an Oath or Affirmation, or at least a Declaration on his Word and Honour, that he thinks military Defence lawful, and that he will maintain to the utmost of his Power our present Constitution.

I thank'd the old Gentlemen for his Advice, and when I came home wrote it down, that you might, if you thought fit, communicate it to the Publick. Perhaps, if it does no Good it may do no Harm.

I am

Your, &c.

Pensylvanus.

The Development of Frederick Douglass's Educational Program: Cultivating Human Beings to Live as Citizens

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Frederick Douglass's political project was to shape an America in which black and white people could live together in a common country enjoying equal rights as citizens. The institution of slavery was perpetuated by the claim that black people were naturally unfit for freedom by nature. Douglass rejected such assertions by appealing to the rational nature inherent in all human beings. While education had always been an intrinsic good for a rational person, it could also serve the practical purpose of changing the whites' perceptions of black people. Douglass's work on education began with industrial training to enable free blacks to possess practical skills for self-sufficiency. He would also argue for a kind of liberal education to improve the mind, particularly in the understudied 1894 speech, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education." I contend that an in-depth treatment of Douglass's program for education is necessary to accurately understand how he conceived of social and political life in America after the end of slavery.

David Blight's *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* is a grand biography of the life of one of the greatest figures in American history, and it is the apex of Blight's prolific career.¹ He is the nation's most well-respected Douglass scholar, and the insights he offers into Douglass's personal life are illuminating for a student of Douglass at any level. However, this excellent treatment of Douglass's life and work does not have a single reference to "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," a speech that is not considered among Douglass's most famous but is among the most significant to understanding the role of education in his political thought. This absence is indicative of a larger gap in the scholarship regarding this particular speech and how his work on education developed in the years prior. The current scholarship covers aspects of Douglass's work on education, particularly providing his overarching principles on why education is necessary. However, no author has systematically treated Douglass's work on education over his entire career. This article will offer a corrective

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¹ David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

to the insufficient account of Douglass's educational program by tracing its development from his work promoting industrial training as a means for social mobility in the 1850s and 1860s to its culmination in a comprehensive cultivation of the mind in his 1894 "Blessings."

Over these decades, Douglass developed a philosophy of education that was both practical and philosophical. Education was indispensable to improving one's character. It could also raise one's status in a white-dominated society. Douglass recognized that enslaved black people had been shaped for subservience under slavery, so they required access to the sort of education befitting human beings and citizens. This article will provide a close examination of Douglass's writings to show how he adapted and changed his educational program to match the progress of blacks in society. By this education he hoped to achieve an America in which both blacks and whites could possess an American identity that transcends race, governing themselves as free human beings and citizens.

My argument that Douglass began with trades and then proceeded to account for a deeper cultivation of the mind is not the framing scholars have adopted and examined in a meaningful way. In his first book on Douglass, Blight comes closest to making the same case as this article. However, his account is relegated to a single section in a three-page treatment of the general importance of education in Douglass's reform project. "Since the 1850s," Blight describes, "Douglass had advocated manual labor schools and had preached the virtues of farming for blacks."² Blight explains that this strain of Douglass's work had led to him being "often cited as a precursor of the educational and social philosophy of Booker T. Washington."³ This is an accurate assessment that will be described in more detail later in this article. Blight continues, "Although there is ample evidence for this enduring strain in Douglass' thought advanced during Reconstruction and beyond, it is equally true that emancipation invoked a deeper, more classical educational vision from Douglass." He sets the general principle well here. Douglass supported industrial education for years and saw the need for a more intellectually rigorous education to develop the mind. Blight correctly argues that Douglass's 1865 speech "The Douglass Institute" is vital to showing Douglass's more comprehensive conception of education; nevertheless, he only cites this one speech to support his assertion. He also fails to provide a sufficient assessment of the habits of character

² Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 199.

³ Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 199.

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Douglass believed would be formed under both industrial and classical approaches to education. While recognizing the dual nature of Douglass's educational philosophy, Blight does not treat the subject in depth: he simply notes there is "ample evidence" without providing examples. Nor does he account for the change in circumstances that corresponded to Douglass's change in emphasis on the type of education necessary for black elevation.

EDUCATION DENIED UNDER SLAVERY

Before proceeding to the analysis of Douglass's educational proposals, it is necessary to examine how Douglass's personal experience as an enslaved person shaped his views on why education is a core component of human freedom. Slavery intentionally transformed a man into a brute in a multitude of ways. One that is particularly emphasized by Douglass is how the institution required the enslaved to live in a state of ignorance. Education was problematic for the master because it would develop the rational capacity of the slave, and this would inevitably lead to resistance to the master's arbitrary, unjust rule over him. Douglass's desire for knowledge while he was a slave would shape his efforts to promote the education of blacks in the succeeding decades. In his telling, anything that led a slave to view himself beyond the borders of the master's domicile would pose an existential threat to slavery. This would remain the case even after slavery if educational opportunities were not given to the formerly enslaved people. Douglass made his claim about ignorance breeding subservience based on his firsthand experience. A telling example is his story about Sophia Auld. Douglass explained that Sophia, wife of master Hugh, had no slaves before her marriage, and she had made a living on her own. Sophia initially treated Douglass as she would a white child. Hugh Auld would soon initiate her into the ways of the slave system and change her character for the worse, demonstrating the necessity of slavery to degrade all parties involved.⁴ Sophia had introduced Douglass to the alphabet and taught him to spell simple words when her husband intervened. In Douglass's account, Hugh Auld exclaimed, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world."⁵ Douglass continually described how

⁴ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, ed. John W. Blassingame, Peter P. Hinks, and John R. McKivigan, in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Two: Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999–2012), 1:30–33.

⁵ Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Two*, 3:31.

slavery depended upon the white man's claim that the black man was not fully human. Auld's argument for why a slave cannot be educated refutes his argument that a slave is subhuman. Blight conveys the significance of this part of Douglass's story: "With his quest for literacy and the liberation of his mind, Douglass turned his own youth into one of the most profound meditations ever written on the character and the meaning of slavery, of the slaveholders' mentality, and of human nature itself."⁶ In Douglass's formulation, an enslaved person could not be educated because it would enable him to conceive of himself as a human being. He thought man was suited for freedom by nature, and he had to be habituated to live in a system of servility. Sophia Auld similarly had to be educated in the ways of a slaveholder to no longer treat young Douglass as a normal child.

Slavery depended on circumventing the rational nature of both master and slave, making both unfit for freedom. However, it could not change the human natural impulse for freedom and knowledge. Nicholas Buccola describes Douglass's argument on why this is the case: "Slaves are fit to be free because they are endowed with reason, possess the ability to tell right from wrong, and have free will to choose how they will act. Douglass believed that although slaves were raised in extraordinarily inhumane conditions, they retained their humanity and would, once liberated, be fit for self-government."⁷ Douglass's rational capacity was evident in his own quest for knowledge, even when his inclination to pursue knowledge was subverted under slavery. He recognized the importance of education to view himself as a person, although he had been told he was fit only for servitude by nature as a child. The lengths he went to attain knowledge reveal something about his nature that was opposed to servility. Valerie Smith notes that "the young boy does not yet understand the explicit connections between freedom and literacy, but he is inspired to learn to read and write by every means available to him."⁸ We could also apply Smith's assessment to the black Americans Douglass sought to help after emancipation. For Douglass, freedom was not simply the absence of chattel slavery. Rather, freedom entailed respect for oneself, and this would be attained through the cultivation of one's talents. Black people who did this would

⁶ Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 40.

⁷ Nicholas Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass: In Pursuit of American Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 33.

⁸ Valerie Smith, "Born into Slavery: Echoes and Legacies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177.

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effectively counter the racist claim that they were unfit for citizenship due to an inherent inequality.

A reappraisal of oneself as a human being and citizen was necessary for blacks to be free in fact rather than simply on paper. However, this would prove to be very difficult. Buccola concludes, "The absence of a sense of possibility and hope, the very things that fuel the human desire for freedom, leaves the slave in a condition of deep despair."⁹ Douglass's own rise from slave to prominent orator revealed that the dehumanizing effects of slavery could be overcome, and he used his story to help blacks transcend this sense of despair to conceive of themselves as possessing the natural right to liberty. Scholars have done well in providing accounts of this and other formative experiences for the young Douglass; however, they have not sufficiently linked this personal desire for knowledge with his more practical work for education for black Americans. A good example of this is Peter Myers, who writes, "By learning what slaveholders opposed or what slavery systematically negated, Douglass learned what to affirm."¹⁰ While Myers is certainly correct, this article will fill a gap in scholarship by connecting Douglass's positive ideas of what to affirm to his lengthy and evolving project for black education. Hardly a peripheral goal, it was a primary focus for nearly five decades.

STRIVING FOR MORE THAN MENIAL WORK

Douglass consistently urged black people to actively strive for elevation beyond their present circumstances. He made this plea even while the circumstances for free blacks was not ideal, and slavery remained legal throughout the South. It was no small request at the time, but his striving for knowledge and personal freedom while enslaved could serve as an inspiration to his audience. The literacy rate of free black people conveys the context of Douglass's appeal to free blacks. From 1840 to 1930, the US Census, the only large-scale measure of literacy, asked whether people older than age 10 in the house were literate. In 1850, before Emancipation, it reported that "36% of free Blacks were illiterate."¹¹ Scholars estimate that "illiteracy among slaves was ... 90%."¹² For Douglass, literacy was necessary for freedom, and

⁹ Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 27.

¹⁰ Peter C. Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 20-21.

¹¹ Dale J. Cohen, Sheida White, and Steffaney B. Cohen, "Mind the Gap: The Black-White Literacy Gap in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy and Its Implications," *Journal of Literacy Research* 44, no. 2 (June 2012): 125.

¹² Cohen, White, and Cohen, "Mind the Gap," 124.

too many free blacks were illiterate. He told black people that they would need to take an active role in bettering themselves, including laboring for their rights and educating their children. As he argued in an 1848 editorial, “We deserve no earthly or heavenly blessing, for which we are unwilling to labor. For our part, we despise a freedom and equality obtained for us by others, and for which we have been unwilling to labor. A man who would not labor to gain his rights, is a man who would not, if he had them, prize and defend them.”¹³ Douglass thought they had to understand the value of freedom for it to be maintained. He acknowledged that formal institutions of learning were not sufficiently accessible, so he encouraged black parents to do what they could to improve their own knowledge within the family structure: “Let us educate our children, even though it should us subject to a coarser and scantier diet, and disrobe us of our few fine garments. ‘For the want of knowledge we are killed all the day.’ Get wisdom—get understanding, is a peculiarly valuable exhortation to us, and the compliance with it is our only home in this land.”¹⁴ Black people must conceive of themselves as free people to be able to live freely in America. This would require them to fulfill Douglass’s exhortation to “get wisdom.” Douglass believed blacks could live as people of decent character even while they were not able to access the same schoolhouse as whites. As he explained, “Our oppressors have divested us of many valuable blessings and facilities for improvement and elevation; but, thank heaven, they have not yet been able to take from us the privileges of being honest, industrious, sober and intelligent.”¹⁵ Douglass thought they could still improve themselves if they made a concerted effort to act as individuals possessing good character, and this accent on the individual would be a consistent element of his appeals to free blacks before and after national emancipation.

In Douglass’s writings, the importance of black workers doing their jobs well to elevate their status in a white-dominated society cannot be overstated. He thought blacks needed to receive industrial training first to be able to labor in more skilled occupations appropriate for a free person instead of being relegated to menial tasks easily performed by anyone who was physically able. He argued that a sense of self-worth could be attained through hard work, specifically when engaging in worthwhile trades: “It is impossible for us to attach too much

¹³ Douglass, “What are the Colored People Doing for Themselves?” *The North Star*, July 14, 1848, in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 5 vols. (New York: International Publisher, 1950), 1:316.

¹⁴ Douglass, “What are the Colored People Doing for Themselves?” 319.

¹⁵ Douglass, “What are the Colored People Doing for Themselves?” 319–20.

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importance to this aspect of the subject. Trades are important. Wherever a man may be thrown by misfortune, if he has in his hands a useful trade, he is useful to his fellow man, and will be esteemed accordingly; and of all men in the world who need trades we are the most needy.”¹⁶ Douglass believed that material independence was necessary for black people to later be able to pursue higher endeavors on a greater scale. He stressed that meaningful improvement would come when a broad base of the free black population could demonstrate they were capable workers and then carry themselves as community members worthy of respect. While Douglass acknowledged that the negative view of blacks held by whites was rooted in prejudice instead of truth, he had to adapt a strategy to effectively counter this prejudice. He gave examples of menial labors blacks commonly performed which could soon be deemed unnecessary by whites: “A man is only in a small degree dependent on us when he only needs his boots blacked, or his carpet bag carried; as a little less pride, and a little more industry on his part, may enable him to dispense with our services entirely.”¹⁷ Douglass thought that blacks’ status in society would be improved if whites perceived them to be an integral part of the community, and this could most immediately be done through engaging in a trade.

Black people needed to produce goods themselves instead of caring for goods produced and owned by others. Douglass wanted them to look forward to a better future, and he thought this would only occur when they first realized why they needed to engage in more lasting professions. “What shall a large class of our fellow countrymen do,” asked Douglass, “when white men find it economical to black their own boots, and shave themselves? What will they do when white men learn to wait on themselves? We warn you brethren, to seek other and more enduring vocations.”¹⁸ Blacks were relegated to the jobs that most people could do on their own without any special training, he argued. The problem was not simply that their jobs could be easily replaced but also that it would further a narrative that blacks were unable to perform skilled labor and pursue higher professions. Peter Myers describes why Douglass so fervently opposed menial employment: “They were especially to be avoided in a climate of opinion in which African Americans’ relative confinement to such occupations

¹⁶ Douglass, “An Address to the Colored People of the United States,” *The North Star*, September 29, 1848, in *Life and Writings*, 1:334.

¹⁷ Douglass, “An Address to the Colored People of the United States,” 335.

¹⁸ Douglass, “An Address to the Colored People of the United States,” 335.

perpetuated the prejudice that as a class, they were naturally capable of no more demanding and elevating work.”¹⁹ Douglass thought proficiency in a dignified occupation elevated the individual and the race. This argument for trade education is reasonable given the conditions black people faced. However, Waldo Martin objects to Douglass’s industrial training proposals: “Ironically, Douglass’s blatantly color-conscious call for mechanical training among black youth in particular, by possibly separating them off into a special mechanical education track, contradicted and might have impeded the egalitarian goals of an integrated public school education.”²⁰ Martin views the argument for industrial training as insufficient for the integrated public schools that Douglass thought to be the ideal. It is true that Douglass’s work for trades could be viewed as base or quaint today, but Douglass sincerely thought he was devising a workable path to elevation given the suboptimal circumstances. This industrial education was a necessary step because it would help blacks attain a better standing in society and improve the prospects for integrated education.

To be clear, Douglass did not argue that black people should only engage in trade work, but he did maintain that a greater number of black tradesmen was vital to improving the condition of the race generally. These trades represented the sort of work that most free men of other races did in America, and he did not view them as insignificant or base. Rather, Douglass thought that black people who engaged in trades demonstrated their manhood to a white populace disinclined to view them as men. In his speech “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Douglass asked why black people must prove their manhood when they have shown themselves to be capable workers in various fields: “Is it not astonishing ... while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men ... living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian’s God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!”²¹ Douglass provided a long list of occupations that blacks had already been performing, from farm work to building infrastructure to law and medicine. Those who possessed talent had shown themselves capable of doing the same work as whites. However,

¹⁹ Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 179.

²⁰ Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 192.

²¹ Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame, 4 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 2:370.

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they did not have the equal opportunity to excel in the numbers Douglass believed they would in the future.

The lower status of black people in America was not due to some fault within their nature, as alleged by certain whites. They could do the same work, raise stable families, and worship the same God as whites because they were human beings naturally suited to do so. For Douglass, this similarity was what was worth mentioning, not scientific efforts to perceive racial difference. As he declared in an 1854 commencement address, "I say it is remarkable—nay, it is strange that there should arise a phalanx of learned men—speaking in the name of *science*—to forbid the magnificent reunion of mankind in one brotherhood."²² This brotherhood that Douglass sought to cultivate rested on the assertion that human beings were fundamentally equal in their natures: "[Man's] speech, his reason, his power to acquire and to retain knowledge, his heaven-erected face, his habitudes, his hopes, his fears, his aspirations, his prophecies, plant between him and the brute creation, a distinction as eternal as it is palpable."²³ Douglass believed that human beings were defined by their rational nature and moral capacity. All human beings were endowed by their creator with certain characteristics that make them distinct from the other animals. Gayle McKeen offers a simple but generally accurate statement on Douglass's conception of race: "For Douglass, race was an incidental and not essential characteristic of individuals."²⁴ Douglass thought that one's status as a human being was of far greater significance than ethnic background, and the emphasis on particular races led to unnecessary conflict generally designed to promote a superior and inferior race.

Waldo Martin objects to Douglass's downplaying of racial identity. He argues that Douglass wanted blacks to progress, but he also required them to make some sacrifices relating to their identity and culture: "In his view, Negro Americans, notably the southern Negro, constituted mostly a landless and oppressed peasantry in need of social, economic, and political opportunity. The major cultural issue, according to Douglass, was Afro-American acculturation to Anglo-American values, norms, and institutions."²⁵ Martin

²² Douglass "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address Delivered in Hudson, Ohio on 12 July 1854," *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One*, 2:503–504.

²³ Douglass "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered," 502.

²⁴ Gayle McKeen, "Whose Rights? Whose Responsibility? Self-Help in African-American Thought," *Polity* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 413.

²⁵ Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 222.

believes that Douglass wanted blacks to shed their distinct culture to better fit within white society, thus he put the burden on the oppressed people. But this is not an accurate depiction of what Douglass sought. He did not think blacks should act “more white” and shed their distinct culture. Rather, Douglass thought he was seeking for blacks what was best by nature for human beings generally in his promotion of the character required for self-government. Martin is wrong to claim that Douglass’s program resulted from an “Anglo-European cultural bias.”²⁶ Material and moral prosperity were good for human beings regardless of race.

EARLY ARGUMENTS FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

While Douglass did highlight how some blacks had been able to prove themselves as apt workers in a variety of fields, the number of them who had done so was insufficient. The solution was not simply for more black people to pursue higher education. On the contrary, Douglass argued in 1853’s “Learn Trades or Starve!” that pursuing academic knowledge was counterproductive at this stage for many people. There were other more pressing skills they needed to learn as they transitioned to live in a position of freedom. While Douglass fervently argued that blacks were equal human beings by nature, this editorial focused on how people are valued by others for what they do in practice. A prejudiced white person would not be swayed by a rational argument stating why black people were human beings of equal worth. The white man needed to be shown what the black man could do in order to disprove prejudice. Douglass explained that going to work would be the solution: “We tell you to go to work; and to work you must go or die. Men are not valued in this country, or in any country, for what they *are*; they are valued for what they can *do*. It is in vain that we talk about being men, if we do not do the work of men.”²⁷ Much like he had argued in 1848, he emphasized why blacks must work to prove their value in society and to learn new skills to permit them to do more than menial jobs: “We must do that we can *do* as well as *be*; and to this end we must learn trades. When we can build as well as live in houses; when we can *make* as well as *wear* shoes; when we can produce as well as consume wheat, corn and rye—then we shall become valuable to society.”²⁸ The importance of making the things necessary

²⁶ Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 224.

²⁷ Douglass, “Learn Trades or Starve!” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, March 4, 1853, in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 2:224.

²⁸ Douglass, “Learn Trades or Starve!” 224.

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for life cannot be overstated. Black people, in Douglass's estimation, needed to shape raw materials into products they could use and sell, permitting them to be more self-sufficient and engage in commerce with whites, which would breed better relations between the races. This principled argument for racial elevation through trades prefigures the work of one of Douglass's successors as another advocate for his race, Booker T. Washington. Peter Myers succinctly compares Douglass's argument for trades to Washington's: "The learning of trades was for Douglass what it was for Washington—an imperative of self-defense and a broadly accessible means of cultivating some essential liberal virtues, such as industry and self-reliance."²⁹ Douglass agreed with Washington on the need for trades as a means of self-improvement, but Douglass also offered a deeper account of the human person in his educational philosophy that extended well beyond trades.

According to Douglass, a more general diffusion of education in the higher fields of knowledge would have to wait. As Waldo Martin explains, "He thought a mechanical education more relevant than a classical education to the need of a people, like Negroes, struggling to overcome the impact of slavery."³⁰ In fact, Douglass argued that blacks who were classically educated faced particular hardships of their own. Since they were deemed members of an inferior race, they would have to fight to work in occupations that correlated to their allegedly lower intellectual capacities. "An educated colored man, in the United States," Douglass elaborated, "unless he has within him the heart of a hero, and is willing to engage in a life-long battle for his rights, as a man, finds new inducements to remain in this country."³¹ The best and brightest will face obstacles in an acute manner. For Douglass, they had a special role in persuading other blacks to elevate themselves using the means available to them: "We, therefore, call upon the intelligent and thinking ones amongst us, to urge upon the colored people within their reach, in all seriousness, the duty and the necessity of giving their children useful and lucrative trades, by which they may commence the battle of life with weapons commensurate with the exigencies of the conflict."³² The average person would likely hold the most intelligent among them in esteem. Douglass wanted the best and

²⁹ Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 180; see Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 192, and Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 199.

³⁰ Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 192.

³¹ Douglass, "Learn Trades or Starve!" *Life and Writings*, 2:225.

³² Douglass, "Learn Trades or Starve!" *Life and Writings*, 2:225.

brightest to see that the most good would come when their fellow blacks received industrial training. This more educated group may have deemed industrial training as beneath them, but Douglass argued they should set aside this pride and encourage industrial training for the benefit of their race. Douglass aligns with W.E.B. Du Bois in this particular emphasis on the role of the most naturally gifted to serve as leaders for the elevation of fellow members of their race. Du Bois wrote, “The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”³³ Douglass departs from Du Bois in his belief that racial uplift would mostly arise from the bottom-up instead of the top-down, as is evident in his promotion of trades, but they did share a common view on the importance of the development of the mind as indispensable for human flourishing.

Douglass builds on the arguments of “Learn Trades or Starve!” in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe written to raise support for an industrial college. According to Benjamin Quarles, this letter was written after he visited Stowe at her home in Andover, Massachusetts: “An admirer of Douglass, and impressed by his enthusiasm for the manual labor college, she requested him to put his views in writing so that she might show the letter to interested persons abroad.”³⁴ David Blight notes that Douglass “wrote of the encounter as a magical experience.”³⁵ This letter was ostensibly written to Stowe, but it also must be viewed as targeting a white European audience who would help to fund this institution. Douglass described in great detail the problems facing black America and why an industrial college would be instrumental in solving them. The problems facing free blacks were threefold: “I assert then, that *poverty*, *ignorance* and *degradation* are the combined evil or, in other words, these constitute the social disease of the Free Colored people in the United States.”³⁶ The school Douglass envisioned would teach blacks the necessary skills to be employed in a productive job and to acquire the basic manners of civilized people. Douglass emphasized

³³ W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth” in *W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings*, ed. Nathan Huggins (New York: Library of America, 1986), 842.

³⁴ Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), 130.

³⁵ Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 247.

³⁶ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, March 8, 1853, in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Three: Correspondence*, ed. John R. McKivigan, 4 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 2:11. In “The Industrial College,” January 2, 1854, *Life and Writings*, 2:273–74, Douglass described the plight of blacks in the same terms, and he said that Stowe had decided not to support his proposal for the establishment of an industrial college.

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the need for gradual elevation instead of pursuing the highest positions immediately: "Accustomed, as we have been, to the rougher and harder modes of living, and of gaining a livelihood, we cannot, and we ought not to hope that, in a single leap from our low condition, we can reach that of *Ministers, Lawyers, Doctors, Editors, Merchants &c.*"³⁷ While in "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Douglass had mentioned that members of his race have proven themselves capable of these noble professions, he took a more measured stance in this letter to account for the general station of blacks in society in the decade before the Civil War. He explained, "These [occupations] will, doubtless, be attained by us; but this will only be, when we have patiently and laboriously, and I may add successfully, mastered and passed through the intermediate gradations of agriculture and the mechanic arts."³⁸ Douglass emphasized that he wanted no "artificial elevation" to these positions but rather a state of "fair play."³⁹ The best course to attain loftier positions would be gradual advancement instead of a top-down arrangement.

Douglass thought the black people who had attended institutions of higher education lacked some basic skills necessary for self-sufficiency. "Yet few, comparatively," he posited, "have acquired a classical education; and even this few have found themselves educated far above a living condition, there being no methods by which they could turn their learning to account."⁴⁰ They were educated for careers they may not have access to given the circumstances of the day. While there were black lawyers and ministers, Douglass claimed they were not necessarily the best in their fields. "White people will not employ them to the obvious embarrassment of their causes," he described, "and the blacks, taking their *cue* from the whites, have not sufficient confidence in their abilities to employ them."⁴¹ It was more pressing for blacks to demonstrate excellence in a given trade than be represented in higher professions. The opinion of whites regarding these black professionals would then have an impact on how blacks viewed themselves.⁴² According to Douglass, the black lawyer and

³⁷ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Three*, 2:11.

³⁸ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 11.

³⁹ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 11.

⁴⁰ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 12.

⁴¹ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 13.

⁴² See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903, in *W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings*, 363. Du Bois would coin the phrase "double consciousness" to encapsulate the phenomenon Douglass is describing here. He wrote, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."

minister were viewed as a cheaper, less capable alternative by some whites. He thought gradual elevation would help prevent this view of black professionals as an inferior option from taking greater hold. Blacks could more easily earn distinction and be perceived as excellent in the trades before contending with more established whites in loftier occupations.

Douglass said that he would leave the details of the curriculum to others, but he did have a broad conception of how the industrial college would serve its students. This would be “a college where colored youth can be instructed to use their hands, as well as their heads; where they can be put into possession of the means of getting a living whether their lot in after life may be cast among civilized or uncivilized men.”⁴³ While Douglass had focused on utility before, here he addressed how the mind would be trained while *also* preparing students for a trade. The students at the school would be free blacks, but he saw their education as vital for those who were still enslaved. “The most telling, the most killing refutation of slavery,” he argued, “is the presentation of an industrious, enterprising, thrifty, and intelligent free black population. Such a population I believe would rise in the Northern States under the fostering care of such a college as that supposed.”⁴⁴ His effort to help free blacks in the North was also a way to have the whites see blacks as human beings who were capable of citizenship. The institution of slavery in the South and the lack of equal opportunity for blacks to advance in the North were intertwined. The North had permitted slavery, and most whites there viewed blacks indifferently or negatively. Black people could apply the skills learned through industrial education in their occupations to provide a strong counter to negative stereotypes.

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOUGLASS INSTITUTE

Douglass’s 1865 speech commemorating the opening of a school named in his honor, the Douglass Institute, provides more details on why he thought industrial training remained important over a decade after he began to advocate for such training in earnest. He planned a truly comprehensive education, beyond that of developing the physical body to perform a task to earn a wage. Douglass addresses both themes in this speech and uses a loftier rhetoric than his earlier work for industrial education. In the words of David Blight, “Douglass crafted a beautiful address about the nature of education, civilization, and lives characterized by

⁴³ Douglass to Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series Three, 2:15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:16.

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pursuits of the mind and soul and not merely by laborer's brawn."⁴⁵ Black Americans who strived to learn in accordance with the cultivation of the mind and good character would help to rebuff prejudiced narratives about them. At the same time, Douglass pointed out the hardships that blacks faced when denied access to institutions of learning: "A people hitherto pronounced by American learning as incapable of any thing higher than the dull round of merely animal life ... dare here and now to establish an Institute, devoted to all the higher wants and aspirations of the human soul."⁴⁶ The founding of the Douglass Institute represented a substantial effort taken by black people to attain a better life for themselves. Douglass noted a shift in their mindset: "It implies that the colored people of Baltimore not only have the higher qualities attributed to the white race, but that they are awakening to a healthy consciousness of those qualities in themselves, and that they are beginning to see, as the dark cloud of slavery rolls away, the necessity of bringing those qualities into vigorous exercise."⁴⁷ Both the individuals who founded the school and those who wanted to attend it demonstrated that blacks were willing and able to elevate themselves and overcome the brutal existence of striving for basic subsistence they had been relegated to under slavery.

The Douglass Institute was founded in 1865 in Baltimore, Maryland. The time and location were both noteworthy: "The establishment of an Institute bearing my name by the colored people in the city of my boyhood, so soon after the act of emancipation in this State, looms before me as a *first* grand indication of progress."⁴⁸ While Douglass treats the founding of this school as a touchstone moment, the year 1865 was significant historically. The Freedmen's Bureau was established on March 3, 1865, and the Civil War officially concluded on May 26, 1865. Douglass uses a positive tone in this message delivered after Union victory, but he, with the Radical Republicans, was aware of the plight of the formerly enslaved and the need to use the mechanism of the national government to aid in the elevation of black people. The purpose of the Freedmen's Bureau was to materially aid the formerly enslaved living in the South in transition to freedom. Blight describes the conditions field agents observed in the South at the time: "Freedmen's Bureau agents reported over and

⁴⁵ Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 469, also notes that there were eight hundred people in attendance for the address.

⁴⁶ Douglass, "The Douglass Institute," October 1865, in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 4:176.

⁴⁷ Douglass, "The Douglass Institute," 177.

⁴⁸ Douglass, "The Douglass Institute," 175.

again about violence against ex-slaves, including whippings, ritualistic torture, and murders.”⁴⁹ These conditions in the Deep South were present at the same time Douglass expressed his optimism about the school. Robert Levine provides a reminder of why a school had to be established especially for blacks: “Situated at the site of a former university, the Douglass Institute was founded by a group of Baltimore African Americans with the goal of educating Black youth in a venue sheltered from the city’s pervasive anti-Black racism.”⁵⁰ Even though there was racism in the city, there was good reason for Douglass’s optimism. He was able to inaugurate an institution founded by black people for their own education. As Douglass declared, “It is an indication of the rise of a people long oppressed, enslaved and bound in the chains of ignorance, to a freer place and higher plane of life, manhood, usefulness and civilization.”⁵¹ Douglass acknowledges the adversity black people have faced due to slavery and prejudice, but he also conveys a general hope that they would be able to elevate themselves through the pursuit of education. Blight notes, “Douglass wished that separate black schools and associations were not necessary. But he accepted reality and used them as the source of a brilliant critique of racism.”⁵² It was good for all people to be better educated. For a time, this would have to be done within separate institutions.

While the Douglass Institute catered to black students specifically, Douglass wanted schools to eventually be mixed-race in composition. He viewed this assimilation as essential for whites and blacks to learn how to live together in a shared country. If whites and blacks attended separate schools, in Douglass’s estimation, the education would not be equal, and the prejudiced claim that blacks were inferior and less intelligent would be perpetuated more easily. He even claimed the interests of the poor whites and poor blacks were “identical.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 473. Douglass was certainly aware of the serious risk of black people becoming de facto re-enslaved if the country failed to see Radical Reconstruction through to its completion (471). According to Robert S. Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021), 81, Douglass’s concern that the nation would not integrate black people as citizens, was tempered by his hope based on the course of action pursued by the Radical Republicans. On the treatment black people faced at the hands of whites who did not take well to the national government enforcing emancipation, W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 673: “The unrest and bitterness of post-war lawlessness were gradually transmuted into economic pressure. Systematic effort was made by the owners to put the Negro to work, and equally determined effort by the poor whites to keep him from work which competed with them or threatened their future work and income.”

⁵⁰ Levine, *The Failed Promise*, 76.

⁵¹ Douglass, “The Douglass Institute,” *Life and Writings*, 4:176.

⁵² Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 470.

⁵³ Douglass, “Mixed Schools,” *The New National Era*, May 2, 1872, in *Life and Writings*, 4:289.

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Waldo Martin writes, "Douglass often stressed the importance of socialization and education, especially in a multiracial society like the United States, as a way to help people accept different races of people as an equal and integral part of humanity. This was particularly significant for the training of the youth."⁵⁴ Douglass thought America was rightly the home of blacks and whites. A common conception of a shared home could begin to take hold with children learning together in a shared educational enterprise. Nicholas Buccola addresses the significance of students studying in the same setting: "Douglass viewed the schoolhouse as an important site of character formation. Just being present at that site with others, he thought, could serve as the basis to strengthen the bonds of community. It was for that reason that he was so adamant about the need for racial integration."⁵⁵ Poor whites in the South had been taught that they were superior to blacks, and the best way to disprove this claim was for blacks and whites to engage as equals in the classroom at a young age. Douglass explained, "Educate the poor white children and the colored children together; let them grow up to know that color makes no difference as to the rights of a man; that both the black man and the white man are at home; that the country is as much the country of one as of the other, and that both together must make it a valuable country."⁵⁶ Douglass wanted whites and blacks both to see why each had a contribution to make in this country. They possessed the rights and corresponding duties of citizens. Part of the lower-class whites' poor treatment of blacks was an attempt to make themselves feel superior due to their own lowly status.

SUSTAINED EFFORT REQUIRED FOR MASS ELEVATION

Douglass's work for technical training depended on black people having the will to start these institutions and a desire to improve themselves individually. This concept was contained in his works on industrial schools, and Douglass addressed it in greater depth in his lecture "Self-Made Men." A human being, he argued, has a natural desire to learn, and the pursuit of knowledge offers a better understanding of oneself. Man, he said, can observe and contemplate great beauty in nature, art, and science; however, "no matter how radiant the colors, how enchanting the melody, how gorgeous and splendid the pageant; man himself,

⁵⁴ Martin, Jr. *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 134.

⁵⁵ Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 152.

⁵⁶ Douglass, "Mixed Schools," *Life and Writings*, 4:289

with eyes turned inward upon his own wondrous attributes and powers surpasses them all.”⁵⁷ Douglass raised the point of the majesty inherent in mankind at the beginning of the address to prepare his audience for the great task he would urge them to perform: Man is capable of great deeds even when such a life appears to be impossible. Other scholars have examined “Self-Made Men,” but they tend not to refer to it as part of his broader work on education. This is a mistake because the qualities Douglass said were possessed by the self-made man are promoted throughout his work on education.

Early in the speech, Douglass reminds his audience that a firm foundation in knowledge must be established to cultivate the character necessary to respond effectively to challenges that will arise in an individual's life. A human being is not like other animals because a person is not governed by instinct alone. “The importance of this knowledge is immeasurable,” Douglass elaborated, “and by no other is human life so affected and colored. Nothing can bring to man so much of happiness or so much of misery as man himself.”⁵⁸ Douglass stresses a theme that is more implicit in most of his earlier work: Happiness is attained through the pursuit of knowledge of various kinds. Man’s happiness can endure when he has this kind of self-knowledge. Man can be miserable if he does not choose to do what is natural, pleasurable, and fulfilling. It is also due to the human capacity to reason that man has a conception of the present and eternity. As Douglass explains, A human being “is the prolific constituter of manners, morals, religions and governments. He spins them out as the spider spins his web, and they are coarse or fine, kind or cruel, according to the degree of intelligence reached by him at the period of their establishment.”⁵⁹ This is in accordance with his view that one of man’s great abilities is to assess the past and use that knowledge to shape the future. The conditions of the public mind at a given time are reflected in their way of life contained in their dual roles as human beings and citizens. Douglass further describes, “It is the faith of the race that in man there exists far outlying continents of power, thought and feeling, which remain to be discovered, explored, cultivated, made practical and glorified.”⁶⁰ There was still more to learn, according to Douglass. This made the process of self-discovery rewarding to the person willing to develop his rational capacity and apply it in the conduct of

⁵⁷ Douglass, “Self-Made Men: An Address Delivered in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in March 1893,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One*, 5:547.

⁵⁸ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 547.

⁵⁹ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 548.

⁶⁰ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 548.

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his everyday life. Blight is critical of some of the rhetoric of “Self-Made Men,” arguing that it “is at times knitted together by lines that read like platitudes in a young man’s advice manual.”⁶¹ But this criticism comes from the perspective of a modern reader who finds Douglass’s emphasis on work to be quaint. A more guided interpretation will properly account for the circumstances in which Douglass spoke and his intended audience. To be sure, his emphasis on work leading to success was idealistic and aspirational, but perhaps he believed it was what his audience needed to hear to overcome the obstacles they faced.

In large part due to “Self-Made Men,” Douglass has been cited as an expositor of rugged individualism akin to contemporary libertarians, but this is an overly simplistic conclusion. He saw the bettering of each individual person as in service to mankind more broadly. Nick Bromell observes that “even in his lecture ‘Self-Made Men,’ which many readers take to be an unequivocal celebration of individualism, Douglass is careful to stress the importance of ‘inter-dependence and brotherhood’ as a *condition* of individuality.”⁶² In Douglass’s view, mankind was not and could never be completely atomized. He explained, “It must in truth be said, though it may not accord well with self-conscious individuality and self-conceit, that no possible native force of character, and no depth of wealth and originality, can lift a man into absolute independence of his fellowmen, and no generation of men can be independent of the preceding generation.”⁶³ Douglass reconciled the seeming tension between the concept of a self-made man and a social, political man with his view that man could best make himself when he learned from those who preceded him. Likewise, he needed to live in a regime in which his rights were protected so he could freely apply himself to the pursuit of knowledge.

Douglass’s point that a self-made man was not born into a lofty position certainly resonated with his audience. While he emphasized that human greatness had been an inheritance, the self-made man’s efforts are laudable because he was not given what he had: “They are the men who owe little or nothing to birth, relationship, friendly surroundings; to wealth inherited or to early approved means of education; who are what they are, without the aid of any favoring conditions by which other men usually rise in the world and achieve

⁶¹ Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 566.

⁶² Nick Bromell, *The Powers of Dignity: The Black Political Philosophy of Frederick Douglass* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 135.

⁶³ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 549.

great results.”⁶⁴ These individuals pushed through adversity in order to become men of good character and social standing. They did not necessarily have the greatest intellectual capacity by nature. As Douglass explained, there were a number of people born into a lowly station who had some capacity of genius, but this did not guarantee the advancement attained by the self-made man. “Much can certainly be said of superior mental endowments, and I should on some accounts, lean strongly to that theory,” he argued, “but for numerous examples which seem, and do, contradict it, and for the depressing tendency such a theory must have on humanity generally.”⁶⁵ He wanted people with superior natural faculties to flourish, but he thought emphasis ought not to be placed too heavily on natural mental endowments. The concept of the self-made man countered claims that one could only be successful if he were uniquely gifted, and this was in line with his advocacy for industrial education in the 1850s.

According to Douglass, the character of the self-made man is of greater importance than his natural intellectual endowments. Douglass thought a man of average faculties could attain the knowledge that would enable him to live a meaningful life. The self-made man used his capacity to reason for his own improvement to overcome adversity. Peter Myers explains, “He held self-making to be at once the basis of natural rights, a right itself, and a duty.”⁶⁶ As Myers makes clear, Douglass’s view of self-making is that it was a right that society needed to respect, and it was a duty that the individual needed to perform. Douglass did not want his audience to believe that fortune alone determined one’s lot in life. He did not want the drumbeat of whites telling blacks they were not capable of bearing the rights and privileges of equal citizenship to take such hold that they would withdraw and resign themselves. The self-made man did not want to live like a slave, and Douglass thought no one should submit to such an existence. He argued that an ordinary person and not just one with superior natural talents can choose to help himself: “From these remarks it will be evident that, allowing only ordinary ability and opportunity, we may explain success mainly by one word and that word is WORK! WORK!! WORK!!! WORK!!!!”⁶⁷ This continuous effort, Douglass thought, was the key to black people making the best of their circumstances and improving opportunities available to their posterity. He tried to encourage blacks to see that a better life

⁶⁴ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 550.

⁶⁵ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 552.

⁶⁶ Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 114.

⁶⁷ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 556.

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was possible for them even when they felt overwhelmed by the adverse circumstances they faced. This work would not be completed quickly: "Not transient and fitful effort, but patient, enduring, honest, unremitting and indefatigable work into which the whole heart is put, and which, in both temporal and spiritual affairs, is the true miracle worker. Everyone may avail himself of this marvelous power, if he will."⁶⁸ Douglass made clear that the life of a self-made man was difficult but rewarding. It was not relegated to those who were favored by fortune. It took a strong will to overcome the adverse position into which one was born.

Douglass returned to his point on how man is connected to his fellow man in this exhortation for work. If black people in a low position wanted the assistance of the then-dominant whites, they would need to show a willingness to help themselves. They could not wait for whites to give the platform from which they could more easily reach new heights. "If he waits for this, he may wait long," Douglass declared, "and perhaps forever. He who does not think himself worth saving from poverty and ignorance by his own efforts, will hardly be thought worth the efforts of anybody else."⁶⁹ Freedom, said Douglass, was not something to be simply given; it had to be earned to be made durable. Black people would be subservient in a new way if they deferred to whites instead of laboring themselves. Buccola describes how Douglass believed respect could be earned: "With strong hands *and* strong minds, Douglass thought, individuals are best equipped to operate in the world. In addition to equipping men to compete in the marketplace, the development of the mind, he believed, is a crucial part of the task of demonstrating that one is worthy of concern and respect."⁷⁰ Douglass envisioned a black populace that believed in their own capacity for self-improvement and reformulated society's conception of their capabilities in the process.

Douglass emphasized how consistent work for oneself is indispensable, and he exhorted American society to assess the progress of black people in light of the lower starting point from which they came. He wanted blacks to be given "fair play," a phrase he used in the letter to Stowe as well as this speech. "For any adjustment of the seals of comparison," he explained, "fair play demands that to the barbarism from which the negro started shall be added two hundred years heavy with human bondage."⁷¹ This is not to say that Douglass

⁶⁸ Douglass, "Self-Made Men," 556.

⁶⁹ Douglass, "Self-Made Men," 556.

⁷⁰ Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 151.

⁷¹ Douglass, "Self-Made Men," 557.

thought black people in America should always be treated differently because they had been enslaved. The best solution society could give would be to open up opportunities for the sort of men he described throughout the speech: “The nearest approach to justice to the negro for the past is to do him justice in the present. Throw open to him the doors of the schools, the factories, the workshops, and of all mechanical industries.”⁷² These are types of knowledge that Douglass believed could permit a dignified existence in a free society. Myers concludes, “In demanding fair play, Douglass insisted on the duties of both parties.”⁷³ In other words, Douglass thought both races had important roles to play in the elevation of blacks in America to a more equal station.

Douglass did not ask America to simply give blacks a better position in society. Rather, he wanted them to have greater access to opportunities to improve themselves: “For his own welfare, give him a chance to do whatever he can do well. If he fails then, let him fail! I can, however, assure you that he will not fail.”⁷⁴ It was best for black people to believe they were capable of helping themselves, and Douglass believed they were. He argued they had already demonstrated their capacities to be industrious and acquisitive, but they could do even better if they had access to equal resources. Douglass declared of the black man, “In a thousand instances has he verified my theory of self-made men. He well performed the task of making bricks without straw: now give him straw. Give him all the facilities for honest and successful livelihood, and in all honorable avocations receive him as a man among men.”⁷⁵ Douglass thought more blacks could live in a dignified way if their desire to work and cultivate skills was further encouraged instead of hampered by white society.

While emphatically arguing that a hearty work ethic was praiseworthy, Douglass did note that there were some elites who would look at the self-made man with contempt. These elites viewed someone who had gone to university to read complex books as admirable, while the self-made man was merely a laborer in comparison. However, Douglass did not think this elitism was the general sentiment of the nation: “There is a small class of very small men who turn their backs upon any one who presumes to be anybody, independent of Harvard, Yale, Princeton or other similar institutions of learning. These individuals cannot believe that any

⁷² Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 557.

⁷³ Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 119.

⁷⁴ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 557.

⁷⁵ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 557.

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good can come out of Nazareth. With them, the diploma is more than the man.”⁷⁶ These men possessed the highest credentials, but Douglass considered them to be of lesser character than the self-made man. Their book learning did not inexorably translate to superior character or productivity. Douglass’s reference to Nazareth would not have been lost on his audience: these elites would have doubted that Jesus was the Son of God because Christ came from a small town. Those in the upper echelon of society were so focused on academic credentials that they would deny that the “uneducated” Jesus possessed special knowledge that all people ought to heed. The argument extends from credentials to property: Douglass wanted all white audience members to contemplate how they viewed blacks who were in a lower position. The worth of a human being should not be determined by the prestige of his degree or the size of his estate.

OVERCOMING RACIAL DIVISION THROUGH EDUCATION

“The Blessings of Liberty and Education” was one of Douglass’s last great speeches, and it is worthy of thorough examination as the culmination of his work on education. As with the address at the Douglass Institute, the occasion of this speech was the dedication of an industrial school to educate black students.⁷⁷ Douglass addressed the significance of the foundation of this school both in the progress it represented for formerly enslaved blacks and the city in which it was built. He began with a few remarks of personal introduction. This was an effective tool to remind his audience of the depths from which both he and they had come: “Fifty-six years ago to-day, it was my good fortune to cease to be a slave, a chattel personal, and to become a man. It was upon the 3rd day of September, 1838, that I started upon my little life work in the world.”⁷⁸ Douglass spoke to them in 1894 as the most famous African American orator of his day. He reminded the audience that he had risen out of slavery in order for them to believe that elevation was possible. Blight writes of the formative role of education in Douglass’s life and how he viewed it as a necessity for others: “Douglass

⁷⁶ Douglass, “Self-Made Men,” 573.

⁷⁷ Rita G. Koman, “Legacy for Learning: Jennie Dean and the Manassas Industrial School,” *OAH Magazine of History* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 37. A broad audience of black and white community leaders had come to hear Douglass speak, and the school began operating the following month with a small number of students that quickly grew: “On 1 October 1894, six pupils came to learn. The faculty consisted of a principal and three teachers, all of whom worked only for their board the first year. Within months of its opening, the school population reached seventy-five students.”

⁷⁸ Douglass “The Blessings of Liberty and Education: An Address Delivered in Manassas, Virginia, on 3 September 1894,” *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One*, 5:617.

had always been driven by the quest for knowledge; nothing had given more meaning to his life than the freedom, self-understanding, and power he had attained through language and learning.”⁷⁹ Education was not granted to Douglass formally, but on his own he found ways to attain it and a life of fulfillment after slavery. The founding of this school would give black students a place to learn that the young enslaved Douglass could only have dreamed of.

The school’s location was of note given Douglass’s reference back to his time under slavery. Manassas was one of the most famous battle sites in the Civil War. Virginia was a slave state and the governing seat of the Confederacy. It was now home to a school for black students. “Since the great and terrible battle with which its name is associated and which has now passed into history as the birth of many battles,” Douglass declared, “no event has occurred here so important in its character and influence and so every way significant, as the event which we have this day met to inaugurate and celebrate.”⁸⁰ This language may seem to be somewhat hyperbolic regarding the founding of one school, but Douglass thought this occasion was emblematic of a greater development for blacks generally. “This spot, once the scene of fratricidal war, and the witness of its innumerable and indescribable horrors, is, we hope to be hereafter the scene of brotherly kindness, charity and peace.”⁸¹ The occasion contrasted starkly with the earlier conditions blacks had faced in this same location: “It is to be the place where the children of a once enslaved people may realize the blessings of liberty and education, and learn how to make for themselves and for all others the best of both worlds.”⁸² Emancipation from enslavement attained in the war was the first step for blacks to be able to pursue the education required for true freedom, as Douglass understood the term.

The transition from slavery to liberty was happening relatively quickly, Douglass argued. While it was easy to dwell on the injustices present at the time, Douglass wanted to remind his audience of the seismic shift in circumstances that this school represented. He rhetorically asked, “Who would have imagined that Virginia would, after the agony of war, in a time so short, would become so enlightened and so liberal as to be willing and even pleased to welcome here, upon her sacred soil, a school of the children of her former slaves?”⁸³

Douglass emphasized that this change had occurred over the span of approximately thirty

⁷⁹ Blight, *Frederick Douglass’ Civil War*, 198.

⁸⁰ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 617.

⁸¹ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 617.

⁸² Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 617–18.

⁸³ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 618.

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years, which is a comparatively short time when considering the long duration of the institution of slavery.⁸⁴ Douglass's optimism about the improving status of black Americans is supported by the decline of illiteracy as the twentieth century approached: "By 1900, overall Black illiteracy had decreased to 48%, with the younger generations showing much higher literacy levels than older generations: 85% of Blacks ages 60 to 69 were illiterate, whereas 37% of Blacks ages 20 to 29 were illiterate."⁸⁵ Those who fell between ages 20 to 29 "were the first cohort born after Emancipation."⁸⁶ The change that Douglass speaks of occurred both in the South and the North, and he believed it ought to provide African Americans with a greater sense of hope. The people of Virginia had "encouraged and justified the founding of this Industrial School," while "the good people of the North have responded to the call for pecuniary aid and thus made this enterprise successful."⁸⁷ Whites in both regions wanted to help blacks access opportunities to develop their talents.

Douglass then referred to his support for industrial education decades prior to the foundation of this school. "Nearly forty years ago I was its advocate," he explained, "and at that time I held it to be the chief want of the free colored people of the North.... I saw even then, that the free negro of the North, with every thing great expected of him, but with no means at hand to meet such expectations, could not hope to rise while he was excluded from all profitable employments."⁸⁸ Douglass contended that while a black man was not a slave by law, he was not truly free because he did not have equality of opportunity. There were free blacks before the war, but most did not have the training and employment he believed were necessary for one to live as a self-governing citizen. "He was free by law," Douglass said, "but denied the chief advantages of freedom: he was indeed but nominally free; he was not compelled to call any man his master, and no one could call him slave, but he was still in fact a slave, a slave to society and could only be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water."⁸⁹ Freedom, he thought, included the potential for mobility in society. Myers concludes, "What

⁸⁴ Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," *Du Bois: Writings*, 848, provides a chart of the number of black college graduates that shows a steady increase of black graduates following Reconstruction. Before 1876, there were 137 who graduated from black colleges and 75 from white colleges. In 1895-1899 there were 475 black graduates from black colleges and 88 from white colleges.

⁸⁵ Cohen, White, and Cohen, "Mind the Gap," 125.

⁸⁶ Cohen, White, and Cohen, "Mind the Gap," 125.

⁸⁷ Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," 5:618.

⁸⁸ Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," 5:619.

⁸⁹ Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," 619.

was needed to secure the conditions of real freedom for African Americans after emancipation was a program of liberal reforms centering on the protection of formal civil and political rights (foremost among them the right to vote), including the provision of fair opportunities for acquiring property and education.”⁹⁰ The school Douglass depicted in this speech would be a refuge for blacks to learn how to best apply their skills to live as rights-bearing, property-holding citizens. It would offer an education that would comprehensively affect its students. “It is to educate the hand as well as the brain; to teach men to work as well as to think, and to think as well as to work. It is to teach them to join thought to work, and thus to get the very best result of thought and work.”⁹¹ This is an expansion of Douglass’s earlier advocacy for industrial training and the self-made man, which focused on developing skills to become more independent. With changing circumstances, Douglass added a broader formal education for blacks who would have more opportunities than in the past.

The beginning of Douglass’s speech focused on man’s unique rational capacity that permits him to be capable of doing great things, and he returns to this point after describing the sort of education the school would offer. This capacity needed to be cultivated: “In his natural condition, however, man is only potentially great. As a mere physical being he does not take high rank, even among the beasts of the field.... His true dignity is not to be sought in his arms or in his legs, but in his head.”⁹² Man is not naturally physically stronger than many animals. His potential to be great lies within the capacities of his mind, not merely the training of the body. “But if man is without education,” Douglass elaborated, “although with all his latent possibilities attaching to him, he is, as I said, but a pitiable object; a giant in body, but a pigmy in intellect, and at best but half a man.”⁹³ Douglass had witnessed such men whose intellectual capacities lay dormant under slavery. Both slave master and slave were educated in the ways of the institution instead of the free inquiry natural to human beings.

Emancipation from bondage was only the starting point for freedom. Douglass wanted whites to see the potential for free blacks in society and for them to see themselves as having a role to play in improving their country. Education in a free society was the best way for whites to perceive blacks as more than servile menial laborers. It was a necessary public good

⁹⁰ Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 148.

⁹¹ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 621.

⁹² Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 622.

⁹³ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 623.

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that American society needed to support. Concurrently, Douglass wanted black people to develop a work ethic that would be applied to bettering both their material and intellectual conditions. In one of the speech's most enduring passages, Douglass contrasted ignorance and servility with education and freedom: "Education, on the other hand, means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light by which men can only be made free. To deny education to any people is one of the greatest crimes against human nature."⁹⁴ Douglass thought the human being was at his most complete in the pursuit of knowledge. The refusal to permit blacks, or even poor whites, the means to acquire an education is to prevent them from attaining their full potential as human beings. Buccola treats the implications of Douglass's grand proclamation: "In this statement, we see Douglass articulate his belief that knowledge, freedom, and moral truth are closely related to one another. Because education serves both freedom and virtue, it is not surprising that Douglass was so deeply devoted to the idea that all individuals must be educated."⁹⁵ He thought education was possible in a free society and necessary for its perpetuation. It was good for the individual, and it was indispensable for human beings to live together, particularly in his vision of a multiethnic American society.

Blacks had been told that they were ineducable by racist whites, but Douglass thought the influence of this prejudice was waning. Americans would be willing to help blacks acquire the means to help themselves when they were shown why it benefited them. Douglass had to appeal to the interest of whites in order to sway them. He again points out that education has been withheld from blacks for a long time: Physical wrongs were "terrible enough; but deeper down and more terrible still were the mental and moral wrongs which enter into his claim for a slight measure of compensation. For two hundred and forty years the light of letters was denied him, and the gates of knowledge were closed against him."⁹⁶ The best way for black people to overcome the lingering effects of slavery was education. The state of ignorance imposed by slavery had crippled their advancement. This was, writes Buccola, a truly liberal education: "In Douglass's mind, education was linked to freedom and virtue. In order to achieve freedom, individuals must acquire the intellectual and practical skills provided by a liberal education. In order to develop the moral and civic virtues that are

⁹⁴ Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," 623.

⁹⁵ Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 153.

⁹⁶ Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education," 623.

supportive of freedom, individuals must be liberated from the vices of ignorance.”⁹⁷ In Douglass’s view, education enables a person to live as a free citizen. His educational program appeared to be relatively remedial when he talked about trades in the past, but his end goal was no less than shaping human beings to be moral and industrious.⁹⁸

While the speech is most applicable to the plight of black people in the aftermath of slavery, Douglass thought his work was in service of making America a better country for everyone. He did not want racial division to remain a source of perpetual conflict. In fact, he thought that one’s identity as a human being was more vital than his race. He explained, “Race, in the popular sense, is narrow. Humanity is broad. The one is special; the other is universal. The one is transient; the other permanent. In the essential dignity of man as man, I find all necessary incentives and aspirations to a useful and noble life.”⁹⁹ The human race is universal. The education Douglass advocated was an intrinsic good for all people. His appeal to the human being over ethnic identity was in response to African American leaders who assessed others as being a “race man” or not. Douglass concluded that the essence of a human being is not to be found in a particular race: “Neither law, learning, nor religion, is addressed to any man’s color or race. Science, education, the word of God, and all the virtues known among men, are recommended to us not as races but as men. We are not recommended to love or hate any particular variety of the human family more than any other.”¹⁰⁰ The race men who thought they were advocates for the best interests of blacks were perpetuating a prejudice of a different sort. Douglass did not question their motives, but he thought their method was fundamentally flawed. He argued, “My position is, that it is better to regard ourselves as a part of the whole than as the whole of a part. It is better to be a member of the great human family, than a member of particular variety of the human family. In regard to men as in regard to things, the whole is more than a part.”¹⁰¹ The expositors of race pride focused on themselves as a minority group to the detriment of the race they believed they were helping. Myers argues that there were times in which Douglass was a kind of “race man” in possessing a certain pride as a black man, but not to the degree Douglass said was problematic: “For Douglass, proper race pride signified a negation of racial shame

⁹⁷ Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 157.

⁹⁸ See Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*, 153.

⁹⁹ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 625.

¹⁰⁰ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 625.

¹⁰¹ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 627.

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and inferiority, not an affirmation of the right kind of racial superiority.”¹⁰² Race pride, in the moderate form described by Myers, was the belief that being a member of a particular race should not permit one to view himself as naturally superior or inferior based on his race. This interpretation certainly is applicable to Douglass, but Douglass was not a race man according to the definition of the phrase when he used it himself.

Douglass proceeded to apply a universal feature of human existence to the American context. The struggle for racial equality in America was in accordance with the quest for justice throughout human history. For Douglass, justice was not simply a reparation for ills done to his race in the past. This is clear in his refusal to align only with members of a race. Instead, he would join with whomever he thought was pursuing the right ends: “I put my foot upon the effort to draw lines between the white and the black or between blacks and so-called Afro-Americans, or race line in the domain of liberty. Whoever is for equal rights, for equal education, for equal opportunities, for all men of whatever race or color, I hail him as a ‘countryman, clansman, kinsman and brother beloved.’”¹⁰³ He believed that to be truly human was to live as a free person within a free society. Black people had long had this freedom withheld from them, but circumstances were changing at a relatively rapid pace. This school at Manassas reflected the greater assimilation between the races, which Douglass thought was both just and inevitable.

The hurdles black people experienced at this point were, in part, a response to their advancement by whites who preferred they remain in a lowly position. Douglass claimed that the whites would not care if blacks had remained in the servile position they had been in during slavery: “It is only when he acquires education, property, popularity and influence; only when he attempts to rise above his ancient level, where he was numbered with the beasts of the field, and aspires to be a man and a man among men, that he invites repression.”¹⁰⁴ The black man had proven himself desirous of the life of a human being. In response to this, the white man sought to reassert his dominance as it existed in the hierarchy of slavery. Douglass thought this tendency would be best overcome when whites saw an educated, civilized black man as representative of the qualities inherent in human beings. Slavery had separated people into two distinct races, with one being master and the other slave.

¹⁰² Myers, *Race and the Rebirth*, 172.

¹⁰³ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 627.

¹⁰⁴ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 628.

Organizing men into a majority and minority race perpetuated artificial hierarchy and prejudice. Instead, one needed to consider the character and merit of his fellow man rather than his race. Since race was not the defining characteristic of human beings, Douglass wanted members of both races to view themselves as Americans. They should make an effort to view Americans of the other race as engaged in a common political enterprise. The position of one as a human being and an American citizen could be far broader than race, and it would permit more people to live in accordance with the higher elements of their nature. Bill E. Lawson observes, “An important aspect of Douglass’s vision for African-American social progress was his belief that, at some point in time, racial differences would not matter in the lives of the majority of Americans, black or white.”¹⁰⁵ America, Douglass believed, was not a regime founded to only incorporate white people. Black people had an equally rightful claim to live as citizens. Myers describes Douglass’s view of integration: “This was the cause he embraced as his own, laboring to advance it with single mind, whole heart, and energy second to none among his own contemporaries from the beginning to the end of his six-decade career of public activism.”¹⁰⁶ Douglass wanted members of both races to think of themselves as Americans first. The appeal to one’s status as an American did not negate the past injustices directed toward black Americans, but Douglass thought it was best to place national identity above ethnic origin for American citizens to live together in concord.

“The Blessings of Liberty and Education” represents the culmination of Douglass’s educational philosophy, and the content of this speech is best understood in the context of his work on education in the preceding years. Education for black Americans was part of his goal to shape an America in which blacks and whites would be able to live as citizens in a shared country. Citizenship should not depend upon one’s race because the qualities of human beings transcend race. As Douglass said in “Blessings,” “Manhood is broad enough, and high enough as a platform for you and me and all of us. The colored people of this country should advance to the high position of the Constitution of the country. It makes no distinction on account of race or color, and they should make none.”¹⁰⁷ He wanted all

¹⁰⁵ Bill E. Lawson, “Frederick Douglass and Social Progress,” in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 366.

¹⁰⁶ Peter C. Myers, “‘A School of the Moral Education of the Nation’: Frederick Douglass on the Meaning of the Civil War,” in *The Political Thought of the Civil War*, ed. Alan Levine, Thomas W. Merrill, and James R. Stoner, Jr. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 370.

¹⁰⁷ Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” 625.

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Americans to live a life befitting their rational nature and moral capacity. This would be possible when they received a comprehensive education. Manhood was greater than race, and he wanted society to move away from the particulars of race that had sown division to instead focus on the qualities inherent in human beings. The Constitution was made for a people whose potential could only be fully realized within a political society in which rights and privileges were granted equally to all citizens. Douglass provided the model for an education in which black Americans specifically could improve their material circumstances and cultivate their talents in the aftermath of slavery to be able to live as fulfilled human beings and citizens.

Folly in the Pacific: How America's Interventionist Policy in China Provoked the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor

Josiah Lippincott

World War II decisively altered the world order. This essay explores the roots of America's involvement in that conflict. Describing itself in clear opposition to the American Founders' views of neutrality and diplomacy, the late nineteenth-century progressive view of foreign policy directly led to America's involvement in the Philippines, China, and the Far East. Those interventions ultimately led to Pearl Harbor by placing American projects for global uplift on a collision course with Imperial Japanese geopolitical interests in their near abroad. In what is meant to be a provocative and original argument, this article makes the case that by following the Founders' foreign policy the United States could have avoided the War in the Pacific altogether.

World War II represents a decisive turning point in the structure of the international order. The conflict reduced the once-dominant imperial European powers to secondary players. Out of the ashes rose a new and radically different international arrangement characterized in the West by American hegemony, free trade, mass immigration, international mediating institutions, and the elevation of democracy, ethnic self-determination, and colonial liberation as guiding principles. This new international regime has been called, in turn, “globalism,” “liberal democracy,” or “neoliberalism.”¹ Regardless of the name, this new unipolar world order, in the decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has come to dominate the planet culturally, economically, and politically. In order to understand the true nature of this new global regime it is necessary to return to its origin. The birthplace of this American hegemony is World War II. The birthplace of American involvement in World War II was the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. That attack was the fruit of decades of the United States' Far East policy. It could have been prevented. Had Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his cabinet followed the foreign policy of the American Founders, as enshrined by the Declaration of Independence, they could have avoided war with the Empire of Japan altogether without jeopardizing national security.

¹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

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By intervening in the Far East to protect Chinese sovereignty under the Open Door Policy from 1899 onward, the United States sacrificed the freedom of action inherent in the Founders' foreign policy. By dedicating themselves to the enforcement of the Open Door Policy, FDR and his fellow liberal internationalists chose to go to war against Japan. From the standpoint of the Founders' principles, therefore, the United States' involvement in the Pacific War was unnecessary and unjust.

The consensus view today is that the Pacific War was a righteous crusade against evil. Victor Davis Hanson, in his book *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won*, gives a good summary of this contemporary historical consensus. Hanson holds that Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany were the central actors in the conflict. He argues that the global war began with the German invasion of Poland in 1939, as opposed to the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, or the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, all of which could plausibly lay claim to the moment when the series of conflicts that make up the war either began or began to be truly global.² Hanson argues that WWII was a typical western war that was fought by men “who went to war, fought, and forged a peace according to time-honored precepts.”³ He criticizes neutrality as a political policy: “Being neutral is by design a choice, with results that either harm or hurt the particular belligerents in question—with neutrality almost always aiding the aggressive carnivore, not its victim.”⁴ For Hanson, the cause of WWII was Axis aggression, and American involvement was both justified and good. His condemnation of American neutrality is a condemnation of the America First movement and of the older American orientation against intervention in European and Asian conflicts.

H.P. Willmott, in his book *The Great Crusade*, gives another mainstream account of WWII.⁵ Willmott, more than Hanson, stresses that the war was a break with the older order; it was not simply another conflict in the tradition of western war. Willmott identifies the break but believes it to be justified and good. He concludes that even though the aftermath of the war in the Pacific was brutal, the wars of liberation birthed in the trail of the conflict

² Victor Davis Hanson, *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 19.

³ Hanson, *The Second World Wars*, 19.

⁴ Hanson, *The Second World Wars*, 35.

⁵ H.P. Willmott, *The Great Crusade: A New Complete History of the Second World War*, rev. ed. (Williamsport, MD: Potomac Books, 2008).

would have been infinitely crueler had they taken place under Japanese, as opposed to American, occupation.

Hanson's criticism of neutrality as a policy shows that he misunderstands the western way of war as it was understood by the Founders and by European international law jurists from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries. Willmott more accurately understands that WWII and the view of justice embodied by the victors represents a decisive break with the older order. His claim that this break was good and justified, however, is open to serious criticism. The rise of the Soviet Union and global communism in the aftermath of the war should give pause to those who view WWII as a simple morality play. Contra Hanson and Willmott, the Pacific War was not a righteous crusade of good against evil but the result of FDR's administration becoming deeply involved in a complex geopolitical situation that had no direct bearing on American national security. The Japanese believed they had serious national interests in the Far East. The United States, had it adhered to its Founding principles, would have declined any role in adjudicating those interests.

America's involvement in the Pacific in World War II came at a cost. The crusade against the Japanese Empire required an alliance with the ideological tyranny of the Soviet Union which intentionally killed and imprisoned the innocent on a massive scale both at home and abroad. At the end of war, the Soviet empire stretched from Sakhalin Island in the Pacific to the Elbe River in Germany. China, on whose behalf America had originally antagonized Japan, fell to communist hands. American liberal democracy, in the end, became just another faction in the global conflict between the global Right and the global Left in what James Burnham called the "struggle for the world."⁶

The mythology of WWII as a righteous moral crusade ignores the dramatic departure from the nation's Founding principles present in FDR's foreign policy in the Far East. The Declaration of Independence contains a succinct overview of this older tradition. The Declaration argues that America deserves, like other countries, a "separate and equal station" among the powers of the earth. Each nation is sovereign unto itself, not subject to the whims of others. Nations have a right to this freedom not by human convention, but by the "Laws of Nature." The Founder's understanding of the proper orientation of nations to one another is contained in the document's penultimate paragraph, in which the Americans declare that

⁶James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), 1.

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at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, they will hold the British “as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.” American foreign policy, in the view of the Declaration, is fundamentally non-interventionist. America has no more right to deny another power a “separate and equal station” than the British had to deny America such a right. As John Quincy Adams noted in his Fourth of July address in 1821, America’s principles prevented her from going abroad in search of monsters to destroy. America would be the “well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all” but “is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”⁷ Adams makes clear that it is not America’s job to defend the rights or sovereignty of other nations:

She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom.

Adams’s warning predicted the outcome of American policy toward China in the early twentieth century.

Elite opinion by the end of the nineteenth century had distanced itself from the Founding’s older framework.⁸ The emerging consensus of the progressive era embraced the view that America should act as a benevolent hegemon with a central role in managing world affairs. The end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 provided an opportunity to put this new understanding into practice. It was then that the United States acquired colonies for the first time. Chief among these new territories were the Philippines. America now had a decisive interest in the Far East. The Philippines could serve as a “hitching post” on the way to the real goal: China.⁹ American interest in China developed slowly. At first, most American interest in China was religious: missionaries came there to spread the Gospel. Later, this interest became increasingly commercial. The American Asiatic Association formed in June of 1898 to argue for increased access to Chinese markets for American industries, especially steel, textiles, and oil. At an Association dinner in January, 1900, Charles Denby Jr., the

⁷ John Quincy Adams, “July 4, 1821: Speech to the U.S. House of Representatives on Foreign Policy,” *Presidential Speeches*, millercenter.org, University of Virginia.

⁸ See John Grant, “Theodore Roosevelt, Imperial Uplift, and the Transformation of American Foreign Policy,” *Pietas* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2023): 51–80.

⁹ John Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes: The Life of John Hay, from Lincoln to Roosevelt* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 331.

former American minister to China, gave a speech in which he lauded China as an “Eldorado of commerce.”¹⁰ He noted that American imports to China were doubling yearly under the McKinley administration. But for Denby, America shouldn’t just embed herself more deeply in the Far East to make money. Western civilization and Christianity would also benefit from increased ties. In Denby’s formulation, “teach a Chinaman English and you make him a new man.”¹¹ Denby tied his call for more American intervention to national pride. America, he claimed, was a “great nation” and it was “not for us to stand aside like a poor boy at a frolic when international questions are on the tapis.”¹² Denby’s speech concluded by tying America’s China policy to the colony in the Philippines. Forty years later, Henry Stimson, FDR’s Secretary of War, would do the same in a letter to the *New York Times* demanding an embargo of Japan.¹³ As Denby’s comments illustrate, America’s involvement in the Far East was a product of a longing for new markets, Christian evangelization, and a newfound sense that America was a great power with a right to help settle international questions, especially those relating to China.

The Open Door Policy, which Denby praises implicitly, was the beginning of American management of affairs in the Far East. China’s decline throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), caused a scramble among the Great Powers to seize newly available Chinese territory and assets for their own ends. This is the “frolic” that Denby did not want to “stand aside” from. China had been in collapse for a long time. In the mid-nineteenth century, she had lost the two Opium Wars to the combined might of Britain and France.¹⁴ In the 1860s, the nation suffered through the brutal ravages of the Taiping Rebellion in which scholars estimate at least some 20–30 million died.¹⁵ The result of China’s defeats at the hands of the European powers resulted in the British and French imposing a “treaty port” system to benefit their own trade with China and establish privileged footholds within the Chinese political order. They also imposed tariffs

¹⁰ “American-Asiatic Dinner: Wu Ting-Fang, Chinese Minister Guest of Association,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1900, 3.

¹¹ “American-Asiatic Dinner: Wu Ting-Fang, Chinese Minister Guest of Association,” 3.

¹² “American-Asiatic Dinner: Wu Ting-Fang, Chinese Minister Guest of Association,” 3.

¹³ “STIMSON ASKS CURB ON ARMS TO JAPAN: Extension of ‘Moral Embargo’ Urged to Impress on Tokyo the Sentiment in U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1940, 1.

¹⁴ SCM Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

¹⁵ Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), xxiii.

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on China, which they collected and managed themselves.¹⁶ Buried in these treaties were provisions for the extra-territoriality of certain foreigners.¹⁷ These treaties stripped China of the key marker of sovereignty: the ability to enforce the rule of its own laws within its borders. China's decline was in full swing.

At the end of the nineteenth century, China lost both the Sino-French War (1883-85) and the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). Foreign powers rushed to fill the void with ever greater energy. In 1891, Russia announced plans to build a Trans-Siberian railway through Manchuria. This railway would allow the mass movement of troops into China that no other power could hope to match.¹⁸ In addition to constructing new rail lines, the Russians tightened their grip on the Liao-tung Peninsula and leased the Talienwan and Port Arthur naval bases from the Chinese.¹⁹ The Germans took over the port of Tsingtao in the South and secured railroad and mining rights. The British, in addition to the dozen treaty ports it had established in China in the mid-nineteenth century, also carved out a base at Weihaiwei. France moved northward from Indochina by leasing the Kwangchow port on the Luichow Peninsula.

American elites, guided by the widely shared sentiments of men like Charles Denby, wanted similar access to China's resources. But America lacked the imperial will to take them outright. President William McKinley, historian John Taliaferro writes, was uncertain about America's role in China: in McKinley's view, "to join in the gluttony for territory seemed demeaning and in some respects more badly colonialistic than annexation of the Philippines."²⁰ The chords of restraint tying McKinley to America's older international tradition were frayed but still retained some hold over American policy. The history of the early twentieth century is the story of the Progressive effort to finally snap them all together.

McKinley, for his part, left the task of forming a China policy to his Secretary of State, John Hay. Hay's attitude toward China was heavily influenced by four men: Charles Beresford, a British member of Parliament and former Admiral in the Royal Navy; Jacob Schurman, the President of Cornell University; Alfred Hhipisley, a British customs inspector

¹⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 3.

¹⁷ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 7.

¹⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 7.

¹⁹ On foreign interventions in China, see Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 353-54.

²⁰ Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 356.

in China; and his old friend William Woodville Rockhill.²¹ Rockhill, the most important of the four, had studied Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan, had a long running interest in Buddhism, and had spent extensive time in the Far East. Beresford was the first to pitch to Hays the idea that America should adopt an “open door policy” toward China that would guarantee free and equal trade for all great powers along with Chinese independence. Rockhill, at Hay’s direction, took these ideas, along with input from Hippisley and Schurman’s travels on the continent, and he included it in the memorandum that eventually became the first Open Door Note.²² In September 1899, Hay took the document Rockhill had written and issued it to the British, Germans, Russians, Japanese, French, and Italians.²³ This first note insisted only on equal trading rights for all powers operating in China. Hay made no mention of Chinese sovereignty.

This small clique had set in motion a monumental shift in American foreign policy. America had fully inserted itself into the question of a foreign nation’s internal and external trade. Though the Open Door Note did not have the force of law, it bore moral weight. Hay engaged in significant diplomatic maneuvering to ensure other powers with an interest in China signed on. Regardless of immediate effects, the note signaled the United States’ interest in the region. America, which had grown to power staying out of the international fray, had finally joined it. China, it should be noted, had had no role in shaping this policy. Wu T’ing-fang, the Chinese minister in Washington, learned about the note in the newspaper.²⁴ American benevolent hegemony did not involve consent.

The American role in China expanded dramatically after the Boxer Rebellion. In late 1899, shortly after the release of the First Open Door Note, Chinese reactionaries began attacking foreigners, especially missionaries, in an attempt to restore China to pre-eminence. The Legation Quarter, home to numerous foreigners in Peking, was put under siege by the Boxers in June 1900. In response, the United States dispatched some six thousand Marines to help the other foreign powers lift the siege and rescue their citizens trapped within the Legation. Hay feared this incident might be used by the other powers to increase their territories in China, break it up completely, and afterward bar America from the equal trade

²¹ Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 356

²² Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 360.

²³ Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 360.

²⁴ Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes*, 364.

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emphasized in the first Open Door Note. In response, he crafted the Second Open Door Note, again with the help of William Rockhill. This time, Hay explicitly promised that America would honor, protect, and “preserve Chinese territorial and administrative” integrity.²⁵ That promise to protect Chinese sovereignty became the bedrock principle of American policy toward China. It was later codified in Article I of the Nine-Power Treaty signed in Washington, D.C., in 1922.²⁶

Secretary Hay had, without knowing it, set America on a collision course with Japan. Like China, Japan had spent much of its history isolated from the West. In 1854, Commodore Perry of the US Navy forced Japan out of its self-imposed isolation after Japan's mistreatment of America sailors had reached the point, in the minds of American policymakers, of requiring a response.²⁷ The opening of Japan made clear to the Japanese leadership class that their own social order was no longer capable of meeting foreign challenges. Perry's expedition unintentionally set off a cultural revolution in Japan the consequences of which would radically alter the Japanese political position in the Far East. Confronted with the possibility of being conquered by the West due to its technological backwardness (much like its neighbor China), Japanese leaders embarked on a program of westernization. This included a military build-up and an expansion into neighboring territories such as the island of Formosa.

Japanese leaders feared they would be conquered without an empire of their own to rival that of European powers in the region.²⁸ In Korea in the late 1880s, internal dissension among the ruling class caused destabilization of the regime. The Japanese dispatched troops to protect their investments (much as the British had already done) in order to set up a treaty port and tariff collection system.²⁹ An unstable or conquered Korea was a historical threat to Japan. The short distance across the straits of Tsushima made it an ideal location for launching attacks on the main islands. Indeed, it was from Korea that the Mongol invaders in 1281 had launched their ultimately thwarted attack on the Japanese main islands.³⁰ The

²⁵ “Hay's Second ‘Open Door’ Note,” in *Selected Readings in American History*, ed. Theodore Calvin Pease and A. Selwew Roberts (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), 632.

²⁶ “Nine-Power Treaty,” United States Treaties and Other International Agreements, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0375.pdf>.

²⁷ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 3.

²⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 3.

²⁹ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 10.

³⁰ Stephen Turnbull, *The Mongol Invasions of Japan 1274 and 1281* (New York: Osprey, 2010), 71.

First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War both occurred due to perceived threats to the Japanese defensive foothold on the Asian mainland. By the 1930s, the Japanese once again perceived their national security and economic position to be at risk unless they conquered deeper into China. An inability to feed its growing population, the international economic collapse in the 1920s, and growing militarism among the young all played significant roles in Japan's decision in 1931 to invade Manchuria.³¹ As Paul Johnson points out, Japan simply followed the example set by the European powers already active on the continent by conquering more territory.³² The question before us is not whether Japanese actions was justified, but whether America had any meaningful interest in the Far East that demanded intervening in this dispute.

There was yet another cause that impelled Japan to war with America. After WWI, liberal internationalists in both Europe and America worked to implement their vision of a world governed by international institutions and diplomacy, not force. To this end, they sought to create international arms control agreements regarding naval vessels. Most important of these was the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922. That agreement, signed between the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy, limited capital ship construction for all of the signatories. Crucially, that treaty embraced a 5:5:3 ratio between the capital ships of the US, the UK, and the Empire of Japan. Japan, though an ally of the United States during WWI, was not treated as an equal of the other two great powers. One faction of Japanese naval war planners, led by Vice Admiral Kato Kanji, an ardent follower of American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, believed that Japan needed at least 70 percent of American naval power in order to deter an American attack in a hypothetical war.³³ Another faction, led by Kato Tomosaburo, both the Japanese Prime Minister and Naval Minister at the time, held that Japan could not hope to defeat the United States militarily and therefore needed to seek diplomatic solutions to potential conflict.³⁴ On that ground, Tomosaburo was willing to accept the 5:3 ratio of naval power proposed by the Americans. Tomosaburo was able to get the treaty under the 60 percent ratio signed, but

³¹ Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), 190.

³² Johnson, *Modern Times*, 190.

³³ Sado Asada, "The Revolt against the Washington Treaty: The Imperial Japanese Navy and Naval Limitation, 1921-1927," *Naval War College Review* 46, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 86.

³⁴ Asada, "The Revolt against the Washington Treaty," 86.

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anger among Japanese naval officers eventually culminated in a series of assassinations and internal political turmoil which undid his diplomatic work.³⁵ The attempt to implement arms controls in order to prevent war ended up having the exact opposite effect. By interfering with Japanese internal affairs, the liberal internationalists provoked long-lasting anger among Japanese leaders. Kato Kanji called the treaty an “unbearable humiliation” that was a product of “Anglo-American oppression” that posed a “most serious threat” to Japanese security.³⁶ The aftermath of the Washington Naval Conference was an entrenchment of naval opinion that the United States—and not Russia—was the primary enemy of Japan. The Imperial National Defense Policy of 1923, adopted by the Japanese high command just one year after the Washington Conference, stated that:

The United States, following a policy of economic invasion in China, menaces the position of our Empire and threatens to exceed the limits of our endurance.... The longstanding embroilments, rooted in economic problems and racial prejudice [discrimination against Japanese immigrants], are extremely difficult to solve.... Such being the Asiatic policy of the United States, sooner or later a clash with the United States will become inevitable.³⁷

This sharp negative turn in Japanese military policy was the direct byproduct of America's liberal elites seeking to impose their vision of a new internationalist world order on foreign powers.

Neither Japan's possession of 70 percent instead of 60 percent of America's naval strength nor its taking more territory in China threatened the rights of Americans to live in peace and freedom in their own country. That 10 percent difference in naval power and the changes in control of Chinese territory were not important to the security of the American regime. Most ordinary Americans during the 1920s and 1930s acknowledged these facts, even as Japan went to war with China and began conquering more territory in the south of the country. In January 1938—after the USS Panay Incident, in which a Japanese aircraft accidentally attacked a US gunboat carrying American personnel—70 percent of American citizens polled favored a complete withdrawal from China.³⁸

³⁵ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty,” 89.

³⁶ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty,” 87.

³⁷ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty,” 90.

³⁸ Samuel Elliot Morrison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific 1931-1942* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), 18.

American elites had different ideas. In 1937, before an audience of business leaders in Chicago, FDR gave his Quarantine Speech. In it, he called for “positive endeavors” to preserve global peace from the “contagion” of war.³⁹ Using the language of disease and treatment, FDR called for America to intervene explicitly in world affairs to prevent an outbreak of lawlessness:

It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others and of putting an end to acts of international aggression.⁴⁰

Putting an end to acts of international aggression meant, in the end, the use of force. While FDR deplored war in the speech, he did not say America would only protect the international order through pacifism. America, in FDR’s new formulation, would no longer be the defender and champion of her own liberties as John Quincy Adams had called for. Instead, she had taken up the banners of “foreign independence.”⁴¹

Henry Stimson, FDR’s Secretary of War, in a January 1940 letter to *The New York Times*, showed what “quarantining” a foreign power meant practically for American policy in the Far East.⁴² Stimson argued that America ought to embargo Japan from purchasing oil and steel from the United States as a way of choking her imperial ambitions. He claimed that America’s official neutrality was immoral because it allowed the Japanese to purchase raw goods that allowed them to “facilitate acts of unspeakable cruelty” toward Chinese civilians and “assist unprovoked acts of aggression.”⁴³ America taking such a decisive step against another power was part of her civilizing role on the world stage: “We have been active and potent in spreading the influence of our civilization as a moral and cultural force among our neighbors on the opposite shore of the ocean.”⁴⁴ For Stimson, the American people had a moral interest in mediating the conflict between China and Japan. The Open Door policy, in his mind, should be defended by acts of economic strangulation against violators.

³⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Quarantine Speech (October 5, 1937),” *Presidential Speeches*, millercenter.org, University of Virginia.

⁴⁰ Roosevelt, “Quarantine Speech.”

⁴¹ Adams, “July 4, 1821: Speech to the U.S. House of Representatives on Foreign Policy.”

⁴² “Text of Stimson Letter Asking Ban on War Exports to Japan,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1940, 4.

⁴³ “Text of Stimson Letter Asking Ban on War Exports to Japan,” *New York Times*, January 11, 1940, 4.

⁴⁴ “Text of Stimson Letter Asking Ban on War Exports to Japan,” 4.

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This meant, however, under the older understanding of international law, a declaration of war. Emer de Vattel, in Book III of his *Law of Nations*, specifies the meaning of neutrality: "Neutral nations are those who, in time of war, do not take any part in the contest, but remain common friends to both parties, without favouring the arms of the one to the prejudice of the other."⁴⁵ He goes on to describe what this means in practice: "As long as a neutral nation wishes securely to enjoy the advantages of her neutrality, she must in all things shew *a strict impartiality towards the belligerent powers*: for, should she favour one of the parties to the prejudice of the other, she cannot complain of being treated by him as an adherent and confederate of his enemy."⁴⁶ Economic embargos, in other words, are an act of war. Stimson's demand for an embargo on Japan represented a provocation under international law that could justly be met by force.

Stimson was not alone in his antagonistic view, however. The insistence that America ought to cut off Japanese oil supplies because of their aggression in the Far East ultimately came to dominate within the highest levels of the FDR administration. Irvine H. Anderson carefully reconstructs American policy toward Japan in 1940 and 1941; he points out that cooler heads than Stimson's in the Far East division of the State Department acknowledged in December of 1938 that "any attempt by the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands to cut off from Japan exports of oil would be met by Japan's forcibly taking over the Netherlands East Indies."⁴⁷ If America were to press the Japanese hard enough to submit to American ideas about how the international order should operate then war would almost certainly result. FDR's cabinet ignored such warnings. When America began negotiating in earnest in April of 1941 with Japan over her presence in China, the fundamental demand was simple: total withdrawal of all Japanese troops from China and the protection of the integrity of Chiang Kai-Shek's government.⁴⁸ America never moved from this position. The

⁴⁵ Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations: Or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*, sixth American ed., trans. Joseph Chitty (Philadelphia, PA: T & JW Johnson, Law Booksellers, 1844), 332.

⁴⁶ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, 332.

⁴⁷ Irvine H. Anderson, "The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan: A Bureaucratic Reflex." *Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 2 (May 1975): 203.

⁴⁸ Togo Shigenori, *The Cause of Japan*, trans. and ed. by Togo Fumihiko and Ben Bruce Blakeney (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 65.

Japanese, on the other hand, believed that to abandon their foothold in China would mean a loss of national autonomy they were unwilling to accept.⁴⁹

Yet, as Anderson shows, the total embargo of oil sales to Japan in mid-1941, though critically important, was not made by American lawmakers or even, as far as the historical record shows, by Roosevelt himself. Instead, it was a product of bureaucratic inertia and factions within the Roosevelt administration asserting dominance. What mainstream American scholars have called the “double government” and Americans now term the “deep state” has existed for a long time.⁵⁰ Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and FDR himself were all wary of taking a hardline stance against Japan. State Department Political Advisor (and supposed Asia expert) Stanley Hornbeck, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau took the opposite view by arguing that Japan would submit to economic pressure in the form of an oil embargo.⁵¹ Both sides agreed that Japan should *not* be able to establish a sphere of influence in China, however. That tacit agreement on the fundamental question led inexorably to war.

After the collapse of the 1911 Treaty of Commerce and the passage of the National Defense Act in 1940 giving power to the President to regulate the export of “war materials,” Japan had to apply directly to the American government to acquire resources that she needed.⁵² In July of 1940, the President of Standard-Vacuum Oil Company, George Walden, informed the State Department that Japan was trying to corner the market on aviation gasoline.⁵³ Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau argued that this would be the perfect time to ban Japan from buying *any* oil at all from the United States in order to pressure Japan to leave China. Morgenthau, in conversation with the British Ambassador Lord Lothian, argued that America could cripple Axis oil supplies by conspiring with the Dutch in Indonesia, directing the British to bomb German oilfields, and cornering the rest of the world market.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Shigenori, *The Cause of Japan*, 206.

⁵⁰ Michael J. Glennon, *National Security and Double Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵¹ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 204.

⁵² Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 205.

⁵³ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 207.

⁵⁴ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 207.

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Roosevelt himself balked, but the plans to take America to war were already in motion. Even though America was ostensibly a “neutral power” and though the constitutionally required means of going to war—a Congressional declaration—had not been implemented, elements within the American bureaucracy were already conspiring with other powers to cripple the Axis. These bureaucrats had effectively gone to war with the Constitution in order to get their war with Japan. While Roosevelt in 1940 only wanted to embargo “excessive” oil shipments to Japan for fear of accidentally forcing the Japanese onto a war footing, Morgenthau wasn’t willing to accept no for an answer. In July of 1940 he presented a memo requiring FDR’s signature that would have placed controls on all oil supplies and not just aviation gasoline. FDR signed it, believing it had gone through the State Department process. That was incorrect. Sumner Welles, the Undersecretary of State, caught the memo before it was released, however, and had it retracted.⁵⁵

Conspiracy would characterize other dimensions of American policy toward the Japanese ability to acquire oil supplies. The British and the Americans, prior to America entering the war, were already working behind the scenes to wage economic warfare against the Axis. This underhanded dealing demonstrated contempt for the opinion of the people and their right to understand the actual foreign policy of their own country. In July 1940, the American Maritime Commission pulled all American oil tankers out of the Pacific oil trade with Japan in order to prevent Japan from being able to ship oil that it had purchased.⁵⁶ British officials proposed to Secretary of State Cordell Hull later in the year that the United States should pressure foreign carriers to do the same. Even though Japan could still purchase oil from the United States, she wouldn’t be able to stockpile resources without foreign tankers. In early 1941, Hull agreed to the British proposal and ordered the Maritime Commission to put pressure on American oil companies operating foreign vessels in the Pacific to stop doing business with Japan.⁵⁷

Bureaucratic momentum in the American government by mid-1941 was toward economic sanctions against Japan. Treasury Secretary Morgenthau proposed in late 1940 to freeze Japanese assets. Secretary of War Stimson had working groups in the State Department churn out papers on *how* an embargo might be best accomplished—without

⁵⁵ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 207.

⁵⁶ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 213.

⁵⁷ Anderson, “The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan,” 214.

asking whether such a policy *should* be implemented.⁵⁸ When Japan negotiated with the Vichy French regime to station troops in Indochina to help cut off the flow of supplies to China through the southern trade routes, Roosevelt and Hull's resistance to a full embargo simply could no longer maintain itself. Roosevelt ordered all Japanese assets frozen in July of 1941. He still left open the possibility, however, that Japan could purchase oil and resources—just not necessarily with money already present in US banks.⁵⁹ FDR did not, even at that late stage, want a full embargo on Japanese oil. He got one anyway. Morgenthau simply did not allow the Japanese to use funds located outside the United States to purchase oil in August of 1941.⁶⁰ He ensured the paperwork the Japanese filed to purchase necessary oil and scrap metal simply did not get approved. The *de facto* result of FDR's order was to allow bureaucratic factions within his regime to assert themselves against the Japanese. When FDR eventually discovered what had been done, he made no effort to rectify the situation.⁶¹

Unable to purchase oil for herself on the open market, Japan chose to seize it by force from the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese believed they had been backed into a corner and that their very national survival was at stake. The Japanese naval high command believed the only way they could successfully seize the Dutch East Indies was by attacking the American fleet at Pearl Harbor to prevent them from interfering. Would America have gone to war to protect this foreign territory? It is not clear that FDR would have. The American people would have been unlikely to clamor for war because a different European power's territory had been attacked. Japan did not know this, however. Cut off from needed national resources and fervent in their belief that a position in China was necessary to their national security, the Japanese chose to go on the offensive in a last-ditch effort to preserve their autonomy.

Pearl Harbor could have been prevented had FDR embraced the Founders' foreign policy. Had the United States never issued the Second Open Door Note guaranteeing Chinese sovereignty then America would have had no reason to go to war with Japan in 1941. The insistence that Chinese sovereignty had to be maintained because America had a right to enjoy the "Eldorado" of commerce in the Far East and spread civilization had ruinous consequences. 400,000 Americans were killed and 600,000 were wounded fighting in

⁵⁸ Anderson, "The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan," 216.

⁵⁹ Anderson, "The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan," 220.

⁶⁰ Anderson, "The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan," 220.

⁶¹ Anderson, "The 1941 De Facto Embargo on Oil to Japan," 229.

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WWII. America was sucked into that conflict by commercial and political interests in the Far East that had nothing to do with preserving the rights of American citizens within their own borders. In fact, the policies that led to the war ended up costing hundreds of thousands of Americans their right to life in order to protect Chinese sovereignty. Asking such a sacrifice runs counter to the fundamental principle at the heart of the American Founding. America may have won the Pacific War but at enormous cost.

Cicero Matters

Coyle Neal

Review: *Why Cicero Matters*, by Vittorio Bufacchi. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019. Pp. 192. Paperback, \$24.25 / Hardcover, \$90.00.

Cicero's legacy has fallen on hard times in the past century. Often seen more as a repository of other, better sources than a thoughtful and careful philosopher in his own right, the "Tully" whom previous generations learned to love in public high school has largely vanished from the popular landscape. In his short new book *Why Cicero Matters*, Vittorio Bufacchi pushes back against this modern trend and seeks to restore Cicero to his rightful place as a major influence on politics and American life.

Warm, thoughtful, knowledgeable, and clearly delighted with Cicero, Bufacchi's book introduces us to the basics of Cicero's philosophical thought in a way that is accessible to the newcomer and refreshing to Ciceronian veterans.

Loosely following Cicero's major philosophical works, Bufacchi provides an introduction laying out his project. He then gives an overview of Cicero on the necessity of philosophy for individuals. Chapters follow each on practical virtue, political structures, friendship, aging, and the role of philosophy in the state. An epilogue calls for a return to the prominence of Cicero in our troubled times. Across the book, Bufacchi's stated purpose is to bring Cicero back into the conversation about philosophy, public life, and what it means to be human—and if doing so displaces the prominence currently held by Julius Caesar in contemporary thought about ancient Rome, so much the better.

Why Cicero Matters has two major strengths and a major weakness—and I want to be clear that the strengths outweigh the weakness. This is a book you should read and enjoy, and pass along to others so that they may do the same.

First, as for the strengths, Bufacchi is clearly right that Cicero is important in responding to our modern political ills. And he is even more right to highlight the importance of philosophy in that response for Cicero and us alike. This should not be the high philosophy

of the academy, caught up in the nebulous twists and turns of *dasein* or *différance* or *the Ground*. Instead Bufacchi follows Cicero by insisting on a philosophy that influences, flows from, and is continually in intimate conversation with the real world around us. Friendship, for example, is not an abstract longing for a missing part of ourselves à la Plato. As Cicero notes friendship is a real connection between human beings that affects how we think, feel, and act. Just as friendships in the real world are connections that drive how we actually live and think, so if we want a healthy republic we need philosophical citizens who understand the intersection between thought and life on a practical level. How we think about virtue must be directly tied to how we live in society. Only citizens so shaped can resist the temptations offered to us by would-be tyrants and demagogues.

Second, and more importantly, Bufacchi is right that those concerned with republican freedom (or even our more contemporary ‘liberal’ freedom, which Bufacchi carefully distinguishes) should be more focused on Cicero than on Julius Caesar. I would perhaps add that this is even more true of Augustus Caesar, given that he succeeded in finishing off the Roman Republic in ways that Julius Caesar may never have even contemplated. In any case, the fascination with Caesar may be understandable at least from a military perspective (just how good a general was he anyway?), but interest in his political revolution as a model to be emulated rather than as a cautionary tale is unsettling to say the least in a society that claims to value republican freedoms. Bufacchi’s continued refrain that Cicero provides a better way than Caesar is a message that needs to be heard.

That said, the weakness of this book is that far too much emphasis is placed on contemporary politics and the threat from the right. The concern with the populist right (certainly something to be concerned about) reaches such heights that it begins to interfere with the application of Cicero’s thought. One line is especially telling:

The aim of this book is to change our perception of Cicero, and to offer a more progressive interpretation of Cicero’s political thought, even if this means sacrificing historical accuracy (111).

It would be far better to admit that Cicero simply doesn’t make all the points we want him to make than to attempt to twist history until it runs counter to reality. No thinker does everything—we don’t need them to. And if there are times when instead of being the cranky

old conservative I want him to be Cicero instead is pandering to the populist masses, it is my responsibility to him, to myself, to my students, and (as a scholar) to the general public to be clear about that side of Cicero as well.

When we forget our obligation to historical truth, we end up making blatantly false overstatements like this:

Cicero highlighted the importance of equality in these [Republican] institutional arrangements; he would be shocked, and alarmed, by the grotesque levels of domestic and global inequality in the modern world (77).

This statement is staggering in its inaccuracy, both about Cicero and about our times relative to those of the ancient world. There is *far* less space today between the poorest and the richest in our modern world than there was in Cicero's day. If anything, Cicero would be stunned by the level of prosperity available even to the most destitute in the twenty-first century.

If perhaps the desire to use Cicero as a bludgeon to beat back the specter of Donald Trump or Boris Johnson is understandable, giving in to that desire ultimately undermines the overall point of the book and erodes Cicero's legacy as a moderating influence on the extreme forces pulling apart the Roman Republic. Cicero is important because of his valuing of philosophy and as a foil against the political extremes, to be sure. But he is also important because he calls us to find a way to live together in the same nation despite our extreme inclinations. Cicero would insist that the populist right and the woke left should be able to collaborate together for the good of the republic. Both should submit to the rule of virtue and the necessity of a functional state. This message is not quite as clear as it could have been, even accounting for the gaps in Cicero's political philosophy.

Even with that weakness, overall *Why Cicero Matters* is an excellent little book and well worth your time. Cheerfully recommended.

Coyle Neal

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On Theories of Deliberative Democracy

Nathanael Blake

Review: *Tradition and the Deliberative Turn: A Critique of Contemporary Democratic Theory*, by Ryan Holston. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2023. Pp. 218. Hardcover, \$99.00, Paperback, \$34.95.

Theories of deliberative democracy are neither deliberative nor democratic.

In his new book, *Tradition and the Deliberative Turn*, Ryan Holston provides an essential critique of deliberative democratic theorists, most prominently John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas. It is not just that they rely upon “an understanding of deliberation that is unrealistic to the point of being utopian” (3), but that this is rooted in a mistaken understanding of morality itself. Holston attributes this error to the presupposition that experience and tradition are morally dubious, and that public justification must rest upon that which can be universalized.

Holston traces this mistake back to Rousseau, who insisted that legitimate democratic self-government requires setting aside particularity and identifying with the whole. For Rousseau, he argues, “justice and the good were not only identified in opposition to the concrete, experiential realm, but they were comprehended in explicitly *anti-historical* terms” (18). In Rousseau’s view, moral freedom is threatened by the historical, for that which is conditioned is neither moral nor free.

Consequently, democratic legitimacy, which Rousseau expressed through the idea of the general will, requires people to set aside their private concerns, interests and experiences as they legislate, and to instead focus on that which is universalizable. The individual must become undifferentiated, stripped of particularity, so that his will may correspond to, and be subsumed by, the general will. Only in this way can the demands of morality be reconciled to those of autonomy—for democracy to be true self-government it must seek that which is universal and common to all.

What Rousseau intuited, Kant organized. As Holston observes, “in Kant’s more systematic philosophical approach, there lies a further entrenchment of the cleavage that

Rousseau had explicitly established between historical experience and morality” (44). Kant saw the moral as that which is universal, and the task of reason as taking particular moral impulses and making them into general moral laws. For Kant, as Holston explains, “man’s distinctive moral worth resides not in an essential nature ... but in his ability to resist the impulsion of historical experience and to become a self-determining agent” (48).

Holston argues that modern theories of deliberative democracy still rely on an inheritance from Rousseau and Kant in presuming a “division between morality and historical experience” (57). It was Rousseau’s attempt to solve the riddle of how naturally autonomous humans might morally and freely govern themselves in community that set the stage for theories of deliberative democracy, and therefore for their aporias. Holston writes that,

While the idea of public reason aimed at the universal justification of political positions first emerged in these early discussions regarding deliberative democracy, the concept has its roots in the autonomy tradition that can be traced back to Kant and Rousseau. For it was the idea of the general will, first articulated in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, that was responsible for the notion that democratic legitimacy requires citizens to become the authors of the laws by which they are governed (72).

This argument is convincing, though it would have been further strengthened had Holston engaged with scholars, such as Judith Shklar, who explored the fissures in Rousseau’s thought—how does the universality of the moral apply to Rousseau’s familial or solitary dreams, rather than his political ones? Nonetheless, Holston is right that the challenge set by Rousseau remains for modern democratic theorists, which is how to legitimate democratic outcomes as self-government, including for those in the minority. Holston therefore claims that, for deliberative democratic theorists, “What is key and unavoidable for each of these thinkers, regardless of the priority of deliberative procedures or the substantive outcomes of deliberation, is the possibility of reasons of justifications endorsed by ‘all’” (75). The ideal of autonomy and self-government coexist uneasily with each other, unless individual wills can somehow be universalized. Public reason must be accessible to all, and thereby provide reasons understandable to all, including electoral and legislative losers.

These imperatives push theorists to imagine ideal discursive communities, but as Holston demonstrates, these are both exclusive and illusory. Even as they expand theoretical discourse across populations numbering hundreds of millions, they deliberately exclude and

denigrate the concrete communities and traditions that provide the basis for actual discourse and moral/political insight. Deliberative democratic theories treat the historical, particular and traditional as suspect at best. And so endless theoretical expansion results in practical exclusion, as demonstrated by Rawls's antipathy to anything he regarded as a "comprehensive doctrine."

Deliberative democracy is intentionally dismissive and even destructive toward that which is historically evolved, and especially toward anything it deems to be prejudice. But it thereby undermines itself, for real discussants come from particular, historical communities and traditions. Thus, deliberative democratic theories require an intellectual sleight-of-hand. As Holston explains, "Conceiving of deliberation as if it were possible among the millions of individuals who comprise contemporary democratic societies, such theories essentially graft a familiarity with smaller-scale dialogue among rooted interlocutors onto a significantly larger scale, while no longer appreciating or valuing the essential preconditions that made such dialogue possible" (5). We are finite and must speak out of our finitude—to attempt to speak in a limitless dialogue is to leave ourselves behind, forfeiting the very realities that make dialogue possible.

And so Holston turns to Hans-Georg Gadamer to reconcile the moral and the historical, and thereby explain the basis for genuine moral discourse and action. Gadamer collapsed the dichotomy between the particularity of human life and the universality of the moral; he addressed our finitude and historicity without succumbing to relativism, for he saw that the moral must be historically apprehended and realized. Gadamer's recognition that justice "emerges within history" (104) is not relativism. Rather, it is a recognition that "justice, where it does exist, always takes place within history, and that as we act within a particular historical situation, it is merely *possible* to instantiate justice with right ethical conduct. The good, for Gadamer, only comes to be within the concrete reality of the particular" (104). We can never fully stand apart from language, history and tradition, but this does not mean that true moral deliberation and action are impossible, because they are always what we are already engaged in and who we are.

We cannot leap outside of history, which would require leaping outside of ourselves to assume some sort of God's-eye view. Thus, the models of deliberative democratic theory denigrate precisely that which they require: the historical sources of moral reasoning and the

concrete communities in which instruction and deliberation about the good are possible. We are particular and our moral knowledge is of a stature for who we are. It develops through relationship, community, and concrete life far more than abstraction. Holston touches on an intriguing point when he notes Gadamer's reliance on Aristotle's remarks regarding the natural law. However, he passes by the opportunity to explore how Gadamer's insights might renew and strengthen a natural law tradition that, like that of the theorists of deliberative democracy, is prone to abstraction and a separation of the good from the historical.

Still, the neglect of this intriguing side-trail may be forgiven as a requirement of Holston's close focus on how the false ideals of deliberative democratic theories damage the preconditions for actual deliberation about politics and morality, which are always carried out by concrete people in concrete circumstances. Our theories should acknowledge this rather than long for an impossible universalization. Holston asserts that "only the conditions that cultivate the bonds of *philia*—namely, concrete communities that exist over time—can furnish the essential support for a *sensus communis* and a predisposition toward a cooperative search for the common good" (150). Yet it is precisely these existing "thick" communities and relationships that theorists of deliberative democracy denigrate and dismiss.

Holston is right that there is a pervasive unreality to theories of deliberative democracy, and his turn to Gadamer is inspired. Instead of appealing to a veil of ignorance or abstract ideal discursive communities, Gadamer remained grounded in reality, and reminded us of the immanence of the demands of morality.

Even many of the vices of this valuable book are linked to its virtues. Though points of interest are passed over or only briefly addressed (e.g., Habermas's encounter with Gadamer), this also ensures a brisk read dedicated to Holston's main themes. A sterner criticism is that there is more case for hope than Holston's conclusion allows for. He is right that the communities and relationships we need are under assault, and that their waning will make genuine dialogue, moral reflection and persuasion more difficult, and our culture and politics worse. Nonetheless, robust communities and relationships are a better, more authentic way of life than the abstractions of modern theorists and the indulgences of our culture of autonomous individualism, and they may become beacons of hope to the lost.

Thus, both theorists who rely on abstractions, and those who criticize them, may find themselves overtaken by practice if people turn to seek the good in real life.

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Seeking a Good (and Great) Man

Jacob Wolf

Review: *The Statesman as Thinker: Portraits of Greatness, Courage, and Moderation*, by Daniel J. Mahoney. New York: Encounter Books, 2022. Pp. 243. Paperback, \$30.99.

Our age furnishes us with few examples of true statesmen. In fact, the typical American is hard pressed to distinguish between a statesman and a mere politician, since he has witnessed so few of the former and so many of the latter. Moreover, if one defines a statesman as does Daniel J. Mahoney—someone who exhibits moral and intellectual virtues along with prudential leadership in exigent circumstances—then many, especially young, people must admit that they have not encountered a single one in their lifetimes. To be clear, we lack not the crises but the (states)men. In this veritable winter of statesmanship, we now have, thanks to Mahoney’s recent book, compelling vignettes of human excellence at its historical testing points. This book aims to equip readers with the ability to distinguish between a certain kind of self-aggrandizing greatness and a genuine political greatness that redounds to the people—in short, the ability to distinguish between a Napoleon and a Washington.

What distinguishes the two men proves to be a fascinating question, for both can rightly be called “great” in a certain sense. For Mahoney, and Chateaubriand before him, the difference is not one of physical characteristics or personality but of *soul*: Washington’s soul had the virtues of courage *and* moderation, whereas Napoleon’s had only the former. “Napoleon,” Mahoney says, is “an object lesson in what happens when grandeur is separated from moderation” (viii). One might wonder how moderation and courage fit together, given that they pull in somewhat different directions, but a moment’s reflection teaches that moderation has always required courage—*utmost* courage in an age of extremes like our own (One here thinks of Aurelian Craiutu’s striking phrase: “Moderation, a virtue for courageous minds”).¹ Yet, it is not merely moderation, but the whole of the cardinal virtues—courage, prudence, justice, and temperance—which Mahoney seeks among his

¹ Aurelian Craiutu, “Isaiah Berlin on Marx and Marxism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Joshua L. Cherniss and Steven B. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 115.

pantheon of greats. These virtues, and not power politics, are “the core of authentic political greatness” (ix).

Mahoney’s book rests on an important claim: politics is not reducible to power, nor is character reducible to charisma. There is a forgotten sphere of human action—call it “practical reason” or “applied political philosophy”—to which belong the noblest actions of the human person. Ideas and ideals matter, for they set the horizon of possibility (221). Yet, we live in an age of lowerings, and nothing has been more humiliated than the status of ideals. There are few idealists yet among us, and even our residual “realism” has made true politics all but impossible, for it holds (in Raymond Aron’s words) that “ideas are merely weapons, methods of combat used by men engaged in the battle; but in battle the only goal is to win” (4). Worse still, our “doctrinaire egalitarianism” leads us to believe that human greatness is itself a fiction; for, finding no suitable models around us, we naturally assume that greatness is a myth (2, 18, 24, 119). This book is about the hopeful possibility that there is an entire realm of human action left to rediscover.

Towards that rediscovery, Mahoney employs a refreshing methodology, which he calls “empirical political philosophy” or “political sociology” (x, 5). In this regard, Mahoney is following in the august footsteps of Aristotle, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Aron. Quantitative political science, with its sterile reductionism, will not do here, for the simple fact that one cannot quantify the soul. And yet the soul—that seat of human action and longing—is where the great drama of human life occurs, and it is in the soul where our problems now reside. Part of Mahoney’s goal is therefore to study the “philosophically minded statesman” (ix). This is not Plato’s philosopher-king, but rather a public figure who unites political acumen and deep moral reasoning—a high, but achievable, ideal.

Readers of *Pietas* will no doubt be familiar with Mahoney’s cast of characters, which include Burke, Tocqueville, Lincoln, Churchill, De Gaulle, and Havel. Each of these figures shared a commitment to excellence, the fullest development of the mind, and the possibility of civic fraternity. They acknowledged, moreover, the limitations of human nature and the importance of moral restraint. Finally, they realized that “turning the other cheek” may be good individual moral conduct, but it is rather inadequate as a policy prescription for whole nations. In short, these figures brought the best of classical and Christian statecraft into their own epochs.

One would like to see a bit more discussion of whether the specifically Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity—to say nothing of humility—can truly be reconciled with political greatness. Churchill and De Gaulle, Mahoney notes, seemed to think not. Perhaps the solution here can be found in Rick Warren’s famous claim that “humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”² In this sense, Washington was both great *and* humble, sacrificing his own interests for the good of his fellow citizens. He earned glory for himself and his fellow citizens by means of the same noble actions. It is one thing to desire the esteem of the people, but it is a far better and nobler thing to deserve it.

Of course, history shows the good man is rarely great and the great man is even less frequently good; however, there are blessed moments wherein the two coincide, and it is worth serious study of those points of convergence (for one cannot truly call them “coincidences”). One waits, as it were, upon divine providence that such stars might align once more. Mahoney’s book is therefore fortuitous, as it does what is unfashionable today: it praises excellence and lauds greatness. First among the loves of any true conservative should be the love of excellence: we look not to the past merely for its own sake, but because we can retrieve from it sterling examples of human potential. Whatever the conservative movement looks like in the future, it needs to place a love of and commitment to excellence at its conceptual core. Mahoney is, for this reason, a welcome guide, and his book is essentially a chronicle of moral and political excellence, of great men in great and trying times. Ultimately, Mahoney’s book is deeply Aristotelian, as its central aim is to restore the dignity of political life and to identify something like the golden mean of politics—of greatness and moderation, of nationalism and liberality, of classical honor and Christian humility. There, in the tension, one finds the true heart of politics.

After reading the lives of such eminent men, one may be tempted to despair that there are no statesmen within our own compass. In fact, Mahoney admits that his book required “nothing less than an act of intellectual and moral recovery”—so far have we come from the days of true statesmen (217). Are we merely to look back and exclaim, “There were giants on the earth in those days”? Perhaps there can be moral and political giants in our day as well. To that end, it is good to remember that giants such as David, Solomon, and Samson

² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?*, expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 149.

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succeeded them—to say nothing of Moses himself. Of course, moral and political excellence come in different forms as demanded by different contexts, and one hopes and prays that we will be sent legislators like Moses, rulers like David, builders like Solomon ... and not yet destroyers like Samson. In the end, statesmen emerge when the moment requires, according to a providential logic, and the best we can do is till the earth to make it hospitable to such types. There is perhaps some benefit from each of us knowing, and demanding, such moral and intellectual virtues among our leaders. Seeking a good (and great) man is perhaps not so futile as the cynic, Diogenes, thought.

We can each, in our own small ways, “repudiate the repudiation,” and fight to preserve the small sliver of civilization we have each inherited. We may face new contexts and unprecedented hardships; however, the fundamental challenge remains the same as it did for Mahoney’s statesmen: we must defend our civilizational inheritance from perverse ideologies and self-aggrandizing individuals. “The gospel of envy” that Churchill saw after World War II is alive and well today, as is the “culture of repudiation” perceived by Roger Scruton (17, xi). Mahoney’s call to moderation “has nothing to do with slow-motion accommodation to cultural rot or moral nihilism or doctrinaire egalitarianism” but of utilizing “all the powers of the soul and the full range of the intellectual and moral virtues ... [in] the service of commanding practical reason and of civilization itself” (18).

Perhaps the first step towards regaining statesmanship is to realize, contrary to our democratic tendencies, that greatness is indeed possible. And, while greatness is no formulaic thing, we are fortunate now to be able to look back upon eminent figures to see how they wisely navigated their times and circumstances. We learn from Cicero that republican peace requires readiness for war; from Churchill and De Gaulle that intrepid nihilism must be met with audacious resistance; from Burke that prudence and moral clarity alone can distinguish between ordered liberty and pernicious license; from Lincoln that great and noble deeds can be achieved within, and not without, a constitutional framework; and from Tocqueville that the eyes and indeed souls of democratic peoples must repeatedly be turned upward and outward.

Fortunately, we Americans have a system which can survive long winters of statesmanship—those moments in which enlightened leaders are not at the helm—however, we hope and pray that such statesmen do not tarry long.

Cormac McCarthy's Romantic Naturalism

Oliver Spivey

Review: *Ungessed Kinships: Naturalism and the Geography of Hope*, by Steven Frye. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2023. Pp. 181. Paperback, \$29.95.

The loss of Cormac McCarthy in June of 2023 signifies the loss of one of the last remaining links to that tragic tradition in American fiction, a tradition which includes—in all their stylistic variability and originality—Hawthorne, Melville, Hemingway, and Faulkner. But McCarthy and his American predecessors may be said to belong to a more ancient literary lineage, despite their writing in a post-Enlightenment culture. The late George Panichas tells us of this “ancient and higher tradition of wisdom”:

For the true novelist the burden of vision and responsibility is imperative and unavoidable. Consequently, in his fictional world we are thrown into a world of good and evil; a world in which moral struggle, loneliness, choice, accompanied by pain and misery and terror, become a transcending and a transforming experience. This experience of moral crisis can be a prelude to moral awareness. Art that provides for this heightening experience belongs to that ancient and higher tradition of wisdom that returns us to the world of the Bible, of Sophocles, of Virgil, of Dante, of Milton.¹

McCarthy's art at its best finds a home among this revered company. And we Americans of the twenty-first century are lucky to have had McCarthy in our midst, working consummately with the vast and venerable inheritance of the English language.

Seldom noted, however, is the way in which “the experience of moral crisis” in McCarthy's fiction owes much to American literary naturalism. In *Ungessed Kinships: Naturalism and the Geography of Hope in Cormac McCarthy*, Steven Frye—professor of English at California State University, Bakersfield—persuasively argues that McCarthy's novels are indebted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century American naturalist authors like Stephen Crane, Jack London, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. But the complexity of

¹ George Panichas, *Growing Wings to Overcome Gravity: Criticism and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 199.

McCarthy's fiction is such that no single, totalizing literary-artistic category can account for it. Knowing this, Frye makes a thoughtful case for McCarthy's naturalist affinities. Naturalism, in its purest sense, "assumes a kind of pessimism with respect to human nature. A natural world governed by the Darwinian principle of natural selection is brutish and indifferent to human suffering. Human beings are determined by chemical forces and are often atavistic, monstrous, and cruel" (5). McCarthy's fictional cosmos contains the "atavistic, monstrous, and cruel" with terrifying clarity. But these realities, though inescapable and immovable, do not define the world in its variety and fullness.

Frye reminds us that naturalism "is a contested category" (5). Like most literary movements and genres, naturalism admits gradations and variations; it is elastic and dynamic, not rigid and static. We should not think of naturalist fiction as characterized solely by pessimism, materialism, and biological and social determinism. By the end of the 1950s, a new generation of critics posited naturalism's relation to other literary traditions (like American romance) and philosophical schools of thought. As Frye explains, these new critics—most notably Donald Pizer and Charles Child Walcutt—came to see naturalism as far more complicated and contradictory, sometimes sounding notes of optimism and affirming the individual. In spite of its presentation of nature as red in tooth and claw, "literary naturalism explores things distinctly human, such as brotherhood, altruistic commitment to the other, and even spiritual awareness" (7). Frye sees McCarthy's corpus as a major contribution to this brand of naturalism: "Beginning with *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) and continuing through *The Road* (2006), a firmly naturalistic vision works in dialectical interaction with a more humanistic and even romantic view of the human condition and the material universe" (9). Across seven chapters, Frye identifies and explicates the "romantic naturalism" in McCarthy's oeuvre.

Frye begins with the early Appalachian novels, whose settings evoke the elemental power and ineffable mystery of the natural world. The characters of *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) inhabit and traverse "a beautiful and ultimately unknowable landscape, embodied with mystery and the numinous, yet defined by the harsh indifference and unmitigated strength of the naturalist worldview" (22). The novel pits human technological advancement against the primordial forces of nature: "Even as the natural world recedes in the face of an advancing technological modernity, the physical laws that govern remain inexorable" (22). Arthur

Ownby, the aged woodsman, has dedicated his life to maintaining the old ways of coexisting with nature; thus, the novel “reflects sympathy for the forces of reaction, but McCarthy’s tragic vision acknowledges the omnipotence of fate and the portentous reality of time and its ebb and flow” (22). Frye does a fine job illuminating the significance of the novel’s symbolic hawk and panther, but an even more profitable interpretation might have resulted had Frye commented on McCarthy’s apparent borrowings from two literary forbears who also worked in a naturalist idiom: Robinson Jeffers and Walter Van Tilburg Clark. One thinks specifically of Jeffers’s poem “Hurt Hawks” (1928) and Clark’s novel *The Track of the Cat* (1949)—and perhaps Clark’s stories “Hook” and “The Indian Well”—as having influenced the animal symbolism of *The Orchard Keeper*.

McCarthy’s *Outer Dark* (1968) is a continuation of the Gothic-romance novel into the twentieth century, but it is romance overlaid with the preoccupations of literary naturalism. Nature in the novel is alternately hostile and indifferent to human life and ambition. We are witness to a netherworld seemingly bereft of sacred possibility. The emptiness, the sheer silence, of the land itself creates a palpable sense of *absence* throughout the narrative. Characters are always listening, even being commanded to listen, though no one seems sure what it is he or she will hear, or if anything at all will be revealed. According to Frye, “*Outer Dark* is an allegory of sin enacted and punished, guilt obliquely expressed and partially but not adequately expiated. It is also a tale of retribution in a naturalist context, as the world itself, in all its power and indomitability, consigns one young man to a journey universal and without conclusion” (31).

The final two Appalachian novels deepen McCarthy’s naturalist sensibility. *Child of God* (1973) confronts its readers with disquieting questions about human nature. The grotesque Lester Ballard—who in part recalls the protagonists of Frank Norris’s *Vandover and the Brute* and *McTeague*—leads a life marked by incest, murder, necrophilia, and overall degeneration. And yet, Frye contends, Ballard “is a figure of sympathy, a victim of the inexorable currents of the modern world” (41). The novel’s title forces us to recognize a troubling kinship with Ballard, who is “a person like any other, darkly and horrifically revealing the potential latent within any human being walking the fallen earth” (48). Once again we notice the naturalistic mingling with the theological.

CORMAC MCCARTHY'S ROMANTIC NATURALISM: A REVIEW OF *UNGUESSED KINSHIPS*

In *Suttree* (1979), McCarthy shifts to an urban locale. Frye asserts that the “birth of the modern city was a central concern for American literary naturalists” at the *fin de siècle* (51). For the classic American naturalist writer, “The physical laws that bind the material world were not limited to the wilderness or rural nature. It was in the urban realm that the struggle for survival was most transparent and acute, and the naturalist novel found itself emerging on the teeming and troubled streets of these new American industrial spaces” (51–52). *Suttree*, set on the streets of Knoxville, Tennessee, in the 1950s, is a first-rate example of American urban naturalism. A stylistically baroque novel, arguably rivaling *Blood Meridian* as the author’s highest imaginative achievement, *Suttree* “displays McCarthy’s eye for sensory detail and his personal experience, memory, and meticulous research” (55). Like the earlier novels, but on a grander and more varied canvas, McCarthy’s “distinctive brand of romantic naturalism” comes into focus (59). The inhabitants of the rat-infested underworld of McAnally Flats are not without some sense of a mystery immanent in and transcendent of their material surroundings. Cornelius Suttree’s Knoxville is an urban space both mythic *and* mundane, sacred *and* profane. Even in the seeming wasteland of modern America, McCarthy suggests that “other realities may exist outside the confines of the body, and consciousness itself may be the untraceable and ubiquitous space where the spiritual and the material may meet” (61).

Critics have interpreted—as well as mis- and over-interpreted—*Blood Meridian* in umpteen ways. Frye wisely begins by situating McCarthy’s masterpiece historically and culturally. The national experience of the frontier, starting with the Puritans’ errand into the wilderness, has left its imprint on most of our literature (high and low). *Blood Meridian* draws nourishment from frontier lore and the Western genre; in this way, the novel is uniquely American. But *Blood Meridian*, as Frye demonstrates, is also a brilliant blend of literary forms extending from antiquity through the twentieth century: epic, tragedy, pastoral, biblical parable, the picaresque, the travel narrative, Gothic, and much else. The creative convergence of these forms and genres invests the work with a timeless gravitas, establishing the high seriousness involved in the novel’s main conflict: Judge Holden’s attempt to win the Kid’s soul by converting him to belief in “the ultimate divinity of war” (70).

The devilish figure of the Judge—one of literature’s greatest villains—embodies various naturalistic themes in a complex way: “The judge is by no means only the voice of an

indifferent nature; instead, the extremes of his position suggest that at the heart of the natural world is blood and a cycle of death and decimation. The judge's naturalism is polyvalent and ambiguous. Nature is not merely unconcerned but is active and destructive" (71). Accordingly, the novel may be read, in its Dostoevskian dialectic between the Judge and the Kid, as a search for "meaning, purpose, and value in the material universe broadly construed" (71). While Frye examines many of the novel's most celebrated moments, he also lingers over some commonly ignored passages and scenes. For instance, in taking the time to explicate the Kid's encounter with a hermit who ponders the mystery and limitations of the human mind, Frye again reveals the spiritual import of McCarthy's romantic naturalism: "For the hermit, 'mystery' is central to any pursuit of wisdom. This same recognition informs a more complex and nuanced naturalistic perspective in McCarthy's vision, one that acknowledges that materiality must remain our primary frame of reference, even as we hope to glimpse realms that exist at the edge of knowing" (75).

The later major works are also given careful attention. Frye skillfully covers the Border Trilogy—*All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998)—detailing the ways in which the novels continue to develop McCarthy's romantic naturalism. America's Southwestern border provides a suggestive setting for McCarthy's investigations into the natural world and the nature of man. Within this "intermediary realm," John Grady Cole and Billy Parham embark on multiple journeys which "involve a universal quest for place and identity within a harsh and unforgiving land" (81). The collision between the ideal and the real, between the world as it is and as we wish it to be, gives a novel like *All the Pretty Horses* its tragic force. And yet, amid the bleak realities of things as they are, nature—internal and external, human and non-human—hums with mystery. As in the previous novels, "not all is comprehensible by the limited frame of understanding permitted by the human intellect" (103).

The naturalistic basis of *No Country for Old Men* (2005) is evident enough. Frye maintains that the novel "explores the historical presence and defining nature of violence in the natural world, as well as the role of human agency in mitigating a process of cause and effect that is frequently unconcerned with its consequences in destruction and suffering" (121). Frye rightly places Sheriff Ed Tom Bell at the moral center of the novel. Bell is only partially unreliable as a narrator. If his nostalgic longing for a past free of extreme violence is

illusory—as the conversation with his Uncle Ellis would seem to bear out—his moral code and sense of decency, along with his gratitude for his marriage, function as a stay against human violence and nature's indifference. In Frye's words, "Bell's apparent conservatism is predicated on a tension between his emerging recognition of a brutal and determined world and his skepticism of a completely amoral nature" (123). Bell's dream of reuniting with his father by a fire in the cosmological darkness is perhaps McCarthy's way of suggesting—if I may borrow words from Emily Dickinson—that this world is not the conclusion.

The postapocalyptic nightmare of *The Road* (2006) lends itself well to an exploration of naturalistic themes. Amid the ruins of civilization, "the species is reduced to its bestial essence and a man and a boy must seek redemption" (129). The likely culprit of this worldwide calamity, despite never being made explicit, is human evil (nuclear war or possibly environmental catastrophe). One of Frye's most compelling points is that "the man and the boy must struggle with the same impulses that broadly applied may have led to their situation in the first place" (130). The man must deal with his own aggressive nature (he is willing to kill anyone or anything that threatens him or the boy). The child, symbolically father to the man, must try to deter the man's worst impulses. We might think of the man, says Frye, "as nature itself made conscious, and his inner conflict might best be characterized as a struggle with Satan that is mythological and figurative but nevertheless practically manifest in the man's darkest survival impulses" (130). The ash-covered landscape seems devoid of anything approximating the divine, but "the novel is full of the sacred and sacramental, which is expressed in the unvarnished use of religious language that may owe something to McCarthy's Catholic upbringing" (133). Moreover, McCarthy's recurrent image of fire bearing reinforces a sense of the sacred, even though "any concept of the transcendent is inextricably bound to the material world" (136). In this most extreme rendering of a cold and unfeeling universe, McCarthy's romantic naturalism never abandons the human capacity for hope.

Although well written and cogently argued, Frye's study has a major structural shortcoming. Why did Frye or the editors think it necessary to insert lengthy overviews of the critical literature in each chapter? One sees the benefit in summarizing the critical dialogue, but these overviews tend to come at the most inopportune moments, interrupting Frye's own ideas and arguments. Most of these could have been reduced to a short paragraph

or simply consigned to the end notes. There are times, one regrets to say, when the overviews give the impression of an attempt to pad out underdeveloped chapters (and this also applies to the needless summaries of each novel).

But this drawback does not lessen the fact that Frye has written an enlightening study of an American master. Avoiding the inane race-gender-sexuality obsession of contemporary literary and cultural criticism, Frye plumbs the depths of artistic genius. McCarthy's novels will never cease to fascinate us because they belong to that ancient and higher tradition of wisdom that poses the oldest and profoundest human questions: questions about the moral nature of man, fate and free will, God's presence or absence, the abundant mystery of the natural world, and the possibility of transcendence.