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**Patron:** Sagar, Rahul  
**Reference #:** 5135181

**Journal Title:** The Greek tradition in Republican thought /

**Volume:**

**Issue:**

**Month/Year:**

**Pages:** 155-194 *2*

**Article Author:**

**Article Title:** Chapter 5; Montesquieu's Greek republics

**Imprint:** Cambridge, UK ; New York ; Cambridge Uni

**Notes:** Billing Notes; SHARES. Prefer IFM; will also pay invoices.

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corrupted by their wealth) to rule, thus undermining the rule of reason (i.e. justice) – and that it is therefore just to resort to coercive means in order to prevent this state of affairs from coming to pass. Property, indeed, plays no significant role in Shaftesbury's system; and Leibniz, while he prefers universal "friendship" and the community of possessions, endorses the Roman standard of distributive justice.<sup>102</sup> Just as Harrington's Platonist metaphysics was largely absent from the Whig account of property and agrarian laws, his analysis of property was missing from the philosophical treatises of the early eighteenth-century Platonists. Montesquieu would reunite these disparate elements, and emerge with a solidly Greek analysis of republican government. He would argue that only republics have virtue as their "principle," and he would define virtue, with Shaftesbury, as the love of order and beauty in society. But, most importantly, he would insist that, because republics are entirely reliant upon virtue, they must secure an equal distribution of property in order to survive.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Leibniz, *Political Writings*, pp. 64, 98.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Montesquieu's Greek republics*

#### I

From the outset of his career, Montesquieu found himself obsessed with the uneasy relationship between wealth, virtue, and justice. In the *Lettres persanes*, published anonymously in 1721 when their author was only thirty-two, Montesquieu's *porte-parole* Usbek emphatically asserts the objective reality of justice and attacks the pretensions of the positivists. "Justice," he announces, "is a relation of suitability, which actually exists between two things. This relationship is always the same, by whatever being it is perceived, whether by God, or by an angel, or finally by man."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "justice is eternal, and does not depend on human conventions;"<sup>2</sup> like Leibniz before him, Montesquieu makes clear that it even exists independently of the will of God himself. Usbek continues that "it is true that men do not see these relationships all the time. Often, indeed, when they do not see them, they turn away from them, and what they see best is always their self-interest. Justice raises its voice, but has difficulty in making itself heard amongst the tumult of the passions."<sup>3</sup> Justice is, then, a fixed, eternal *rapport de convenance* (Montesquieu took the phrase from Leibniz's *Théodicée*)<sup>4</sup> which towers above the abundant variety of human laws, but finds itself obscured by human passions. The chief agent responsible for promoting the passions at the expense of justice turns out to be wealth.

<sup>1</sup> English translations from *Les Lettres persanes* are taken from Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, ed. and trans. C. J. Betts (London: Penguin Books, 1973); all French texts of Montesquieu's works, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Daniel Oster (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964). This passage is from Letter 83 (p. 162). "La Justice est un rapport de convenance, qui se trouve réellement entre deux choses; ce rapport est toujours le même, quelque être qui le considère, soit que ce soit Dieu, soit que ce soit un ange, ou enfin que ce soit un homme."

<sup>2</sup> "la Justice est éternelle et ne dépend point des conventions humaines."

<sup>3</sup> "Il est vrai que les hommes ne voient pas toujours ces rapports; souvent même, lorsqu'ils les voient, ils s'en éloignent; et leur intérêt est toujours ce qu'ils voient le mieux. La Justice élève sa voix; mais elle a peine à se faire entendre dans le tumulte des passions."

<sup>4</sup> On this, see Sheila M. Mason, *Montesquieu's Idea of Justice* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 178ff.

Montesquieu explores this theme in Letters 11 through 14 of the *Lettres persanes*, in which he describes the fanciful republic of the Troglodytes. The generic features of this narrative alone furnish a powerful indication of the direction of Montesquieu's thoughts. Like More and Harrington before him, Montesquieu gives his fictional Arabian people a Greek name (τρωγλοδύται, the Ethiopian "cave dwellers" of Book IV of Herodotus' *Histories*),<sup>5</sup> and, recalling both More's *Utopia* and Fénelon's more recent *Télémaque* (1699), places his account in the mouth of a traveler, Usbek. The similarities increase as we move from form to content. Montesquieu's Troglodytes, having turned away from the barbarism, isolation, and vigilantism of their forbearers, have built a virtuous community that acts (like Plato's *politeia*, More's *Utopia*, Harrington's *Oceana*, and Fénelon's *Bétique*) "as a single family" (*une seule famille*),<sup>6</sup> and has banished envy by allowing each man only what he needs. It has, in short, rendered its people "happy" (*heureux*) by teaching them virtue (which it defines, in terms almost identical to Shaftesbury's, as the understanding that "the individual's self-interest is always to be found in the common interest").

But in Letter 14 the Troglodytes, like the children of Israel in *I Samuel*, beseech one of their brethren to accept a crown. Their nominee bemoans the decision, realizing that his countrymen seek only a respite from the demanding regimen of virtue which republican government necessitates (and which, as Montesquieu would explain at great length in *De l'esprit des lois*, is not required in a well-ordered monarchy). The Troglodytes, their nominee concludes, merely desire an excuse to "satisfy [their] ambitions, accumulate wealth, and live idly in degrading luxury"<sup>7</sup> – in short, to live "under the rule of something other than virtue" (*sous un autre joug que celui de la Vertu*).

That is where Montesquieu leaves the Troglodytes in *Les Lettres persanes*, but he had written one further installment in their story which survives in one of the notebooks later edited as the *Pensées*. In this scene the first king has died, and the Troglodytes (living in what seems to be less a monarchy than a republic which has fallen from grace) choose the wisest man in his family to succeed him. During this second king's reign – and quite predictably given what we learned in Letter 14 – the Troglodytes decide

<sup>5</sup> iv.183. See Herodotus, *Histories*, ed. and trans. A. D. Godley, vol. II, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1921).

<sup>6</sup> In *De l'esprit des lois*, Montesquieu would insist that republics can only exist "in a small state, where one can educate the general populace and raise a whole people like a family" (iv.7). English translations from *De l'esprit des lois* are taken from *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. and trans. Anne Cohler, Basia Miller, and Harold Stone (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> "vous pourrez contenter votre ambition, acquérir des richesses et languir dans une lâche volupté."

to "institute trade and commerce among them."<sup>8</sup> In response, their king asks the fateful question: "Do you now want to have wealth rather than your virtue?" (*Voudriez-vous préférer aujourd'hui les richesses à votre vertu?*). The answer given by the people's representative deserves to be quoted at length, as it sets out the basic terms in which Montesquieu would discuss republicanism for the rest of his life:

it will be you alone who decides whether wealth is or is not to be harmful to your people. If they see you would rather have wealth than virtue, they will soon fall into the same habit; in this manner your attitude will determine theirs. If you raise a man to an important post, or bring him into your confidence, merely because he is rich, you may be sure that you have struck a mortal blow at his virtue . . . The foundation of your people's virtue, sir, as you know, is their education. Change this education, and those who are not bold enough to be criminals will soon be ashamed of being virtuous. There are two things that we have to do: to make both meanness and extravagance equally shameful. Everyone must be accountable to the state for the administration of his property, and the man who ignobly demeans himself, by denying himself a reasonable standard of living, must be judged as harshly as the man who squanders his children's patrimony. Each citizen must spend his own wealth as equitably as if it belonged to someone else.

The king responds forlornly:

Troglodytes, you are about to acquire the use of riches; but I declare to you that if you are not virtuous you will be one of the unhappiest nations on earth. As things are at present, all that is required is for me to be juster than you: it is the sign of my royal authority, and no other that I could find would be more illustrious. If you seek to distinguish yourself only by riches, which in themselves are nothing, I shall certainly have to distinguish myself by the same means . . . At present it is within myself that I find all my riches.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, p. 286 (appendix); reproduced in *Œuvres*, p. 863. "d'établir chez les Troglodytes le commerce et les arts."

<sup>9</sup> "Ce sera vous seul qui déciderez si les richesses seront pernicieuses à votre peuple, ou non. S'ils voient que vous les préférez à la vertu, ils s'accoutumeront bientôt à en faire de même, et, en cela, votre goût réglera le leur. Si vous élevez dans les emplois ou que vous approchiez de votre confiance un homme par cela seul qu'il est riche, comptez que ce sera un coup mortel que vous porterez à sa vertu . . . Vous connoissez, Seigneur, la base sur quoi est fondée la vertu de votre peuple: c'est sur l'éducation. Changez cette éducation, et celui qui n'étoit pas assez hardi pour être criminel rougira bientôt d'être vertueux. Nous avons deux choses à faire: c'est de flétrir également l'avarice et la prodigalité. Il faut que chacun soit comptable à l'Etat de l'administration de ses biens et que le lâche qui s'abaissera jusqu'à se dérober une honnête subsistance ne soit pas jugé moins sévèrement que celui qui dissipera le patrimoine de ses enfants. Il faut que chaque citoyen soit équitable dispensateur de son propre bien, comme il le seroit de celui d'un autre" (*Œuvres complètes*, ed. Roger Caillois [Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1949], pp. 378-79).

"Troglodytes, dit le Roi, les richesses vont entrer chez vous mais je vous déclare que, si vous n'êtes pas vertueux, vous serez un des peuples les plus malheureux de la Terre. Dans l'état où vous êtes, je n'ai besoin que d'être plus juste que vous: c'est la marque de mon autorité royale, et je n'en saurois

The great fear about wealth in this passage is that it will compete with virtue in order to become the criterion which determines the distribution of political power.<sup>10</sup> Before the advent of riches, Troglodyte kings attained their office by being more virtuous than the rest of the citizens (an arrangement which is "just" in the Greek sense, since the rule of the best men corresponds to a rational *rapport de convenance*). But wealth might come to replace virtue as the political coin of the realm in two ways: either the king might begin appointing the wealthy, rather than the virtuous to important state positions, thus setting a devastating example for his people, or the people might themselves come to place more stock in wealth than virtue, and might therefore begin to seek wealthy rather than virtuous kings. If either should happen, both people and king agree, the Troglodyte republic would lose its virtue (its conformity to objective moral facts) and its people would be rendered *malheureux*, "unhappy."<sup>11</sup> Their proposed solution is to empower the state to regulate the *use* of property, and to enforce moderation.

It is worth noticing that, on this account, the introduction of commerce and money provides an opportunity for wealth to gain ascendancy over virtue, but it does not *guarantee* that outcome. Indeed, Montesquieu's fable does not embrace determinism: given the introduction of wealth, and even in the absence of fixed limits on the amount of property that individuals may possess, virtue can still win the day. Later, however, Montesquieu would lose faith in the notion that virtue can survive if the state merely regulates the ways in which people use their property; he would come to

trouver de plus auguste. Si vous ne cherchez à vous distinguer que par des richesses, qui ne sont rien en elles-mêmes, il faudra bien que je me distingue par les mêmes moyens . . . Je trouve à présent toutes mes richesses dans moi-même" (*Œuvres complètes*, ed. Caillois, p. 379).

There is a helpful summary of the Troglodyte episode in Nannerl O. Keohane, "Virtuous Republics and Glorious Monarchies: Two Models in Montesquieu's Political Thought" in *Political Studies* 20 (1972), 385-87. Keohane does not, however, connect Montesquieu's anxiety about wealth and virtue to the tradition we have been following. She does mention Montesquieu's general indebtedness to Plato, but discusses only structural, generic similarities. She also attributes to Montesquieu a belief that Plato's Republic is "difficult to introduce" and "impossible to maintain," despite Montesquieu's clear statements to the contrary (which will be discussed shortly).

<sup>10</sup> This is, I believe, the central feature of the Troglodyte story that Richard B. Sher neglects in his otherwise excellent essay. See Richard B. Sher, "From Troglodytes to Americans: Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment on Liberty, Virtue, and Commerce" in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 368-402.

<sup>11</sup> *Œuvres*, p. 864. Donald Desserud provides a helpful discussion of what Montesquieu means by calling the Troglodytes' life of virtue "natural," although I disagree with his broader conclusions. See Donald A. Desserud, "Virtue, Commerce and Moderation in the 'Tale of the Troglodytes': Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*" in *History of Political Thought* 12 (1991), 605-26.

believe that it must regulate the *amount* of property they have to begin with. Only if property is distributed in an egalitarian manner, he would argue, could wealth be prevented from thrashing virtue in the political arena, and thus rendering the state unjust. On this later account disproportionate wealth corrupts its possessors, causing them to lose sight of the social whole and their proper place within it; and when they come to rule, virtue is lost. Already in the *Lettres persanes*, Montesquieu gestures at that conviction. In Letter 122 Usbek insists that "equality between citizens, which usually produces an equal distribution of wealth, itself conveys prosperity and life to the body politic and scatters it throughout,"<sup>12</sup> and in Letter 119 he attacks the "unjust law of primogeniture" which "destroys the equality between citizens, on which their prosperity entirely depends."<sup>13</sup> But Montesquieu's major reorientation on the subject would come, unsurprisingly, in his confrontation with Roman history.

As Bertrand Barère noted, Montesquieu's 1734 *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* bears the mark of Moyle's *An Essay on the Constitution and Government of the Roman State*, and, as we would expect given that provenance, it endorses the substance of the Harringtonian analysis of Roman decline.<sup>14</sup> Early in his treatise

<sup>12</sup> *Persian Letters*, p. 220. "L'égalité même des citoyens, qui produit ordinairement de l'égalité dans les fortunes, porte l'abondance et la vie dans toutes les parties du corps politique et la répand partout." I have substituted my own translation here.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215. "l'injuste droit d'aînesse . . . en ce qu'il détruit l'égalité des citoyens, qui en fait toute l'opulence."

<sup>14</sup> Machiavelli is also a major influence, and occasionally Montesquieu sides with him against Harrington (for example, Montesquieu refuses to condemn the tumults in Rome [*Œuvres*, p. 453], although, unlike Machiavelli, he treats them as a necessary evil, rather than an intrinsically beneficial part of civic life). On the crucial issue of the agrarian, however, Montesquieu is firmly within the Harringtonian camp. See Robert Shackleton, "Montesquieu and Machiavelli: a reappraisal" in *Essays on Montesquieu and the Enlightenment*, ed. David Gilson and Martin Smith (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1988), pp. 117–32. The role of the agrarian laws in the *Considérations* is often entirely passed over, as in Richard Meyers, "Montesquieu on the Causes of Roman Greatness" in *History of Political Thought* 16 (1995), 37–47; and Georges Benrekassa, "Le problème des sources dans les *Considérations*: questions de méthode" in *Storia e ragione: le Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence di Montesquieu nel 250° della pubblicazione. Atti del Convegno internazionale organizzato dall'Istituto Universitario Orientale e dalla Società italiana di studi sul secolo XVIII*, ed. Alberto Postigliola (Naples: Liguori Editore, 1987), pp. 33–46. A notable exception is an article by Luciano Guerri, in which he discusses the philo-Gracchan position in the *Considérations*, and sets it in the broader context of eighteenth-century Francophone Roman historiography. He does not, however, trace this strand of Roman historiography to its rightful source: Harrington and the English Whigs (Luciano Guerri, "La République romaine di Louis de Beaufort e la discussione con Montesquieu" in *Storia e ragione*, pp. 421–53). Much the same could be said of Alfred Heuss's analysis. See Alfred Heuss, *Barthold Georg Niebuhrs wissenschaftliche Anfänge: Untersuchungen und Mitteilungen über die Kopenhagener Manuscripte und zur europäische Tradition der lex agraria (loi agraire)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), pp. 289–93. Translations from the *Considérations* are my own.

Montesquieu unequivocally asserts the centrality of the Roman agrarian law, both for civic health and for military prowess: "The founders of ancient republics divided the lands equally: this alone produced a powerful people, that is a well-ordered society; it also produced a good army, each one having an equal interest – and a great one at that – to defend his country."<sup>15</sup> Rome was not founded as a republic, but Montesquieu follows Moyle in arguing that the decision of the Roman kings to empower and enrich the people made monarchy untenable and inevitably yielded republican government.<sup>16</sup> The comparison he draws is instructive: "Just as Henry VII, the king of England, augmented the power of the commons in order to debase the great, Servius Tullius before him had extended the privileges of the people in order to diminish the senate. But the people, having become more powerful, overturned both monarchies."<sup>17</sup> The parallel between Henry VII and Servius Tullius is, as we have seen, a staple of the Harringtonian account.<sup>18</sup>

Montesquieu records that the equality of possessions in Rome was maintained by the state's treatment of conquered lands and the spoils of war. It was standard practice that, after a Roman victory, "the spoils were held in common,"<sup>19</sup> and equally divided amongst the soldiers. Conquered *ager publicus*, in turn, was divided in two: "one part was sold for the profit of the public, and the other was distributed among the poor citizens, in return for rent paid to the republic."<sup>20</sup> Montesquieu summarizes his position neatly: "It was the equal division of lands that rendered Rome capable of

<sup>15</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 439. "Les fondateurs des anciennes républiques avaient également partagé les terres: cela seul faisait un peuple puissant, c'est à dire une société bien réglée; cela faisait aussi une bonne armée, chacun ayant un égal intérêt, et très grand, à défendre sa patrie."

<sup>16</sup> See note 153 in the *Dossier des Considérations* (*Œuvres*, p. 215).

<sup>17</sup> "Comme Henri VII, roi d'Angleterre, augmenta le pouvoir des communes pour avilir les grands, Servius Tullius, avant lui, avoit étendu les privilèges du peuple pour abaisser le sénat. Mais le peuple, devenu d'abord plus hardi, renversa l'une et l'autre monarchie." (*Œuvres*, p. 436).

<sup>18</sup> Servius Tullius is also given a central role in the institution of the first agrarian law by Giambattista Vico in his *Scienza Nuova*. See Vico, *The New Science*, ed. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Cornell University Press, 1976), esp. 107, 420, 613, 619, 620. This argument of Vico's puzzled Momigliano: "Where did Vico get this extraordinary idea of transforming the Servian constitution and the alleged nucleus of the XII Tables into two agrarian laws? My researches on the study of Roman agrarian laws in the seventeenth century... have yielded no results. So far I have been unable to discover any predecessors to Vico in this theory." Moyle was such a predecessor. See Arnaldo Momigliano, "Vico's *Scienza Nuova*: Roman 'Bestioni' and Roman 'Eroi'" in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), p. 268. I am grateful to Richard Serjeantson for this reference.

<sup>19</sup> "Le butin étoit mis en commun, et on le distribuait aux soldats" (*Œuvres*, p. 436).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. "On confisquait une partie des terres du peuple vaincu, dont on faisait deux parts: l'une se vendait au profit public; l'autre étoit distribuée aux pauvres citoyens, sous la charge d'une rente en faveur de la république."



escaping from its abasement; and it felt this well when it was corrupted."<sup>21</sup> Like the Harringtonians, he traces the cause of Roman corruption to the rejection of the agrarian law: "When the laws were not rigidly observed, things returned to the point where they are presently among us: the avarice of some individuals, and the prodigality of others caused parcels of land to pass into few hands; and for the first time arts introduced themselves, for the mutual needs of rich and poor."<sup>22</sup> No longer was it the case that "in Rome public offices could not be achieved but by virtue, and gave no reward besides honor."<sup>23</sup> Decline came fast and furious. In a familiar line of reasoning, Montesquieu argues that Sparta met the same fate for the same reasons:

The kings Agis and Cleomenes, seeing that in the place of the nine thousand citizens who lived in Sparta at the time of Lycurgus there were now no more than seven hundred, of whom perhaps one hundred possessed lands, and that the rest were nothing but a populace without courage, they endeavored to reestablish the laws in this regard; and Sparta recovered its former power, and one again became formidable to all the Greeks.<sup>24</sup>

This account (duly adduced by each and every Harringtonian author), Montesquieu tells us, can be found easily in Plutarch's life of Agis and Cleomenes.<sup>25</sup> That he concludes this chapter by quoting the speech which Appian gives to Tiberius Gracchus should establish beyond question the ideological thrust of his thoughts (and should explain his emphasis on the depletion of Roman manpower caused by the lapse of the agrarian).<sup>26</sup>

We should note, however, that Montesquieu did not by any means argue that the original Roman agrarian laws were flawless. On the contrary, in a passage from the *Pensées*, he comments: "the laws of the Romans were not as wise as those of Plato, and they permitted (or reluctantly allowed) the citizens, under assumed names, to acquire the inheritances of other

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 440. "Ce fut le partage égal des terres qui rendit Rome capable de sortir d'abord de son abaissement; et cela se sentit bien, quand elle fut corrompue."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 439. "Quand les lois n'étaient plus rigideusement observées, les choses revenaient au point où elles sont à présent parmi nous: l'avarice de quelques particuliers, et la prodigalité des autres, faisaient passer les fonds de terre dans peu de mains; et d'abord les arts s'introduisaient, pour les besoins mutuels des riches et des pauvres."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 440. "à Rome les emplois publics ne s'obtenoient que par la vertu, et ne donnoient d'utilité que l'honneur..."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. "Les rois Agis et Cleomènes, voyant qu'au lieu de neuf mille citoyens qui étoient à Sparte de temps de Lycurge, il n'y en avoit plus que sept cents, dont à peine cent possédoient des terres, et que tout le reste n'étoit qu'une populace sans courage, ils enterprirent de rétablir les lois à cet égard; et Lacédémone reprit sa première puissance, et redevint formidable à tous les Grecs."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., note.

<sup>26</sup> Montesquieu remained interested in the effects of agrarian laws on population (a point of view he passed on to Rousseau). See, for example, *The Spirit of the Laws* (ed. Cohler et al.) xxiii.15 (p. 436).

citizens, which was to elude the law. But if this law had not been eluded, Rome would not have fallen into corruption."<sup>27</sup> Later in *De l'esprit des lois*, he observes that "the laws of the first Romans concerning inheritances thought only to observe the spirit of the division of lands; they did not sufficiently restrict the wealth of women, and thereby left a door open to luxury, which is always inseparable from this wealth."<sup>28</sup> He adds:

the indefinite permission to make testaments, granted among the Romans, gradually ruined the political provision on the sharing of lands; more than anything else it introduced the ominous difference between wealth and poverty; many shares were brought together in the same person; some citizens had too much, an infinity of others had nothing. Thus, the people, continually deprived of their share, constantly asked for a new distribution of lands.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, Montesquieu did believe that the ancient Roman agrarian was the sound bedrock of Roman virtue and power, and he attributed the republic's collapse to lax observance. In one passage of the *Considérations*, for example, he explains that, after the plebs had finished undermining patrician authority – which had been based on "wisdom, justice, and the love the senate inspired for the fatherland"<sup>30</sup> – inequalities in wealth led to a disastrous, but familiar outcome:

Over the course of time, after the plebs had so debased the patricians that this familial distinction was empty, and both groups were indifferently elevated to honors, there were new disputes between the lowly people, spurred on by their tribunes, and the principal patrician and plebeian families, which one called the "nobles," and who had for themselves the senate, which was composed of them. But, since the ancient mores [with respect to land] were no more, and certain individuals had immense wealth, and since it is impossible that riches will not secure power, the nobles resisted with more force than the patricians ever had; it was this that caused the death of the Gracchi and several others of those who worked in their ranks.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 893. "Les lois des Romains ne furent pas si sages que celles de Platon, et elles permirent (ou l'on souffrit) que des citoyens, sous des noms empruntés, acquissent les héritages propres des citoyens, ce qui était éluder la loi. Mais, si cette loi n'avaient pas été éludée, Rome n'aurait pas tombé dans la corruption." This passage was left out of *De l'esprit des lois*.

<sup>28</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 525. <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>30</sup> *Œuvres*, p. 451. "Le sénat se défendoit par sa sagesse, sa justice et l'amour qu'il inspiroit pour la patrie."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* "Dans la suite de temps, lorsque les plébéiens eurent tellement abaissé les patriciens, que cette distinction de famille devint vaine, et que les unes et les autres furent indifféremment élevées aux honneurs, il y eut de nouvelles disputes entre le base peuple, agité par ses tribuns et les principales familles patriciennes ou plébéiennes, qu'on appela les Nobles, et qui avaient pour elles le sénat, qui en était composé. Mais, comme les mœurs anciennes n'étaient plus, que des particuliers avaient des richesses immenses, et qu'il est impossible que les richesses ne donnent du pouvoir, les nobles

In this telling, the Gracchi, defenders of the "ancient mores," end their lives overwhelmed by a regime in which Montesquieu's nightmare has come to pass: deference to the virtue of the patricians is replaced by the usurpation of wealthy and corrupt men. The republic is undermined, and virtue banished. Thus Rome fell.<sup>32</sup> In short, for Montesquieu, as for Harrington and his English disciples, Rome had to be analyzed in Greek terms. With his embrace of this account of Roman collapse in the *Considérations*, the stage was set for Montesquieu's mature account of republican government.

## II

Montesquieu's readers have tended to take one of two general approaches to the task of interpreting *De l'esprit des lois*. Some have assumed that Montesquieu meant to endorse one of the regimes he describes in the treatise, and they have accordingly concentrated their efforts on identifying the object of his praise.<sup>33</sup> Others, however, have seen Montesquieu as an empirical proto-sociologist who responsibly analyzes each regime without playing favorites.<sup>34</sup> On this view, the quest for Montesquieu's "preferred regime" is badly conceived. At first glance, the sociological approach has much to recommend it. In the preface to *De l'esprit des lois*, Montesquieu announces: "I do not write to censure that which is established in any country whatsoever. Each nation will find here the reason for its maxims, and the consequence will naturally be drawn from them that changes can be proposed only by those who are born fortunate enough to fathom by a stroke of genius the whole of a state's constitution."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Montesquieu makes clear that his primary purpose is to elucidate the principles that make sense of the great variety of human laws and institutions – not to explain away or attack that variety. As he puts it, "I began by examining men, and

résistèrent avec plus de force que les patriciens n'avaient fait; ce qui fut cause de la mort des Gracques et de plusieurs de ceux qui travaillèrent sur leur plan."

<sup>32</sup> Roger Oake neglects to discuss this aspect of Montesquieu's writings on Rome. See Roger Oake, "Montesquieu's Analysis of Roman History" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16 (1955), 44–59.

<sup>33</sup> I include in this category scholars who have sought to establish Montesquieu's preference for "moderate" regimes. See, for example, Lando Landi, *L'Inghilterra e il Pensiero Politico di Montesquieu* (Padua: CEDAM, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> For a helpful exposition of these two positions in the literature, see Sara MacDonald, "Problems with Principles: Montesquieu's Theory of Natural Justice" in *History of Political Thought* 24 (2003), 109–11. ✓

<sup>35</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* (preface), p. xlv. "Je n'écris point pour censurer ce qui est établi dans quelque pays que ce soit. Chaque nation trouvera ici les raisons de ses maximes; et on en tirera naturellement cette conséquence, qu'il n'appartient de proposer des changements, qu'à ceux qui sont assez heureusement nés pour pénétrer, d'un coup de génie, toute la Constitution d'un Etat."

I believed that, amidst the infinite diversity of laws and mores, they were not led by their fancies alone."<sup>36</sup> The diversity of regimes is neither random nor senseless, but results from nature itself. Accordingly, multiple forms of government can "make sense," and there is no one form of government which suits all people in all places and times. On the contrary, "it is better to say that the government most in conformity with nature is the one whose particular arrangement best relates to the disposition of the people for whom it is established."<sup>37</sup>

In reading the first book of *De l'esprit des lois*, however, it becomes readily apparent that Montesquieu uses the word "natural" in two radically different senses. To begin with, there are natural laws – "necessary relations deriving from the nature of things"<sup>38</sup> – which govern the material world. These laws cannot be "disobeyed": "Between one moving body and another moving body, it is in accord with relations of mass and velocity that all motions are received, increased, diminished, or lost; every diversity is *uniformity*, every change is *consistency*."<sup>39</sup> But there are also moral laws embedded in nature. Montesquieu repeats his definition of objective moral relations from the *Lettres persanes*: "Before laws were made, there were possible relations of justice. To say that there is nothing just or unjust but what positive laws ordain or prohibit is to say that before a circle was drawn, all its radii were not equal."<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, one must admit that there are relations of fairness prior to the positive law that establishes them, so that, for example, assuming that there were societies of men, it would be just to conform to their laws; so that, if there were intelligent beings that had received some kindness from another being, they ought to be grateful for it; so that, if one intelligent being had created another intelligent being, the created one ought to remain in its original dependency; so that one intelligent being who has done harm to another intelligent being deserves the same harm in return, and so forth.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. xliii. "J'ai d'abord examiné les hommes; et j'ai cru que, dans cette infinie diversité de lois et de mœurs, ils n'étaient pas uniquement conduits par leurs fantasies."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 1.3 (p. 8). "Il vaut mieux dire que le gouvernement le plus conforme à la nature est celui dont la disposition particulière se rapporte mieux à la disposition du peuple pour lequel il est établi."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 1.1 (p. 3). "les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. "Entre un corps mu et un autre corps mu, c'est suivant les rapport [*sic*] de la masse et de la vitesse que tous les mouvements sont reçus, augmentés, diminués, perdus; chaque diversité est *uniformité*, chaque changement est *constance*."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 4. "Avant qu'il eût des lois faites, il y avait des rapports de justice possibles. Dire qu'il n'y a rien de juste ni d'injuste que ce qu'ordonnent ou défendent les lois positives, c'est dire qu'avant qu'on eût tracé de cercle, tous les rayons n'étaient pas égaux."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. "Il faut donc avouer des rapports d'équité antérieurs à la loi positive qui les établit: comme par exemple, que, supposé qu'il y eût des sociétés d'hommes, il serait juste de se conformer à leur lois;

These laws are objective and natural "relations," but they differ from physical laws in that they can be ignored – and frequently are. While the "intelligent world also has laws that are invariable by their nature, unlike the physical world, it does not follow its laws consistently."<sup>42</sup> Montesquieu concludes that "man, as a physical being, is governed by invariable laws like other bodies" but "as an intelligent being, he constantly violates the laws god has established."<sup>43</sup> He is in constant need of being recalled to his natural duties by divine revelation and by philosophers, who have "reminded him of himself by the laws of morality."<sup>44</sup> Something can, thus, be "natural" in the sense of following logically from the nature of the material world, and still be "unnatural" in the moral sense.

Advocates of the sociological approach are right to stress that Montesquieu's most original contribution to political thought lies in two connected areas. The first is his attribution of the variety of regimes to a cluster of factors (climatological, geographical, demographic, economic, etc.) which produce different sorts of societies by physical necessity (for example, a republic cannot exist in a large geographical area). The second is his similarly empirical analysis of what kinds of laws and institutions effectively support different regimes. In this sense, every regime that Montesquieu describes is indeed "natural" under certain circumstances (that is, can follow naturally from those circumstances), and a government can be said to be "perfect" or "imperfect" based on the extent to which it embraces the laws and apparatus which – as a matter of material necessity – tend to produce and support its particular type of regime. But Montesquieu also retains a different idea of "nature" which asserts the independent existence of abstract moral principles. On this definition of "nature," some regimes may be said to be intrinsically more "natural" than others. "The law of nature," he explains, "makes everything tend toward the preservation of the species," while the "law of natural enlightenment" encourages us "to do to others what we would want done to us."<sup>45</sup> All governments

que, s'il y avait des êtres intelligents qui eussent reçu quelque bienfait d'un autre être, ils devraient en avoir de la reconnaissance; que, si un être intelligent avait créé un être intelligent, le créé devrait rester dans la dépendance qu'il a eue dès son origine; qu'un être intelligent qui a fait du mal à un être intelligent mérite de recevoir le même mal; et ainsi du reste."

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. "Car, quoique celui-là [le monde intelligent] ait aussi des lois qui par leur nature sont invariables, il ne les suit constamment comme le monde physique suit les siennes."

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 5. "L'homme, comme être physique, est, ainsi que les autres corps, gouverné par des lois invariables. Comme être intelligent, il viole sans cesse les lois que Dieu a établies..."

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. "Un tel être pouvait à tous les instants s'oublier lui-même; les philosophes l'ont averti par les lois de la morale."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. x.3 (p. 139). "la loi de la nature, qui fait que tout tend à la conservation des espèces; la loi de la lumière naturelle, qui veut que nous fassions à autrui ce que nous voudrions qu'on nous fit."

will necessarily be driven by the first law, but few will observe the second. Indeed, Montesquieu gives us substantial grounds for believing that only republics will maximize human virtue and create a morally "natural" life for human beings. Montesquieu's republics may no longer be possible or "natural" in the physical sense given the circumstances of modernity, but he makes clear that they still "astonish our small souls"<sup>46</sup> and stand at the summit of regimes for extremely Greek reasons.

In Book II of *De l'esprit des lois* Montesquieu divides all governments into republics, monarchies, and despotisms. Each of these, he explains, has a dominant "principle" (a "spring" which sets it in motion), and in the case of republics that principle is "virtue." What exactly Montesquieu means by "virtue" in this context has divided and preoccupied generations of scholars. The source of the confusion is Montesquieu's "Avertissement de l'auteur" at the outset of the text. "In order to understand the first four books," Montesquieu writes, "one must note that what I call *virtue* in a republic is love of the homeland, that is love of equality. It is not a moral virtue or a Christian virtue; it is *political* virtue, and is the spring that makes republican government move..."<sup>47</sup> Montesquieu offers this clarification in order to mollify critics who had protested that he appeared to grant republican government an unwarranted monopoly on virtue:<sup>48</sup> do we not find moral and Christian virtue in monarchies as well, they asked? Indeed we do, Montesquieu replied, but this particular *vertu politique*, while it may be present in other regimes, is the essential motive force in republics.

It has become increasingly popular to cite this "avertissement" as evidence that Montesquieu's *vertu politique* is not only wholly unrelated to moral virtue, but even inherently hostile to it. If substantiated, this argument would have the obvious effect of disconnecting the "virtue" of Montesquieu's republics from the immanent moral relations of Book I, thus refuting the suggestion that his republics give human beings the best chance of fulfilling their moral natures. Thomas Pangle makes this argument, and

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. IV.4 (p. 35). "qui étonnent nos petites âmes."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. xli. "Pour l'intelligence des quatre premiers livres de cet ouvrage, il faut observer que ce que j'appelle la *vertu* dans la république, est l'amour de la patrie, c'est-à-dire, l'amour de l'égalité. Ce n'est point une vertu morale, ni une vertu chrétienne; c'est la vertu *politique*; et celle-ci est le ressort qui fait mouvoir le gouvernement républicain..."

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Montesquieu's comments in the *Eclaircissements sur l'esprit des lois* (*Œuvres*, p. 822). See also Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 415-19. Keohane provides a helpful discussion of Montesquieu's view of *vertu politique*, but does not take an explicit position on this quality's relationship to the moral *rapports* of Book I.

his reasoning is developed by Paul Rahe in a recent study.<sup>49</sup> Rahe argues that when Montesquieu discusses virtue, "he has in mind the fostering of an irrational, unreasoning passion for equality" which "in no way depends on, gives rise to, or is subordinate to anything resembling moral, Christian, or even philosophical virtue."<sup>50</sup> Such claims seem difficult to reconcile with Montesquieu's insistence that "one can define virtue as love of the laws and the homeland. This love, requiring a continuous preference of the public interest over one's own, produces all the individual virtues; they are only that preference."<sup>51</sup> Montesquieu writes similarly that "political virtue" is "moral virtue in the sense in which it points toward the general good,"<sup>52</sup> and that "love of the homeland leads to good mores, and goodness in mores leads to love of the homeland. The less we can satisfy our particular passions, the more we give ourselves up to passions for the general order [i.e. virtue]."

True, Montesquieu is clear that while "political virtue" engenders the moral virtues, it does not follow that it is impossible for moral virtues to exist in its absence (although he does suggest that monarchies cannot exhibit moral virtue to as great a degree as republics<sup>53</sup>). He also stresses the difference between virtue proper and "that virtue which relates to revealed truths" (nor is he the first classicizing philosopher to draw such a distinction).<sup>54</sup> However, none of this diminishes Montesquieu's conviction that *vertu politique* is the quality which causes men to love the common interest and accept their given place within the organic whole.<sup>55</sup> It is, in short, the characteristic possessed by virtuous people that is most relevant to political

<sup>49</sup> See Thomas Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 54–65, and Paul A. Rahe, "Forms of Government: Structure, Principle, Object, and Aim" in *Montesquieu's Science of Politics: Essays on The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 69–108.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>51</sup> David Carrithers stresses this point in "Democratic and Aristocratic Republics: Ancient and Modern" in *Montesquieu's Science of Politics*, p. 117. However, he is promptly overcome by the desire to place Montesquieu on the side of the "moderns" against the "ancients" when it comes to virtue.

<sup>52</sup> III.5. *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 25n. "Je parle ici de la vertu politique, qui est la vertu morale, dans le sens qu'elle se dirige au bien général." This point is made nicely in Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> In monarchies, "one judges men's actions not as good but as fine, not as just but as great; not as reasonable but as extraordinary" (*The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 32). See also p. 25: "in a monarchy it is very difficult for the people to be virtuous." Likewise, in commercial states citizens are taught "ius strictum," not those "moral virtues that make it so that one does not always discuss one's own interests alone" (p. 339).

<sup>54</sup> Consider, *inter alia*, the distinction between moral and theological virtues in Catholic theology.

<sup>55</sup> See *The Spirit of Laws*, pp. 36, 42. This explains why Montesquieu advocates such restrictive measures in his republics in order to secure and defend the moral virtues: they are inextricably linked to political virtue. See esp. pp. 56–60.

life in republics; that is its utility in Montesquieu's scheme. In republics, where the people must uphold laws to which they themselves are subject, this is a necessary quality.<sup>56</sup> But *vertu politique* is not devoid of normative significance: it brings the moral virtues – those *rappports de convenance* – in its wake and, in turn, is undermined by their absence. Indeed, Montesquieu insists that “when that virtue ceases, ambition enters those hearts that can admit it, and avarice enters them all,” and the fatal process of παραδιαστολή (rhetorical redescription) so feared by Thucydides and Aristotle takes hold.<sup>57</sup> “What was a *maxim* is now called *severity*; what was a *rule* is now called *constraint*; what was *vigilance* is now called *fear*. There, frugality, not the desire to possess, is avarice.”<sup>58</sup>

This notion that a public or political kind of virtue brings the moral virtues in its train was quite prevalent during the period. Consider, for example, a passage from Fénelon's essay *Sur le pur amour* (first published in 1718):

All these [ancient] legislators and philosophers who reasoned about laws presupposed that the fundamental principle of political society was that of preferring the public to the self – not through hope of serving one's own interests, but through the simple, pure, disinterested love of the political order, which is beauty, justice, and virtue itself.<sup>59</sup>

Likewise, a passage from *Cato's Letters* seems to anticipate Montesquieu's comments directly. In letter thirty-five Gordon discusses what he calls *public spirit*, or “the love of one's country.” In tyrannical regimes, Gordon observes, public spirit might encourage citizens to be “blind slaves to the blind will of the prince.” In “free countries,” however, “publick spirit is another thing; it is to combat force and delusion; it is to reconcile the true interests of the governed and the governors”:

This is publick spirit; which contains in it every laudable passion, and takes in parents, kindred, friends, neighbours, and every thing dear to mankind; it is the

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> For an account of the role of rhetorical redescription in classical and early-modern thought, see Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 138–80.

<sup>58</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* III.3 (p. 23). “Lorsque cette vertu cesse, l'ambition entre dans les cœurs qui peuvent la recevoir, et l'avarice entre dans tous . . . Ce qui était *maxime*, on l'appelle *rigueur*; ce qui était *règle*, on l'appelle *gêne*; ce qui était *attention*, on l'appelle *crainte*. C'est la frugalité qui y est l'avarice, et non pas le désir d'avoir.”

<sup>59</sup> Fénelon, *Œuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 668. “Tous les législateurs et tous les philosophes qui ont raisonné sur les lois ont supposé comme un principe fondamental de la société dans la patrie, qu'il faut préférer le public à soi, non par espérance de quelque intérêt, mais par le seul amour désintéressé de l'ordre, qui est la beauté, la justice et la vertu même.” The translation is taken from Fénelon, *Telemachus*, ed. and trans. Patrick Riley (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. xxi.



highest virtue, and contains in it almost all others; steadfastness to good purposes, fidelity to one's trust, resolution in difficulties, defiance of danger, contempt of death, and impartial benevolence to all mankind. It is a passion to promote the universal good, with personal pain, loss and peril: It is one man's care for many, and the concern of every man for all.<sup>60</sup>

This notion of "publick spirit" is uncannily similar to Montesquieu's "vertu politique."

Indeed, it is also tempting to see in *Cato* the antecedent to Montesquieu's theory of the dominant "principles" (or "springs" – *ressorts*) of government:

Government is political, as a human body is natural, mechanism: both have proper springs, wheels, and a peculiar organization to qualify them for suitable motions, and can have no other than that organization enables them to perform; and when those springs or principles are destroyed by accident or violence, or are worn out by time, they must suffer a natural or political demise.<sup>61</sup>

For both Cato and Montesquieu, "political virtue" is the root of free government. This most politically relevant passion is not hostile or antithetical to the moral virtues; rather, by inculcating a deep reverence for the common whole, it gives rise to moral virtue. As Montesquieu has it, all the constituent virtues are only expressions of a fundamental commitment to the common interest.

So while political virtue is "natural" to republican government in the material sense (i.e. it makes republics tick), it also produces a society which conforms to "nature" in the moral sense. In order to understand Montesquieu's account of how all of this works, it is necessary to appreciate how deeply indebted the President was to ancient Greek models. In the second volume of his *Pensées* Montesquieu makes a remarkable statement:

I am not to be numbered among those who view the Republic of Plato as something ideal and purely imaginary, and the institution of which would be impossible. My reason is that the Republic of Lycurgus seemed every bit as difficult to institute as that of Plato, and, meanwhile, it was so well instituted that it endured as long as any republic that one knows of in its power and splendor.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), vol. 1, p. 251.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 607.

<sup>62</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 1036. "Je ne suis pas du nombre de ceux qui regardent la République de Platon comme une chose idéale et purement imaginaire, et dont l'exécution serait impossible. Ma raison est que la République de Lycurge paraît d'une exécution tout aussi difficile que celle de Platon, et que, cependant, elle a été si bien exécutée qu'elle a duré autant qu'aucune république que l'on connaisse, dans sa force et sa splendeur." This passage is identified as *Pensée* 1811 in the standard Bordeaux edition, which organizes Montesquieu's material thematically rather than chronologically. It actually appears in volume 11 of the manuscript, which places it between the years 1734 and

Written several years before David Hume would declare in his *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* that Plato's *politeia* was "plainly imaginary" and unattainable,<sup>63</sup> this is an observation of some significance. Indeed, Montesquieu goes even farther than Plato himself, who, we might recall, has Socrates admit at the end of *Republic* ix that his *politeia* can be found nowhere on earth, but is rather a pattern "laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it, and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen."<sup>64</sup> Montesquieu, however, takes Plato's work as a practical political handbook and regards it as very much in keeping with the mainstream of ancient Greek political life. In another section of the *Pensées*, he insists that "one must reflect upon the *Politics* of Aristotle and upon the two republics of Plato [i.e. the *Republic* and the *Laws*] if one wants to get a good idea of the laws and mores of the Greeks."<sup>65</sup> As the passage just quoted suggests, Montesquieu associated Plato's philosophy with the operational principles of an actual Greek republic, namely that of Sparta. In Book iv of *De l'esprit des lois*, Montesquieu praises the laws of Lycurgus, but exalts Plato's as their "correction."<sup>66</sup> Lycurgus' laws, we learn, aimed at making citizens "plus guerriers,"<sup>67</sup> while Plato's sought to transform them into "honnêtes gens." Montesquieu's regard for Plato as an authoritative political guide appears to be unequalled. Plato is everywhere in *De l'esprit des lois*, and his presence shapes the text extensively.<sup>68</sup>

1754 (volume i begins in 1720 and ends c. 1728, while volume iii begins in 1754 and ends with Montesquieu's death). As the development of Montesquieu's thoughts over time is significant for this project, all items from the *Pensées* will be listed according to volume. All volume references are drawn from Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Caillois.

<sup>63</sup> David Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 58.

<sup>64</sup> Quotations from Plato in English are taken from *Plato: the Collected Dialogues, including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton, Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton University Press, 1989). Greek texts are taken from *Platonis opera*, ed. John Burnet, 5 vols., Oxford Classical Texts, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). This reference is found in *Collected Dialogues*, p. 819 (*Republic* 592b). 'Ἄλλ', ἣν δ' ἐγὼ, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται τῷ βουλομένῳ ὁρᾶν καὶ ὀρώντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίειν."

<sup>65</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 1007. "Il faut réfléchir sur la *Politique* d'Aristote et sur les deux Républiques de Platon, si l'on veut avoir une juste idée des lois et des mœurs des Grecs." This passage appears in volume ii.

<sup>66</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* iv.6 (p. 36). See Plutarch, *Lycurgus* xxxi.

<sup>67</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 1044.

<sup>68</sup> The most astute analysis of Montesquieu's Platonism undoubtedly remains that of Badreddine Kassem in *Décadence et absolutisme dans l'œuvre de Montesquieu* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), pp. 89–103. But even as Kassem notes that "c'est pour que les citoyens ne soient pas détournés, par la recherche des richesses, des devoirs que leur impose le patriotisme, qu'ils puissent concourir à qui rendra le plus de services au pays, que Montesquieu, exige, dans la république, la médiocrité et l'égalité des fortunes" (p. 98), she neglects to connect this preoccupation to Plato or to trace Montesquieu's regulations to those recommended in the *Laws* (and coopted by the likes of More

But, as Montesquieu himself points out, Plato had written about "deux républiques," and when it comes to the problem of wealth and virtue, the *Republic* and the *Laws* agree in their diagnosis but prescribe very different treatments. In order to prevent wealth from undermining virtue as the criterion that determines the distribution of political power, the *Republic* institutes the complete abolition of private property among the guardians, a proposal enthusiastically taken up by another "législateur" whom Montesquieu associates with Plato in the quest for "honnêteté": Sir Thomas More.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in Book XXIX of *De l'esprit des lois*, when we learn that Thomas More "wanted to govern all states with the simplicity of a Greek city" – an objective which, as we have just seen, Montesquieu did not dismiss as "utopian" – the city we are surely meant to think of is Plato's *politeia*. In *Utopia* More follows the *Republic* in arguing that, once we admit private property, it is simply inevitable that the wealthy will appropriate public offices "which ought to go to the wise."<sup>70</sup> But, as his *porte-parole* Hythloday informs us, because all their property is held in common, the Utopians are able to favor the most excellent members of society – those who should rule by nature. Montesquieu is by no means unsympathetic to this approach. In Book IV he argues that those who wish to emulate the "extraordinary" institutions of the Greeks "will establish the community of goods of Plato's *Republic*" and "will proscribe silver, whose effect is to fatten the fortune of men beyond the limits nature has set for it, to teach men to preserve vainly what has been amassed vainly, to multiply desires infinitely and to supplement nature, which has given us very limited means to excite our passions and to corrupt one another."<sup>71</sup> Here we have the standard Platonic argument that wealth causes men to lose sight of their own nature, and should accordingly be abolished. But, as a general matter,

and Harrington). Most importantly, she misses the opportunity to connect these measures to a theory of justice – although, unlike many, she does stress Montesquieu's reliance on Platonic holism. David Lowenthal's "Montesquieu and the Classics" in *Ancients and Moderns*, ed. Joseph Cropsey (New York: Basic Books, 1964) also contains an insightful discussion of Montesquieu's Platonism, but he and I part company when he describes *De l'esprit des lois* as an ironic critique of the *Republic* (pp. 278–80). Thomas Pangle also seems to be sympathetic to this view. See Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy*, p. 65.

<sup>69</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 1044. This passage appears in volume II.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* IV.6 (p. 38). "Ceux qui voudront faire des institutions pareilles établiront la communauté de biens de la république de Platon... Ils proscrireont l'argent, dont l'effet est de grossir la fortune des hommes au-delà des bornes que la nature y avait mises, d'apprendre à conserver inutilement ce qu'on avait amassé de même, de multiplier à l'infini les désirs, et de suppléer à la nature, qui nous avait donné des moyens très bornés d'irriter nos passions, et de nous corrompre les uns les autres."

Montesquieu places more stock in the solution advanced in Plato's *Laws* – and, not at all coincidentally, also in Harrington's *Oceana*.<sup>72</sup>

In the *Laws* private property is not abolished, but intricately regulated in such a way as to equalize holdings. Recall that Plato had advocated a city composed of 5,040 citizens, in which no one could possess more than four times the standard land allotment, and in which dowries were banned and inheritances sharply regulated. Montesquieu makes clear in Book VII that he takes the *Laws* as his model for dealing with questions of luxury, wealth, and inheritance. He records:

in the republic of Plato [by which he means the *Laws*], it was possible to calculate luxury accurately. Four levels of census were established. The first was set at precisely the point where poverty ended; the second at double the first, the third triple, and the fourth quadruple. In the first census, luxury was equal to *zero*: it was equal to one in the second, to two in the third, to three in the fourth; and it followed arithmetic proportion accordingly.<sup>73</sup>

Montesquieu agrees with Plato's Athenian, and with Harrington, that the central problem for republics is luxury, the existence of disproportionate wealth. For him, the republican watchword is "frugality," a quality which must be established by laws.<sup>74</sup> "If wealth is equally divided in a state," he observes, "there will be no luxury," so the state should maintain an equal distribution of wealth by giving "each man only the physical necessities."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Landi makes this point nicely (Landi, *Montesquieu*, p. 44). Montesquieu does not have much to say about Harrington directly. He criticizes him once on the question of "political liberty" (i.e. the separation of powers), claiming that the Englishman sought liberty "only after misunderstanding it" (*The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 166), and praises him once as a thinker who "saw only the republic of England, while a crowd of writers found disorder wherever they did not see a crown" (p. 618). But, like Harrington, Montesquieu comes to base his republicanism explicitly on a rigid, meticulously developed agrarian law, and does so for precisely the same reasons. Giuseppe Cambiano deserves credit for being the only contemporary scholar even to allude to the Harringtonian influence on Montesquieu's agrarian proposals – although I disagree with his ultimate characterizations of both Harrington and Montesquieu. His statement that we find in Montesquieu's account of extreme equality "echi platonici ed aristotelici" which have been fused with the altogether different "temi del discorso di Harrington e della tradizione repubblicana inglese" calls attention to the fact that, throughout his essay, he neglects to see Harrington himself (and Montesquieu) in the context of what I have called the Greek tradition. See Giuseppe Cambiano, "Montesquieu e le antiche repubbliche greche" in *Rivista di Filosofia*, 65 (1974), esp. 114–20. Montesquieu owned a copy of the first edition of *Oceana* (Shackleton, "Montesquieu and Machiavelli," p. 126).

<sup>73</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* VII.1 (p. 96). "Dans la république de Platon, le luxe aurait pu se calculer au juste. Il y avait quatre sortes de cens établis. Le premier était précisément le terme où finissait la pauvreté, le second était double, le troisième triple, le quatrième quadruple du premier. Dans le premier cens, le luxe était égal à *zero*; il était égal à un dans le second, à deux dans le troisième, à trois dans le quatrième; et il suivait ainsi la proportion arithmétique."

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* v.4 (p. 44).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* VII.1 (p. 96). "Si, dans un Etat, les richesses sont également partagées, il n'y aura point de luxe. . . il faut que le loi ne donne à chacun que le nécessaire physique."

Accordingly, Montesquieu notes with approval that "some legislators of ancient times, like Lycurgus and Romulus, divided the lands equally."<sup>76</sup> But he insists that "if the legislator who makes such a division does not give laws to maintain it, his is only a transitory constitution; inequality will enter . . . and the republic will be lost."<sup>77</sup> His own solution should sound rather familiar:

One must, therefore, regulate to this end dowries, gifts, inheritance, testaments, in sum, all the kinds of contracts. For if it were permitted to give one's goods to whomever one wanted and as one wanted, each individual bequest would disturb the disposition of the fundamental laws . . . It suffices to establish a census that reduces differences or fixes them at a certain point; after which, it is the task of the particular laws to equalize inequalities, so to speak, by the burdens they impose on the rich and the relief they afford to the poor.<sup>78</sup>

Solon, who is praised for approving the cancellation of debts, is then criticized for allowing "one to leave one's goods to whomever one wanted by testament provided one had no children,"<sup>79</sup> while the Athenian law "that forbade one to have two inheritances" is praised for being consistent with "the equal divisions of lands and portions given to each citizen" in ancient times.<sup>80</sup> Even in "aristocratic republics" (republics in which sovereignty resides in only a part of the citizenry), where moderation, rather than virtue, is the motive principle, Montesquieu insists that "the laws should remove the right of primogeniture from the nobles so that fortunes are always restored to equality by the continual divisions of inheritances."<sup>81</sup> He also writes, in what is in effect a quotation of the Harringtonian position,

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. v.5 (p. 44). "Quelques législateurs anciens, comme Lycurge et Romulus, partagèrent également les terres." Montesquieu adds that land allotments should be small in addition to being equal; they should create self-sufficient yeoman farmers. Any excess will invite commerce, which (almost always) leads to luxury and decay. Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 45. "Si lorsque le législateur fait un pareil partage, il ne donne pas des lois pour le maintenir, il ne fait qu'une constitution passagère; l'inégalité entrera . . . et la république sera perdue."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. (I have replaced Cohler's "will" with "bequest" for the sake of clarity.) "Il faut donc que l'on règle, dans cet objet, les dots des femmes, les donations, les successions, les testaments; enfin, toutes les manières de contracter. Car, s'il était permis de donner son bien à qui on voudrait, chaque volonté particulière troublerait la disposition de la loi fondamentale."

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. "Solon, qui permettait à Athènes de laisser son bien à qui on voulait par testament, pourvu qu'on n'eût point d'enfants . . ."

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. "C'était une bonne loi, pour la démocratie, que celle qui défendait d'avoir deux hérités. Elle prenait son origine du partage égal des terres et des portions données à chaque citoyen."

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. v.8 (p. 54). "Les lois doivent ôter le droit d'aînesse entre les nobles; afin que, par le partage continu des successions, les fortunes se remettent toujours dans l'égalité." These aristocratic republics have been a subject of some confusion. Carrithers is surely correct, however, when he states that Montesquieu's attitude toward these states was negative ("Democratic and Aristocratic Republics," p. 263), a claim born out by Montesquieu's insistence that aristocratic republics function better the more they resemble "democratic republics" (*The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 17).

that "laws dividing fields anew, demanded with such insistence in certain republics, were salutary by their nature. They are dangerous only as a sudden action."<sup>82</sup> Also like Harrington (whose agrarian law does not require the actual confiscation of property unless citizens acquire illicit levels of land after the institution of the law), Montesquieu retains a visceral distaste for violent, coercive action in the here-and-now. The source of his distaste is not surprising. In Book xxvi (although no longer discussing republics) he records that "Cicero held that the agrarian laws were deadly because the city was established only in order for each one to preserve his goods."<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, Montesquieu lays it down as a general principle that the "public good" should never be interpreted to authorize a capricious assault on the property of the rich. Even in the midst of this strongly Greek edifice, the Ciceronian theory of justice continues to haunt the President.

Yet Montesquieu, like Harrington, nonetheless places agrarian laws at the very center of the republican project. In the *Pensées* he begins one of his lengthy discussions by announcing "here are the laws that I believe are the most effective for causing a republic or colony to flourish" (*voici les lois que je croirais les plus propres à rendre une république ou une colonie florissante*).<sup>84</sup> What follows is nothing but a string of marriage and inheritance laws:

All goods should be equally distributed among the male children, save that the mother and father may bestow an extra portion of their holdings on the one of their male children they believe most worthy of it . . . In the distribution of the goods of an inheritance, one should not acknowledge any distinction of goods, movable and immovable, original goods, acquisitions and winnings, goods given as dowries, goods brought by a spouse over and above the dowry, noble or plebeian goods . . . Those who have no children should not be able to make wills: their goods should pass to the nearest relation, preferably male . . . Unmarried males should be unable to inherit or bequeath by will, if they are above twenty-five years of age . . . All places of honor should be marked in church and other places according to the number of children [one has] . . . Those who have seven children,

<sup>82</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* vii.2 (p. 98). "Les lois du nouveau partage des champs, demandées avec tant d'instance dans quelques républiques, étaient salutaires par leur nature. Elles sont dangereuses que comme action subite."

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* xxvi.15 (p. 510). "Cicéron soutenait que les lois agraires étaient funestes, parce que la cité n'était établie que pour que chacun conservât ses biens."

<sup>84</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres*, p. 1051. This passage appears in volume 1, which, as noted earlier, places it in the early portion of Montesquieu's career (c. 1720–28). But, given how closely the reasoning behind it resembles his reasoning in *De l'esprit des lois*, I see no reason to discount it as "immature."

alive or killed in war, will be exempt from all assessments; those who have six will pay none except the tithe . . . <sup>85</sup>

All of these meticulous laws have one aim in common: to encourage the fragmentation of estates, and, as a result, the equalization of holdings. Parents must divide their estates among their children, and they are encouraged to have as many children as possible – and sharply stigmatized if they have few or no children. That these laws are submitted and singled out as “les plus propres” for republican government speaks volumes about how comprehensively Montesquieu internalized the tradition we have been following.

Montesquieu also agrees with his predecessors in the Greek tradition that republics alone are characterized by the rule of the best men, and that the introduction of excessive wealth and poverty topples this government of virtue. As he makes clear in Book v, when “frugality”<sup>86</sup> reigns in a republic and it is state policy that each citizen “should have the same happiness and the same advantages, each should taste the same pleasures and form the same expectations,”<sup>87</sup> all distinctions in the republic will derive from “the principle of equality, even when equality seems to be erased by successful services or superior talents”<sup>88</sup> – that is, men will only achieve disproportionate power if they are more virtuous, not more wealthy, than their fellow citizens. Otherwise, as Montesquieu puts it later, “the one who has silver is always the master of the one without.”<sup>89</sup> And we should not be surprised that, in order to express the danger of applying this principle to government, the President turns to Plato: “Plato cannot endure such venality. ‘It is,’ he says, ‘as if, on a ship, one made someone a pilot or a

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. “Tout les biens seront partagés également entre les enfants mâles, sans que les pères et mères puissent avantager que d’un tiers de leur bien celui de leurs enfants mâles qu’ils en croiront le plus digne . . . Dans le partage des biens d’une succession, on n’admettra aucune distinction de biens, meubles et immeubles, propres, acquêts et conquêtes, dotaux ou paraphernaux, nobles ou roturiers . . . Ceux qui n’auront point d’enfants ne pourront faire de testaments: leurs biens passeront aux plus proches, les mâles préférés . . . Mâles non mariés seront incapables de donner et de recevoir par testament, s’ils sont âgés de vingt-cinq ans. Gens non mariés succéderont pourtant à leurs père et mère comme les autres enfants; ne pourront posséder aucune charge de judicature, être témoins en matière civile. Toutes places d’honneur seront marquées dans les églises et autres lieux par rapport au nombre d’enfants . . . Ceux qui auront sept enfants vivants ou morts à la guerre seront exempts de toutes sortes de tributs; ceux qui en auront six n’en payeront que la moitié . . .”

<sup>86</sup> Pocock has a fine discussion of this term’s entrée into political discourse. See Pocock, *The Machiavelian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 445–46.

<sup>87</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* v.3 (p. 43). “Chacun devant y avoir le même bonheur et les mêmes avantages, y doit goûter les mêmes plaisirs, et former les mêmes espérances.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. “Ainsi les distinctions y naissent du principe de l’égalité, lors même qu’elle paraît ôtée par des services heureux, ou par des talents supérieurs.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. XIII.19 (p. 226). “celui qui a l’argent est toujours le maître de l’autre.”

sailor for his silver. Is it possible that the rule is good only for guiding a republic, and bad in all other life employments?"<sup>90</sup> In frugal republics (and only there) "magistracies are testimonies to virtue."<sup>91</sup> But when republics become corrupt, the spirit of "extreme equality" is embraced, and "each one wants to be the equal of those chosen to command."<sup>92</sup> The natural order is then utterly subverted:

Then there can no longer be virtue in the republic. The people want to perform the magistrates' functions; therefore, the magistrates are no longer respected. The senate's deliberations no longer carry weight; therefore, there is no longer consideration for senators or, consequently, for elders. And if there is no respect for elders, neither will there be any for fathers; husbands no longer merit deference nor masters submission. Everyone will come to love this license . . . There will no longer be mores or love of order, and finally, there will no longer be virtue.<sup>93</sup>

Montesquieu's republics were, indeed, as Greek as they come.<sup>94</sup>

### III

Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois*, more than any other text, provided the ideological structure for eighteenth-century French republicanism.<sup>95</sup> As a result, the basic Hellenism of that tradition should serve as a continuing reminder of Montesquieu's own Greek scale of values. Consider, for example,

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. v.19 (p. 70). "Platon ne peut souffrir cette vénalité. 'C'est, dit-il, comme si, dans un navire, on faisait quelqu'un pilote ou matelot pour son argent. Serait-il possible que la règle fût mauvaise dans quelque autre emploi que ce fût de la vie, et bonne seulement pour conduire une république?'"

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 68. "Dans le premier [le gouvernement républicain] les magistratures sont des témoignages de vertu."

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. viii.2 (p. 112). "chacun veut être égal à ceux qu'il choisit pour lui commander."

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. "Il ne peut plus y avoir de vertu dans la république. Le peuple veut faire les fonctions des magistrats: on ne les respecte donc plus. Les délibérations du sénat n'ont plus de poids: on n'a donc plus d'égard pour les sénateurs, et par conséquent pour les vieillards. Que si l'on n'a pas du respect pour les vieillards, on n'en aura pas non plus pour les pères: les maris ne méritent pas plus de déférence, ni les matres plus de soumission. Tout le monde parviendra à aimer ce libertinage . . . Il n'y aura plus de mœurs, plus de l'amour de l'ordre, enfin plus de vertu." Note that Montesquieu considered slavery "unnatural" in a moral sense, and also mechanically unnatural for republics, since slavery introduces luxury (xv.1).

<sup>94</sup> This is by no means to suggest, however, that Montesquieu's relationship to the Greek tradition was wholly uncritical. For one thing, he expressed no affection for the contemplative life, and insisted that republics must force their citizens to accept public offices (*The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 68). However, even here, his emphasis (like Bolingbroke's) is on the fact that, in republics, "magistracies are testimonies to virtue," and not on a claim about liberty. He also leaves room at the civic table for glory, although defined in an extremely idiosyncratic manner. On the whole, however, his republics do indeed seem to derive their form from the Greek tradition that I have analyzed.

<sup>95</sup> It also ensured that late eighteenth-century French histories of Rome would retain their decidedly Whig character. See, for example, Louis de Beaufort, *La République romaine, ou Plan général de l'ancien gouvernement de Rome* (Paris, 1766).



the republican writings of his younger contemporary, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably.<sup>96</sup> Mably began his scholarly life as a committed monarchist, and his first work, the *Parallèle des Romains et des François, par rapport au gouvernement* (1740), celebrates this commitment. Later in the decade, however, he found himself persuaded of the merits of republican government, and dedicated his remaining years to defending a popular regime. In 1819 Benjamin Constant classed Mably as a chief exponent of "la liberté des anciens" as against that of the "modernes," which accounts for Mably's continued attractiveness to contemporary scholars.<sup>97</sup> For present purposes, however, the essential fact about Mably is the explicitly Greek character of his republican theory. Indeed, it is not insignificant that he unveiled his republican program in 1749 (one year after the publication of *De l'esprit des lois*) with his *Observations sur les Grecs*, later republished under the title *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce* (1764). The hero of his story – and the hero of his entire political theory – is the Spartan legislator Lycurgus. After instituting a mixed constitution for Sparta which secured a dynamic balance of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, Lycurgus realized that he still had work to do:

What would have been, in effect, the benefit of the order he had established in order to render the laws the only powers and the only sovereigns, if riches and luxury, always linked together, and always followed by depravity of mores, inequality among citizens, and, as a result, tyranny and servitude, had again taught the Spartans to disdain or elude their new laws? The people, enfeebled by misery, would have soon been incapable of conserving its dignity; it would have sold its

<sup>96</sup> For a recent study of Mably's life and thought, see Johnson Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: the Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford University Press, 1997). Wright's analysis is nuanced and learned, but his acceptance of Pocock's account of "classical republicanism" causes him to discount the possibility that some of the idiosyncrasies he notices in Mably might be attributable to different republican principles. He notices, for example, that Mably's "laconomania" leads him into open rebellion against the neo-Roman Machiavelli, but fails to attribute this fissure to Mably's embrace of a fundamentally different political theory (Wright's reflections on Mably's "laconomania" are clearly indebted to Elizabeth Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], esp. pp. 245–51). Likewise, Wright notices that Mably's view of property puts him at odds with Locke and Cicero, but does not connect this fact to his equally trenchant observation that eighteenth-century French republicanism was characterized by a "shift of attention from Roman models to the more 'primitive' Greek city-states" (*A Classical Republican*, p. 208). See also Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 4; Heuss, *Barthold Georg Niebuhrs wissenschaftliche Anfänge*, pp. 301–8; R. B. Rose, "The 'Red Scare' of the 1790s: the French Revolution and the 'Agrarian Law'" in *Past and Present* 103 (1984), esp. 117–18; and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Athens on Trial: the Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 162–66.

<sup>97</sup> Benjamin Constant, "De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes" in *De la liberté chez les modernes: écrits politiques*, ed. Marcel Gauchet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1980), pp. 493–515.

votes, its rights, and its liberty to the highest bidder. The senate, whose seats were only intended to honor the most virtuous men, would not have been open except to the richest.<sup>98</sup>

As we would expect from a theorist in the Greek tradition, Mably emphasizes the effects of wealth on rulership (and, thus, justice): disproportionate wealth corrupts and gives political power to the rich, rather than the virtuous. In order to prevent this state of affairs from developing amongst his citizens, Lycurgus "established a perfect equality in their fortunes."<sup>99</sup> Indeed, "he did not stop at instituting a new distribution of lands. Since nature certainly did not give all the Spartans the same passions, or the same industriousness in cultivating their inheritances, he [Lycurgus] feared that avarice would soon accumulate possessions."<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, "so that Sparta would not enjoy a merely temporary reform, he descended, so to speak, right down to the bottom of the heart of his citizens, and extinguished the germ of the love of riches."<sup>101</sup> He "forbade the use of gold and silver," and it came to pass that "riches, having become useless, seemed contemptible, and Sparta became a fortress inaccessible to corruption."<sup>102</sup>

Just as More had dismissed laws decreeing that "no one should own more than a certain amount of land or receive more than a certain income" as the equivalents of "poultices continually applied to sick bodies that are past cure,"<sup>103</sup> Mably attributes to Lycurgus an understanding that only the outright elimination of gold and luxury could bring health to his state. Nonetheless, he never doubts for a moment the significance of the Spartan agrarian laws. He takes his account of Sparta's descent into corruption from

<sup>98</sup> Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Collection complète des œuvres*, vol. iv (Paris, 1794), p. 20. "Quel eût été en effet le fruit de l'ordre qu'il avoit établi pour rendre les lois seules puissantes et seules souveraines, si les richesses et le luxe, toujours liés ensemble, et toujours suivis de la dépravation des mœurs, de l'inégalité des citoyens, et par conséquent de la tyrannie et de la servitude, eussent encore appris aux Spartiates à mépriser ou à éluder leurs nouvelles lois? Le peuple, avili par la misère, auroit bientôt été incapable de conserver sa dignité; il eût vendu ses suffrages, ses droits et sa liberté au plus offrant. Le sénat, dont les places n'étoient destinées qu'à honorer les hommes les plus vertueux, n'auroit été ouvert qu'aux plus riches."

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 22. "Établit une parfaite égalité dans leur fortune."

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. "Il ne se borna point à faire un nouveau partage des terres. La nature ne donnant pas sans doute à tous les Lacédémoniens les mêmes passions, ni la même industrie à faire valoir leur héritage, il [Lycurgus] craignit que l'avarice n'accumulât bientôt les possessions."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. "Pour que Sparte ne jouit pas d'une réforme passagère, il descendit, pour ainsi dire, jusque dans le fond du cœur des citoyens, et y étouffa le germe de l'amour des richesses."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. "proscrit l'usage de l'or et de l'argent les richesses devenues inutiles parurent méprisables . . . et Sparte devint une forteresse inaccessible à la corruption."

<sup>103</sup> More, *Utopia*, p. 103.

the same passage of Plutarch's *Agis* that Harrington and his followers had appropriated so enthusiastically:

The Spartans, again defeated by the Thebans at Mantinea, fell into the most shameful degradation, from the time that the ephor Epitadeus, giving free rein to avarice, had proposed a law according to which he was permitted to sell his possessions, and to dispose of them by will. The desire for riches invaded all of Laconia, and the citizens without patrimony begged their favor in a servile manner, or stirred up seditions to recover the goods they had lost. The hands of the Spartans, which Lycurgus had intended only for the sword, the lance, and the shield, were dishonored amongst the instruments of the arts which luxury introduced into Laconia unawares.<sup>104</sup>

The repeal of Lycurgus' ban on the sale of property and on the making of wills resulted in the rise of disproportionate wealth and poverty, and doomed the Spartan commonwealth.

Later in his career, Mably would expand on this analysis and offer a systematic summary of his Greek political theory in *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen* (1758). The author's interlocutor – initially named “Harrington” when Mably circulated the text in manuscript form<sup>105</sup> – joins Montesquieu and the rationalists in rejecting legal positivism, insisting that “the idea of good and evil necessarily preceded the establishment of society,” and that political life ought to be based upon “those luminous, fixed, and immutable principles that nature has given us in order to seek out and secure our own happiness.”<sup>106</sup> More specifically, “the laws and the whole machinery of political government were only devised to come to the aid of our reason, almost always powerless against our passions.”<sup>107</sup> Earlier, in his *Entretiens de Phocion, sur le rapport de la morale avec la politique* (1763), he made

<sup>104</sup> Mably, *Œuvres*, vol. iv, p. 123. “Les Lacédémoniens, encore défaits à Mantinée par les Thébins, tombèrent dans l’avisement le plus honteux, dès que l’éphore Epitadeus, ouvrant une libre carrière à l’avarice, eût porté une loi par laquelle il étoit permis de vendre ses possessions, et d’en disposer par testament. L’avidité des riches envahit toute la Laconie, et les citoyens sans patrimoine mendierent servilement leur faveur, ou excitèrent des séditions pour recouvrer les biens qu’ils avoient perdus. Les mains des Spartiates que Lycurge avoit destinées à ne manier que l’épée, la lance et le bouclier, se deshonorèrent parmi les instruments des arts que le luxe introduisit dans la Laconie étonnée.”

<sup>105</sup> See Michael Sonenscher, “Republicanism, State Finances and the Emergence of Commerical Society in Eighteenth-Century France – or from Royal to Ancient Republicanism and Back” in *Republicanism: a Shared European Heritage*, vol. II, ed. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 278.

<sup>106</sup> Mably, *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 270. “l’idée du bien et du mal a nécessairement précédé l’établissement de la société.” The second passage is quoted using Wright’s translation (see Wright, *A Classical Republican*, p. 83).

<sup>107</sup> Mably, *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 271. “les lois et toute la machine du gouvernement politique n’ont été imaginées que pour venir au secours de notre raison, presque toujours impuissante contre nos passions.”

clear that, in instituting the laws of Sparta, Lycurgus had consulted this transcendent blueprint:

Instead of consulting [his people's] prejudices, Lycurgus only consulted their nature. He descended into the tortuous depths of the human heart, and penetrated the secrets of Providence. His laws, made to repress our passions, only tended to develop and affirm the same laws which the Author of nature prescribed for us through the agency of the rational faculty he endowed us with, and which is the supreme and only infallible magistrate for men.<sup>108</sup>

The Lycurgan system was in conformity with reason, which is natural and just.<sup>109</sup> But, looking around him at the state of his own government, Mably (like Montesquieu) despairs: "How the baseness of our mores has degraded our souls and our laws! The virtue which Solon desired in Athens would be regarded today as the crime of a rabble-rouser."<sup>110</sup> The way out of this morass of corruption, Mably insists, is to institute republican government: "the republican citizen, so proud in his bearing for wanting to obey only the laws, naturally has a soul that is upright, just, elevated, and courageous."<sup>111</sup> Republics, animated by "l'amour de la liberté," make their citizens just and reasonable.

But Mably argues passionately that republics cannot produce virtuous citizens where there are extremes of wealth and poverty; indeed, his ideal is the abolition of private property.<sup>112</sup> He asks, "what is the principle source of all the evils which afflict humanity? The private ownership of goods":<sup>113</sup>

We who see the infinite evils which arise from this fatal Pandora's Box, if the least ray of hope struck our reason, should we not aspire to that happy community of

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., vol. x, p. 47. "Au lieu de consulter leurs préjugés, il [Lycurgus] ne consulte que la nature. Il descendit dans les profondeurs tortueuses du cœur humain, et pénétra les secrets de la Providence. Ses lois, faites pour réprimer nos passions, ne tendirent qu'à développer et affermir les lois mêmes que l'Auteur de la nature nous prescrit par le ministère de la raison dont il nous a doués, et qui est le magistrat suprême et seul infallible des hommes."

<sup>109</sup> Wright makes this point very forcefully (Wright, *A Classical Republican*, pp. 83-84).

<sup>110</sup> Mably, *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 351. "Que la bassesse de nos mœurs a avili nos âmes et nos lois! La vertu que Solon désiroit dans Athènes seroit regardée aujourd'hui comme le crime d'un séditieux."

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 372. "Un républicain assez fier de sa dignité pour ne vouloir obéir qu'aux lois, a naturellement l'âme droite, juste, élevée et courageuse."

<sup>112</sup> There is not space here for a full account of Mably's advocacy of a "communauté des biens." He discusses the issue at length in *De l'étude de l'histoire*, *De la législation*, and *Doutes proposées aux philosophes économistes*. See also the informative discussion in Wright, *A Classical Republican*, pp. 95-109.

<sup>113</sup> Mably, *Œuvres*, vol. xi, p. 379. "quelle est la principale source de tous les malheurs qui affligent l'humanité? C'est la propriété des biens . . . Nous qui voyons les maux infinis qui sont sortis de cette boîte funeste de Pandore, si le moindre rayon d'espérance frappe notre raison, ne devrions-nous pas aspirer à cette heureuse communauté de biens, tant louée, tant regrettée par les poètes, que Lycurge avoit établie à Lacédémone, que Platon vouloit faire revivre dans sa république, et qui, grâce à la dépravation des mœurs, ne peut plus être qu'une chimère dans le monde?"

goods, so praised, so mourned by the poets, which Lycurgus established in Sparta, which Plato wanted to revive in his republic, and which, thanks to the depravity in manners, cannot be anything but a chimera in the world?

Once again, Mably insists that "with whatever equality one distributes the goods of a republic in the beginning, be sure . . . that the equality will not prevail amongst the citizens in the third generation."<sup>114</sup> Imagine, he explains, that one person has only one son whom he has reared to be virtuous and industrious, while another, less virtuous person has three or four sons, all of them slaves of vice. The first person's estate will grow and be passed on intact, while the second's will be diminished and divided three or four ways. Inequality then arises, and "it is not possible that the rich, once they are esteemed and looked up to for their fortunes, will not band together and claim to form an order separate from the multitude. With the best faith in the world, they will believe that they merit the place which is due only to virtue and talents."<sup>115</sup> Mably amplifies this concern in the *Entretiens*, where Phocion observes of the Athenians that "hardly had we begun to esteem voluptuousness, elegance, and riches, and to respect great fortunes, when we were punished, in seeing charms, pomp, luxury and riches take the place of talents, and become themselves titles for being elevated to the magistracy."<sup>116</sup> Wealth replaces virtue as the criterion which determines the distribution of political power, and the state is rendered unjust. In case the Greek character of this argument is not sufficiently clear, Mably includes a footnote explaining that "Plato admirably describes, in Book VIII of his Republic, the progress, and if I may speak this way, the generation of vices in a city which possesses superfluous riches."<sup>117</sup> Once this corruption has infiltrated the city, Mably continues, "do not even hope that the public good will be the first interest of the citizen: his property and the distinctions which his pride acquires for him are for him goods more precious than the fatherland."<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 380. "avec quelque égalité qu'on partage d'abord les biens d'une république, soyez sûr . . . que l'égalité ne régnera plus entre les citoyens à la troisième génération."

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. "Il n'est pas possible que les riches, dès qu'ils seront estimés et considérés par leur fortune, ne se liguent et ne prétendent former un ordre séparé de la multitude. De la meilleure foi du monde, ils croiront mériter la place qui n'est due qu'à la vertu et aux talents."

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., vol. x, p. 71. "à peine, en un mot, avons-nous estimé la volupté, l'élégance, les richesses, et respecté les grandes fortunes, que nous en avons été punis, en voyant les grâces, le faste, le luxe et les richesses tenir lieu de talents, et devenir autant de titres pour s'élever aux magistratures."

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., note. "Platon peint admirablement dans sa *république*, livre 8, les progrès, et si je puis parler ainsi, la génération des vices dans une ville qui possède des richesses superflues."

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. "n'espérez plus que le bien public soit le premier intérêt du citoyen: sa propriété et les distinctions que son orgueil s'est acquises, sont pour lui des biens plus précieux que la patrie."

Mably is led by these convictions about the intrinsic dangers of property to carry out the same thought experiment as Plato and More, his two great predecessors. Indeed, later, in his *De la manière d'écrire l'histoire* (1783), Mably would have Théodon, his interlocutor, respond in shock and disbelief to the suggestion that "it was important to study seriously the follies of Plato, of Thomas More, and of however many other dreamers who only talk about a kind of politics which has possibly never been known to exist."<sup>119</sup> But Mably answers that "I do not only insist that the historian should know about those things you call reveries; I condemn him to meditating on them thoroughly so that they seem to him to be so many incontestable truths."<sup>120</sup> In his treatise on rights and duties, however, he himself becomes the *rêveur*:

Never do I read of some deserted island where the sky is serene and the waters are healthy without being seized by the desire of going there to establish a republic, where all are equal, all rich, all poor, all free, all brothers, and our first law would be not to possess anything individually. We would carry the fruits of our labors to public stores; there it would be the treasure and patrimony of every citizen. Every year the fathers of each family would elect those in charge of distributing necessary things for the needs of each individual, assigning him the work task which the community has ordained for him, and maintaining good mores in the state.<sup>121</sup>

Whereas property invariably creates a situation in which "little by little virtues and talents lose as much of their reputation as riches acquire" and men "persuade themselves that riches can take the place of merit, and from then on they [the riches] begin to give a certain reputation to their possessors,"<sup>122</sup> in Mably's utopia, as in More's, "virtuti pretium sit" – virtue has its just recognition. "The most intelligent men" are at long last able to play their rightful role in society, namely "to make up for the incapacity of others, and to guide them just as a father directs and guides his child,

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., vol. xii, p. 380. "il faudra s'occuper sérieusement des folies de Platon, de Thomas Morus, et de je ne sais combien d'autres rêveurs qui ne parlent que d'une politique qui n'a peut-être jamais été connue."

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. "Je n'exige pas seulement que l'historien connoisse ce que vous appelez des rêveries; je le condamne à les méditer assez pour qu'elles lui paroissent autant de vérités incontestables."

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., vol. xi, p. 283. "Jamais je ne lis de quelque île déserte dont le ciel est serein et les eaux salubres, qu'il me prenne envie d'y aller établir une république, où tous égaux, tous riches, tous pauvres, tous libres, tous frères, notre première loi seroit de ne rien posséder en propre. Nous porterions dans les magasins publics les fruits de nos travaux; ce seroit-là le trésor de l'état et le patrimoine de chaque citoyen. Tous les ans les pères de famille élieroient des économes chargés de distribuer les choses nécessaires au besoin de chaque particulier, de lui assigner la tâche de travail qu'en exigeroit la communauté, et d'entretenir les bonnes mœurs dans l'état."

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., vol. x, p. 76. "peu à peu les vertus et les talents perdirent autant de leur crédit que les richesses en acquirent... se persuadèrent que les richesses pourroient tenir lieu de mérite, et dès-lors elles commencèrent à donner quelque considération à leurs possesseurs."

when the child's reason is not yet developed."<sup>123</sup> "Contempt for riches," he explains, "is always accompanied by the love of order and justice."<sup>124</sup>

Mably's republics, thus, bear a striking resemblance to those of Montesquieu, though their contours are more obvious for not being couched in the detached, descriptive tone of *De l'esprit des lois*. Mably's republics, like Montesquieu's, require *vertu politique* and its moral offspring in order to survive, and both theorists insist that virtue and justice cannot be engendered or preserved without the equality of fortunes or the outright abolition of private property. They agree that political virtue – a reverence for the organic whole – leads citizens to embrace the rule of reason in the persons of the most excellent men (which is justice). This just balance of elements, in turn, gives rise to the individual moral virtues and, through them, the happiness of the commonwealth.

But, in addition to Mably, Constant also listed a second eighteenth-century political theorist among the advocates of the "liberté des anciens": Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Accordingly, I ought to say a word about where the author of the second *Discours* and *Du Contrat social* fits into this story. There are, to begin with, plausible reasons for thinking that Rousseau does not fit in at all. If we take the substance of the Greek case to rest upon the notion that men achieve their greatest happiness and fulfillment when they are part of a rationally ordered state in which the best men rule, then Rousseau must at first glance seem difficult to assimilate to this mold. Certainly, the Rousseau of the *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1755) paints a very different picture. He invites us to imagine that men enjoy their greatest felicity, freedom, and innocence in the state of nature, isolated and alone, free from the grip of *amour propre*, and susceptible to the benign force of disinterested pity. Man in his original state is "good," not in the sense of "virtuous" or "just" (categories of thought which would not yet exist), but in the sense that his natural sentiment of pity draws him to aid others when doing so will not adversely affect his own condition. Moreover, because he is self-sufficient and free from vainglory, such disinterested assistance will rarely compromise him.<sup>125</sup>

The path toward civil society, on the other hand, is one of degradation and corruption. The progress of "enlightenment" produces enormous

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 374. "Les hommes les plus intelligents . . . suppléer à l'incapacité des autres, et les conduire, de même qu'un père dirige et conduit son enfant dont la raison n'est pas encore développée."

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 111. "Le mépris des richesses est toujours accompagné de l'amour de l'ordre et de la justice."

<sup>125</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* in *Ceuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

"moral" inequalities out of relatively modest "physical" inequalities, establishing extreme wealth and poverty, servitude and rulership, and the rise of *amour propre* (the powerful tendency, both destructive and constructive, to measure ourselves against our fellows). The formation of the state appears as a ruse conceived by the rich to legitimize their usurpations as "private property." Within the state, to be sure, man first learns virtue, justice, and enlightened reason, but the reader is left with the distinct impression that he is not better off. After concluding this account of the rise of the state, Rousseau summarizes:

Such was, or might have been, the origin of Society and of Laws, which gave the weak new fetters and the rich new forces, irreversibly destroyed natural freedom, forever fixed the Law of property and inequality, transformed a skillful usurpation into an irrevocable right, and for the profit of a few ambitious men henceforth subjugated the whole of Mankind to labor, servitude and misery.<sup>126</sup>

In a fragment on the state of nature, written during the same period as the second *Discours*, Rousseau is even more emphatic. "All the noble words of society," he writes, "justice, laws, mutual defense, assistance to the weak, philosophy, and the progress of reason, are only lures . . . the pure state of nature is the one of all the others where men would be the least wicked, the happiest, and the most numerous on earth."<sup>127</sup>

This view of the state would indeed have the effect of distancing Rousseau quite considerably from the Greek tradition, but, as is well known, he soon modifies and tempers it. Even in the "political fragments" of the 1750s, Rousseau announces that, however attractive the state of nature may be, man can only realize his true self in the civil state: "It is only by becoming sociable that he becomes a moral being, a reasonable animal, the king of

<sup>126</sup> English text is taken from Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 173. "Telle fut, ou dut être l'origine de la Société et des Loix, qui donnèrent de nouvelles entraves au foible et de nouvelles forces aux riches, détruisirent sans retour la liberté naturelle, fixèrent pour jamais la Loi de la propriété et de l'inégalité, d'une adroite usurpation firent un droit irrévocable, et pour le profit de quelques ambitieux assujétirent désormais tout le Genre-humain au travail, à la servitude et à la misère" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 178).

<sup>127</sup> Rousseau, *Fragments politiques* in *Œuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). "tous ces grands mots de société, de justice, de lois, de défense mutuelle, d'assistance des faibles, de philosophie et de progrès de la raison, ne sont que leures inventés . . . le pur état de nature est celui de tous où les hommes seroient le moins méchants, le plus heureux, et en plus grand nombre sur la terre" (p. 475). English text is taken from *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, vol. IV (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 1994).



the other animals, and the image of God on earth."<sup>128</sup> Rousseau elaborates on this view in a classic passage from Book I, chapter eight of the *Contrat social* (1762):

This passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his behavior and giving his actions the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty replaces physical impulse and right replaces appetite, does man, who until that time only considered himself, find himself forced to act upon other principles and to consult his reason before heeding his inclinations. Although in the state he deprives himself of several advantages given him by nature, he gains such great ones, his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas broadened, his feelings ennobled, his whole soul elevated to such a point that if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him beneath the condition he left, he ought ceaselessly to bless the happy moment that tore him away from it forever, and changed him from a stupid, limited animal into an intelligent being and a man.<sup>129</sup>

The state of nature is certainly to be preferred to the degraded, corrupt condition of many states and regimes, but the rationally ordered state would allow man a fulfillment even surpassing the one he achieved in his isolated innocence.

Thus, Rousseau eventually embraces a vision of the state which allows for real dialogue with Montesquieu and Mably. But even here, an absolutely sweeping departure presents itself. Rousseau agrees with the theorists we have been following in locating man's most complete realization of his own nature in the rationally ordered state; he does not, however, follow the Greek tradition in locating the basic rationality of the state in the rule of the best men. For Rousseau, the governing reason of the state is to be found rather in the *volonté générale*, the collective judgment of the people as Sovereign. As described in the *Contrat social* and in the *Discours*

<sup>128</sup> *Collected Writings*, p. 19. "En un mot, ce n'est qu'en devenant sociable qu'il devient un être moral, un animal raisonnable, le roi des autres animaux, et l'image de Dieu sur la terre" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 477).

<sup>129</sup> English text from *the Contrat social* is taken from *Collected Writings* (ed. Masters et al.), vol. IV. "Ce passage de l'état de nature à l'état civil produit dans l'homme un changement très remarquable, en substituant dans sa conduite la justice à l'instinct, et donnant à ses actions la moralité qui leur manquoit auparavant. C'est alors seulement que la voix du devoir succédant à l'impulsion physique et le droit à l'appétit, l'homme, qui jusques là n'avoit regardé que lui-même, se voit forcé d'agir sur d'autres principes, et de consulter sa raison avant d'écouter ses penchans. Quoiqu'il se prive dans cet état de plusieurs avantages qu'il tient de la nature, il en regagne de si grands, ses facultés s'exercent et se développent, ses idées s'étendent, ses sentiments s'ennoblissent, son âme toute entière s'élève à tel point, que si les abus de cette nouvelle condition ne le dégradoient souvent au dessous de celle dont il est sorti, il devroit bénir sans cesse l'instant heureux qui l'en arracha pour jamais, et qui, d'un animal stupide et borné, fit un être intelligent et un homme" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 364).

sur l'économie politique (1755), this *volonté générale* is emphatically not the sum of the *volontés particulières*, the individual opinions of all the citizens. It is rather an occult, abstracted expression of the common good – an idealized projection of what each citizen's "higher self" would choose when untethered from his private desires. To be sure, as Rousseau puts it in the *Contrat social*, while "the general will is always right and always tends toward the public utility," it is not the case that "the people's deliberations have the same rectitude."<sup>130</sup> Indeed, "one always wants what is good for oneself, but one does not always see it. The people is never corrupted, but it is often deceived, and only then does it appear to want what is bad."<sup>131</sup>

In unmistakably Platonic terms, Rousseau insists that the *volonté générale* represents what the people would choose if not "deceived"; when they choose something wicked, it is never an intentional act. The *volonté générale* is not what the aggregated citizens actually want; it is what they should want. It is, therefore, reason itself insofar as it identifies the common good, an almost mystical guide which is accessible when particularity and private passions have not yet overwhelmed the individual citizen. Accordingly, in the *Economie politique*, Rousseau seeks the union of the general and particular wills, and states unambiguously that "virtue is nothing but this conformity of the particular will to the general one."<sup>132</sup> Virtue is, indeed, a gift of the social condition. Only when we have the opportunity to make the general will our own can we learn what virtue is. Moreover, the *volonté générale*, "which always tends toward the conservation and the well-being of the whole and of every part, and which is the source of the laws," is also "the measure of just and unjust."<sup>133</sup> Rousseau goes so far as to suggest that "the most general will is also always the most just, and that the voice of the people is in effect the voice of God."<sup>134</sup>

We are left, then, with a view which, like its Greek antecedents, stresses the reconstitutive potential of the state. Only within the rationally ordered

<sup>130</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 147. "Il s'ensuit de ce qui procède que la volonté générale est toujours droite et tend toujours à l'utilité publique: mais il ne s'ensuit pas que les délibérations du peuple aient toujours la même rectitude" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 371).

<sup>131</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 147. "On veut toujours son bien, mais on ne le voit pas toujours: Jamais on ne corrompt le peuple, mais souvent on le trompe, et c'est alors seulement qu'il paroît vouloir ce qui est mal." My translation of "tromper" as "to deceive," rather than "to fool," departs from the printed translation.

<sup>132</sup> "la vertu n'est que cette conformité de la volonté particulière à la générale" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 252). English translations from this text are my own.

<sup>133</sup> "cette volonté générale, qui tend toujours à la conservation et au bien-être du tout et de chaque partie, et qui est la source des lois, est pour tous les membres de l'état par rapport à eux et à lui, la règle de juste et injuste" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 245).

<sup>134</sup> "la volonté la plus générale est aussi toujours la plus juste, et que la voix du peuple est en effet la voix de Dieu" (*ibid.*, p. 246).

state can men learn virtue and live according to justice. The catch is that, in the Rousseauian state, the people as an idealized whole are the locus of rationality – not a small number of wise and virtuous men. This is not to say that Rousseau does not leave room in his theory for a more conventional attachment to the “natural aristocracy.” Even in the second *Discours*, he insists that merit “confers a Natural Ascendancy”<sup>135</sup> whose legitimacy is contrasted to the unnatural ascendancy of wealth and power.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, he ends the *Discours* with the observation that nothing could be more contrary to natural right than “for an imbecile to lead a wise man,”<sup>137</sup> and observes in his *Preface to “Narcissus”* that “in a well-constituted State” one gains precedence only “for being the best.”<sup>138</sup>

Rousseau's most extensive discussion of this theme, however, appears in Book III of the *Contrat social*, where he turns to consider the various advantages and disadvantages of different governments. First considering democracy, Rousseau follows Montesquieu's lead in identifying its range of important (and rare) prerequisites:

First, a very small State where the people is easily assembled and where each citizen can easily know all the others. Second, great simplicity of morals, which prevents a multitude of business and knotty discussions. Next, a great equality of ranks and of fortunes, without which equality of rights and authority could not subsist for long. Finally, little or no luxury, because either luxury is the result of wealth, or it makes wealth necessary. It corrupts both rich and poor, the one by possessing, the other by covering. It sells out the fatherland to indolence and vanity; it deprives the State of all its Citizens by enslaving some of them to others and all of them to opinion.<sup>139</sup>

Even without these moral and logistical problems, however, pure democracies, on Rousseau's account, have never existed. It is, he writes, “contrary to

<sup>135</sup> *Discourses* (ed. Gourevitch), p. 181. “mérite . . . qui donne un Ascendant Naturel” (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 245).

<sup>136</sup> *Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 188.

<sup>137</sup> *Discourses*, p. 188. “qu'un imbécille conduise un homme sage” (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 194).

<sup>138</sup> Compare with *Projet de constitution pour la Corse*, p. 910. “L'état ne doit accorder des distinctions qu'au mérite, aux vertus, aux services rendus à la patrie . . .” See also *Projet*, p. 939: “La puissance civile s'exerce de deux manières: l'une légitime par l'autorité, l'autre abusive par les richesses.”

<sup>139</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, pp. 173–74. “Premièrement un Etat très petit où le peuple soit facile à rassembler et où chaque citoyen puisse aisément connoître tous les autres: secondement une grande simplicité de mœurs qui prévienne la multitude d'affaires et les discussions épineuses: Ensuite beaucoup d'égalité dans les rangs et dans les fortunes, sans quoi l'égalité ne sauroit subsister longtems dans les droits et l'autorité: Enfin peu ou point de luxe; car, ou le luxe est l'effet des richesses, ou il les rend nécessaires; il corrompt à la fois le riche et le pauvre, l'un par la possession l'autre par la convoitise; il vend la patrie à la mollesse à la vanité; il ôte à l'Etat tous ses Citoyens pour asservir les uns aux autres, et tous à l'opinion” (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 405).

the natural order that the majority govern and the minority be governed."<sup>140</sup> Far preferable is an elective aristocracy: "It is the best and most natural order for the wisest to govern the multitude, as long as it is certain that they govern for its benefit and not their own."<sup>141</sup> All of this sounds quite Greek, but it is essential to remember the distinction in Rousseau's account between Legislation and Government. The governors of a Rousseauian state play an exclusively executive role: they enforce the laws in particular cases. They are not, however, the source of the laws, nor, indeed, are they the source of the rational principle that sets the state in motion. The Legislator is always the people, and the laws result from the *volonté générale*. This is Rousseau's great departure.

Yet Rousseau's conviction that reason is to be found in the *volonté générale*, rather than in the persons of the wise, does not prevent him from applying the principles of the Greek tradition to his own idiosyncratic circumstances. In order for men to live according to their (higher) nature, they must be governed by the *volonté générale*. A state so ordered will be "just." However, when particularity and private interests begin to predominate, the *volonté générale* becomes inaccessible. The chief factor in the rise of *volontés particulières* is disproportionate wealth, and, as a result, Rousseau is as committed as Harrington to the proposition that only an egalitarian distribution of property will allow a just regime. Indeed, Rousseau makes this case throughout his life. In the second *Discours* he insists that unnatural moral inequalities should not be temporized with, but, rather, that a good lawgiver would "begin by purging the threshing floor and setting aside all the old materials, as Lycurgus did in Sparta, in order afterwards to erect a good Building."<sup>142</sup> In the *Economie politique* he writes that "the greatest evil is already done when there are poor people to defend and rich people to appease. It is on middling fortunes alone that the force of the laws can exert itself. They are equally impotent against the treasures of the rich and the misery of the poor."<sup>143</sup> It is, therefore, "one of the most important tasks of government to prevent extreme inequalities in wealth, not by confiscating treasures from their owners, but by removing from everyone the means

<sup>140</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 173. "Il est contre l'ordre naturel que le grand nombre gouverne et que le petit soit gouverné" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 404).

<sup>141</sup> *Collected Writings* vol. IV, p. 175. "c'est l'ordre le meilleur et le plus naturel que les plus sages gouvernent la multitude, quand on est sûr qu'ils la gouverneront pour son profit et non pour la leur" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 407).

<sup>142</sup> *Discourses*, p. 175. "qu'il eut fallu commencer par nettoyer l'aire et écarter tous les vieux matériaux, comme fit Licurgue à Sparte, pour élever un bon Edifice" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 180).

<sup>143</sup> "le plus grand mal est déjà fait, quand on a des pauvres à défendre et des riches à contenter. C'est sur la médiocrité seule que s'exerce toute la force des lois; elles sont également impuissantes contre les trésors du riche et contre le misère du pauvre..." (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 258).

to accumulate them . . . in order to maintain, together with good mores, respect for the laws, love of the fatherland, and the strength of the general will."<sup>144</sup> Likewise, in the *Contrat social* Rousseau warns that "with regard to wealth, no citizen should be so opulent that he can buy another, and none so poor that he is constrained to sell himself,"<sup>145</sup> and adds in a celebrated footnote that wealth and poverty "are equally fatal to the common good."<sup>146</sup>

In all of this, however, Rousseau does not discuss agrarian laws. In the *Economie politique*, his prescription for the elimination of wealth and poverty rests upon the taxation of luxury goods, not upon the breakup of large estates. "It is by means of such taxes," he insists, "which relieve poverty and charge wealth, that one should prevent the continual increase of the inequality of fortunes."<sup>147</sup> It is little wonder, then, that the American colonists whom I am shortly to consider did not cite Rousseau in their defenses of the agrarian movement.<sup>148</sup> Had they known of Rousseau's unpublished *Projet de constitution pour la Corse*, however, they would have had every reason to list him with Harrington and Montesquieu. Rousseau

<sup>144</sup> "une des plus importantes affaires du gouvernement, de prévenir l'extrême inégalité des fortunes, non en enlevant les trésors à leurs possesseurs, mais en ôtant à tous les moyens d'en accumuler . . . pour maintenir avec les bonnes mœurs le respect pour les lois, l'amour de la patrie, et la vigueur de la volonté générale" (ibid.). Rousseau, indeed, has quite elevated words for the right to private property. See *Economie Politique*, p. 263; *Political Fragments*, p. 22.

<sup>145</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. iv, p. 162. "quant à la richesse, que nul citoyen ne soit assez opulent pour en pouvoir acheter un autre, et nul assez pauvre pour être contraint de se vendre" (*Œuvres*, vol. iii, p. 391). Here is the more neo-Roman version of the argument: the great worry is dependence. But Rousseau argues that wealth endangers freedom for two distinct reasons. On the one hand (and this is the Roman point), the wealthy can in effect buy the poor, thereby rendering the latter dependent and, hence, unfree. On the other hand, extremes of wealth and poverty imperil freedom by fostering particularity, private interest, and the subjugation of the *volonté générale*. Cut off from the moral dictates of the general will, man is a slave to his impulses and private passions; he does things which his higher self would not choose to do, and he is therefore unfree. A lack of attention to this second anxiety about wealth is, it seems to me, the shortcoming in John O'Neal's analysis. See John C. O'Neal, "Rousseau's Theory of Wealth" in *History of European Ideas* 7 (1986), 453-67.

<sup>146</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. iv, p. 163. "Ces deux états . . . sont également funestes au bien commun" (*Œuvres*, vol. iii, p. 392n.). Rousseau also developed these themes in an unpublished *Discours sur les richesses*. On this, see Charles E. Ellison, "The Moral Economy of the Modern City: Reading Rousseau's *Discourse on Wealth*" in *History of Political Thought* 12 (1991), 253-61.

<sup>147</sup> "C'est par tels impôts qui soulagent la pauvreté et charge la richesse, qu'il faut prévenir l'augmentation continuelle de l'inégalité des fortunes" (*Œuvres*, vol. iii, p. 276).

<sup>148</sup> An exception may be Jonathan Jackson's *Thoughts upon the Political Situation of the United States of America* (Worcester, MA, 1788). Jackson defends the abolition of primogeniture and entails on the grounds that such measures scuttle the aristocracy of wealth and clear a path for the "natural aristocracy." Such a situation is desirable because "the happiness of a free government consists in obtaining the wisest and best general will of the community, and in being sure of having it conformed to. Mankind are abundantly happier, when obliged to conform strictly to rules, if they are wise ones; as the children of the same family are, to those of a well regulated house, than where each one may do as he pleases" (pp. 56-58). This may well be Rousseauian language.

wrote the *Projet* in 1765 while living in Prussian Neuchâtel, where he had fled to after the condemnation of the *Contrat social* and *Emile* in 1762. He had by then already recorded a special admiration for Corsica (which had recently revolted against centuries of Genoese rule) in the *Contrat social*.<sup>149</sup> In Book II he observes that "in Europe there is still one country capable of legislation; it is the Island of Corsica. The valor and perseverance with which this courageous people was able to recover and defend its freedom would well deserve that some wise man should teach them how to preserve it."<sup>150</sup> Matthieu Buttafoco, a Corsican noble and officer, took the hint, and wrote to Rousseau in August of 1764, declaring that his comments "gave the nation reason to hope that you would want to be that wise man who could obtain the means to conserve this liberty which cost so much blood to acquire."<sup>151</sup> Rousseau took on the task, but seems to have abandoned any intention of publishing his proposals after Corsica was united to France in the Versailles treaty of 1768. His notes for the *Projet* were found at his death, and were finally published in 1861.

Rousseau recommends the life of agrarian democracy for Corsica, and hopes to create an institutional arrangement which will favor virtue and justice.<sup>152</sup> As he puts it, "I will not preach morality to them, nor will I direct them to have virtues, but I will rather put them in a position such that they will have the virtues without knowing the word, and will be good and just without really knowing what justice and goodness are."<sup>153</sup> In order to secure this goal, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of a uniform, equal citizenry, evenly distributed over the various provinces of the island, and free from extremes in wealth and poverty. His intention, as he phrases it, is "not completely to destroy private property, since this is impossible, but to enclose it within more narrow boundaries, to give it a measure, a rule,

<sup>149</sup> For Rousseau and Corsica, see Venturi, *Utopia and Reform*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>150</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 162. "Il est encore en Europe un pays capable de législation; c'est l'Isle de Corse. La valeur et la constance avec laquelle ce brave peuple a su recouvrer et défendre sa liberté, mériterait bien que quelque homme sage lui apprit à la conserver. J'ai quelque pressentiment qu'un jour cette petite Isle étonnera l'Europe" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 391).

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in *Œuvres*, vol. III, p. ccii. "a fait souhaiter à la nation que vous voulussiez être cet homme sage qui pourrait procurer les moyens de conserver cette liberté qui a coûté tant de sang à acquérir."

<sup>152</sup> For a defense of the view that Rousseau regarded the proposals in his "practical" writings as realistic blueprints, rather than purely "utopian" musings, see Ethan Putterman, "Realism and Reform in Rousseau's Constitutional Projects for Poland and Corsica" in *Political Studies* 49 (2001), 481–94.

<sup>153</sup> "Je ne leur prêcherai pas la morale, je ne leur ordonnerai pas d'avoir des vertus mais je les mettrai dans une position telle qu'ils auront des vertus sans en connoître le mot; et qu'ils seront bons et justes sans trop savoir ce que c'est que justice et bonté" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 948). English translations from the *Projet* are my own.

a bridle which restrains it, which directs it, which subdues it, and always keeps it subordinate to the public good."<sup>154</sup>

In this spirit, Rousseau proposes the creation of extensive public lands "which could even increase in a few years through the order that will be discussed in the law of successions,"<sup>155</sup> and the enforcement of sumptuary laws. But his central proposal is for a Corsican agrarian law. He observes that, "when there is simplicity in mores, agrarian laws are necessary, because then the rich man, not being able to put his wealth anywhere else, hoards his possessions."<sup>156</sup> In other words, since sumptuary laws prevent the wealthy from spending their money on luxury goods, they open the doors wide to massive accumulations of wealth. Because the republic cannot tolerate such fortunes, limits must be placed on the size of estates. Accordingly, Rousseau sketches out a familiar, although preliminary framework: "No one will be able to own lands outside his district. No one will be able to own more than [Rousseau left the number blank] acres of land. He who has such a quantity will be able to acquire equivalent quantities through exchange, but not greater quantities, even of inferior lands, and all gifts, all bequests which could be made to him in lands will be nullified . . . No young man will be able to make a will, but rather all his goods will pass to the community."<sup>157</sup> Once again, the rationale behind such laws could not be clearer. As Rousseau has it, "all the laws concerning succession must tend to return circumstances to equality, so that each person should have something, and no one should have anything excessive."<sup>158</sup>

That said, Rousseau (like Harrington) makes clear that agrarian laws should not tamper with existing holdings; they should simply prevent further accumulation and use inheritance laws to advance their redistributive goals.<sup>159</sup> He insists that "neither agrarian laws nor any other

<sup>154</sup> "n'est pas de détruire absolument la propriété particulière parce que cela est impossible mais de la renfermer dans les plus étroites bornes, de lui donner une mesure, [une] règle, un frein qui la contienne, qui la dirige, qui la subjugue et la tienne toujours subordonnée au bien public" (ibid., p. 931).

<sup>155</sup> "qui pourront même augmenter en peu d'années par l'ordre dont il sera parlé dans la loi des successions" (ibid., p. 926).

<sup>156</sup> "Quand il y a de la simplicité dans les mœurs, les lois agraires sont nécessaires, parce qu'alors le riche ne pouvant placer sa richesse en autre chose accumule ses possessions" (ibid., p. 936).

<sup>157</sup> "Nul ne pourra posséder des terres hors de sa piéve. Nul ne pourra posséder plus de [ ] de terres. Celui qui en aura cette quantité pourra par échanges acquérir des quantités pareilles, mais non plus grandes même de terres moins bonnes et tous dons, tous legs qui lui pourroient être faits en terres seront nuls . . . Nul h(omme) garçon ne pourra tester, mais tout son bien passera à la communauté" (ibid., p. 942).

<sup>158</sup> "Les Loix concernant les successions doivent toutes tendre à ramener les choses à l'égalité, en sorte que chacun ait quelque chose et que personne n'ait rien de trop" (ibid., p. 945).

<sup>159</sup> Rousseau states emphatically in the *Economie politique* that property rights end with death. Thus, redistributive inheritance laws involve no violations of right (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 263). At this point

laws can ever have a retroactive effect, and one cannot confiscate any lands acquired legitimately, no matter their quantity, by virtue of a later law which forbids having so much."<sup>160</sup> Indeed, "no law can despoil any particular person of any portion of his goods. The law can only prevent him from acquiring more; then if he breaks the law, he deserves punishment and the illegally acquired surplus can be confiscated."<sup>161</sup> Unsurprisingly, Rousseau draws this lesson from a discussion of Roman history:

The Romans saw the necessity of agrarian laws when it was already too late to establish them, and for want of the distinction that I have just made, they finally destroyed the Republic by a method which should have saved it: the Gracchi wanted to take away the existing landholdings of the Patricians, whereas they should have prevented them from acquiring more.<sup>162</sup>

It is of course true that "later on these same Patricians acquired more lands in spite of the law, but this is because the evil was already very deep-rooted when the law was carried, and there was not enough time to remedy it."<sup>163</sup> The Roman agrarian laws were necessary and would have been salutary, had they simply forbidden the growth of existing estates and used inheritance laws to redistribute land and wealth. They would then, without the least appearance of inequity, have safeguarded the rule of virtue and the rational order of the state. Once these comments have been taken into account,

it is perhaps worth correcting a statement by O'Neal. He argues that Rousseau, unlike Plato, More, and Bodin, was unwilling to abrogate the right to property in order to achieve equality. In making this argument, he claims to be endorsing an observation by Robert Derathé. Yet Derathé quite clearly (and correctly) includes only Plato and More among those who were willing to part with property rights. As we have seen, Bodin certainly does not belong in this company; indeed, Rousseau's own analysis may well have owed something to the *Six Livres*. Compare O'Neal, "Rousseau's Theory of Wealth," 465n. to Robert Derathé, "La Place et l'importance de la notion d'égalité dans la doctrine politique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau" in *Rousseau after Two Hundred Years: Proceedings of the Cambridge Bicentennial Colloquium*, ed. R. A. Leigh (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 55-63.

<sup>160</sup> "si [*sic*] les loix agraires ni aucunes loix ne peuvent jamais avoir d'effet rétroactif et l'on ne peut confisquer nulles terres acquises légitimement en quelque quantité qu'elles puissent être en vertu d'une loi postérieure qui défende d'en avoir tant" (*Œuvres*, vol. III, p. 936).

<sup>161</sup> "Aucune loi ne peut dépouiller aucun particulier d'aucune portion de son bien. La loi peut seulement l'empêcher d'en acquérir davantage; alors, s'il enfreint la loi il mérite le châtement et le surplus illégitimement acquis peut et doit être confisqué" (*ibid.*).

<sup>162</sup> "Les Romains virent la nécessité des loix agraires quand il n'étoit plus tems de les établir, et faute de la distinction que je viens de faire ils détruisirent enfin la République par un moyen qui l'eut du conserver: les Gracques voulurent ôter aux Patriciens leurs terres; il eut fallu les empêcher de les acquérir" (*ibid.*, p. 937).

<sup>163</sup> "dans la suite ces mêmes Patriciens en acquirent encore malgré la loi mais c'est que le mal étoit invétéré quand elle fut portée et qu'il n'étoit plus tems d'y remédier" (*ibid.*).



Rousseau's place in the story that I have been telling becomes much more clear.

## IV

It is, then, a helpful exercise to look back at Montesquieu through the eyes of his early French acolytes. Both Mably and Rousseau followed him in insisting that republics alone can guarantee the rule of reason, that such regimes cannot survive without virtue, and that extremes in wealth and poverty will warp the just arrangement of the commonwealth. As we have seen, some scholars have tried to avoid the implications of this analysis for Montesquieu's overall thought by stressing the supposedly amoral character of his *vertu politique*: if his republics are kept in motion by something other than "virtue proper," they reason, the purely descriptive character of his analysis remains intact. The republic is, then, merely an equal among equals, or is even surpassed by the "political liberty" of the British constitution. But if Montesquieu's republics, alone among regimes, produce truly virtuous citizens and a life that accords with reason and nature, then something decidedly normative has crept into Montesquieu's analysis. That the President (like Mably) makes clear that his Greek republics cannot be brought into being in "the dregs and corruption of modern times"<sup>164</sup> does not negate his basic point. True, the "political men" who lived in ancient Greece "recognized no other force to sustain [the city] than virtue" while "those of today speak to us only of manufacturing, commerce, finance, wealth, and even luxury."<sup>165</sup> But that disparity only reinforces Montesquieu's conviction that republics alone gave men the chance to live in accordance with their true natures.

This message was received loud and clear by many of the President's early readers – Bertrand Barère among them<sup>166</sup> – who saw Montesquieu as a straightforward republican partisan, and took his advice on how to

<sup>164</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* iv.6 (p. 37). In this passage Montesquieu notes that there are occasional examples of classical republican virtue in the modern world. William Penn, for example, is styled a "true Lycurgus," a characterization that Voltaire disputed in his *Commentaire sur l'esprit des lois*: "Je ne sais rien de plus contraire à Lycurge qu'un législateur et un peuple qui ont toute guerre en horreur" (*Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. xxx [Paris: Garnier Frères, 1880], p. 419). In general, however, Montesquieu believed that the world of the ancient republics was unavailable to modernity.

<sup>165</sup> *The Spirit of the Laws* iii.3 (p. 22).

<sup>166</sup> See, for example, Bertrand Barère, *Montesquieu peint d'après ses ouvrages* (Paris, 1797). That said, it must be remembered that it was the same Barère who, in 1793, proposed the death penalty "for anyone who shall propose the agrarian law" (See Rose, "French Revolution," 111).

constitute and preserve republican government extremely seriously. One of those early readers, Thomas Jefferson, wrote a letter to John Adams in 1813 in which he outlined the difference between the "natural aristocracy" and the "pseudo-aristocracy" of wealth. In this connection, Jefferson reminds his old friend of an important measure adopted by the Virginia legislature during the American Revolution:

At the first session of our legislature after the Declaration of Independence, we passed a law abolishing entails. And this was followed by one abolishing the privilege of Primogeniture, and dividing the lands of intestates equally among all their children, or other representatives. These laws, drawn by myself, laid the axe to the root of the Pseudo-aristocracy. And had another which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been compleat. It was a Bill for the more general diffusion of learning. . . . Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and compleatly prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts.<sup>167</sup>

It is difficult not to see the hand of Montesquieu in this pattern of thought.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, Montesquieu deserves much of the credit for transporting the Greek tradition to the New World.

<sup>167</sup> *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 390.

<sup>168</sup> For a helpful summary of Jefferson's reading of Montesquieu, see David Carrithers, "Montesquieu, Jefferson and the Fundamentals of Eighteenth-Century Republican Theory" in *The French-American Review* 6 (1982), 160-88.

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Greek tradition and the American Founding*

#### I

Taking the story of the Greek tradition forward into the period of the American Founding necessarily involves an intervention in one of the most vitriolic historiographical debates of the last thirty years. Beginning with the release of Bernard Bailyn's *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) and Gordon S. Wood's *Creation of the American Republic* (1969), a distinguished group of American historians began to question the scholarly consensus that had placed the political theory of John Locke at the center of American revolutionary and constitutional thought.<sup>1</sup> These historians stressed instead the reliance of the Founders on eighteenth-century British opposition writers and, by implication, on the "classical republicanism" sketched out in the postwar period by Zera Fink and Caroline Robbins.<sup>2</sup> The new "republican synthesis," as Robert Shalhope dubbed it in 1972,<sup>3</sup> received perhaps its most crucial defense from J. G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), which, as we have seen, presents the American Revolution as the apotheosis of a tradition of republican thought stretching back to the writings of Aristotle and Polybius.<sup>4</sup> The controversy

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic: 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969). Joining Bailyn and Wood were, among others, Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Cornell University Press, 1978), and Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). The classic postwar statement of the Lockean case was Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: an Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> Zera S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: an Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth-Century England* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1945); Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Harvard University Press, 1959).

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: the Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972), 49-80.

<sup>4</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975).