

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
AND THE CREATION OF
MODERN POLITICAL CULTURE

Volume 3

THE TRANSFORMATION OF
POLITICAL CULTURE 1789-1848

Edited by
FRANCOIS FURET
&
MONA OZOUF

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INSTITUT RAYMOND ARON, PARIS



PERGAMON PRESS

Member of Maxwell Macmillan Pergamon Publishing Corporation

OXFORD · NEW YORK · BEIJING · FRANKFURT
SÃO PAULO · SYDNEY · TOKYO · TORONTO

U.K.	Pergamon Press plc, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford OX3 0BW, England
U.S.A.	Pergamon Press, Inc., Maxwell House, Fairview Park, Elmsford, New York 10523, U.S.A.
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	Pergamon Press, Room 4037, Qianmen Hotel, Beijing, People's Republic of China
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	Pergamon Press GmbH, Hammerweg 6, D-6242 Kronberg, Federal Republic of Germany
BRAZIL	Pergamon Editora Ltda, Rua Eça de Queiros, 346, CEP 04011, Paraíso, São Paulo, Brazil
AUSTRALIA	Pergamon Press Australia Pty Ltd., P.O. Box 544, Potts Point, N.S.W. 2011, Australia
JAPAN	Pergamon Press, 5th Floor, Matsuoka Central Building, 1-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan
CANADA	Pergamon Press Canada Ltd., Suite No. 271, 253 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R5

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First edition 1989

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

(Revised for vol. 3)

The French Revolution and the creation of modern political culture.
English and French.

Vol. 2 edited by Colin Lucas.

Vol. 3 edited by François Furet.

Papers presented at a series of three colloquia. The first colloquium, Conference on the Political Culture of the Old Regime, was held in Chicago, Sept. 11–15, 1986. The second colloquium, Conference on the Political Culture of the French Revolution, was held in Oxford, Sept. 5–9, 1987. The third colloquium, Conference on the French Revolution and Modern Political Culture, was held in Paris, Sept. 14–18, 1988.

Includes bibliographies and indexes.

Contents: v. 1. The political culture of the old regime — v. 2. The political culture of the French Revolution — v. 3. The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789–1848.

1. France—History—Revolution, 1789–1799—Influence—Congresses. 2. France—Politics and government—18th century—Congresses. 3. France—Politics and government—19th century—Congresses. 4. Europe—Politics and government—1789–1900—Congresses. 5. Political science—Europe—History—Congresses. 6. Political culture—France—History—Congresses. I. Baker, Keith Michael. II. Lucas, Colin. III. Furet, François, 1927–. IV. Conference on the Political Culture of the Old Regime (1986: Chicago, Ill.) V. Conference on the Political Culture of the French Revolution (1987: Oxford, England) VI. Conference on the French Revolution and Modern Political Culture (1988: Paris, France)

DC155.F74 1987 944.04 87-16080

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

The French Revolution and the creation of modern political culture.
Vol. 3: The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789–1848.

1. France. Political events, 1789–1815

I. Furet, François, 1927–
944.04

ISBN 0 08 034260 4

*Typeset, printed and bound in Great Britain by
BPCC Hazell Books Ltd, Member of BPCC Ltd, Aylesbury, Bucks, England*

Preface

1989 MARKS the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Even after two hundred years, scholars find themselves still confronted by the challenge of understanding the extraordinary event that gave birth to modern political culture. To further that endeavour, an international committee of scholars planned a series of three colloquia to explore the general topic of "The French Revolution in the Creation of Modern Political Culture." Papers presented to each colloquium form the volumes of the present series.

The first colloquium, held in Chicago in September 1986, investigated the nature of French political culture under the Old Regime, and the processes by which revolutionary principles and practices were invented within the context of absolute monarchy. These papers, edited by Keith Michael Baker under the title *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, were published by Pergamon Press in 1987 as the first volume in the series. The second colloquium, held in Oxford in September 1987, analysed the political culture of the French Revolution itself, from the declaration of the principle of national sovereignty by the National Assembly until the creation of the Consulate. These papers, edited by Colin Lucas under the title *The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, were published by Pergamon in 1988. The third colloquium, held in Paris in September 1988, explored the transformation of European political culture in response to the French Revolution in the period up to 1850 and is the basis of this the third and final volume of the series.

The colloquia were planned by an organizing committee comprised of Bronislaw Baczko (Université de Genève), Keith Baker (University of Chicago), David Bien (University of Michigan), Furio Diaz (Ecole Normale Supérieure, Pisa), François Furet (Institut Raymond Aron, Paris), Colin Lucas (Oxford University), Mona Ozouf (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris), Jean Starobinski (Université de Genève).

The Conference on the French Revolution and Modern Political Culture, held in Paris on September 14–18, 1988, was made possible by the institutional support of the Institut Raymond Aron (EHESS) and the Musée d'Orsay. On behalf of the organizing committee, and of all the participants in the conference, we wish to thank them for their generous support. We also wish to express our appreciation

to Pergamon Press for its commitment to publishing the substantial volumes that are the result of the three conferences. Finally, particular thanks are due to Geraldine Billingham for seeing the work through the Press.

KEITH BAKER
FRANÇOIS FURET
COLIN LUCAS
MONA OZOUF

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Introduction

FRANÇOIS FURET ET MONA OZOUF

Le troisième colloque sur *La Révolution française et la Culture politique moderne*, qui s'est tenu à Paris en septembre 1988, s'est donné pour objet d'étudier la manière dont la Révolution a été interprétée par la pensée européenne et dont son héritage a pesé sur l'élaboration de la philosophie politique du XIX^e siècle. Il constituait comme naturellement le troisième volet de la vaste enquête inaugurée en 1986 lors de la réunion de Chicago: l'aval de la Révolution, après avoir considéré son amont, l'*Ancien Régime*, et son cours, de 1789 à l'Empire napoléonien.

Pour ne pas alourdir démesurément la matière traitée, il avait été décidé de ne prendre en considération que le premier XIX^e siècle, date commode puisque c'est celle d'un ébranlement révolutionnaire général en Europe: à cette date, d'ailleurs, les grandes questions de l'historiographie de la Révolution française ont été posées, et l'observation de 1848 permet de comprendre comment elles travaillent le tissu des nations et des pensées européennes. Tocqueville, Quinet, Marx, Michelet en sont les inoubliables témoins: ils nous ont fourni le point d'orgue de ce colloque.

Quant à son point d'origine, il est contemporain de la Révolution elle-même. Les *Réflexions* de Burke sont écrites et publiées dès 1790 et elles contiennent la réfutation la plus intransigeante de l'entreprise française de 1789, réservoir inépuisable d'arguments hostiles à la Révolution. Le livre, dont la portée n'est pas seulement politique, mais aussi esthétique et, peut-être en son fond religieuse, est si riche et si complexe qu'il alimentera des traditions très diverses: contre-révolution, historicisme, ou libéralisme traditionaliste à l'anglaise. L'influence séminale de Burke sur les interprétations de la Révolution française en fait ainsi le premier grand auteur européen sur le sujet. Nous avons donc ouvert notre colloque par sa lecture, sa discussion et la pesée de son autorité; de l'accueil sans vraie compréhension que lui firent les milieux de l'émigration à une postérité intellectuelle disparate: toujours un peu rétractée en France, immense en revanche en Allemagne, où elle est toute mêlée à l'histoire de l'idéalisme et du romantisme.

Après Burke, le cours de la Révolution française ne cesse d'alimenter et même d'obséder la réflexion politique: les événements de l'an II, la dictature de Salut Public et la Terreur dissocient les principes de la Révolution française de son déroulement, et font apparaître la difficulté à penser l'événement dans sa diversité, ou encore à célébrer 1789 sans avaliser 1793. Pourquoi la Terreur? Immédiatement

posée par les conjurés du 9 Thermidor qui doivent comprendre leur histoire, évaluer ou esquiver leurs responsabilités, très tôt problématisée dans les polémiques du Directoire, cette grande question ne cessera d'habiter la pensée des libéraux français: chez Madame de Staël et Benjamin Constant, elle est même l'âme de la réflexion, au point de leur inspirer une théorie de l'écriture et de la parole publiques. C'est elle encore qui domine la réception et l'interprétation de la Révolution française en Allemagne, des obscurs militants ou sympathisants "jacobins" (qui soutiennent l'action des révolutionnaires français sans pour autant en comprendre l'esprit ni en approuver les moyens) aux grandes figures de la philosophie allemande: Kant, Humboldt, Fichte, Hegel. A des degrés inégaux et avec des fortunes diverses, les uns et les autres sont aux prises avec la difficulté de conjuguer l'admiration pour l'entreprise révolutionnaire, ou au moins l'accord avec les principes de 1789, avec le recul que leur inspire la perversion de l'ordre juridique, illustrée soit par le procès du roi, soit la Terreur. Ainsi s'ouvre un débat qui domine toute la pensée politique du XIX^e siècle.

Ce n'est pas lui qui risque d'embarrasser les Contre-révolutionnaires. Eux englobent dans une même condamnation les principes et le déroulement de la Révolution. Pour la terminer, avaient prêché Maistre et Bonald, il faut revenir à contre-courant de ce qu'elle a voulu faire, opérer un retournement complet de ses idées, réenraciner la société dans l'ordre divin et la soumission de l'individu. Cette critique de l'individualisme moderne et de la souveraineté du peuple s'étend bien au-delà des rangs réactionnaires et nourrit un courant bien différent de doctrine, de Saint-Simon à Comte: l'ordre historique y est substitué au plan divin, mais il s'agit toujours de préserver des conflits politiques de l'époque révolutionnaire, source constante de divisions, l'intégrité organique de la société.

Terminer la Révolution, ce peut être aussi envisager de reprendre l'héritage politique de 1789. "Enfants du siècle" en Italie, hegelien de gauche en Allemagne, radicaux anglais, tous cherchent à comprendre pourquoi la Révolution française n'a pas produit de résultats durables, mais aussi quelles leçons le modèle français ne cesse de leur proposer. Garder, en le remaniant, l'héritage de 1789, c'est encore la tâche des libéraux: les Doctrinaires français, quand ils fondent la Monarchie de Juillet, invoquent l'exemple anglais pour modérer la tradition d'où ils viennent. Guizot cherche à réunir les deux histoires, mais il n'y parviendra pas longtemps.

Sa tentative est d'autant moins assurée du succès que, combattue sur sa droite, elle se heurte aussi sur sa gauche au développement d'un mouvement qui s'enracine une fois de plus dans la Révolution française, mais en espérant, lui, non la terminer mais la refaire. A travers le socialisme et le communisme, dont Babeuf a signé l'acte de naissance, la "question sociale" redonne à l'idée révolutionnaire une fraîcheur intacte, puisqu'il s'agit de recommencer au nom du prolétariat ce que la bourgeoisie a confisqué à son profit. Elle ramène le messianisme de 1789, la table rase, le volontarisme politique, mais cette fois comme instruments du dépassement de 1789. L'idée socialiste s'habille dans des costumes empruntés, néo-christianisme, néo-robepierrisme, néo-utopie, jusqu'à ce que Marx lui donne son appellation contrôlée, la science de l'histoire.

Ainsi, en montrant que l'ébranlement donné à la politique et à la philosophie européennes par la Révolution française continue à travailler les nations, les peuples et les esprits, les textes réunis par notre colloque permettent de mieux

comprendre l'extraordinaire complexité de l'événement. Vu du milieu du XIX^e siècle, il s'est enrichi d'une formidable sédimentation de pensées. Au centre de ces commentaires, comme au centre de notre colloque, figure l'immense problème des rapports du Christianisme et de la Révolution. Soit qu'ils cherchent à apprécier la réalité et la nature de la rupture survenue entre l'église catholique et la Révolution, soit qu'ils examinent l'hypothèse d'une continuité entre la Réforme et la Révolution, soit encore qu'ils traitent la Révolution comme une religion nouvelle, les interprètes du premier dix-neuvième siècle ont mis au coeur de leurs interrogations la représentation religieuse du phénomène révolutionnaire. Le christianisme a-t-il été une anticipation de la Révolution française? Celle-ci a-t-elle réalisé le message évangélique? Et ne l'a-t-elle fait que dans la mesure où le religieux venait précisément d'être violemment séparé du politique? Aux retrouvailles avec ces questions vertigineuses, qui ont été si longtemps enfouies, le colloque de Paris doit son originalité. A elles, il doit aussi de figurer non un achèvement, mais un programme.

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Introduction

FRANÇOIS FURET AND MONA OZOUF

The object of the third colloquium on *The French Revolution and Modern Political Culture*, held at Paris in September 1988, was to study the way in which the French Revolution has been portrayed in European thought and how its legacy influenced the development of political philosophy in the nineteenth century. It constituted the third part of a vast enquiry begun in 1986 during the Chicago gathering: the legacy of the Revolution, after having considered its ancestry, the *Ancien Régime*, and its development from 1789 to the Napoleonic Empire.

In order not to make the subject matter unwieldy, it was decided to take only the first half of the nineteenth century into consideration, a convenient break because it was a time of general revolutionary upheaval in Europe. Besides, by that time the great historiographical questions about the French Revolution had been posed, and observing 1848 permitted an understanding of how they shaped national consciousness and European thought. Tocqueville, Quinet, Marx, and Michelet are the unforgettable witnesses: they provided us with the end point for this colloquium.

As for the starting point, it was contemporary to the Revolution itself. Burke's *Reflections* were written and published in 1790 and contain the most intransigent refutation of the French undertaking of 1789—an inexhaustible reservoir of arguments hostile to the Revolution. This book, whose content is not only political, but also aesthetic and maybe at base religious, is so rich and so complex that it was able to feed very diverse traditions: counter-revolution, historicism, and traditional English liberalism. Burke's seminal influence on interpretations of the French Revolution made him the first great European author on the subject. Therefore we began our colloquium by reading his work, discussing it and weighing its authority; from the reception accorded him in émigrés circles—where he was not really understood—to his varied intellectual posterity—always a bit limited in France, but on the contrary, enormous in Germany where it mingled with idealism and romanticism.

After Burke the developments of the French Revolution never stopped inspiring and even obsessing political reflection. The events of year II, the dictatorship of Public Safety and the Terror, disconnected the principles of the Revolution from its development and made it difficult to reflect on the event in all its diversity, or

even celebrate 1789 without endorsing 1793. Why the Terror? This great question was immediately asked by the conspirators of 9 Thermidor who had to understand their history and evaluate or evade their responsibilities. It soon became a problematic in the polemics of the Directory and never ceased to occupy the thoughts of French liberals: with Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant it even became the heart of reflection to the point of inspiring a theory of writing and public speech. It continued to dominate the reception and interpretation of the French Revolution in Germany: from obscure militants or “jacobin” sympathizers (who supported the French revolutionaries’ actions without understanding their spirit nor approving their methods) to the great figures of German philosophy, Kant, Humboldt, Fichte and Hegel. To varying degrees and with unequal success, they all struggled with the difficulty of combining admiration for the revolutionary undertaking (or at least agreement with the principles of 1789) with their revulsion at the perversion of legality, illustrated by the King’s trial and the Terror. Thus opened a debate which dominated all of nineteenth century political thought.

Counter-revolutionaries were in no danger of being encumbered by this. Their condemnation included both the principles and the events of the Revolution. Maistre and Bonald preached that to conclude the Revolution required going directly against its aims by reestablishing society on the basis of individual submission and the divine order. This critique of modern individualism and the people’s sovereignty extended well beyond reactionary ranks and fed a very different doctrinal stream, from Saint-Simon to Comte. Here the historical order was substituted for the divine plan, but it was still a matter of preserving the organic integrity of society from the political conflicts of the revolutionary period, a constant source of divisions.

Concluding the Revolution could also mean contemplating a return to the political heritage of 1789. “Enfants du siècle” in Italy, leftist hegelians in Germany and English radicals all tried to understand why the French Revolution had not produced lasting results, but also, what lessons the French model continued to offer them. The liberals’ task remained retaining and revising the heritage of 1789: when the French Doctrinaires founded the July Monarchy, they invoked the English example in order to moderate their own tradition. Guizot tried to combine the two histories but did not succeed for long. His attempt was all the more likely to fail because, attacked on the Right, it also confronted the development of a leftist movement, once again rooted in the French Revolution, that did not wish to conclude it, but to redo it. Through socialism and communism, whose birth certificate had been signed by Babeuf, the “social question” restored a complete freshness to the revolutionary idea, since it meant restarting in the name of the proletariat what the *bourgeoisie* had confiscated for its own benefit. It revived the messianism of 1789, the *tabula rasa* and the political determination, but this time as instruments for surpassing 1789. The social idea was clothed in borrowed garment—neo-christianity, neo-robepierrism, neo-utopianism—until Marx gave it its *appellation contrôlée*, the science of history.

Thus, by showing that the upheaval in European politics and philosophy caused by the French Revolution continued to shape nations, peoples and thought, the texts brought together by our colloquium permit a better understanding of the event’s extraordinary complexity. It is enriched by a great deposit of ideas when

viewed from the mid-nineteenth century. The huge problem of the relationship between Christianity and the Revolution was at the centre of these commentaries, as it was at the centre of our colloquium. The early nineteenth-century analysts put religious interpretation of the revolutionary phenomenon at the heart of their investigations, either by trying to appreciate the reality and nature of the rupture that took place between the Catholic Church and the Revolution, or by examining a hypothesis of continuity between the Reformation and the Revolution, or even by treating the Revolution as a new religion. Had Christianity been an anticipation of the French Revolution? Had the Revolution realised the evangelical message and had it only just done so to the extent that religion came to be violently separated from politics? The Paris colloquium owes its originality to the reunion of these breathtaking questions which have been buried for so long.

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Part I

Burke or Why a Revolution?

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Presentation

HARVEY MITCHELL

It was by means of an existing context and language that the protean and mythic power of the French Revolution was valued and devalued in its own time. It has been probed and examined by successive generations that have altered the old contexts, creating new ones, all the while incorporating the earlier ones. In this connection, two points, both perspectival, must be made as we approach Edmund Burke's ideas. The first and more obvious one is that, while there are differences on how his ideas may be interpreted in their immediate context, those interpretations also affect the ways in which his ideas may be assessed when they are removed from it. Thus, if his ideas are seen as self-contained in their original context, then a consideration of what happened to them in other contexts may take on the features of a conjuring act. In effect, such a perspective, if pursued too literally, would tend to accord Burke's ideas very little power, making them in a sense peripheral or inconsequential outside their immediate context. The second point becomes evident when the perspective is shifted to the contexts shaping other discourses. Then we are made aware that there exist a whole other set or sets of linguistic conventions, which help to determine the reception to ideas outside them.¹

The discernment of common strands of ideas that cut across and move beyond their particular manifestations enables us to perceive Burke's "historicization" of the Revolution in a new light. Though he was not alone in doing so, Burke lifted the Revolution from its French context and introduced it into the realm of international political discourse with an *éclat* that no one else could match. He placed it within the sphere of intercontextuality, but the detailed analysis of the reception given his emotionally powerful jeremiads, the degree to which it was understood, reinterpreted, or ignored, is a complex problem that the papers under the rubric *Pourquoi entrer en Révolution?* only touch upon, addressing it, when they do, with considerable reservation. What we can say with a kind of bland certainty is that there existed a more or less common discourse on legitimacy and revolution, as well as on political ideals and empirical practices, beginning from the premises underlying the discussion of political obligation, and leading to arguments on how to ensure it and on how to avoid threats to it.² The cataclysmic and prolonged nature of the French Revolution deeply affected and focused the discourse. It is

therefore not surprising that Burke did not call on a specific, if I may use a term from the vocabulary of the pharmacopoeia of the early modern period, to cure a non-specific illness, but instead looked to the universal remedy of violent extirpation—in brief, on an armed counterrevolutionary coalition of states against “the great beast”—the several and collective offenders who harboured erroneous beliefs about politics, propriety and possession. Therefore, while there is considerable merit in working within the contextualizations which are required to trace degrees of coherence in a single discourse and between discourses, it seems wise to recognize that the constraints of context are not total, that inherited or traditional discourse cannot always resist the impression of distinctive intellects, and that there is no clear way of knowing in advance the range of possible outlooks in any discourse.

When Burke laboured to make his contemporaries accept his vision of the Revolution, he expanded and changed the language of the discourse to the point of paradoxically endowing the Revolution with a significance that breached its French context and permitted its home-grown supporters and opponents to invade other discourses. Burke’s thoughts on justice, rationality and liberty emerged, John Pocock tells us,³ from the lively debates in Britain on the nature of the English Revolution, most importantly, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and in the years following. Burke’s intention was to impress everyone with the idea that there was only one proper discourse on revolution, the one elaborated in Britain, in which the Lockeans, and other less ambivalent dissidents as well, had been on the losing side of a great debate, and, whose putative successors after 1789—and this is John Pocock’s point—misconceived their purposes by seeking to emulate the French model instead of achieving an understanding of and coming to terms with the parameters of their native discourse.⁴ Pocock attempts to advance his argument by calling Burke’s explanation of the revolutionary upheaval a “meta-discourse” in the sense that such a characterization may challenge the idea that the Revolution is properly studied as the “assertion of the sovereignty of discourse”. François Furet’s position that the Revolution produced a situation in which “the semiotic circuit [became] the absolute master of politics”⁵ is what, I believe, Pocock has in mind in questioning the historical accuracy and utility of viewing the Revolution as a triumph of discourse. Burke had the prescience, Pocock seems to be saying, to foresee such a development as a radical and unwelcome turn in the study of the history of ideas in general and in the study of context and discourse in particular. To strengthen his case, Pocock moves away from Burke’s thought as the embodiment of a proleptic challenge to a twentieth-century articulation of how a revolution took place in discourse, or of how “a self-creating discourse” came into being, to the eighteenth century itself when Burke took up his pen to combat a revolution in which the notion that language may be deployed to make the word the world was actually being translated into action. But Burke was above all a master of rhetoric, to which he gave full scope in trying to make his word prevail; and in his attempt his language became part of a changing discourse. It is also fair to be reminded that François Furet, Mona Ozouf⁶ and Jean Starobinski,⁷ to whom Pocock assigns chief responsibility for the ideas of a revolution in discourse, are doing two things, and not one, as Pocock may be implying. They are saying that the various makers and actors of the French Revolution could not but help, at

various levels of consciousness, work toward the creation of verbal and non-verbal emblems and symbols to describe or to attach to new political models. At the same time, they are claiming that these artifacts may be analysed to understand the dynamics of the Revolution. John Pocock may be forgetting the first of their intentions. In any case, he wishes to make the more important claim that what the French revolutionaries were doing was not only deeply offensive to all notions of legitimate political conduct, but that English political and historical rhetoric—the structure of the English language encoded in the language itself—resisted the very idea of a self-generating discourse imposing its meaning on the world.

Pocock takes us back to the tangled roots of the political and religious disputes of the English Civil War and its aftermath, most importantly, the events leading up to the 1688 Revolution and the course that Britain took afterwards. It is in the religious enthusiasm of the seventeenth century and the ideas disseminated about liberty of religion in the following century that Burke discovered a kind of precursor to and analogue with the openness, transparency and enthusiasm of belief in a metaphysic of regeneration which he believed animated the French revolutionaries and made them dangerous to themselves and to all civilized human beings. Burke transferred his animus against the religious enthusiasm that pervaded the previous century's English political disputes to French publicists and *gens d'esprit*, who were unrestrained, he declaimed, in their speculations about virtually everything. As well, he found that the Revolution's attempts to strip the church of its privileged position and subordinate it to the state had a deep resonance in the sermons and pamphlets of the dissenting groups of his own day—among them, the Prices and the Priestleys, as well as numerous others—whose espousal of liberty of religion really amounted to liberty of reason, which was another blow against the mysteries of religion. Both “French” reason and enthusiasm for its pretended benefits reverberated ominously through the English dissenting sermons, recalled the disorder of the previous century, disturbed the foundations of the temperate settlement of 1688–89, and threatened a fatal severance of the sacred ties between the British monarchy and the Church of England. The French Revolution, Pocock argues, was “primarily an event in the religious history of Europe”.

Reliance on and surrender to reason elevated one part of the nature of human beings and made them vulnerable to illusions and to the social disorder they generated. It removed all limits upon the will to make itself the final measure of morals and politics. Abstractions carried men too far from the real and the concrete. At the same time, an equally unscrupulous class of men, speculating in paper money, was creating a complementary fictive world that would ultimately be shattered, but not before destroying the real but fragile social fabric in its wake. Public credit and credibility were both being put at risk by this double speculation; the money jobbers in fiduciary and the intellectual jobbers who were attacking traditional fidelities had come into the world together. Together they were wreaking havoc.

From this account of how Burke fashioned his case against the Revolution, Pocock draws the conclusion that Burke's major complaint against the revolutionaries was that they overthrew their own “contextuality of . . . speech and action” and moved ineluctably to destruction. Similarly, Burke's domestic opponents, by misunderstanding and therefore challenging what was becoming entrenched as the dominant English political discourse, exposed themselves the more readily to the

siren calls of the French revolutionary discourse: they became “fellow-travellers” in Pocock’s phrase, because of their disaffection from the dominant context of English discourse, and because they also mistakenly saw in the Revolution echoes and extensions of an understanding of politics and political economy developed in critical counterpoint to orthodox English discourse. By denying that their critique was a realistic possibility in the prevailing English context, Pocock argues that there would be no “*transparence*”, that is, “no revolution of discourse, where 1688 and 1789 absorbed one another, and [that] French discourse, however deeply it affected [the] British [discourse], could not substitute itself for it”. The argument seems to be that English political discourse possessed a kind of immune system that sent out warning signals when it was under attack. This reading seems plausible if we accept Pocock’s depiction of the English language as deeply resistant to the sovereignty of self-creating discourse, and that such resistance is “necessarily true of language itself”. The second part of Pocock’s proposition is certainly well taken, but can historical, linguistic, literary, or any other kind of criticism support the first?

If I understand the climax of John Pocock’s argument, he is saying three things. First, Burke was moved by the French Revolution to reach back to an existing political and religious discourse or paradigm to look for familiar reference points to distinguish between the legitimacy of the English Revolution and the illegitimacy of the French; second, that, in thus looking back, Burke’s reading was superior to the interpretations of his opponents who saw 1688 and its aftermath in quite another, and in his view, a mistaken perspective; and third that, had the French metaphysicians understood their own prevailing discourse, e.g., their own constitutional system rightly, including its natural but reparable defects, they would have avoided the perilous descent into chaos. Unless I miss undertones of an ironic mode in Pocock’s paper, I conceive him to be saying that the most important conclusion to be drawn from reading Burke on the Revolution and the Revolution itself is that revolution is the consequence of the decontextualization of discourse; that to break the boundaries of context is a species of madness, which is itself inexplicable, and that therefore revolution is ultimately either not subject to rational analysis, or preferably should be bracketed from intellectual scrutiny for fear of normalizing it, or both; and, by using the example of Auschwitz, Pocock further raises the spectre that the dissection of its irrational nature might induce persons to find a place for it in human experience and make it acceptable.

But is Pocock doing more than this? He seems to be placing responsibility for the horrors of the Revolution on human beings who he argues were blinded and led into error by notions of *transparence*, bequeathed to them by the *gens de lettres*. He is arguing, by extension, that modern revolutionaries, following a similar path, became apparatchiks and inquisitors in one part of the globe, while in another part they constructed the railway tracks to and found enthusiastic custodians for places like Auschwitz. Whether legislators or terrorists of a more innocent age, or cynical manipulators of a post-lapsarian age, they owe their appearance on the world stage of history because of their denial of history. Some thirty years ago Jacob Talmon tried to trace the totalitarianism of the left to Jacobinism.⁸ Is Pocock encompassing the totalitarianism of two political hues in a fuller condemnation? It seems odd, given Pocock’s respect for context, to perform a leap so great as to

make no reference to the particular contexts and discourses from which Nazism and Stalinism emerged. Is the Enlightenment responsible for everything abhorrent in the twentieth century? Surely only serious loss of memory could overlook the complex and varied sources of the death camp and the gulag. Should we dismiss in particular the passions of the anti-Enlightenment itself? Pocock is right to question Burke's credentials as a political philosopher, but the mantle of prophet which he gently places on his shoulders is hard to accept.

Basing his own judgements on a theory of aesthetics, distinguishing the sublime and the beautiful,⁹ which he worked out more than thirty years before the Revolution, Burke judged the Revolution by using his great powers of rhetoric to attack it on the grounds, some have argued, that it came to embody for him the false sublime.¹⁰ The Revolution assumed for him fiendish terror, and it is fair to say that Burke did advance at one point neo-Hobbiist principles against, as he put it, the Revolution's creation through a fusion of terror and virtue of a false sublime.¹¹ By 1795, the Revolution took on for him the total aspect of a civil war, justifying in his mind a coherent ideological offensive to stifle every vestige of the Revolution on behalf of the ancient authority. He saw himself as spokesman, as he said some years earlier, of the English system of liberty—"A Constitution of things in which the liberty of no one Man, and no body of Men and no Number of Men can find Means to trespass on the liberty of any Person or any description of Persons in the Society"¹²—against the Revolution's presumed adulation of an unlimited liberty. It may be said that he saw the latter as the embodiment of modern tyranny represented by the Revolution. It may also be that he was disingenuously distorting Rousseau's *Contrat social*. In his paper on Burke and the Germans, Philippe Raynaud suggests that Burke indeed played off certain Hobbiist ideas against Rousseau.¹³ Since Burke's time, some people have read Rousseau as an unwitting Hobbiist on the grounds that there is in the *volonté générale* an implicit tyranny—even an explicit one warranted by Rousseau himself—that no degree of voluntarism can erase. Such a reading would be credible only if we failed to take seriously Rousseau's belief that there was no realistic middle point between "la plus austère démocratie et le hobbisme le plus parfait".¹⁴ Following Roger Ayrault,¹⁵ Raynaud suggests that Burke's mystification of the state was intended to undermine individualistic principles of modern natural law in that he conceived of the state as a body mediating between private interests and a natural and supernatural order hierarchically organized. This is consonant with the primacy Burke gave to the interconnectedness of society, religion and politics, and of the risks to all by sundering it. He had no difficulty in urging the destruction of a polity constructed, he believed, on the premises of Rousseau's *Contrat social*, for him a travesty of a valid contract the wisdom of which found its sanction in God: "He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, [who] willed also the necessary means of its perfection. . . the state."¹⁶

Behind so much of Burke's defence of the existing order and his thrust into the historical past to support it lurked the question of legitimacy. In his perfervid linguistic assaults against the home-grown critics of the English constitution, he came to see the Revolution in France, not simply as parading its gifts under the banners of a false political legitimacy, but as an event that called into question the idea of political legitimacy itself, thereby raising the thought that legitimacy had

no foundation at all other than force, sanctioned, as David Hume concluded before him by time and habit.¹⁷ Indeed, like Hume, he spoke about the constitution as prescriptive—as having arisen in a timeless past, but nonetheless legitimate for all that,¹⁸ a question that Hume had preferred to remove from the realm of morals. By contrast, Burke was foremost a politician, orator and polemicist. When he spoke of the prejudices, manners and customs that he revered as emblematic of the movement from primitive to civilized society, he deeply felt the truth of what he was saying. The weight of prejudice was another name for the illusions human beings required to protect themselves from one another. But Burke would not have found it easy to surrender to a naked Hobbism, for it would have necessitated a significant emendation of his religious beliefs, as well as have rendered the embellishments essential to social intercourse superfluous. He found himself, as I earlier suggested, using crypto-Hobbist arguments to urge all-out war to restore the fragile balance of society so close to disintegration, so needful of its “natural” rulers to preserve it. In the end, he never pursued the question of legitimacy to its outer limits. Instead, it lay undisturbed at the bottom of his defence of the unique evolution of the English constitution according to a divine plan but interpreted by the legal instruments of the day. It is true that he did not omit to pay due acknowledgement, nor did he bestow inferior status, to custom and manners. He saw the latter as the warp and weft of civilized life, so much so that commerce and manners might be seen as having been woven together tightly within the same frame.¹⁹ But this advance of civilization by the amplification of polite intercourse, fostered by commerce, helped Burke to avoid the broader question of how to comprehend the legitimacy of organized politics. It was a question he ultimately shied away from. In this respect, to find an authentic basis for authority, he shakily relied on legalism to support his undemonstrable case for English political legitimacy. Society could not do without laws; Montesquieu from whom Burke may have borrowed the concept that all societies were the work of *moeurs, manières, lois* did not attribute primacy to one. The “mechanic philosophy” had replaced this truth, and was eating away at natural affections, and at public affections as well, which, when “combined with manners, are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law”.²⁰ The empty formalism of republican legality, which François Furet says became a feature of post-Thermidorian France,²¹ may be what Burke perceived earlier than most of his contemporaries, and it may be of some moment that he was able to do so, because he never felt at ease with notions of rights that sought their sanction on the basis of law alone.

John Pocock’s treatment of the notion of *transparence* around which Burke and Rousseau both circled, the first man denouncing it, the second man hoping to achieve it, reminds us that Burke brought their languages of antagonistic discourses together. This comment may serve as a transition point to James Chandler’s paper.²² He deploys the notions of representation and imitation to bring us closer to Burke’s literary strategies. I have already pointed out that Burke violently protested against the English dissenters for preferring the errors of the French political model, for wishing to imitate the French in reconstituting their political culture. According to Chandler, Burke intended his antipathy for French political experimentation to cut more deeply, since behind what were ostensibly political

matters there lay the elements of culture itself, made manifest in its manners. On this account, Chandler agrees with Pocock. So in Burke's reportage, some facsimile of the horrible spectacle of the Queen's disarray at Versailles, in ways yet unimaginable but surely no less destructive of order, awaited Englishmen ready to be deceived by the English apologists of the French Revolution. Burke cleverly tried to turn the tables on both his domestic opponents and the revolutionaries by claiming that chivalric manners were French in origin. But if this was meant to drive home the point that the degradation of manners followed hard on the heels of unwarranted political change, Burke intended his attempt to force an acknowledgement from the dissenters that the French revolutionaries had imitated the English model of constitutionality to be taken as an ironic comment. The fact is that the English model was indeed looked upon favourably by some of the revolutionaries. He was not, however, set on correcting the historical record. His purpose was to remind both sets of his opponents that they were misconceiving and misconstruing the nature of constitutionality. In a broader sense, James Chandler's insight into what we may learn from Burke's serious play with the notion of imitation as generating and nurturing particular political modes is related to the question of the transferability of the premises of one political discourse to another without regard to the divergent developments of each.

Representation may be associated with the idea of *transparence*. Burke scornfully dismissed Rousseau's literary and autobiographical efforts as naive and dangerous expressions of deep narcissism, not only as reflecting an incipient deterioration of Old Regime morals and manners, as exemplified in the profitable literary market for such a literature, but as an anticipation of the descent into their utter reversal in the earliest stages of the Revolution. For Burke, the private and public Rousseau were cut from the same cloth. Burke cleverly questioned the political wisdom of the French Assembly's study of Rousseau, since he was "a moralist or he is nothing", with nothing useful to impart to makers of constitutions. How could a "philosopher of vanity", a man who blended "metaphysical speculations" and "the coarsest sensuality" be a trusted guide?²³ Rousseau, Burke saw, wanted to make *transparence* the basis of a social and political vision in which a perfect correspondence between words and things would be forged. It is important to be reminded of Rousseau's agenda, since it adds to Chandler's argument that, as in the case of imitation, though differently, the "constitutive" dimension of representation plays an important role in Burke's understanding of its aesthetic and legislative modes. A well-constituted polity, Burke argued, possesses the power to "enact", that is, to make laws but also to act on behalf of others, hence to represent them. He had after all been the chief advocate of virtual representation years before. Representation was essential not only to Burke's politics; it rested on his metaphysics and his aesthetics.

Chandler discusses Burke's rejection of Platonizing politics. As a *littérateur* and journalist, who once had a close affinity for Rousseau's ideas, Mallet du Pan, who was also a conservative, but not in the Burkean vein, did in fact signify the revolutionaries as "Platonic legislators".²⁴ Burke was indeed determined to demolish a metaphysics that supposed a radical divergence between object and image. To that distinctive aspect of Burke's agenda may be added his notion of politics as a human endeavour necessitating the cultivation of practical wisdom

or prudence. On his side he had no less a figure than Adam Smith, who in his last revision of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which appeared in 1790, took special care to denounce revolutionary change in the name of untried principles or the “spirit of system [which] is often confused with the public spirit. Its advocates make all sorts of promises. . . and propose new models for the constitution,” and end up believing in “their own sophistries”.²⁵ Smith, it should be added, never wavered in his elevation of prudence as the most useful means of achieving approbation and ensuring sociability. Burke spoke about prudence as “the first of Virtues [in politics which] will lead us rather to acquiesce in some qualified plan that does not come up to the full perfection of the abstract Idea, than to push for the more perfect, which cannot be attain’d without tearing to pieces the whole contexture of the Commonwealth. . .”²⁶ This was also central to Cicero’s idea of how virtue might be attained in the realm of politics,²⁷ but it does not mean that Burke did not have Aristotle in mind as well.²⁸ He would have applauded Aristotle’s repudiation of Plato’s ideal republic and found congenial the idea that politics is concerned with action and deliberation about things that are particular. It is just as likely that Burke would have been somewhat uneasy with the Aristotelian proposition that good action is itself an end, but not with the idea that human beings pursue practical wisdom in the state to become just, noble and good—to perfect virtue, as he put it, because of his nature endowed to him by God.²⁹ Most of all he would have approved the Aristotelian idea that theoretical wisdom could shed no immediate useful light on politics. On the question of “theoretick and practical Perfection,” he said that “an object pure and absolute may not be so good as one lower’d, mixed, and qualified”.³⁰

Burke may be seen as an anti-Platonist in yet another way. Burke’s power as a rhetorician constituted the whole of his intellect. Plato’s Socrates in *The Republic* reviles the poets and elevates philosophers in their place. On the other hand, if Plato believed that knowledge could only be achieved by the movement towards philosophy and away from the belief that there are mysterious forces at work in a universe in which the natural and social orders are as one and can only be understood through myth and image, he did not entirely free himself from them.³¹ The irony may be that Burke was a Platonist in one sense, in that, like Plato, he invoked myth and image, as his mystification of the roots of the English constitution and his belief in the need for the presence of theatre in life prove. In another sense, he was, in his uses of rhetoric and eloquence and in his suspicion of the rational principle, a confirmed anti-Platonist. He combined his unremitting insistence on the politics of experience and of the particular, with, as Chandler phrases it, a “poeticization” of power relations. Indeed, Burke may have been trying in his characteristically unsystematic manner to reclaim politics and morals from all the philosophers, Aristotle as well as Plato, using his great powers as orator and writer to make aesthetics the bearer of morals in a revolutionary world. In this respect, Chandler believes that Burke’s true legacy may, after more study, be traced forward in time through some of the literary movements between 1789 and 1832, including the work of Shelley, a very unconservative poet, who was not the first nor the last to assert the privileged vision of the poet.

Chandler’s discussion of imitation in tandem with representation reveals just how much Burke wished to set aside as unthinkable the idea of a society without

the continuous power to act as a source of social continuity and order. Burke wanted to impose closure on any discussion threatening to expose the roots of power or unclothe figures of authority. For Burke, the illusions, including his notion of the nature of true representation, had to be preserved. Thus Rousseau, he intuited, was rightfully to be feared as a kind of non-illusionist—an image-breaker intent on stripping bare all the simulacra of civilized intercourse. Bringing these matters to the surface of British politics did not endear Burke to the power brokers in Whitehall who preferred to keep them undisturbed.

The revolutionary assemblies doubtless believed that in some measure they were living up to Rousseau's ideal. They gave Burke some warrant for his denunciation of an assembly of men who were "grossly ignorant of their trade, or totally negligent of their duty,"³² or were still juvenile enough to think in terms of "high-bred republican[ism]," the last locution being Burke's way of indicting the ancient utopias.³³ The evidence is complex, but revolutionary and non-revolutionary politicians alike who debated the several parts of the 1791 Constitution and issues of representation were of several minds and believed themselves to be consistently faithful to or were fearful of departing from Rousseau's original principles.

I must now move on to a more specific examination of Philippe Raynaud's paper on Burke and the Germans, but I will confine most of my remarks to those figures who are not as well known as Herder and Kant. He sets out the background for Burke's reception in Germany by reminding us of the quarrels between Mendelssohn and Jacobi on the rationalism of the *Aufklärung*. August Wilhelm Rehberg resumed the argument and gave it greater dramatic resonance, eliciting replies from Kant and Fichte in 1793. By then Rehberg did not have to face insuperable obstacles in taking part in a discourse that was not entirely bounded by his own and his contemporaries' political and social contexts. The *Aufklärung* had entered into the realm of politics; and the spectre of theory had to be faced, since, if left unchallenged in its French manifestations, it could weight the scales against the questioners of pure reason. Even before Rehberg, Jacobi utterly dismissed what he regarded as the utilitarian and rational foundations of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Justus Möser attacked it on other grounds as well. Rights are concrete, not abstract; history is a more certain guide to human needs than is reason; customary law is more enduring and ultimately a more stable source of order; and the idea of a *Contrat social* among equals is a fantasy, since a legal social order could not tolerate a challenge from supposed equally *willing* individuals. The parallels with Burke are striking.

Rehberg's critique of the Declaration of Rights followed. By deftly designating the respective but differing rights of the citizenry, dividing them into passive and active ranks, including the right to full or lesser representation, the participants in the debates following the acceptance of the Declaration inadvertently revealed the gap between theory and practice. Rehberg did not say whether the revolutionary debaters comprehended the chasm's more subtle meaning; he adverted chiefly to their inexperience. This places Rehberg alongside Burke. But Burke's tirades against the practical inexperience of the revolutionaries showed scant respect for theory. As far as he was concerned, as we have seen, theoretical speculation of the kind with which French *littérateurs* appeased their own hunger for recognition,

and the literary and popular world's demands for the sensational and for innovative schemes, no matter how bizarre, led straight to death.

Rehberg did not rely only upon the argument that practical experience was a desirable and necessary neutralizer of the tendency to abstract politicizing. He was as convinced as Burke that "political reason" was necessarily composed of irrational and empirical elements. He differed from Burke in his appreciation of the distortions that Rousseau and the physiocrats had suffered at the hands of the Constituent Assembly, and how, for example, Mably vulgarized Rousseau. Thus Rehberg did not draw an uninterrupted trajectory between the *gens d'esprit* and the Revolution, but saw more clearly that one of the questions that Burke merely touched on demanded further thought, namely, that the theory and practice of politics could not be ruled out as an illegitimate epistemological problem, and could not be relegated, as Burke would have preferred, to a netherworld, or because of his paranoia, wished to dismiss as the ravings of madmen. The points of similarity between Rehberg and Burke, as well as their differences, cannot be grasped unless, following Raynaud, we reconstruct the ways in which the German and the Anglo-Irishman may be compared. In the first place, the Kantian distinction between *Verstand*, *entendement*, understanding, on the one hand, and *Vernunft*, *raison*, or reason, on the other—the first, not the second, being applicable to questions of politics, was indeed bred in a non-Burkean context. But it had affinities with Burke's idea that an intellectual system that had no place for empirical observation and ignored cultural traditions was not trustworthy. If I may recall my earlier references to Aristotle's elaboration of the meaning of practical wisdom or *phronēsis*, it seems to me that what appalled Burke was the distance between political and moral truths and metaphysical ones. For Burke, the first error was to seek positive connections between them;³⁴ the second error committed by the French theorists was that they were confusedly positing a political community whose power should subsist on defining theoretical political rights for all, when in his view power and rights not only need not be related, but were, in Britain and among the British thinkers he esteemed, in fact not linked; and that such a condition was not detrimental to rights and liberties.³⁵ Most important was his resolute opposition to any kind of fruitful relationship between theory and practice in politics. For all of Rehberg's agreement with Burke on the need for long experience in practical politics, he brought theory back into the picture by suggesting that the monarchy was in the best position—preferably but not necessarily acting in the framework of an English-type constitution—to express the *volonté générale*, since the prince, together with his councillors, alone had the political experience to act as mediator between theory and practice. Was this a cynical strategy or a genuine interest in dealing with the theory and practice of politics?

Raynaud's paper shows the German predisposition to philosophy in which there was a considerable intellectual preparation for the great events leading to the Revolution and the Revolution itself. That preparation included, for example, the way in which German thinkers, including Jacobi, anticipated the difficulty of reconciling Spinoza's rationalism and his concept of *conatus* with its assumptions of the equality of all *conatuses*, including those of non-human beings, with the Declaration's assumptions that all humans were equal. We saw how that equality was rendered problematic by the distinctions introduced between active and pass-

ive citizens. German critics of the Revolution thus came to see the Declaration as an illustration of the fallibility of Spinoza's rationalism, inadequate to the task of defining the criteria for what is recognizably human.

When Colin Lucas³⁶ turns to the relations between Burke and the émigrés, he takes up elliptically and cautiously the theme of context as well, showing that the welcome some of the leading theoreticians of the French counterrevolution gave Burke was prompted more by a need for political support than by any shock of seeing themselves reflected in Burke's book. Seminal though it was, it did not act as an Archimedean point for all of its admirers, whether polite or passionate. They in fact believed that their analysis of the coming of the Revolution and the route it was taking was not only superior to Burke's, but that Burke did not fully understand the nature of French political institutions. Not only that. Lucas reminds us that the counterrevolution was not a single bloc. It was in fact made up of warring factions. They ranged from the *monarchiens*, the *constitutionnels*, and the *purs* who came closest to Burke's views inasmuch as they, as he, believed in a historic French constitution that gave a crucial, almost mystic, place to the aristocracy, while giving a functional and hence lesser role to the monarch. "Je suis Royaliste," he said in a tone and spirit that would have found an echo in the effusions of the comte d'Antraigues, "mais Royaliste raisonné. Je ne suis pas fanatique pour les Rois. Je mesure mon attachement par l'utilité de leurs fonctions à jamais augustes et sacrées. . . . De garder le peuple contre les entreprises des grands et les grands contre les invasions des peuples, de tenir tout dans sa place et dans son ordre habituel . . ." ³⁷

Burke professed not to understand, though his own words should have told him otherwise, why the various anti-revolutionary factions engaged in deadly combat among themselves. He ruthlessly condemned those monarchists who had taken part in the Revolution's early stages under the illusion that power was in their grasp. Their main fault in his eyes was their uncritical acceptance of the most dubious theoretical premises of a literary cabal who managed to trick public opinion to the point of reversing the real and the ideal. Many of them, Colin Lucas demonstrates, owed their factionalism to the political discourse of pre-revolutionary France. They were imbued with its terms; in brief, the counterrevolutionaries may be said to have shared with the revolutionaries the roots of a common discourse, but it was only after the Revolution that they realized that they had to reckon with the consequences of the claims of the leading philosophes, and they did so without thrusting aside, as Burke did, all consideration of theory.

The abbé Maury granted that Burke was a great orator and statesman, who was nevertheless unable to detect the truth of French political culture, either before or after the Revolution. It is not surprising that Burke failed. His correspondence shows that he could expand his sympathies for émigrés and clergy who landed on British shores, and that he worried about the fate of the survivors of the ill-fated 1795 Quiberon expedition, who were to be branded as traitors and executed by the *bleus*. Yet his concerns were shaped as much, if not more, by rage against his own government that, he charged, failed to understand that the war in Europe could not be treated in terms of a traditional calculus of power, but must be invested with the energy of a crusade against the newest species of barbarians. The war for which he had clamoured almost from the start was a war to be fought for

the preservation of England's "Laws and Liberties". He dismissed as impractical the argument that "an abstract principle of public law" prevented intervention in the affairs of France. For him the "public Law of Europe" was formed by the treaties guaranteeing the Protestant succession in England; as he saw it, the security of the latter was being seriously threatened by the combined efforts of English and French Jacobins and justified a war against both.³⁸ Jacobinism was the natural offspring of dissent; dissent was being fanned by Revolution; and unless unchecked, the English Jacobins would avenge themselves for the prostration of their radical progenitors by the victors of 1688.

He had, as I suggested earlier, preferences for some of the émigrés rather than for others. But I have time for only one example—I think a revealing one—for I believe it sums up Burke's abiding aversion for the "success of those who have been educated and hardened in the Shallow, contemptible and mischievous philosophy, oeconomy, and politicks of this Age, which make them indisposed and unqualified for any great work in the restoration of so great and so undone a Kingdom as France".³⁹ Just as many of the French émigré theorists regarded Burke a superficial observer of French politics, so Burke in 1792 accused Lally-Tollendal of being ignorant of the workings both of the British constitution and of ancient French constitutional practices. Politicians of Lally's stripe were not fit to be entrusted with the sacred mission of restoring France to its ancient state. Burke was not afraid to make himself the authoritative interpreter, if not the master of a single political and moral narrative. He was responding in part to the fact that many émigrés regarded him as a superficial observer of French politics.

Again and again we come back to Burke's defence of property and the justification of continuing the war against revolutionary France on the grounds that a nation is a "moral essence", which he unabashedly and immediately identified with a nation's proprietors against the despoilers of property. There was to be no suspicion that he meant his metaphor to be taken in any metaphysical sense. He spoke this way in 1796, when it looked as if Britain might withdraw from the war. Four years had elapsed since he lavished Lally with insults because of his rationale for the nationalization of clerical property. For Burke, property was the principal if not the sole justification of political power. In his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke looked to those who wielded it as the "natural representative of the people", thereby reiterating his old notion of virtual representation; but by adding that "on this body [the 400,000 men of sound substance in England and Scotland], more than on the legal constituent, the artificial representative depends,"⁴⁰ he not only revealed how much the idea of discontinuity between things and their representation was, on his account of it, of no practical consequence, but was nevertheless a sound political principle. If history and its prescriptions hallowed by age were a more reliable guide to human affairs than "speculatism," so was artifice desirable and necessary as a mark of civilization and a bastion against democracy.

In his interpretation of three groups of French thinkers, and their response to Burke, Franciszek Draus⁴¹ tells us that not until the mid-point of the nineteenth century was Burke accorded serious attention, and then only in the works of Charles de Rémusat and Tocqueville. The former found Burke's *Reflections* an occasion to celebrate English liberties and a quasi-pietistic attack on the French for lacking the good fortune to share them. Tocqueville regarded Burke's disdain

for the Revolution as a failure of historical insight and imagination: Burke saw it wholly in Manichean terms, withholding from it any positive universal significance. His characterization of the *gens d'esprit* was not routinely dismissive; it comes from his very bowels. If Tocqueville's own assessment of their role is flawed, he wanted desperately to know how they mobilized their intellectual energies on the eve of the Revolution, even if in the end his way proved to be limited.⁴²

Before Rémusat and Tocqueville, the *monarchiens* (e.g., Mounier and Lally-Tollendal), the theocrats (Maistre and Bonald), and the early liberals (Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant), gave Burke no extended treatment. But we may infer that they found the terms in which he thought it best to set out his political beliefs of no practical consequence. Indeed, what Draus's survey demonstrates is that they were probably put off by Burke, who in claiming to speak of history's larger goals, was actually thinking of the unfolding of English history, to which he gave a sacred and unique character. He found it hard to envision a practical and a fair politics in any other setting. Burke had a basic distaste for the *monarchiens* who, either in a moment of forgetfulness (this would be that side of Burke at his most generous), or because of a lack of political wisdom (this would be that side of Burke who was asserting his most profound beliefs), had taken the fatal steps toward French ruin. It was as if Burke were saying that, however much the *monarchiens* and other groups of politicians who entered the dangerous game of revolutionary politics, separated themselves in succession from their more radical successors, they were all tainted with the original sin of kicking the props of a genuinely reformable situation from under the monarchy and the privileged orders, including themselves. Their major sin was their elevation of reason and theory at their most useless. Their second was that they had convinced themselves that they could undertake the regeneration of France without compromising their self-interest as custodians of an ancient patrimony, their own and the monarchy's. Once Burke condemned the men of letters and their presumed revolutionary imitators in such an outright manner, it was impossible to discover any one in France, except the princes and their allies, highly placed or simple peasants, for whom an exception could be made from his condemnation of coteries of subverters held together by invisible ties.

But we must shift the focus back to the French critics of the Revolution. The theocrats saw no point in approaching Burke to support their views. They looked more to God than to history, and used reason to advance their arguments. Maistre was Christian in a way that Burke was not; and he could also produce a theological politics in which God could figure both as a punitive and protective father. Burke could not allow a role to Providence that would erase the movement of history. The early liberals found his crusading zeal totally at odds with their own readiness to salvage some enduring goods from the Revolution. It was the absence, they said, of reason that led to the errors of the Revolution. Madame de Staël, Draus tells us, spoke about finding the way to end the Revolution and to establish the Republic on durable foundations by plumbing the depths of pure republican theory. This was de Staël's answer to Jacobinism. Burke saw Jacobinism as the ultimate expression of the Revolution and cast down its progenitors and its apologists, who looked to cure it with the poison that had brought both into the world together. Such opposed views explain a good deal about the eclipse of Burke's thought from