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DAVID HUME
Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals
1751

Hume's Project

1. Hume wants to offer a *secular* moral theory. He aims to show how ethics can be divorced from religion, how it needn't be linked to stern ideas about duty.
2. Hume emphasizes features of morality that are worth caring about. He's interested in our human relations, our affection for one another. Above all, he links morality to our social lives together.

"Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, this latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause, as well as hinder any act of volition. But if reason has no original influence, 'tis impossible it can withstand any principle, which has such an efficacy, or ever keep the mind in suspence a moment. Thus it appears, that the principle, which opposes our passion, cannot be the same with reason, and is only call'd so in an improper sense. We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and reason. Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them. "

Hume's Method

Hume explicitly aspired to be "the Newton of the mind". Newton is all over the *Enquiry* (see, for example, 16, 34, 53). The key to understanding how it is supposed to work is to take the effort to imitate the Newtonian method seriously.

What did Hume take Newton to have done?

Newton rounds up the phenomena about motions; he enunciates some general principles about different sorts of motions; he shows that those principles can be treated in a uniform way by supposing a force of gravitational attraction that varies inversely as the square of the distance between the bodies; on this basis he puts forward a law of universal gravitation.

How could you do the same thing with respect to morality?

Like this: you start with the moral judgments people make; you enunciate general principles about these; you then declare that these general principles can be treated in a uniform way if you suppose that we are responding to certain very general qualities

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of character and actions; on this basis you put forward a law that moral judgments are responses to the presence or absence of these qualities.

Just as Newton gives you a way of predicting the outcomes of previously unstudied instances of motion, so too with Hume. The general law is supposed to enable us to arrive at judgments about cases beyond those that have been studied in the collection of moral phenomena on which it's based.

"In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it."

Justice

Hume supposes that we live under conditions of scarcity, and that these conditions make it necessary to allot resources to individuals. The confidence that the allotment will be supported by others underlies everyone's ability to plan. So, when we see a transfer of goods from a well-supplied person to someone who is in great need, our initial sympathy has to be qualified if that transfer is made by force, against the rich person's will. We can't undermine the conditions that make stable society possible. It's quite compatible with this to suppose that we might disapprove of the rich person for a lack of generosity towards the indigent.

In cases like this, there's a more substantive use of reason. Before we even pose the question of whether a trait or action would be approved by virtually everyone, we have to be sure to have the consequences in clear focus. In particular, we have to understand the actual ways in which a stable social life is made possible. The test is whether the trait or action would be approved by people who had clear knowledge of the effects and of the conditions of stable social life. Applying this test yields a further set of generalizations about what we approve and disapprove.

The Unified Theory

Hume tries to offer a unified account of these phenomena. What we're responding to, he tells us are qualities that are either *agreeable* (to ourselves or to others) or *useful* (to ourselves or to people generally). *He isn't supposing that people are normally in any*

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position to offer this description of what we're doing. Most of us make the right moral judgments, without understanding their basis, just as most of us make the right judgments about how bodies move, without recognizing the principle of gravitation. The moral theorist – Hume – comes along and tells us what is behind our everyday practice (just as Newton told us what's behind the motions of bodies).

It's notable that Hume doesn't give us any precise definition of utility. He talks vaguely about general, common, or public good. In difficult cases it's far from obvious what would count as the public good.

For just this reason, Bentham developed Hume's appeal to utility into a much more precise instrument. From Bentham's perspective, Hume's idea that the touchstone of moral judgment lies in our approval or disapproval (given appropriate refinement through operations of reason) was far too vague to settle important matters. Bentham, in particular, worried that the imprecision of "social utility" might serve to allow for gross inequalities. Hence he developed the much sharper moral perspective that declares (a) that individual well-being is a matter of the net balance of pleasures and pains, (b) that pleasures and pains are measured only in terms of intensity and duration, and (c) that social utility is the sum of the measures of individual well-being for all individuals in the society ("each to count for one and none for more than one"). This is the core idea of Utilitarianism.

Strictly speaking *Hume is not a Utilitarian*. He's a sentimentalist moral theorist whose explanatory framework emphasizes utility as the crucial factor in the direction of moral sentiments.

'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an *Indian* or person wholly unknown to me. 'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledg'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. A trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment; nor is there anything more extraordinary in this, than in mechanics to see one pound weight raise up a hundred by the advantage of its situation."

ROUSSEAU
Discourse on Inequality (1754) and the *Social Contract* (1762)

DI is an indictment of existing forms of political life, and that SC takes up the project of trying to do better: DI is diagnosis, SC is a plan for treatment.

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Life and Background

Rousseau was born in 1712 in Geneva, the son of a watchmaker; Rousseau's mother died in childbirth. His life involved a wide range of activities: he worked as an apprentice engraver, moved around Switzerland and what is now Italy, as well as France; wrote a very successful opera and a successful novel; had liaisons with aristocratic women and fathered five children by a laundress. (One of the women with whom Rousseau was involved, Mme. De Warens, was a few years older than he; Rousseau addressed her as "Mama"; his account of the relationship is supposed to have inspired Freud's ideas about the Oedipus complex.)

Rousseau's *Émile* is a cross between a novel and a treatise on education (one that comes under criticism from Mary Wollstonecraft in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*); the theoretical ideal contrasts with his behavior as a parent: he consigned the five children to orphanages. He converted to Catholicism and later converted back. As his *Confessions* is at pains to reveal, he was guilty of both dishonesty and theft. His life oscillates between periods of great success and downfalls. He died in 1778.

The Discourse

"Reason is what engenders egocentrism, and reflection strengthens it. Reason is what turns man in upon himself. Reason is what separates him from all that troubles him and affects him. … the human race would long ago have eased to exist, if its preservation had depended solely on the reasonings of its members." (DI)

One obvious approach to the DI is to consider it in relation to Hobbes. Is he telling a counter-'state of nature' story, one that is rather nicer than Hobbes? If so, who is right?

Rousseau is very clear - indeed he is explicit - that he isn't doing real history. The important question is to find out what we are like by nature, and in what ways the characteristics we observe (and may hope to change) result from the intrusions of society. His method is to draw on what he knows about human beings under a range of conditions, and on what he knows about non-human animals, to identify the possibilities and limits of human behavior.

"The state of nature where everything takes place in such a uniform manner and where the face of the earth is not subject to those sudden and continual changes causes by the passions and inconstancy of people living together." (DI)

Rousseau suggest that, under some conditions, a solitary life in which each of us was completely free would be entirely in accordance with our natures. Given the

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demands of scarcity, our natures also admit the possibility of forming associations with one another, in which we respond to the challenges of the non-human world partly with the help of language to coordinate our efforts.

"Two principles that are prior to reason, of which one makes us ardently interested in our well being and our self preservation, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance to seeing any sentient being, especially our fellow man, perish or suffer." (DI)

"Nature, in giving men tears, bears witness that she gave the human race the softest hearts."

The opening of Part 2 tries to connect the institution of property with more primitive ways of making distinctions. Rousseau recognizes the fragility of human cooperation. But, when cooperation is successful, people will need to pay attention to the qualities of potential cooperators. They can even make their cooperation more efficient by dividing the labor. Dividing the labor, in turn, can easily form the basis for making social distinctions i.e. cases in which there are crucial jobs, some of which can be done by virtually anyone and others of which can only be done by those who are especially able in some respect.

With division of labor in place, it's easy to envisage how a functioning society might need to set up special relationships between some members and particular resources: the person who performs a particular job may need the use of a certain tool, for example.

Eventually, you get the division of land with which Part 2 opens. The more successful the cooperative ventures are, the more you get social divisions and inequalities in terms of property.

The next phase is for the making of an explicit 'social contract' – in something like Locke's sense – whereby the institution of private property comes under protection. What social philosophers perceive as provisions of justice come in as a device for defending the possessions of those who have most.

Rousseau sees an inevitable intensification of the inequalities, as wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people, and the masses become ever more abject in their misery (76-7; in due course we will compare the closing pages of DI with Marx' claims about the dynamic of capitalism).

So how do we avoid this terrible outcome?

The problem of the SC

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"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."

SC opens with a focused statement of the problem, to which Rousseau seems to have been led by the arguments of DI. (*Émile* can be seen as a third stage of the project; the theory of education explains how to develop the sort of person who can make – and keep – a social contract.)

We're to start with human nature ('men as they are') and to consider possible options for social arrangements ('laws as they might be'). Interestingly, it seems that the principal political ideal in terms of which the problem is to be posed is different here – in DI, equality took center stage, whereas in SC it's freedom. But the judgment about existing societies is similarly negative.

Lurking behind Chapter V, there seem to be two major issues.

1. How is consent supposed to work?

Rousseau seems to think that you need to do something much more active than simply taking advantage of the resources of the state; it's almost as though each individual has to think through, and explicitly take, the decision to enter into the social contract prevailing in the neighborhood – a social contract that was, itself, quite deliberately made.

2. Can any group of people in fact make a social contract?

Hobbes and Locke take this for granted (and this is part of Hume's critique in Of Original Contract). For Hobbes, the state of nature is so terrible that people will covenant with those who happen to be around. For Rousseau, there are prior conditions that must be met before you frame the contract.

In making the social contract you do give up your freedom: you 'alienate' yourself and all your rights to the entire community (148). So how can the contract solve the problem as posed?

The General Will

The fundamental question is how can subordination to the General Will be a form of freedom? i.e. a form of freedom so desirable that achieving it outweighs the losses incurred in alienating oneself to the community?

Rousseau explicitly denies that the General Will is such-and-such when a majority of the members of the body prefer it to be the case that such-and-such. He

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distinguishes between the 'General Will' and the 'will of all' (155), and he also claims that '… what makes the will general is not so much the number of votes as the common interest that unites them' (158). It is therefore not simply majority rule.

But matters are complicated by Rousseau's claims that citizens who refuse to obey the General Will are 'forced to be free' (150) and those who find themselves in a minority are shown to be in error about the General Will (206). To subordinate oneself to the General Will is to resolve to cooperate in a way that will be directed towards some outcome in which all members of the group thrive.

At the stage where people consider forming a social contract, they have to consider whether they are sufficiently like-minded, and sufficiently mutually committed, to share a concept of the collective good and to be willing to work together in achieving it. Only under this condition can the social contract go forward. Where it does, each party to the contract agrees to subordinate whatever private preferences he/she has to the General Will.

"Unequal in force or intelligence they may be, men all become equal by convention and by right."

"The general will is always right."

"We always want what is good for us, but we do not always see what it is."

"There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will."

The State

The task of the state is to identify forms of interaction for which there is a collectively optimal outcome, to identify the collectively optimal outcome, and to institute mechanisms that will promote it.

To enter into a social contract is to undergo a *psychological* change, so that one becomes disposed to prefer an outcome that is collectively good rather than the one that accords with the private interests.

This psychological shift needn't be thought of as a tendency to calculate, and to weigh explicitly the effects on the welfare of others. Parties to the Social Contract may have undergone an *emotional* change that leads them to act in the appropriate way. Indeed the idea of an emotional change is much closer in spirit to Rousseau.

It might be helpful to think of the relevant disposition as one of solidarity with one's fellow contractors – or, perhaps, fraternity, or love.

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Some of the things Rousseau says can be understood by thinking about the kinds of interactions available under different circumstances.

- If our association is too small, it may be hard to find interactions that deliver sufficiently high payoffs to the members (we can't satisfy the requirement of increasing the probability of success).

- If it's too large, we're more likely to find ourselves in interactions in which people don't share an understanding of the collective good. It's difficult to have a clear conception of the consequences for groups with which you don't have any regular interaction.

- There must be no 'partial society' within the state . If there's a partial society, then there's a danger that there'll be a choice between two forms of interaction. And thus the whole ceases to exist. The whole must and in fact can only be 'one and indivisible'.

"Sovereignty is indivisible … For either the will is general, or it is not."

"Just as nature gives each man an absolute power over all his members, the social compact gives the body politic an absolute power over all its members."

'He will be forced to be free.'

Our new freedom consists in changing our will so that we desire what is collectively good. If, on a given occasion, we're inclined to want something else, that's because we've made some kind of error, perhaps by misidentifying the collective good, perhaps by giving priority to some private satisfaction. If the state intervenes to compel us to conform to the General Will, it is, in effect, redirecting our activity in accord with what we really wanted. It can be seen as promoting our genuine desires – and thus as enhancing our freedom – when we're in a state of ignorance or weakness of will.

Rousseau is sometimes read as being on the road to totalitarianism: to subordinate yourself to the General Will is to put the state above the individual. But Rousseau is also keen to emphasize the commitment to other individual people: you come to want the collective good because you feel solidarity – fraternity, as the French revolutionaries would later quote him – with those with whom you have contracted.

ADAM SMITH

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Wealth of Nations
1776

Background and Life

Smith lived from 1723 to 1790. A younger contemporary of David Hume, he became a professor at Glasgow University in 1751, where he taught a wide variety of subjects. After 1764 he became private tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch, and eventually received a pension that enabled him to live in Edinburgh and write.

In 1759, Smith published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS), a work that went through six editions in his lifetime. Like Hume, and like their common teacher Francis Hutcheson, Smith develops an approach to morality based on our emotional responses.

WN was published in 1776, and was well-received. Smith was offered an administrative position (as Commissioner of Customs for Scotland), and he eventually became Rector of the University of Glasgow. Late eighteenth century politicians sought his advice. According to a famous anecdote, on one occasion when he visited London, the leaders of the government rose in respect until he was seated.

Homo economicus

Smith's concept of the person that is articulated and presupposed in his economic analyses. In arguing for the response of prices to supply and demand, or in exploring the consequences of free trade, he supposes *that individuals will pursue their economic well-being*. It's very easy to view Smith as the father of the concept of *rational agents* deployed in contemporary microeconomic theory.

One of the most famous lines in WN occurs relatively early: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest" (15). From this line, you might expect that Smith has a very simple – even simplistic – psychological view. Interestingly, TMS provides a rich notion of the person; beginning from the assumption he shares with Hume, that *people have a natural disposition to sympathize with those around them*, Smith argues that our propensity to want to be in harmony with the emotions of those around us, *leads us to regulate our conduct by submitting our decisions to the judgment of conscience, conceived as an internal impartial spectator* ("the vice-regent of the deity", "the man in the breast"). Out of this comes a wide range of emotional tendencies and dispositions. The psychology of TMS seems to go very much beyond the very simple story of *Homo economicus*, the butcher or brewer dedicated to his

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own interest, narrowly defined in terms of wealth, and concerned with nothing else.

"It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."

"Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society."

Political Economy

WN is often seen as the first treatise in political economy, and Smith is viewed as founding a new discipline. Smith was extremely influential. The later work of Malthus, Ricardo, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill builds on his agenda and on his attempts at solution. When political economy gives way to neo-classical economics, it's quite easy to see economists from the late nineteenth century to the present as giving precise mathematical expression to ideas that are formulated qualitatively in Smith. In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx clearly takes the conclusions of standard political economy from Smith – the famous "Alienated Labor" is preceded, as we'll see in a few weeks, by three essays that are summary and commentary on WN, with occasional references to later updates.

Later, Marx adopts a much more negative view of Smith, and, in *Capital*, the heroes of political economy are taken to be Ricardo and a new candidate for founder, Sir William Petty. (Some of the dismissal of Smith surely rests on Marx' revisionist history of political economy.) Petty was a member of the early Royal Society, a contemporary of Pepys, who wrote on the economic and social issues of Ireland.

What is WN's place in the history of economics and of social science generally? Why did topics like money, wealth, and commerce start to get discussed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?

In the late fifteenth century, the Spanish and Portuguese gained access to extraordinary sources of wealth – they are the ones who open up "Eldorado" in the New World, and who find their ways to the spice islands of the East. Yet, by the seventeenth century, the wealth – and the political power – had to been transferred to three European nations, France (a traditionally strong power), Britain (rather backward from the perspective of the fifteenth century), and the Netherlands (recently emancipated from Spain). Given that these countries seem to control only the least profitable bits of the Americas, how do they come to be so wealthy?

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This raises the question of the sources of wealth and power. It's really surprising that all the Spanish and Portuguese gold doesn't result in lasting wealth. One of the main themes of WN is its insistence that wealth consists in productivity. Smith's diagnosis is that gold only generates wealth if it's used in starting a form of manufacture. Again and again, throughout WN, he campaigns against the idea that you ought to restrict the flow of gold out of a country. (i.e. He is drawing a difference between idle and productive capital).

Division of Labor

Because Smith takes the key to productivity to be division of labor, this is where WN starts. Smith's work antedates the industrial revolution; he's explaining the dynamic of an earlier form of capitalism – exemplified by the pin factory. Smith makes certain psychological assumptions: allegedly, specializing on a task enables people to work more speedily and efficiently, but, there are also costs resulting from boredom (840).

Smith leans heavily on the idea of a **natural propensity** to *"truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another"* (14).

The Liberal Reward of Labor

Smith is commonly viewed as a social conservative who has little interest in, or sympathy for, the plight of poor workers. This stereotype descends from the plaudits heaped on Smith by Thatcher and Reagan (although it's arguable that part of their enthusiasm for Smith is that they accept his attempt to show that workers will be better off under free-market capitalism). Interestingly, Smith not only advances this argument, but also insists on the inequity of permitting collusion among entrepreneurs while disallowing unions among workers (see 75-8). However, viz-90, Smith commits himself to the view that *just societies require providing for the least fortunate members*.

"Where wages are high, accordingly we shall always find the workmen more active, diligent and expeditious, than where they are low."

Smith's account of how to help the poor begins quite early in WN. He sees very clearly that the notion of poverty involves both an absolute and a relative notion; the praise for the division of labor ends with the thought that, in a productive society, even those at the bottom may have access to goods not available to those at the top of a less productive society. You can be poor, then, by not having much, or by having less than those around you.

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"It is the great multiplication of the productions of all the different arts, in consequence of the division of labour which occasions, in a well governed society, that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people … and a general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of the society."

The *stationary state* is that condition in which the returns to the workers are just sufficient to enable them to survive and to leave behind them exactly the same number of replacements. In effect, the productivity of the society supports a population level that remains constant across the generations. Smith points out that you can have societies with different levels of productivity and both (or all) in the stationary state. In these societies, the workers won't be well-rewarded. He concludes (79, 81) that *the situation of the workers isn't a function of the absolute wealth of a nation. Instead, it depends on the rate at which the economy is growing.* Wages are higher if labor is relatively scarce, so that, from the workers' point of view, the best situation is one in which there are plenty of opportunities for entrepreneurial investment.

Unlike some later thinkers (e.g. J.S. Mill), Smith doesn't offer a general discussion of *distribution*. This isn't because he's unconcerned with the plight of the poor, but because he thinks that a growing economy will automatically transfer wealth to the bottom strata. He thinks there's historical evidence for the fact that the situation of the poor has improved. The worry is that the liberal reward of labor can only be temporary.

Free Trade

Smith's famous advocacy of free trade occurs in his attack on the "Mercantile System". Scholars incline to think that this way of setting things up is somewhat unfair in that there was no such "system"; rather, Smith was criticizing common practices of restricting imports and encouraging some kinds of *domestic* industry. The basic argument is simple. Imagine that Scotland can't produce wine as cheaply as France can, and that the Scots government protects the domestic wine production by imposing a tariff against French wine. It follows that wine-drinking Scots are going to pay a higher price than they might have done in the absence of a tariff. Consequently, there will be some wasted resources within Scotland that might have been put into another form of production (woolens, say). If we imagine two scenarios, one where the Scots make tariff-protected wine and one where they import French wine and make woolens, the output of the Scots economy will be greater if they pursue the latter.

Nor is there any real hardship for the erstwhile winemakers if they switch to woolens. For they can obtain at least the same return on their investment from a more productive employment of their capital. Further, they won't be tempted

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to transfer their winemaking to another place – Bordeaux, say – because Smith thinks that they can't increase their profits by doing that, and they do run a greater risk; the risk is greater because of the difficulties of supervising an operation at a distance from one's home. Hence everybody benefits from a policy of pursuing private economic interests.

This is the point of the famous "invisible hand" (483). *Collectively good outcomes result from uncoordinated pursuit of individual interest*. Smith's basic normative theory of society conceives social institutions as devices for bringing about this harmony. The governmental task is to set things up so that *each individual does well and, in doing well, serves the public good*. Free markets are viewed as important devices for achieving this, but it would be quite wrong to conclude that Smith favors free markets in everything.

"Every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can … led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention … by pursing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it."

IMMANUEL KANT

Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals

1797

Life

Many contemporaries whispered that Kant didn't have much of a life. Born in the Prussian town of Königsberg in 1724, Kant served as a philosopher and geographer at the university. He lived alone and never married, devoting his time to silent contemplation and, as some recent scholars have suggested, depressive reflection. He is considered to be the last and arguably greatest of the Enlightenment theorists of knowledge. He died in Prussia in 1804.

Kant's Machinery

It's quite characteristic of Kant that he should provide a preface in which he characterizes what is to follow in abstract terms, intended to show where G fits into his philosophical system. We begin with a survey of the types of human knowledge, divided into main topics (physics, ethics, logic), and with an assessment of the sources of this knowledge.

Here Kant draws on a distinction that he explains in the *Critique*, the distinction between *a priori* knowledge and *a posteriori* (or empirical) knowledge.

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Kant tells us in the preface that, just as physics has both an empirical part and a pure part, so too with morality. When we study nature, part of our investigation inevitably involves observation and experiment; but we can't gain knowledge from observation without presupposing some *a priori* principles (for example that every event has a cause). By the same token, there are parts of morality that must be adapted to circumstances, and moral principles that will require some empirical knowledge. Behind these stand the moral principles in which he is most interested, the *pure* or *a priori* moral principles (2,2,389). These belong to the *metaphysics of morals*.

The Good Will

A standard philosophical way of posing the relevant questions is to ask about which of these is fundamental, or which is (are) prior to which. More straightforwardly, consider the following possible sets of claims.

1. There are some situations that are intrinsically good – situations, say in which people are happy, have all their needs satisfied, and engage in wonderfully rewarding activities (you can fill this out in whatever way you think appropriate). To act rightly is to try to bring about situations like this: right actions are those that stem from reasonable intentions to make the world as good a place as possible. Virtues are dispositions of character that tend to produce right actions. So the good is prior to the right, and the notion of virtue is understood in terms of the notion of right action.

2. There are some traits of character that are intrinsically virtuous (justice, temperance, and so forth). For someone to act rightly is to act in a way that expresses virtue; (it may be important here that the virtues are unified, that is that they don't tug in different directions). Situations are good when they result from right action and express (or maybe reinforce) virtue. So the notion of virtue is prior to that of right action, and the notion of good is derivative from the concepts of virtue and of right action.

3. There are some ways of acting that are intrinsically right (that express our genuine duties). Situations are good when they result from, or express, right actions. Virtues are character traits that lead people to perform right actions. The perfection of virtue would be a completely universal tendency to do the right thing under all possible circumstances. So the notion of the right is fundamental, and the concepts of good and of virtue derive from it.

Acting from Duty

In accordance with the second of his notions of the *a priori*, he explains that human beings already tacitly know the source of rightness – it "dwells in natural sound

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understanding" – so that the philosopher's task is to make clear and explicit what each of us dimly understands.

The first step is to recognize that right action involves acting in accordance with duty, although, as the *Preface* already informed us, being in accordance with duty isn't enough. Kant's strategy is to explain what moral rightness is by identifying the ways we can fall short: we can go against our duty, we can be compelled to perform our duty, we can do what is our duty because we had some inclination to do it or because we see, prudently, that it will contribute to our attaining our long-term goals. Instead, we act rightly when we act in accordance with our duty *simply because we recognize that that is our duty*. The example of the man tempted to suicide (11,10,398) is valuable here because it dramatizes Kant's claim that we mustn't be prompted by any personal wish.

The next phase is an attack on positions, like Hume's, that trace moral rectitude to our sentiments. Kant imagines someone who is genuinely benevolent and who likes nothing better than helping others. He denies that these actions of giving aid have real moral worth, essentially assimilating this person to others who act from their (selfish) desires.

Universal Law

The solution to the problem comes with a cryptic sentence: Kant admits that he has "deprived the will" of every impulse to obey the law, and claims that nothing is left but "the conformity of actions as such with universal law". The final clause of this sentence gives his preliminary formulation of the categorical imperative. The crucial point here is that, according to Kant, we do know one thing about the moral law, namely that any moral law is universal. Laws don't prescribe for a single case, but cover all cases of a type. The moral law applies to all; everyone has the same rights, duties, and permissions. So we are offered the test for deciding if an envisaged course of action accord with duty – we have to take the maxim of the action and ask if it could be willed as a universal law.

Kant illustrates what he has in mind with the example of promising. You find yourself in difficulties, and consider whether you can make a promise that you intend not to keep. Your maxim, the way in which the option presents itself to you, is something like "I may make a promise that I plan to break, when I am in circumstances of hardship, for the purposes of rescuing myself". To apply Kant's proposed test, you have to ask whether the generalization of this could be willed as a universal law. Could "Anybody in conditions of hardship can make a promise that he/she intends to break for the purposes of extricating himself/herself" be a moral law? Kant claims that it couldn't because the willing of a universal license would undermine the institution of promising – "for in accordance with such a law there would properly be no promises at all" . So the test is supposed to work because we'll find that some maxims (intuitively those that would be associated

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with deviations from duty) can't be willed as universal laws; when we try to do so, we become entangled in contradictions.

A Priori Morality

Section II opens with Kant's assessment of what he's accomplished. He claims to have followed the only possible route to determining the principle of morality. These paragraphs as an attack on the method of someone like Hume who proposes to arrive at moral principles by identifying instances of morally worthy behavior and then working out what they have in common. Kant claims that this is hopeless, since we can never be sure, by means of experience, that any particular action is morally worthy. (Our motives are always suspect, and, even in cases where we suppose people to have acted from respect for duty, some extraneous inclination may have intervened.)

How might Hume reply to Kant? He can simply deny, for example, that there's any need for us to have firm guarantees that actions we take to be morally worthy really live up to that billing. Maybe moral theory will be indefinitely revisable; we start off with some judgments, and, in Hume's Newtonian style, try to find a unifying account of them; perhaps as we learn more there will have to be modifications both of our theoretical principles and of our alleged data. Kant's best response to this, I think, is that our judgments are contaminated from the beginning with the mistakes and prejudices of our society. Hume's best reply to that would be to concede the point, but to claim that the only thing we can do is to work our way patiently out of this predicament by coping with the difficulties that occur; an *a priori* theory would be nice if there were one, but it just isn't available.

Categorical Imperative

How do rational agents represent and govern their actions by laws? According to Kant, they give themselves commands, or *imperatives*. Imperatives come in two types, *hypothetical* and *categorical*. There's no great difficulty in understanding the first type – a hypothetical imperative tells you what to do to achieve some specified goal ("If you want to get a degree from Columbia College, you must pass CC"). Imperatives like this arise from what Kant takes to be a conceptual truth, that a rational agent who wills an end wills the means to that end. Hypothetical imperatives plainly account for the *transfer* of acts of will from one outcome to another, but they don't explain the source of a rational agent's willing. Crudely, if you already understand that a rational agent has certain goals, then recognizing a hypothetical imperative enables you to see why that agent has other aims that promote the goals initially identified. But you can't account in this way for why a rational agent has all the goals she does.

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Maybe there isn't any such explanation. Perhaps all we can say is that rational agents arbitrarily adopt certain goals, and then aim to realize the conditions necessary for attaining those goals. Kant sets out to explore the possibility of going further, of finding an imperative that commands without any reference to an antecedently specified goal – a *categorical* imperative. He wants to show that an imperative of this sort is possible, and indeed possible without making any empirical assumptions (*a priori*).

Rational Beings as Ends

Kant returns to the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives in a quite intuitive way, asking if there are any ends that have "absolute worth". He answers the question by declaring that human beings – and rational beings in general – have absolute worth, and are marked out as ends independently of anyone's inclination. I confess that I don't see any serious argument for this, but it leads Kant to offer a second formulation of the categorical imperative: always treat humanity, in your own person and in others, as an end and never as a mere means.

The Kingdom of Ends

The ideal of rational beings bound together by mutual respect and essential equality of rights leads very naturally into Kant's third formulation of the categorical imperative. He isn't talking about an actual or hypothetical political state. Instead he's using an *image* from political philosophy (specifically from Rousseau) to illuminate issues that arise in the moral sphere. We're to imagine that rational beings form an inclusive community, and that their actions ought to be governed by the laws that they would enact if they understood each and every one of them to be an end, having absolute worth. The second formulation insisted on not treating others as means, but always as ends. Now you're supposed to summon up before your mind the totality of all rational beings, each being seen as an end with absolute worth. You imagine yourself, and all the others, making a "social contract" together, one that will set down the rules that govern our moral lives.

Kant introduces this formulation because he wants to connect his approach to morality with an approach to human freedom. The crucial new point is that we are the authors of the moral law (just as, in Rousseau's story, the participants are the authors of the laws of the state). Kant takes from Rousseau the idea that we express our freedom through coming to obey laws that we have set down for ourselves. This enables him to conclude that, in obeying the commands of duty, we become truly free.

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Kant Chart

"Act that your principle of action might safely be made a law for the whole world"

"Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means… if, then, there is to be a supreme practical principle… with respect to human will, a categorical imperative, it must be… rational nature exists as an end in itself."

Types of Philosophy		**Judgments**		**Faculty**	**Birthday gift**	**Imperatives**	**Kingdom of Ends**
Formal						**Categorical**	*Autonomy*
	Logic (rational)	Right	Wrong	WILL	"B/c it is my duty."	Objectively necessary – apodictical	Dignity – no price
						Hypothetical	*Heteronomy*
Material	Freedom (ethics)	Good	Bad	SENTIMENT -feelings	"B/c it makes you feel special to get and me feel good to give."	Possible purpose - practical principle	Fancy Price
	Nature (physics)	Virtue	Vice	OUTCOMES - utilitarian	"b/c it makes for good social relations."	Assertorical (is or is not)	Market Price

Examples:

1. Suicide — action in DISCORD w/ HUMANITY
2. borrowing money — uses OTHERS as MEANS
3. using/wasting talent — uses SELF as MEANS
4. ameliorating others' suffering — action not in HARMONY w/HUMANITY

REVOLUTIONS

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The concept of Revolution

Our current conception of revolution must be understood as inherited from the French. Before the events that began in 1789, "revolution" meant both "rolling back" and "turning around" (from the Latin *revolvere*). The first use of the term "revolution" in a political sense stems from fourteenth century Italy, when the term "rivoluzione" was used to describe urban uprisings, family feuds, rebellions, and other forms of protests in city states. By the seventeenth century most European languages had adopted the term "revolution" to describe broader political change, especially civil wars and changes of rulers. Thus the English Civil Wars of the 1650s were described at the time as a "revolution". With the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the term had even assumed positive connotations – and not only positive, but sometimes utopian, quasi-religious connotations of salvation in this world, of happiness and liberation from oppression. Descriptions of the American events, beginning with the Declaration of Independence (and subsequent declaration of war), as "revolution" can thus in some senses we read as an attempt to align the American struggle with this older tradition of positive reform.

The war the followed the American revolt, however, triggered change once again in the conception of "revolution." Supplanting the positive associations with the 1688, revolution came again to be associated with civil war and strife. The French Revolution further solidified this impression. The French Revolution, in fact, lent the term "revolution" infamy for some (as Burke's reaction to its potential for gore suggests). Since the French Revolution, the term has come to carry two connotations. First, revolution suggests short term, potentially violent change. But it also connotes longer-term structural change. We should understand "revolution" as both an event and a process.

The Nation

Both the American and French projects may be understood as attempts to create or to redefine a national culture, and then to locate for this people its ideal form of state and governance structure.

Who is a "people"? How are they defined? By language, by shared history, by religion? By location? By political and civil rights as defined by the state?

The answer, in both the French and the American cases, is probably most accurately "a little bit of all these things" – though scholars enjoy arguing about it to this day. It is important to note that in both cases can be detected similar nation-building enterprises:

- establishment of national holidays to supplant religious rituals

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- standardization of language (assimilation in France, forcing all to learn high French; introduction of American spelling and vocab to differentiate from the British, then aggressive assimilation of immigrants – or blatant exclusion if there were deemed inassimilable.)
- new iconography and symbology – images of the nation (Marianne, the bald eagle) on coins, public buildings, etc.
- ritual celebration of national festivals (a monarchy like Britian, for example, has no equivalent of July 4th or Bastille Day; national celebration is embodied through the person of the monarch. So you get the Queen's birthday off – or a bank holiday for the announcement of the engagement of William and Kate).

Declaration of Independence (1776)

"In the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them."

"The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world."

Federalist Number X (1787)

"By a faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of the other citizens."

"There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence, the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests."

Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?* (1789)

'the third estate is always identified in my mind with the idea of a nation'

'all the privileged, without distinction, form a class that is different from and opposed to the third estate'

'every public need ought to be the responsibility of everybody'

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'So what is the third estate? Everything, but an "everything" shackled and oppressed. What would it be without the privileged order? Everything, but an "everything" free and flourishing.'

'the privileged, far from being useful to the nation, can only weaken it and harm it.'

'an entire class of citizens finds its glory in remaining inactive in the midst of general activity and is able to consume the best part of the produce without having helped in any way to bring it into existence. Such a class is surely foreign to the nation in its *sloth*'

Declaration of Rights of Man (1789)
'The *nation* is the source of all sovereignty'

'The *representatives* of the people of France'

'for ever keep attention to their *rights* and their *duties*'

'*sacred* rights of men'
'Men are born, and always continue *free* and *equal*'

What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (1852)

"At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed… The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced."

The State

What form government best represents "the people"? The American answer borrowed from the British precedent, specifically the compromised devised in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution: while sovereignty lay with "the people" this nation was to be represented by a concentration of interests. Power should be equally divided between an executive, a legislature and a judiciary. An elaborate system of checks and balances, as well as revolving and stepped terms for legislators, conceded that change was inevitable, but ensured it would progress gradually. The Whiggish mentality later embodied by Burke can clearly be seen here.

As the French Revolution unfolded, numerous answers were suggested to this question. The Assembly Nationale at the beginning functioned like an

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elective aristocracy; then it decalred itself more radically to be a republic; then Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety seemed like tyranny; the post-1794 Directory seems again like an aristocracy; then in 1799 Napoleon's entry on the stage ushers back in a age of monarchy – not just of monarchy, but of empire. Today France is an elective republic.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)

'natural, imprescriptible and inalienable rights'

'Civil distinction therefore can be founded only on *public utility*'

'liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression'
(compatible? How do you define oppression?)

'The law ought to prohibit only actions *hurtful to society'* (how do you define this?)

'The law is an expression of the *will of the community*' (Rousseau)

'by their virtues and talents' (meritocracy?)

Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?* (1789)

'a common law and a common representation are what make one nation'

'every public need ought to be the responsibility of everybody'

'what is a nation? A body of associates living under a *common* law and represented by the same *legislature*'

'by heads and not by order'

United States Constitution (1787)

"All legislative power shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives."

"Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States… according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons."

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"The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States."

"The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person."

Federalist Number X (1787)

"the most common and durable source of factions, has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold, and those who are without property, have ever formed distinct interests in society."

"The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation."

"the great number of citizens and the extent of territory which may be brought within the compass of republican, than of democratic government; and it is in this circumstance principally which renders factious combinations less to be dreaded in the former, than in the latter… Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probably that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of others."

Rights

The American and French Revolutions signaled a shift from the understanding of people as *subjects* to their construction as *citizens*. What are one's rights as a subject under a monarchy? As a citizen in a Republic? Note that in all of these instances, rights are being defined through *the state*. Hence the French "Declaration of the Rights of Man *and Citizen*." What happens to people legally excluded from the state – do they possess any rights?

Declaration of Independence (1776)

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

"it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

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Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

'No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions … provided that his avowal does not disturb the public order.'

'The unrestrained communication of thoughts.'

'A common contribution … divided equally' (taxation)

'Every community to which a separation of powers and a security of rights is not provided for, wants a constitution.'

'The right to property being inviolable and sacred.'

Frederick Douglass, *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (1852)

"Fellow citizens! There is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT."

"Not take the constitution accordin to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. "

Violence

When is violence sanctioned within a state? Outside a state? Does the existence of a tyrannical leader – or the concentration of power in general—preclude the existence of equality? Machiavelli noted that Republics tend to be very peaceful within their borders, but aggressive in policing their boundaries. Is that simply what Robespierre was doing to the French people—sorting out who belonged to the nation and who didn't?

Robespierre, *On the moral and political principles of domestic policy* (1794)

'to make liberty's destiny depend on the truth, which is eternal'

'every new faction will meet death in the mere thought of crime'

'the public reason is the guarantee of liberty'

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'democracy is a state in which the sovereign people, guided by laws which are its own work, itself does all it can do well, and through delegates all it cannot do itself.'

'we must end the war of liberty against tyranny and pass safely across the storms of the revolution: such is the of the revolutionary system'

'public virtue ... which is nothing other than the love of country and its laws'

'this sublime sentiment assumes a preference for the public interest over every particular interest'

'virtue is the soul of democracy'

'the first rule of your political conduct must be to relate all your operations to the maintenance of equality and the development of virtue'

'In the system of the French revolution, what is immoral is impolitic, what is corruptive is counter-revolutionary'

'ceaseless surveillance and control over all the public functionaries'

'virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs'

EDMUND BURKE

Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)

Burke's Life

Burke was born in 1729, in Ireland, and was brought up as a Protestant. After studying law, he decided to devote himself to writing. He became private secretary to the Marquess of Rockingham, leader of the "Rockingham Party" of Whigs, was elected (in a sense) to Parliament, and served in Rockingham's second administration. The last years of his political career were devoted to the attempted impeachment of Warren Hastings; the trial ended inconclusively in 1794. After retiring from Parliament, Burke died in 1797.

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Burke was a Whig (a member of the party of reform). He urged a strategy of conciliation with the American colonies, that he was a critic (sometimes a harsh critic) of the foreign policy of Lord North and George III, and a tireless scourge of what he took to be the corruption of the East India Company.

Reflections on the Revolution in France (R) surprised some of his allies and his opponents – George III congratulated him on it. But, read carefully, it isn't out of keeping with many of Burke's writings and political causes. Burke is a proponent of constructive reform not of violent, destructive, revolution; that is, at least, how he would put his reaction.

R was written early in the French Revolution, when the events of the Terror were still in the future, and, as those events unfolded, Burke came to seem prophetic.

Burke's Project

Burke is a great rhetorician, but it's easy to feel that R lacks any overall argumentative structure. First we need to recognize the historical context in which Burke writes his letter. As he makes very clear, he is responding not just to the revolution but to the reception of it by English groups of religious dissidents. Various passages in R indicate that Burke sees the idea of revolution as a bacillus that could infect other countries. Interpreting the English enthusiasm for the French Revolution as an attempt to assimilate the events of 1789 to those of 1688, he is, in effect, focusing on three periods and arguing for a particular way of understanding them. The first is the British Civil War of the 1640s (the immediate context of *Leviathan*); the second is the revolution of 1688, and the replacement of James II by William and Mary.

Burke tends to agree with Hobbes' assessment of the awfulness of civil war, and he opposes a Lockean reading of the "Glorious Revolution". Instead of seeing this as the legitimate response to breach of contract on the part of the exiled sovereign (James II), he proposes that it be understood as a minimal deviation from tradition required to honor an important constraint. Hence if Richard Price and the Revolution Society think that the events of 1789 were justified because of the right of French citizens to make a new contract, they have a misguided understanding of the significance of 1688, and of the relations between the state and the individuals who are governed by it.

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Conservatism

Like Smith, Burke has often been embraced by conservatives (one sign is that the Liberty Fund sponsors editions of their works), but I think it's arguable that, in both instances, contemporary "conservatism" shows considerable disregard for eighteenth century ideas. If contemporary politicians were asking "What would Burke do?", they would hardly be tearing down the political institutions of other countries or what remains of the social security network in our own. The essence of Burke's conservatism, expressed throughout R, is that the task of each generation is to preserve and thoughtfully modify what it has been bequeathed by its predecessors. Again and again, he urges his readers to think of reform as a gradual process in which institutions that have been patiently built up are amended to cope with their flaws. The tone throughout is against arrogance and recklessness, distrustful of abstract ideals and general principles.

"The very ides of the fabrication of a new government, is enough to full us with disgust and horror. We wished at the period of the Revolution, and do now wish, to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers."

"You had all these advantages in your antient states but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society, and had every thing to begin anew."

"Respecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to respect yourselves."

Reform

Burke is very clear that reform is important; he isn't arguing that political affairs should be left just as they are (see 19, 148-9, 217). He makes very definite proposals about how reform should be carried out, grounded in his analysis of the events of 1688. Reform is tied to preservation: there is some feature of the antecedent political arrangements that is important, and whose continued maintenance becomes problematic; some change is needed, and Burke recommends that you make the minimum modification that will allow the important feature to be preserved.

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"The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught a priori."

"A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.

Equality

Burke is no egalitarian. His moral perspective suggests that attaining social equality isn't possible, and also not necessary. Each of us is to fulfill our function within society, and doing that can lead to happiness, even when the station we occupy is "humble" (33). He takes over from Smith the thought that the distribution of resources within a prosperous state, while unequal, is automatically to the advantage of the relatively poor (112-13; Burke understands Smith's account well enough to recognize that the expansion of population is an index of prosperity, but he doesn't appreciate Smith's point that the liberal reward of labor is obtained when the productivity of the state is *increasing*). Burke's main opposition to egalitarian proposals, readily understandable in the context of 1789, is that equality cannot legitimately be obtained by "leveling down" (43, 122). Like Hume, he believes that any attempt at permanent equality must fail, and, in an anticipation of contemporary ideas, he suggests that distinctions in wealth and rank can serve as a source of hope for those who do not have them (122).

The core of Burke's objections to egalitarianism stem from his emphasis on the importance of inherited property (51). The ability of people to pass on to their children what they have earned is, for him, an important constraint on any scheme for fair division of the resources of a society. This can readily be understood, I think, in terms to his emphasis on the importance to us of tradition, of seeing ourselves in a process that extends beyond our own lives; in many of his discussions of this theme, the perspective looks backward; here, however, we are conceived as looking to the future and wanting our descendants to use and build on what we have acquired.

The rejection of equality is counterposed with a positive vision of the functions of the state (52-3). We "contrive" government to answer "human *wants*" (52)

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"Government is not made in virtue of natural rights, which may and do exist in total independence of it; and exist in much greater clearness, and in a much greater degree of abstract perfection: but their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to everything they want everything."

"In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights."

Political aestheticism

the description of the capture of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette (62-7). I think it's a good idea to read the concluding paragraph (66-7);

This whole passage is an extended illustration of Burke's theme that revolutions will inevitably blunt moral sensibilities (56-7). He wants to convey to the reader the gap between the attitudes that would "naturally" be felt by a properly sympathetic spectator and the emotions expressed in the actions of the mob. Behind the discussion stand the sentimentalist approach to morality of Hume, and perhaps particularly Hume's emphasis on our sympathy and admiration for the ornaments of wealth and rank.

"To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely."

"But among the revolutions in France must be reckoned a considerable revolution in their ideas of politeness."

"From this sleep the queen was first startled by the voice of the centinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself in flight—that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give—that they were upon him, and he was dead. A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with blood, rushed out into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murders had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure in his own life for a moment."

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

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A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792)

Life

Mary Wollstonecraft lived a short, eventful, and often unhappy life. She ran a school that failed, endured a period as a governess, struggled to make a living through her writing, and died in 1797 of puerperal fever, giving birth to a daughter (who grew up to become Mary Shelley). Despite V's repeated commendation of friendship between men and women, rather than passionate love, Wollstonecraft had a turbulent romantic life. After the publication of V in 1792, Wollstonecraft had an unhappy affair that produced an illegitimate daughter. Later, she became pregnant by the English radical, William Godwin, whom she married about six months before her death.

Liberal Feminism

This is arguably the foundation text of liberal feminism, which may be understand as the view that inequalities in the performance of men and women on the entire spectrum of human endeavors are almost entirely to be understood in terms of socially generated asymmetries, coupled with the normative thesis that all positions in society should be open to men and women alike and that the obstacles traditionally placed in the paths of women should be removed. Liberal feminism, unlike later feminisms, does not offer a critique of current social institutions to which men and women might aspire; it is, if you like, more concerned with providing women equal access to careers in the law, in politics, or in business, than with claiming that attention to the capacities and predilections of women might lead us to rethink the conduct of the law, the forms of our politics, or the ways in which business is done.

"Contending for the rights of women, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge, for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice."

Nature vs. Nurture: Education

MW attempts to undermine the claim that facts of biology dictate social roles for men and women. She starts with the obvious concession that, on average, men are physically stronger than women (7). She denies that one can draw any conclusions from this about the mental, or, in her preferred terms, moral, differences between men and women. She insists, again and again, that the socialization of women both prevents them from developing their minds and characters in important ways,

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and also encourages them to cultivate various types of weakness in the interests of manipulating men.

Have all the barriers been removed? Are we now in a situation in which the actual distribution of achievement between the sexes represents the intrinsic capacities of men and women? It's fairly clear that some of the inequalities about which Wollstonecraft complains have been removed, but there's room for serious debate about whether women are still encouraged to develop in certain directions and discouraged from going in others.

"In the government of the physical world, it is observable that the female, in general, is inferior to the male. The male pursues, the female yields--this is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favour of woman. This physical superiority cannot be denied--and it is a noble prerogative! But not content with this natural pre-eminence, men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society."

Private v. Public - What is Equal Education For?

The big theme of V is the importance of providing equal education for men and women. Wollstonecraft gives you plenty of passages about the proper development of reason and the actual development of trivial abilities and alluring defects (see, for one example, 53). She opposes both the contemporary practices of educating girls and the theoretical claims offered by prominent thinkers. Her *bête noire* here is Rousseau. But there's a serious question of how far Wollstonecraft breaks free from Rousseau. Rousseau explains that woman's proper function is to bear children (but, given the whole argument of the book, at most to raise the female children). Many of Wollstonecraft's arguments are directed by the thought that a more egalitarian program of education will make women into better wives and mothers. For most of the book, she's content not to dispute the primarily private role of women.

"Make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives; — that is, if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers."

Class

Is the liberation of some women – middle-class women – secured by their buying the services of the poor? Is that consistent with the underlying ideas of equality that motivate both her?

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Ideals of Marriage

Again and again, V insists that "love, from its very nature, must be transitory" (29; see also 27, 30, 53, 74). Marital happiness, she tells us, depends on friendship; friendship requires (approximate) intellectual and moral equality; hence, for happy marriages, women must be educated so that they can be the intellectual and moral equals of their husbands. There's a very clear suggestion that husband and wife might be carried away by passion at the very beginning, but that this will quickly pass, and that the principal character of the marriage will be determined by how well they get along once this brief tumultuous period is over.

There are even intimations that she thinks it a good thing that this period should be brief. As she explains (74) because the principal determinant of the happiness of a marriage is the intellectual and moral compatibility, it would be no bad thing if people could concentrate on this from the beginning. Hence, if "some circumstances checked" the passion of two young people, and they chose to marry on the basis of their estimate of their compatibility, that would be "happy". The implication must be that they don't lose anything very important by not going through the turbulent phase. Presumably a marriage that has the ecstasies of passion and then long years of intimate friendship is better than one that just has a longer span of friendship, but it's not so much better that you'd want to trade the high degree of compatibility for a crowded hour of glorious life.

"Women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, men are insultingly supporting their own superiority."

Manners and Morals

Wollstonecraft's opposition to inculcating elegance and grace instead of an ability to think is an implicit rejection of the idea that aesthetic qualities can be measured on the same scale as genuine virtues (the position we saw in Hume and Burke). She makes the point quite explicitly in her comparison of women and soldiers, both of whom are trained to be skilled in superficial matters of etiquette but not equipped with more solid capacities (22-3).

"My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their FASCINATING graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists--I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them, that

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the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt."

TOCQUEVILLE
Democracy in America (1835-1840)

Context

What's going on in France in 1820s?

- Nap defeated at Waterloo in 1815
    - One million French men had died during Nap Wars
- Constitutional Monarchy reestablished – bourbon restoration [Charles X]
- Bourbons overthrown in in civil uprising of 1830
    - July monarchy – lasts until 1848 [then French second Republic proclaimed] – House of Orleans – not King of FRANCE, but King of the FRENCH
        - 1852 – Nap II
        - 1870 – Franco-Prussian war – third republic

In America?

- market revolution
- extension of franchise during this decade (no property quals – WHITE MEN)
- solidification of cotton system and most brutal era of slavery on plantations
- Jacksonian democracy – populism emerging over first gen of southern planters as politicians
- Clearing of the Cherokees – homogenization
- Immigration beginning

Democracy

Tocqueville is the first author we've read who gives a serious extended treatment of democracy. Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau all mentioned democracy. One obvious divergence is that Tocqueville takes democracy to allow for the election of representatives who legislate and administer; but he supposes that American democracy realizes the idea of popular government because any deviation from the popular view would be quickly checked.
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Does Tocqueville simply think of democracy as a matter of voting and of control of the government? There's a genuine connection between democracy and equality: democracy is seen as an attempt to satisfy an ideal of equality. The big question here (as so often in discussions of equality) is "Equality of what?" In some passages the emphasis is clearly on equal standing before the law, but that doesn't seem to demand any particular scheme for political decision-making. There are two other kinds of equality that emerge in Tocqueville's discussion: equality in economic well-being, and equal access to social positions .

"I increasingly viewed this equality of social conditions as the factor which generated all the others, and I discovered that it represented a central focus in which all my observations constantly ended."

"The political constitution of the United States seems to me to be one of the forms of govt which a democracy can assume but it is not my view that American institutions are either the only or the best ones that a democratic nation might adopt."

"democratic govt allows the idea of political rights to filter down to the least of its citizens, just as the division of possessions places the idea of the right to property within the general grasp of all men. That, in my view, is one of its greatest merits."

America as model

Tocqueville's official reason for crossing the Atlantic is to study American penitentiaries, but his real purpose is to find a way to make his liberal ideals more concrete in the context of French politics. From the beginning of D, we're given a clear picture of the point of a thorough study of American democracy – if you understand this, the fullest realization of democratic ideals, then you'll see what's good about it, as well as what the mistakes are, and, as a result, the would-be democrats of Europe can see how to "instruct democracy".

But it isn't just that Europeans might think it a good idea to make their societies more democratic. Rather, Tocqueville considers equality as a force that is taking history in a particular direction. The task for the European politician is to understand that force so that it can be properly directed—and, of course, both Marx and Hegel will place much more emphasis on the dynamics of historical change than on the preservation of the initial conditions.

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It's also worth emphasizing the extent to which Tocqueville's history is a view from New England. He recognizes that there were important differences – and that there continue to be important divergences between the attitudes of various parts of the country (North and South, Eastern seaboard and frontier) .

"The gradual unfurling of equality in social conditions is, therefore, a providential fact which reflects its principal characteristics."

"The whole of the book in front of the reader has been written under the pressure of a kind of religious terror exercised upon the soul of the author by the sight of this irresistible revolution."

"It is not simply, therefore, to satisfy a curiosity, albeit justified, that I have examined America; my aim has been to discover lessons from which we may profit."

Majority Oppression

One of the phrases for which Tocqueville is famous is "the tyranny of the majority." There are interesting points about the ways in which political platforms might bind legislators to the will of the majority (103), about the instability of majoritarian opinion (105), about the possibility of protecting minorities through guaranteed rights (107), about the intrusions of majority opinion into the lives of minorities (110-2), and the consequent uniformity of American opinion (114).

"this instinctive love for one's country reigns supreme."

"I know of no country where there is generally less independence of thought and real freedom of debate than in America."

The Role of Religion

Tocqueville sees religion as a continuing factor in American socio-political life. Tocqueville makes a number of claims: America is the place in which Christianity has the most influence on the ways in which people live; because of its Christian background, Americans set more severe moral standards; family values are particularly important in America; religion works in harmony with political liberty

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– you can give a free reign to people who are captive to their consciences ; the separation of church and state is a cause of the sway of religion; complete political liberty would be inappropriate (impossible?) for non-believers; religious aspirations harmonize with the American zeal for doing well in this-worldly terms.

Social Explanations of norms, customs, and ideas.

One of the striking features of D is Tocqueville's use of types of reasoning and explanation that we haven't previously seen in CC, specifically in his attempts to identify causal relations between social conditions and attitudes. Quite early in the book, he suggests that the circumstances of life in nineteenth century America generate a form of anti-intellectualism that scorns higher education. The second volume treats these kinds of questions more extensively (as you'd expect when the topic has shifted from politics to "mores"). We are offered a sociological explanation of American tendencies to pragmatism; these passages seem especially prescient in light of American intellectual developments at the end of the century; interestingly, the pragmatists themselves were concerned to identify the social factors that generate abstract questions and philosophical themes.

"Certainly, I am far from claiming that to achieve this result the exercise of political rights should be granted all at once to every man; but I do say that the most potent, and possibly the only remaining weapon to involve men in the destiny of their country is to make them take a share in its govt. In our day, civic spirit seems to be inseparable from the exercise of political rights."

Individualism

Tocqueville frequently characterizes Americans as a society of entrepreneurs – good examples of Smith's *Homo economicus* – sometimes heroic, more often limited. But, of course, he also stresses the importance of cooperative projects, the involvement of citizens together in public life, which he views as the counterpoise to individualism.

There is a serious concern here, one that contributes to Tocqueville's theme of the "mediocrity of democratic societies". Economic interests are narrowing.

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But, in an egalitarian society in which individuals successfully pursue their own well-being, there are also factors that lead to special forms of religion and spirituality (through a sense that the material rewards are not enough), so that there are some possibilities for a resurgence of humanism.

"Why in America, this land of democracy par excellence, does no one raise that outcry against property in general which often echoes throughout Europe? Do I need to explain? In America, the proletariat does not exist. Since each man has some private possessions to protect, he acknowledges the right, in principle, to own property."

"Do you not notice how, on all sides, beliefs are ceding place to rationality and feelings to calculations? If, amid this general upheaval, you fail to link the idea of rights to individual self-interest, which is the only fixed point in the human heart, what else have you got to rule the world except fear?"

"Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which persuades each citizen to cut himself off from his fellows and to withdraw into the circle of his family and friends in such a way that he thus creates a small group."

The Tendency to Mediocrity

When Tocqueville compares America and Europe he sees, again and again, a principal type of difference. In America the mean level of performance is higher and the variance greatly diminished. American society, he thinks, tends to forms of mediocrity. The costs of equality seem to be that you have to settle for a world that's comfortable and dull.

Presumably, part of the point about "instructing" democracy is that you try to do better than this, by preserving those features that elevate the mean while allowing for the high reaches of the distribution. In the end, Tocqueville doesn't seem to have a formula for doing this. Perhaps he thinks it's an inevitable consequence of democratic life that you lose the really great achievements.

"There are so few ignorant, and at the same time so few educated individuals as in America."

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Overview of Marx's Works

The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 contains a discussion of "Alienated Labor" and "Private Property and Communism". These pieces plunge into some of Marx' most important concepts and themes; the first gives them a sense of the philosophical depths underlying his political proposals, and the second can easily be connected with a political program of liberation.

Theses on Feuerbach. This is short and contains some of Marx' most quotable lines. Marx is developing Feuerbach's naturalistic response to Hegel more thoroughly.

The German Ideology. This contains some really important passages, providing, for example, a vivid account of the post-Capitalist condition and a succinct juxtaposition of Marx' views about history with those of Hegel.

Grundrisse. Another work unpublished in Marx' lifetime, this is something of a mess. It does, however, contain presentations of some topics that are more vivid than those Marx articulated in *Capital* I, as well as coverage of themes that he intended to elaborate in the later volumes of *Capital*.

Capital provides the crux of Marx's political economy. includes Marx's account of commodity fetishism, the circulation of commodities, to surplus value, exploitation.

The Manifesto. Here we have the political side of Marx. It's pretty straightforward, and contains some quite provocative remarks about property and social arrangements (e.g. the bourgeois family).

Three Ways to Think of Marx:

Philosophical. What is Marx' account of the actual human predicament and of human possibilities? Does Marx have any moral theory? Is he, for example, interested in questions about justice? What is the ideal for a post-capitalist society? What exactly is the theory of history?

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Political. What exactly is Marx' political program? What replaces the bourgeois institutions of private property and the family? If the demise of capitalism is historically inevitable, what's the point of the *Manifesto*? Has Marx' program ever been realized? What has happened to the proletariat?

Economic. What exactly is the fetishism of the commodity? What is Marx' theory of value? How does capitalism create surplus value? Can the account of exploitation be detached from the labor theory of value? Why is capitalism destined to collapse?

"Thus the social character is the general character of the whole movement; just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him. Activity and consumption, both in their content and in their mode of existence, are social: social activity and social consumption… Thus society is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature—the true resurrection of nature—the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment."

"It will be seen how subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and suffering, only lose their antithetical character, and thus their existence, as such antitheses in the social condition; it will be seen how the resolution of the theoretical antitheses is only possible in a practical way, by virtue of the practical energy of men."

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point however, is to change it."

"The demand to change consciousness amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e. to recognize it by means of another interpretation. The Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly 'world-shattering' statements, are the staunchest conservatives."

Alienated Labor

In the early 1840s, Marx became convinced of the importance of studying political economy and he engaged in a fairly close reading of the classical texts, particularly Smith's WN; although Smith comes in for some relatively scathing treatment in *Capital* (where Marx goes to considerable lengths to dispute Smith's

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originality), the first three papers in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscipts of 1844* provide a very insightful summary of the main ideas Smith offers; hence, when Marx begins by claiming that he has "proceeded from the premises of political economy", he is being exact. In effect, Marx has retraced the path that leads from the optimism of the early parts of WN to the point in Book V where Smith confronts the possible consequence of the intensified division of labor (WN 840, 846). Instead of waving his hand in the direction of some remedial program of education, Marx now brings in his post-Hegelian philosophical apparatus to analyze the situation.

Under capitalism, the worker is alienated in four ways: he is alienated from the products of his labor, from the act of production, from his species being, and from other people.

The conditions of capitalism are fundamentally alienating and oppressive because of the kind of being we are, and the other forms of alienation point to facets of our nature that go unfulfilled. Marx contrasts human beings with other animals by suggesting that we fulfill ourselves through a self-conscious deployment of natural resources for meeting our physical needs, that is through freely-chosen work, and through cooperative projects with others. There's a background ideal of life in community where each person finds in a pattern of labor a meaningful way to live. All this is inverted under capitalism, where what should be the meaning-generating part of our lives is subordinated to the satisfaction of our brute functions.

"We have proceeded from the premises of political economy… we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production…"

"… the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker."

"If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?"

Marx' Theory of History

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Marx explicitly characterizes his own approach by standing Hegel on his head.

The fundamental ideas of the theory of history are that the material conditions under which a society produces the things it needs are the determinants of social relations and of the ideas that rationalize these relations, and that the development of these material conditions will (with one exception) inevitably give rise to a state in which the prevailing material conditions break down, generating a transition to a new state of production. The one exception, of course, is the post-capitalist condition, which is special because there is no longer the motive force of historical change, namely class struggle.

Setting things up this way makes it clear that the account consists of two kinds of causal claims: (1) claims about the ways in which the economic conditions realized at a time relate to the social and intellectual life of that time; (2) claims about the ways in which economic conditions develop, producing crises and transitions. *Capital* does spend some time on elaborating this second set of claims.

"Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these." (154)

"In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. that is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process." (154)

"Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."

Class and Class Struggle

Marx has started from the concepts and categories of classical political economy, and, for him, the most basic classes are those divisions of society that political economy employs in its explanations. Remember Smith's three main divisions of people – landowners, entrepreneurs, and workers. Like Marx after him, Smith

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recognizes that the groupings of economic agents vary from historical epoch to historical epoch. Within these large groups, one can recognize subdivisions – productive and unproductive workers, for Smith, industrial capitalists and *petit bourgeoisie*, for Marx. Smith is interested in the coincidence in or divergence of the interests of the groups he considers (WN 284-8), but he doesn't focus on the clash of interests as a potential historical force. Marx, perhaps reading political economy through Hegel, seems to me to make just this move, viewing the opposition in the interests of the basic kinds of historical actors as the source of the "contradiction" through which the "dialectic" of history moves forward.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

"Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labour, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself."

"Communism is the positive expression of annulled private property—at first as universal private property."

"Communism as the positive transcendence of private property, or human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being."

The Basic Features of Capitalism

From the capitalist's point of view, the task is to generate as much surplus-value as possible. There are two ways to do this: you can increase the length of the working day, or you can make the production process more efficient, thereby diminishing the length of that portion during which the worker produces the products that will sell for a minimum sustainable wage (more exactly: products that will cover the cost of the raw materials and a minimum sustainable wage). The use of technology and machinery turns out to be a device for increasing exploitation by shrinking the part of the working day in which "workers work for themselves". Marx thinks that the drive to increase the index of exploitation will inevitably lead to intensified division of labor, working days that are as long as possible (both of which, in the terms of 1844, will exacerbate the alienation of the worker), that the competition among capitalists will constantly decrease their number, that technological improvements will yield a "disposable industrial reserve army", and he hints that these developments will stretch capitalism to

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breaking point. On top of this, there are supposed to be crises of overproduction that will disrupt markets and possibly ruin parts of the system. These collectively amount to the "contradiction with capitalism" that will be resolved by revolution and the transition to the post-capitalist state.

"Wages are a direct consequence of estranged labour, and estranged labour is the direct cause of private property. The downfall of the one aspect must therefore mean the downfall of the other."

"The transcendence of self-estrangement follows the same course as self-estrangement. Private property is first considered only in its objective aspect—but nevertheless with labour as its essence. Its form of existence is therefore CAPITAL."

"The positive transcendence of private property as the appropriation of human life is, therefore, the positive transcendence of all estrangement—that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e. social mode of existence. Religious estrangement as such occurs only in the realm of consciousness, of man's inner life, but economic estrangement is that of real life."

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