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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply “carrying on the fight,” but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines

Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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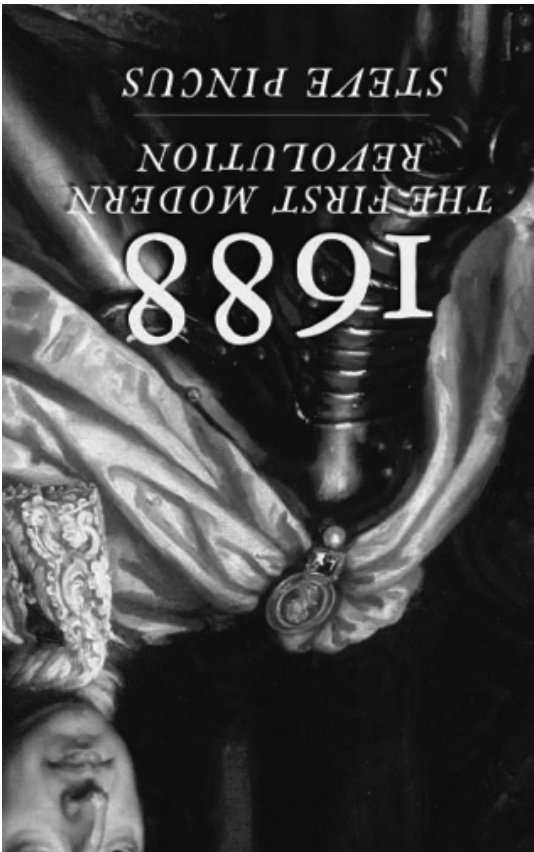
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ing companies had no business interfering with "the manufacturing; therefore, the king and his royal trade-property were mobile, infinite, and based on labor and Whig political economy, on the other hand, wealth and scrutiny of his military and civil projects. According to rights prerogative gave him an absolute right to regulate of vicious competition. This being the case, the sovereign—and trade was, of necessity, a zero-sum game and wealth was land—finite, naturally created, and stationary. Jacobite political economy, the source of all property over whatever territory it occupied. According to Tory/ having total power—military, economic and political—heaven. Indians could only be enforced by the company India Company's claim that treaties with "barbarous and Royal African companies. James supported the East dependent on the Crown, the Hudson Bay, East India, over foreign trade to establish commercial monopolies in imperial trade. James used his prerogative powers



other manufactured goods to faraway markets. The expanding towns and cities were improved with brick houses, paved streets, and workshops. Shops, taverns, and coffee houses serviced the mass addition to tea, of the earlier part of the seventeenth century had made transformational change inevitable; the question was, as James II acceded to the throne in 1685, what form would modernization take, now that England was becoming dependent on global trade and seapower?

and merchants shipped woolen cloths, pottery, and barges; coastal traders shipped coal from Newcastle; to forty percent. Newly navigated rivers teamed with fifty percent, and the urban population grew from ten portion of the population engaged in agriculture fell to in the course of the seventeenth century, the proportion an imperial/world scale.

tions for political and economic change in England, and which fulfilled many of the mid-century radicals' aspirations for political and economic change in England, and Revolution was a transformative event in world history Hume, Voltaire, and John Wilkes: that the Glorious century Enlightenment commentators such as David ignored or forgotten what seemed obvious to eighteenth-some people" (36). All of them, argues Pincus, have ignored or forgotten what seemed obvious to eighteenth-century Enlightenment commentators such as David said it was "not a glorious revolution. [but] a plot by 1988, Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said that power of the traditional ruling class," and Tony Benn which shook our continental neighbors." "On the Left, it was this which saved us from the violent revolutions should be sought and advanced through Parliament ... the Glorious Revolution showed that "[political change 1988, Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said that the non-event of the tercentenary of the Revolution in ward to have produced a modern revolution. During English society in the seventeenth century as too back-it as an essentially conservative event, and misjudges in the case of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, misreads fluence on the Left of the Whig Theory of History which, emerged in their wake. Part of the problem here is in-bourgeois revolutions and the liberalizing societies that ern Left's historical relationship to the early-modern Pincus's 1688 raises the broad question of the mod-giving consists in balancing the poor against the rich."

United States, who famously said, "The great art of law-disciples included John Adams, founding father of the after 1661, but his ideas spread. Hill points out that his into silence by the Restorationist regime of Charles II capable of imposing absolutism. Harrington was driven come?) as long as he did not control a standing army princely head of state (what else had Cromwell be-and women). Harrington saw no problem in having a "poor"—such as manual laborers, servants, paupers, in this seventeenth-century terminology, excludes the power in a "new-modeled" government ("the people," industrious "people" could be trusted with political the establishment of a national Bank of England, the ling [emphasis added]. Harrington thought that with Harrington observed that "industry of all things is most ing of tenants from military service to feudal barons. the Church to the gentry and yeomanry, and the free-the transfer of lands from the Crown, aristocracy, and war was a result of socioeconomic changes, such as about in 1649 because of the Civil War, but because the the dissolution of the Stuart monarchy did not come insights of historical materialism in his argument that of Oceana", to Oliver Cromwell, seems to prefigure the dedicated his utopian work of 1656, *The Commonwealth* or Puritan terror. James Harrington (1631–177), who rather than utopian schemes, millenarian prophecies,

landlords. Social progress needed real material reforms cies which kept farmers economically enslaved to their such as abolition of church taxes and of copyhold tenants—that Cromwell's parliaments had failed to carry out, of the Saints was a lost cause. Wall called for measures *The Experience of Defeat*. In 1659, accepting that the rule Wall and other modernizers who appear in the pages of actually finds support in Hill's examination of Moses and the freed labor that was its basis (369). This view were contained within the rising commercial society, that the potentials for human development and freedom radical critics, for whom property was "primarily a human creation, not a natural endowment," were arguing Glorious Revolution. Already in the 1650s, he points out, in character and achieved a significant victory with the not suffer total defeat. Rather, they were transformed that the radical aspirations of the 1640s and 1650s did Revolution of 1688. Importantly, however, Pincus argues eral" in comparison to what followed the Glorious the Revolution under Cromwell to have been "ephem-the course of modernity. Pincus considers the results of social-political emancipation *tout court*, in determining ers, and the religious radicals, represented the failure of democratic Levellers, the communist Diggers and Rant-that the defeat in the 1640s and 1650s of the proto-traditional narrative of Hill and most Left historians: Pincus's book forms the basis for challenging the (45)

Modern revolutions are not struggles to overturn traditional states. They occur only after regimes have determined, for whatever reason, to initiate ambitious modernization programs. Revolutions, then, pit different modernizers against one another.

ing the Left, a more critical approach to Hill's work is is Steve Pincus's 1688: *The First Modern Revolution*. According to Pincus:

There is something ironic about Clark's appropriation of Moses Wall's ideas for a critique of "futility," for Wall's "transitional demand" was a vision of *modernization*. I would like to suggest that in terms of renovat-

[W]hilst people are not free but straitened in accommodations for life, their Spirits will be dejected and servile: and conducing to [reverse this], there should be an improving of our native commodities, as our Manufactures, our Fishery, our Fens, Forests, and Commons, and our Trade at Sea, &c. which would give the body of the nation a comfortable Subsistence?"

century, he sees as "still a maximalist programme": isms" as forming the basis of what, in the twenty-first sees Wall's "most modest, most moderate of material the "poor people" under the rule of the generals. Clark wellian Protectorate, which complains of the betrayal of Milton, written in 1659 during the last days of the Crom-revolution, Clark refers to a letter from Moses Wall to John *Defeat*. "Quoting from Hill's book on the English Revolution, I feel—is Christopher Hill's *The Experience of rection*, for today requires a "deeper" need to be reading—in preference to *The Coming Insurrection*, look at the history of the Left, and for that, "The book we of the Enlightenment" for today requires a "deeper" between the Restoration of 1815 and the Revolutions of 1848. He argues that any "reconstruction of the project with the impasse of Enlightenment radicals in the years pares the "immobilized" state of the present-day Left. T. J. CLARK, IN "FOR A LEFT WITH NO FUTURE," com-

— Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* bakku.

society had been accomplished. Locke supplanted Ha-achieved and the bourgeois transformation of English their bourgeois revolution. When the real goal had been Old Testament the speech, emotions, and illusions for [Cromwell and the English people] borrowed from the

David Black

University Press, 2009.

Book Review: Steve Pincus, 1688: *The First Modern Revolution*. New Haven: Yale

The non-peculiarity of the English Glorious Revolution From Habakkuk to Locke

Glorious Revolution, continued from page 1

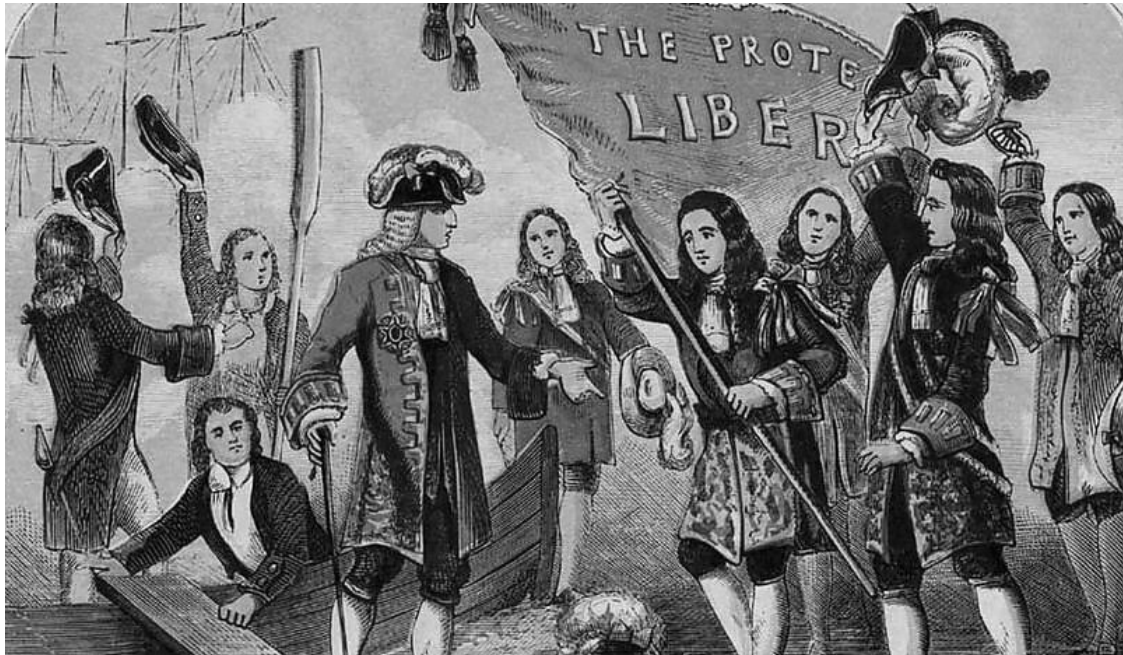
people’s” property. The Whigs claimed that the Tory-owned company deprived a large number of merchants in England from access to trade in the East, sometimes by seizing their property in its territories.

James II, having promised to both uphold the hegemony of the Protestant Church of England and end the persecution of the Quakers and other Dissenters, immediately set about establishing a centralized, absolutist state, policed at all levels by a Jesuit bureaucracy, blessed by a compliant, and thoroughly Tory, Church of England. All criticism of the Catholic religion and Louis XIV’s persecution of French Protestants was suppressed. James’s fourfold expansion of the army without parliamentary approval was an unwelcome burden on townspeople on whom his unruly troops were billeted. Local worthies were outraged by the political purging of magistrates, members of town corporations, and officers of county militias. The surveillance system, which extended to the post office and the coffee houses, imposed a sullen code of silence on a “people” grown accustomed to gossip, news, and debate.

James, in his determination to Catholicize the state, issued a Declaration of Indulgence that suspended the requirement of applicants for government and military office to take oaths affirming the authority of the Church of England. When the Archbishop of Canterbury and six other bishops refused to circulate the Declaration, James put them on trial for seditious libel. Following their acquittal on 29 June 1688, when the masses rejoiced in the streets, leading figures of the opposition decided on a revolutionary course of action. They invited Prince William of Orange to organize an Anglo-Dutch force for the invasion of England. Within weeks of William landing at Torbay on 5 November 1688 with up to 20,000 troops, James’s power collapsed, forcing him to seek refuge in France. In Pincus’s account, the Revolution, like all modern revolutions, was popular, violent, and divisive. The revolutionaries were not a tiny elite; in every major town they had thousands of supporters from all classes who were prepared to—and did—attack the symbols of Catholic power, the property of Jacobite and Tory bureaucrats, and, in many instances, harmless English Catholics (Pope Innocent XI, an enemy of Louis XIV and the Jesuits, actually supported William’s Revolution).

James, with an invasion fleet provided by Louis XIV, tried to fight his way back to power through Ireland and Scotland, but his Catholic army was decisively defeated at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690. Throughout this period of revolution and revolutionary wars there were deep divisions in the Williamite camp. The Tory anti-Jacobites wanted only to reverse James’s Catholicizing of the state and preserve the hegemony of the Church of England against papists and Dissenters alike. In foreign policy, the Tories favored a blue-water strategy to combat Dutch encroachments on India, whereas William and

the Whigs wanted—and got—a continental war in alliance with the Dutch against France (the Nine Years’ War of 1688–97). When the Williamites founded the Bank of England in 1694, with the support of John Locke, Tory and Jacobite-sympathizing landowners founded a rival Land Bank. But the threat of counterrevolution was removed following the failure of the Jacobite Assassination Plot of 1696. The Land Bank collapsed and the Tories were politically routed. The Whigs imposed a heavy land tax advocated by Locke, abolished the right of kings to exclusively manage trade, and ruled that the seizure of English property by the East India Company was unlawful. By the time William was finally confirmed as a *de jure* as well as *de facto* constitutional monarch, the program of James Harrington had been largely ful-



Depiction of William of Orange as he arrives in England, 1688.

filled. Left historians’ dismissal of the Glorious Revolution on the grounds that it did not reopen the Leveller debate over extended and universal suffrage misses the point that Commonwealth radicals such as Harrington in the 1650s, much like the radical Whigs of the 1680s and 1690s, saw the popular content of the state as less important than the subjection of the state to civil society and the rule of law. The Glorious Revolution, in Pincus’s view, was not the assertion of power by a self-conscious, cohesive middle class. It was, however, a bourgeois revolution in the cultural and political sense; it represented “the people” of a commercial society, which James II tried to harness to “landed norms” in partnership with imperial trade: “His program was simultaneously modernizing and anti-bourgeois” (484).

Previous histories have been too narrowly focused on the “event” of 1688–89, whereas its real nature can only

be understood as a process, lasting decades. Not until the 1720s, in the troublesome aftermath of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), did the Whig prime minister, Robert Walpole, establish a post-revolutionary consensus with the Tories by rolling back the land tax and denying civil rights to religious Dissenters. The Whigs ingloriously failed to dismantle the East India and Hudson Bay companies, as some had wished to; they just expanded their joint stocks so that other capitalists got to share in the spoils. Although the monopoly of the Royal African Company over the Atlantic slave trade was abolished, making it just one enterprise among many, it kept its forts on the northwestern coast of Africa. The imperial legacy of the Glorious Revolution was the expansion of the slave trade on an industrialized scale,

the destruction of the Indian economy by the policies of the East India Company, and the ravaging of the North American colonies by territorial wars. It took another hundred years and the pandemonium of the Industrial Revolution for a strong democratic movement to emerge in Britain; and when it did—in the 1815–48 period—T. J. Clark thinks resembles the post-1989 world—it came out of the anti-slavery campaigns and the British radical movement that supported the American and French revolutions. In the 1830s, it was the proletarian Chartists in the struggle between labor and capital, not the bourgeoisie, who unfurled the banner of democracy. In terms of the historical imagination of the “progressivist,” leftist version of Whig History, the nineteenth-century Left—particularly the Chartist movement—might be seen as the heir to seventeenth-century religious and communist, or egalitarian, radicalism. But

when the Chartists entered history nearly two hundred years after the English Commonwealth, the history of the Levellers still remained buried. The Chartists drew their political ideas from Paine, Owen, Spence, Robespierre, and Babeuf, not from Winstanley and the Putney Debaters of 1647. It is true, as Hill points out, that Milton’s status as poet and prophet for nineteenth-century radicals (notably Blake and Shelley) represented a real radical continuity with the struggles of the Commonwealth. But this only strengthens the insight that the Chartists, and their radical working class successors, did not emerge in a society in which revolution and radical thinking was something totally alien.

More generally, Pincus’s suggestion that modern revolutions pit different modernizers against one another challenges the historical imaginations of those on the Left who sloganize political struggles in terms of progressive radicalism versus reactionary traditionalism (“No Return to the 1930s”), or traditional, popular radicalism versus elitist radical conservatism (“Fight For the Right to Work”). As if the purpose of the social market economy of the European Union wasn’t to avoid any such “return” to the protectionism, lawlessness, and slide into that that characterized the nineteen-thirties, and as if the growing ruling class consensus wasn’t to get everyone, apart from small children and geriatrics, “into work.” In the social and economic disorder of the present day it is by no means only the Left that presents “alternatives.” Christopher Hill’s closing sentences in *The Experience of Defeat* are, “In 1644 Milton saw England as a ‘nation of prophets.’ Where are they now?” If that question were posed in regard to the United States, it might be answered with the trite observation that, in today’s radical “prophet” stakes, the Nietzschean atheist, Ayn Rand, would seem to have more standing than the Hegelian Christian, Martin Luther King. But, given the urgent need for a truly modern, secular, ambitious and revolutionary Left capable of developing a viable alternative to capitalism, the question may no longer be relevant or useful. **IP**

1. T. J. Clark, “For A Left With No Future,” *New Left Review* 74 (March–April 2012): 53–75.
2. Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (New York: Viking, 1984), 327.
3. *Ibid.*, 191–205.

To know the worst Anti-Semitism and the failure of the Left on Iran

Stephan Grigat

DESPITE THE CREATION OF AN AUTOCRATIC and anti-Semitic regime after the Khomeinite revolution of 1979, the European Community and later the European Union continued to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran; and even with new, insufficient sanctions in place, trade with Iran continues until today. It is the capitalist state’s primary task to allow the further realization of capital, but there is a certain sense in which politics surpasses this function. Government policy is indeed not indifferent when it comes to the choice of whom it trades with. Accordingly, the U.S. and Israel, who are considered forms of Satan in the eyes of the Iranian regime, have banned large-scale transactions with Iran. Capital and state do indeed follow their own logic of commercialization and domination. However, the Left, which is critical of the state and capitalism, must not be indifferent to the different results of this logic. As important as the critique of state and capital may be, it is also crucially important whether business is done with Iceland, Ireland, Italy, India, or Iran.

For Iran’s government, every success in business means progress and a further step in its *ihad* against emancipation and enlightenment. With the pursuit of nuclear bomb technology in mind, its agenda has to be understood as a political program of annihilation. If liberal and radical leftists want to be serious about Adorno’s imperative, formulated in his *Negative Dialectics*—that in the state of humanity’s unfreedom, thought and action must be arranged in a way so that Auschwitz may never repeat itself—then they should do everything to prevent the Iranian regime from realizing its murderous ideology and facilitate its overthrow. It seems apposite, and it is not by coincidence that, as the motto for the second part of his collection of aphorisms, *Minima Moralia*, Adorno quoted F. H. Bradley, “Where everything is bad, it’s good to know the worst.”

When Adorno and Horkheimer debated the necessity of a new *Communist Manifesto*, the representatives of critical theory had in mind that the critique of the late capitalist society was possible only as long as they listed “the reasons that make it possible to keep on living in the West” at the very same time.¹ The bourgeois idea of the individual pursuit of happiness now appears to be ideological, because the capitalist mode of social relations limits its realization materially. The Islamist

ideal of a “simple and just life,” in contrast, solely points towards absolute barbarism. In order to grasp the distinction between bourgeois capitalist society and its negative dissolution, as it was effected by Germany’s National Socialism and as it is—historical and ideological differences aside—also aimed at by Islamism, one must understand one decisive difference: a difference between a social mode of production, whose purpose is the realization of capital and where the death of a

fore hardly negotiable conflict. It is a conflict between, on the one hand, states whose social structure systematically betrays the individual pursuit of happiness, but nevertheless defends the individual against repressive collectives; and on the other hand, those powers who consider the destruction of Israel merely a prelude for turning the rest of the world into a jihadistically “liberated” hell.

Therefore, and not for bellicosity, a materialist critique in the tradition of Marx and critical theory must defy any kind of appeasement towards those protagonists of a barbarism that *originates* in enlightenment and the process of civilization, but is by no means *identical* with it. The fight against the Iranian regime and its allies deserves the support of anybody who is not indifferent to the ideas of enlightenment and universal emancipation as envisioned by Marx—even if this fight is not led by the Left, but, for example, by liberal or other forces, which may have opposing views on any other subject.

Eliminatory anti-Zionism

The state of Iran is neither a dictatorship nor simply an authoritarian version of a capitalist society. For more than 30 years, the Islamic Republic has been ruled by a regime that exerts terror intensely at home and abroad,

Baha’i, the execution of homosexuals, and the omnipresent oppression of women who do not want to submit to the Islamist code of ethics, are part of the nature of this regime. The same is true for the continued threats of annihilation towards Israel and the denial or relativization of the Shoah.⁴ What also distinguishes this regime from other Islamic despotisms is the combination of messianic and apocalyptic ideology, anti-Semitism, and the desire for the technology of mass destruction. Despite fundamental differences, the regime’s hatred towards communism, materialism, liberalism, Western plutocracy, Judaism, and Zionism, resembles German National Socialist ideology.

The Iranian dictatorship’s aim is to annihilate Israel. It exhibits no interest in actually improving the lives of Palestinians, a two-state solution, or any sort of compromise and balanced settlement of the Middle-Eastern conflict. This stance is neither new nor merely president Ahmadinejad’s individual point of view: Since 1979 the destruction of Israel has been part of the Islamic Republic’s official policy, and it is promoted by the fanatical supporters of Ahmadinejad, by conservatives, and also by those who are deemed by the West to be pragmatist or reformist mullahs and ayatollahs.

In Iran, it is not a state secret that the regime will never accept a Jewish state in the Middle East. The slogan “Death to Israel!” is a constituent part of the Islamist state propaganda since 1979 and is emblazoned on rockets capable of hitting Tel Aviv, regularly displayed at military parades. This claim was repeated incessantly in a May 2012 announcement by *Fars News*, a regime-controlled news agency with ties to the Revolutionary Guards. There Hassan Firouzabadi, the chief of staff of the Iranian army, proclaimed the aim of the Islamic Republic to be “the full annihilation of the Zionist regime of Israel,” while the supreme religious leader, Ali Khamenei, once again called the “Zionist regime” a “cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut.”⁵ In August of this year, a few weeks after the EU had refused to list Hezbollah officially as a “terror organization,” Walid Sakariya—Hezbollah member of the Lebanese parliament and former general—declared of his Iranian allies’ nuclear program on the television station *Al-Manar*, “This nuclear weapon is meant...to finish off the Zionist enterprise.”⁶

Considering these statements, Wahied Wahdat-Hagh described the program of the Iranian regime as “eliminatory anti-Zionism.”⁷ With that in mind, it is not at all surprising that anti-Zionist leftists pose as protectors of the Iranian regime and, worst of all, some Trotskyite groups even defend “Iran’s right to nuclear weapons”⁸ while the international neo-Nazi scene cheers on the Iranian regime.⁹

The rule of Islamist rackets

The Iranian regime’s aggressive foreign policy, which is characterized simultaneously by pragmatism and a mania for annihilation, corresponds domestically with a social form of organization that is characterized by the rule of competing gangs or “rackets.” Drawing

Iran, continued from page 3

from Max Horkheimer’s theory of a racket¹⁰ and Franz Neumann’s study *Behemoth*, Gerhard Scheit analyzed the Islamic Republic as a “non-state.” According to his analysis, the Islamist revolution of 1979 represents “the opposite of the bourgeois revolution, which triumphed in France. Both revolutions lifted the state’s monopoly on the use of force and replaced it with the power of terrorist groups. However, in one case, the terror results in the rule of law that is guaranteed for the sake of capital’s realization by a new monopoly on violence. And in the other case, terror continues undiminished in the

What is to be done?

How can a regime that carries on with the National Socialist’s ideological mania for annihilation, albeit under totally different conditions, be confronted? First, it should be remembered that with respect to Iran’s disregard of security council resolutions dealing with Iran’s uranium enrichment, even the UN Charter points out the possibility of “complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air... and the severance of diplomatic relations.”



Demonstration against Ahmadinejad’s visit in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. Keine Unterstützung für das iranische Regime translates to “No support for the Iranian regime.”

different forms of Sharia and sees itself shielded by the name of Allah and oil revenues.”¹¹

Since Khomeini’s accession, the Iranian regime has been characterized by a rivalry of rackets hostile to each other while the supreme religious leader reigns above all and acts as a mediating authority. In this way, the whole Iranian constitution cannot be understood as a form of bourgeois law: “The complex structure of the constitution is merely there to provide room for the disparate activities of these rackets, who declaredly prefer the state of emergency.”¹² Since 1979, parallel to the state’s organs, additional institutions have been formed in Iran. The influence of the regular courts of justice is restricted through the existence of numerous special courts. Beyond those military tribunals that are common in other countries, there exist so called “Revolutionary Courts,” the “Court for the Justice of Bureaucracy,” the “Special Court for the Clergy,” and “Press Courts.”¹³ Besides the national army, the *Pasdar*an has been established as an alternative revolutionary military force, which today is one of the most influential and probably the most dangerous racket within the regime’s power structure. The Revolutionary Guards not only represent the regime’s military elite unit, but also one of the most important economic conglomerates in Iran, which provides its members with economic and social gains. For several years now, the *Pasdar*an have used their military power to gain control of crucial branches of Iran’s economy, particularly in the realm of foreign trade.



Similar to German National Socialism, but in a different way, the Islamic “non-state” of Iran is capitalist and anti-capitalist at the same time: “Its position on ownership of the means of production is different in the respect that in the form of an industrialized mode of production this kind of ownership only exists to a minimal extent. Universal law and contract have disappeared here as well, replaced by the rackets’ arbitrary course of actions.”¹⁴

A central difference to National Socialism, however, is its position on labor. The affiliation with the Islamist collective, different from Nazi Germany, has almost nothing to do with labor as a commodity: “In such a collective, even somebody, who does not have any prospect for a job, can feel useful and not superfluous, even when he does not expect the *umma* to provide him with one. Everything beyond the racket system that threatens and exposes the individual to superfluousness, the individual projects on a total enemy, the Gegen-Volk [‘counter-nation,’ ed.]”¹⁵ These projections culminate in a suicidal desire for annihilation that concentrates on the State of Israel, that includes self-sacrifice, and that is virtually invoked by the Iranian Islamists’ ideology of martyrdom.

dependence, *Iranian Republic*.” While in Europe great pains were taken not to confront the regime’s ideology offensively, Iranian protesters clearly renounced support for Hamas and Hezbollah as well as the Iranian nuclear program: “No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, I sacrifice my life for Iran” and “A green and blossoming Iran does not need nuclear arms,” ran the chants. And while reformist Islamists in the West warned that open declarations of support for the opposition in Iran by Europe and the U.S. would bring opponents of the regime into disrepute, the Iranians were already pondering out loud: “Obama! Obama! Either on our side or theirs!”¹⁶

The coalition “Stop the Bomb” was formed in Austria in late 2007 and Germany in 2008 in order to oppose domestic business deals with Iran and to challenge their political endorsement. Both countries have developed intense economic and political ties with the Iranian regime for the last 30 years. Established leftist groups, such as part of the antifascists, were greatly involved in setting up Stop the Bomb in both Germany and Austria. With an international petition and numerous other activities, Stop the Bomb targets supporters of the Iranian regime and received prominent support itself by nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld, the literary Nobel prize laureates Elfriede Jelinek and Imre Kertész, and Nobel peace prize laureate Elie Wiesel. Today, Stop the Bomb is active in Great Britain, the Netherlands and Spain as well, and it would be desirable to see similar organizations or initiatives arise in other countries, too—particularly with the help of the Left.

Despite their initial skepticism about the markedly Green Movement in Iran, Israeli diplomats have not only been trying to convince Europe, Russia, and China of the urgency of severe sanctions, but Israeli politicians, including the prime minister, have also repeatedly called on the West to support the Iranian freedom movement,¹⁷ and members of the Iranian opposition have been received and welcomed by the Israeli president.¹⁸ It should be clear that the fight for the freedom of the people in Iran is not separable from the fight against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

There is a consensus in Israel that unilateral military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities represent an extremely risky option.¹⁹ Nevertheless, they are an option.

That the awareness of the Iranian threat and possible countermeasures is omnipresent in Israel’s society, a society which hardly ever arrives at general agreements like this one, is demonstrated by a left-leaning liberal and former party leader of *Meretz*, Yossi Beilin. He has shown to the public that, in this matter, a member of the so-called “peaceniks,” even in the choice of his words, does not differ from *Likud*’s prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu: “The military option represents the last resort, but they should not be taken off the table. Sanctions might be much more successful.”²⁰ Unfortunately, it is doubtful that U.S. foreign policy makers understand the gravity of the threat a nuclear-armed Iran poses, at least in the same way as the Israelis from nearly all camps do.

In the final analysis, the Israeli state can therefore only rely on itself, since Iran is only a strategic threat to the U.S., whereas it is an existential threat to Israel. The U.S. is rather willing to withdraw its support for the Iranian opposition in exchange for a murky agreement with the regime on its nuclear program.²¹ Were the Iranian freedom movement to fail, were it unable to regroup the impulses of 2009’s mass demonstrations again, the lack of support by the states of the West as well as the international left will certainly be a reason for its failure. That would be an even more unwelcome development. The overthrow of the Iranian regime would definitely be the best solution. Yet as Michael Rubin, a notoriously hawkish neo-conservative, observes, rather than military strikes on the nuclear facilities, only a victory of the secular and democratic opposition that envisions a constitutional society can ensure that the threat of a nuclear Iran will be banished in the future.

The Left should fight on the front line against the regime in Iran. And if the West, as much criticism as it deserves, engages against this regime, the Left should not oppose that by simply following a myopic anti-imperialist reflex, but instead greet and support these actions—without deluding itself for a *second* about the character and the primary interests of the states of the West. An overthrow in Iran would not at all have a merely national or regional impact. One might hope that it would be a starting signal to stop the global advance of Islamic jihadism. And it would recall the rallying cry, which tens of thousands of Iranian women shouted for days as they demonstrated against the introduction of forced veiling in 1979, “Emancipation is not Western, emancipation is not Eastern, it is universal!” **IP**

Translated from German by Johannes Arnold

1. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Towards a New Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2010), 57.
2. See Ruhollah Khomeini’s *Islamic Government* (New York: Manor Books, 1979), available online at <http://www.al-islam.org/islamicgovernment/>, a collection of lectures held in 1970, which contains paragraphs that read like extracts of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (München: Eher Verlag, 1933).
3. See Yossi Melman and Meir Javanfaran, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran* (New York: Carroll & Graft, 2007), and Emanuele Ottolenghi, *Under a Mushroom Cloud: Europe, Iran and the Bomb* (London: Profile Books, 2009).
4. The Holocaust denial conference in Tehran in December 2006, which gathered the international who’s who of Holocaust deniers, was inaugurated by Iran’s then foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki. See Wahied Wahdat-Hagh, “Iran: Islamist Holocaust Denial.” Available online at <http://antisemitism.org.il/article/71621/iran-islamist-holocaust-denial>.
5. “Top commander reiterates Iran’s commitment to full annihilation of Israel,” <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=91021212759>.
6. “Hizbullah MP General [ret.] Walid Sakariya: Iranian Nuclear Weapon to ‘Finish Off the Zionist Enterprise.’” <http://www.memri.org/clip/en/00/00/0/0/3525.htm>.
7. Wahied Wahdat-Hagh, “Die Herrschaft des politischen Islam

im Iran. Ein Überblick zu Struktur und Ideologie der khomeinistischen Diktatur,” in *Der Iran: Analyse einer islamischen Diktatur und ihrer europäischen Förderer*, eds. Stephan Grigat and Simone Dinah Hartmann (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2008), 44.

8. Michael Pröbsting, “Zu den Waffen! USA und Israel drohen mit neuen Krieg gegen den Iran,” available online at <http://www.arbeiterinnenstandpunkt.net>.

A more recent text demands “Military victory for Iran!” <http://www.kob.net/international/nordafrika-und-der-arabische-raum/kein-angriff-auf-iran/>.

9. See Herbert Schiedel, “Heiliger Hass: Zur rechtsextrem-iranischen Freundschaft,” in *Iran im Weltsystem: Bündnisses des Regimes und Perspektiven der Freiheitsbewegung*, eds. Stephan Grigat and Simone Dinah Hartmann (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2010), 165–173, and Stephan Grigat, “Mein Feind und Freund. Rechte Parteien in Europa entdecken das iranische Regime als Partner,” *Die Zeit* 14, available online at <http://www.zeit.de/2012/14/P-Rechte-Parteien-Islam>.

10. With his “sociology of rackets,” Horkheimer wanted to supplement his *Sociology of Class Relations*. In contrast to the theoretical model adequate to liberal bourgeois society, conspiring cliques of rackets characterized by unconditional allegiance and anarchic competition with each other became the central protagonists in the phase of monopoly capitalism. See Max Horkheimer, “Soziologie der Klassenverhältnisse,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbush Verlag, 2009), 104. See also Christoph Türrcke: *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, 1994), 49.

11. All of the quotations in this passage have been translated into English from Gerhard Scheit’s essay “Der neue Vernichtungswahn und seine internationalen Voraussetzungen: Wodurch sich Ahmadinejads Islamische Republik von Hitlerdeutschland unterscheidet,” in Grigat and Hartmann, *Der Iran*, 58–78.

12. Scheit, “Der neue Vernichtungswahn,” 63.

13. See Wahied Wahdat-Hagh, *Die Islamische Republik Iran. Die Herrschaft des politischen Islam als eine Spielart des Totalitarismus* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003).

14. Scheit, “Der neue Vernichtungswahn,” 68.

15. *Ibid.*, 70.

16. Available online at <http://platypus1917.org/2010/02/18/30-years-of-the-islamic-revolution-in-iran/>.

17. See Javad Asadian, Stephan Grigat, and Simone Dinah Hartmann, “Solidarität mit Israel gehört dazu,” *Jungle World* 32 <http://jungle-world.com/artikel/2009/32/36916.html>.

18. See Fahiyeh Naghizadeh and Andreas Benl “Nachholehnde Säkularisierung: Bilanz und Perspektiven der iranischen Freiheitsbewegung,” in *Iran im Weltsystem*, eds. Grigat and Hartmann, 28, and Fahiyeh Naghizadeh and Andreas Benl, “The Peace Train,” *Jerusalem Post*, April 16, 2012, available online at <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=264297>.

19. See “Netanyahu rät zu Twitter-Propaganda,” *Spiegel Online*, December 7, 2009, available online at <http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/konflikt-mit-iran-netanyahu-raet-zu-twitter-propaganda-a-665649.html>.

20. See “Fiance of Slain Iranian Protester Neda Soltan Meets Peres,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 2010, available online at <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=171614>.

21. Understandably, the discussion on possible military strikes against the Iranian nuclear program has been a part of Israeli daily politics for months now, and nobody, including the supporters of military action, takes that debate lightly. On the dissensions between the Israeli leadership and the U.S. administration about this issue see Stephan Grigat, “20 Jahre Friedesprozess gegen Israel: Von Oslo zur iranischen Bombe,” *Sans Phrase. Zeitschrift für Ideologiekritik*, 1 (2012), available online at <http://www.sansphrase.org/>.

22. “Indirekte Nahostgespräche sind idiotisch,” *Der Standard*, February 17, 2010, available online at <http://derstandard.at/1264279099007/Indirekte-Nahostgespraeche-sind-idiotisch>.

23. Since 2000, when the legitimacy of the “Islamic Republic” was being questioned by the Iranian population, numerous U.S. officials have spoken about the necessity of “mutual respect” and the regime’s “legitimate interests”; if only Iran would keep its hands off a nuclear program. Inevitably this kind of talk is detrimental to Iran’s opposition. On the misguided U.S. policy of the past 30 years towards the Iranian regime see Hassan Daileslam, “Der gezähnte ‘Große Satan’: US-amerikanische Iran-Politik und der Lobbyismus des Regimes,” in *Iran im Weltsystem*, eds. Grigat and Hartmann, 105–113.

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Losurdo fails to marshal this evidence efficaciously, thus drawing politically questionable conclusions. As far as I can tell, Losurdo has not washed his hands of capitalism. He believes that a retouched version of capitalism is viable—whereas the question, as he writes, is what viability means. Losurdo seems to overlook what neoclassical economics says when it does not have to apologize to anybody. What capitalism holds in store for wealthless individuals who cannot find work is worse than Bentham’s poor relief. The latter-day Left which sides with medieval regression against the center also assents to capitalism by default. **IP**

1. See Losurdo, “The Tangled Paradox of Liberalism,” *International Socialist Review* (July–August, 2012).
2. Locke, *Second Treatise*, §23; and Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 451.
3. Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§85.
4. Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, 451–52.
5. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, Chapter 8.
6. *Wealth of Nations*, Book 5, Chapter 1, Article II.
7. Biancamano Fontana, ed., *The Political Writings of Benjamin Constant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 309ff

An exposé of classic liberalism?

A reply to Domenico Losurdo

Henry Flynt

THE INTERVIEW WITH DOMENICO LOSURDO in *Platypus Review* 46, which coincided with translation into English of his book *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, seems to be part of a broader attempt to raise the estimation of him as theoretician of the Left.¹ His role as a new standard-bearer for the Left, however, does not especially interest me. I am interested in the central claims of *Liberalism* that the interviewers should have—but failed—to challenge him on. I judge him by a standard different from those who are now urging him on.

Liberalism is expressly a polemic against the policy architects of what might be variously called the democratic republic, bourgeois democracy, or liberal society. Losurdo gives his derogation of bourgeois democracy a twist: he brackets it with the rehabilitation of absolute monarchy. That the interviewers in the *Platypus Review* and editors of the *International Socialist Review (ISR)* allowed this claim to go without comment reflects the Left’s rapidly expanding bloc with medieval social regression against the center.

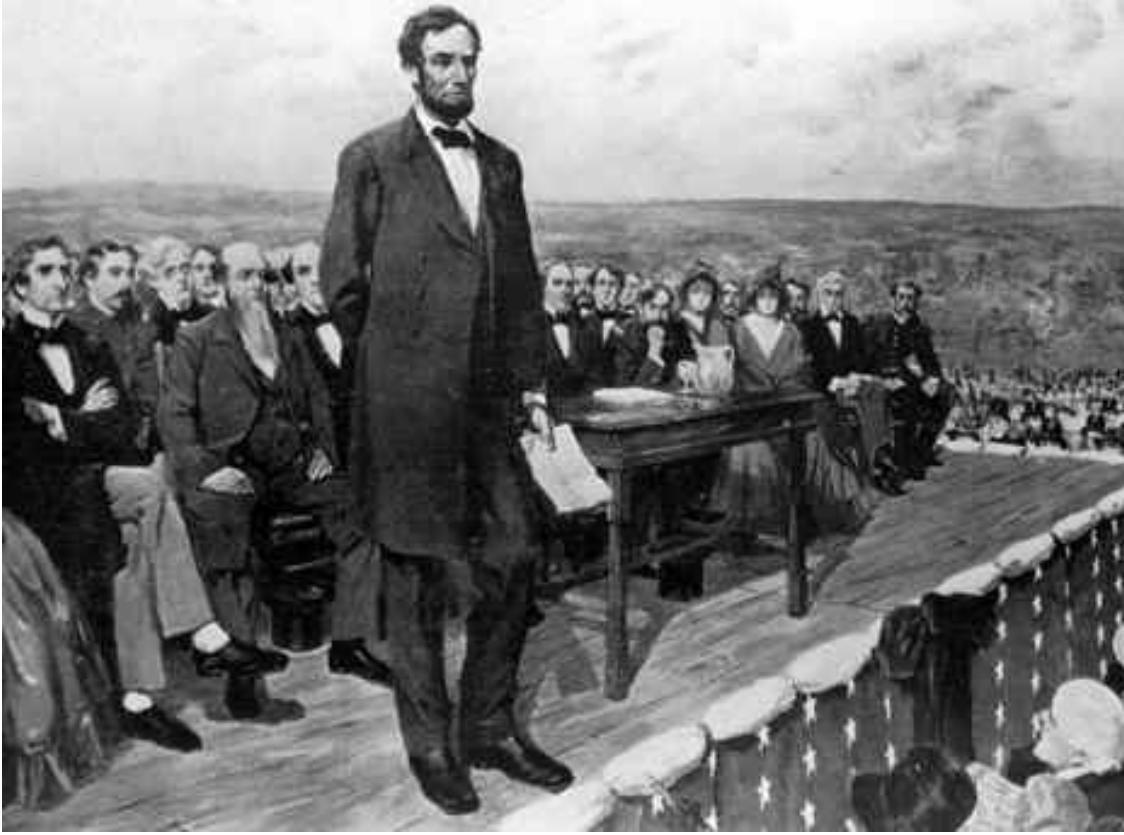
Losurdo enjoys castigating the classic republican Framers from a vantage point of unassailable moral superiority. However, at no point does he contend with the legacy of actually existing world Communism, either at the level of politics or morality. What does it mean that Russia and China, once kingpins of the Left, are now capitalist destinations? Losurdo represents a Left that is content simply to forget world Communism and the one hundred million unnatural deaths it was responsible for. It is a Left that cannot ask, “Was it justified that Communist China transformed itself into a capitalist powerhouse by way of the unnatural deaths of fifty million of its citizens?” Evidently, all Losurdo can do with this history is sweep it aside.

Losurdo uses slavery as an emblem of unimaginable horror. This alone raises a deep question about historiography. The horrors humans inflict on each other—serfdom, war, immiseration, and so on—by empire cannot be treated idiosyncratically, as if it were simply a crime perpetrated by a set of individuals. What is needed, rather, is a form of history adequate to explain the scope and scale of such horrors. Until recent times, slavery was customary. Adam Smith pointed out in his lectures on jurisprudence that the only part of the world in which slavery had been abolished was a small corner of Europe.

From what social utopia does Losurdo hurl his thunderbolts at bourgeois democracy? What social order does he advocate?

In fact, Losurdo does not have to search Locke or Smith to discover if anything can be said in praise of bourgeois democracy; he only needs to look at the history of Russia after 1917. As far as written advocacy is concerned, the last word was Fukuyama—even if he disavowed himself in order to sell another book. Fukuyama took bourgeois democracy at its word, not at its deed; that difference, of course, is the crux of the matter here. Fukuyama concluded that market democracy is the *final* stage in human social evolution—that is, the social order whose justice is unsurpassable.

Does Losurdo really object to Fukuyama’s conclusion? And, if so, on what basis? Losurdo shills for social democracy in *ISR* and criticizes neoliberalism by asserting [without a citation] that Hayek opposed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Losurdo follows this with



Fletcher Cransom, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, oil on canvas, 1938 [Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Los Angeles].

a blast at our latter-day humanitarian wars. What then does Losurdo’s support for the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* mean? How can Losurdo simply cry “internal affair” when a government is massacring its people? By what authority does Losurdo cry “sovereignty” at all? Is he in favor of the existence of nations?

All the same, in the *Platypus Review*, he comes out foursquare for “competition” in a manner that is not especially consistent. The interviewers seem to endorse a Losurdian synthesis of Fabianism, “competition,” and absolute monarchy. Losurdo decries the dismantling of Fabianism in Europe in *ISR*, which when taken together with his comments in the *Platypus Review*, amounts to saying that Keynesianism would be social paradise if only the dissenters would leave it alone—a Keynesianism that, by some miracle, would exist without national-

ism. Do the interviewers consider Keynesianism the last stop on the Left’s rail-line?

Losurdo is a Right Fabian who ought to be able to find his home in the Labour Party. Losurdo doesn’t see bourgeois ideology for what it is. Seemingly, he has never encountered its core: neoclassical economics—the sort of economics for which Nobel Prizes are awarded. Formal political equality is the most egalitarian conclusion in core bourgeois ideology. While there is nothing “mere” about it, formal political equality is nevertheless compatible with the starvation of the poor, and bourgeois ideology does not apologize for that. Social democracy may soften the shock—but it is a fragile remedy. Losurdo says in *ISR* that, by now, the bourgeois republic has granted three enfranchisements that it denied at the outset. (Blacks are not slaves, and can vote, women can vote, etc.) But, Losurdo says, these enfranchisements are “merely formal.”

The Left has devolved to selective outpourings of resentment whose payoff, if any, is to force philanthropy on the rich. (It assumes that the rich will always be with us, and in fact the Left’s achievements would not have it otherwise.) As to Losurdo, he discovers that the heroes of 1776 were slaveowners. That is true—and profound. How can it be, then, that the verbal formulations of the evil republicans of the eighteenth century were the foundation of the “unsurpassably” just social order? Consider Losurdo’s analysis of the new thought of the eighteenth century. Every radical historian (as they are called) in the U.S. has stood in front of the class and wrung his hands over the fact that “all men are created equal” was written by slaveowners. In fact, the slavery question in America is as much a central concern for a proponent of eighteenth-century values, such as Henry Jaffa, as it is for Losurdo. Was it historically unique that the Framers who did bad wrote good? Hinduism propounded one of the most idealistic visions of all time, thousands of years ago. At the same time, that vision was bound up with a vicious social hierarchy. Engels was a capitalist, and Marx, having gambled away his own inheritance, was forced to depend on Engels’ capitalist munificence for his survival.

What Losurdo’s citations show, once they are properly sifted and collated, is that the classic liberals presupposed enfranchised citizens who were drawn exclusively from the Third Estate, i.e. the gentry. Not only did the normative actors include slaveowners, but the slaveowners themselves *led* the individualist and libertarian movement. In particular, Locke did not just pronounce on slavery as a social philosopher; in his capacity as a British official, he was complicit in the West Indian slave trade and the slave constitutions of the American colonies. Thus, when the liberals asserted the autonomy of the individual against tyranny, and when they asserted the will of the majority, these in fact referred strictly to the gentry as political actors—i.e., to 20 percent of the population. The other 80 percent was excluded and ripe for the plucking.

If you take your stand in 1700, say, and look forward, slavery and colonialism are not old evils in the process of being phased out. They are expanding enterprises. Slavery, colonialism, the dispossession of Native Americans, and (most important, numerically) the non-enfranchisement of women, did not persist because some copyist made a mistake in the *Declaration of Indepen-*

dence. These were deliberate omissions, and the locutions that seemed to preclude them are extraordinary illustrations that meaning is in the eye of the beholder. Losurdo tells us in *Liberalism* that Bentham said that the only man in France who actually believed the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was Babeuf. If Bentham said that, it is extraordinarily piercing. Babeuf was the founder of modern Communism. The only people who took “all men” as all humans were the Communists. The classic liberal position abounds in subtleties that are curve balls for the interpreter:

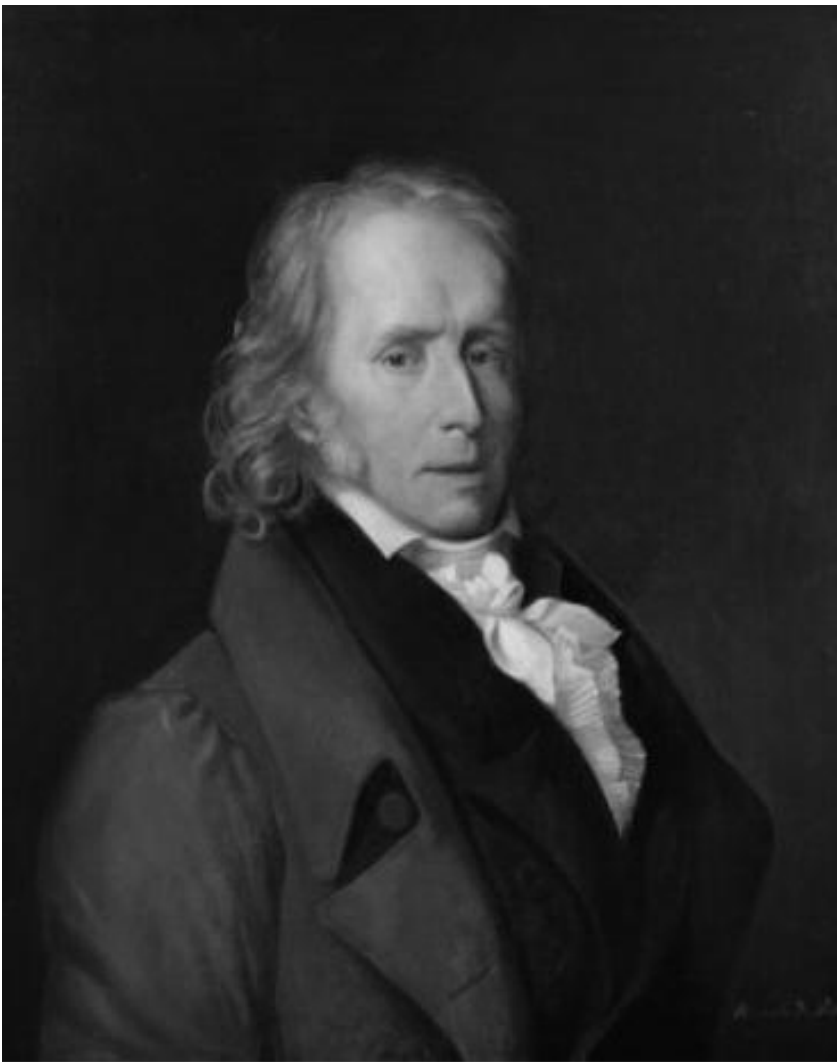
(i) Classic liberals wrote ringing denunciations of slavery on the grounds that a man cannot sell his autonomy, or voluntarily surrender his autonomy.² For all that, when slavery was prohibited in Texas

by the Mexican government, the Anglo slaveowners held on to slavery precisely by the ruse of the lifetime indentured servant. Precisely what Locke said was impossible was in fact a key institution to the Texas economy until such time as Texas became part of the U.S. and chattel slavery could be reinstated.

(ii) The rhetoric in the liberal classics did not supply any bold authorization of slavery. Locke *did* supply a bold authorization for private property: he says twice that the sole purpose for which civil society exists is to protect private property.³ He also says, as Losurdo tells us elsewhere, that without private property justice cannot exist.

In contrast, the liberal classics slip slavery under the door. But their reticence does not in the least mean that slavery was on the way out. Either they wanted a world that was not yet possible—a circumstance dreamers typically find themselves in—or else they were committed to an institution they didn’t much want to talk about (as in the case of Hinduism on caste).

Once we are clear on (i)-(iii), we can see that the Dred Scott decision was not a mistake; it confirmed what



Hercule de Roche, Portrait of Benjamin Constant, oil on canvas, 1830? [Musée Carnavale, Paris].

had been custom since 1776 or 1789. The Dred Scott decision confirmed what the U.S. gentry had been doing and what was the basis of a lucrative economy and foreign trade in the U.S. In the 1850s, the Washington government was pro-slavery on balance. It was the endorsement of slavery by the Supreme Court decision that crystallized a decisive counter-tendency from Northern industry (as we have learned to call it). If the Dred Scott decision is read as an explication of U.S. institutions—rather than as a creed—it says in a few lines what Losurdo takes a book, an article, and an interview to say.

As we all know, Lincoln decried the Dred Scott decision and launched his political career by way of decrying it. We need to know something that has generally been forgotten: the Republican Party was founded at that juncture as America’s abolitionist party. Lincoln was abolitionism’s leading political figure. Of course he decried the Dred Scott decision. Lincoln may have spoken abstractly of a withering away of slavery in his Senate campaign speech, but he never once objected to slavery in the slave states within the Union. That there were slave states in the Union is well documented in history, but it is not taught because ideology needs perfect saints and perfect villains.

The scope of the Emancipation Proclamation is deeply misrepresented by history as typically taught. Lincoln made it okay to say that a Supreme Court decision is plain damn wrong. Legally, the way to override the Supreme Court is to amend the Constitution. But President Jackson had already repudiated the Supreme Court in 1832 in the matter of the Cherokees: Jackson overrode the decision with the force of the army. In fact, Jackson’s override was an Executive *coup d’état*. So, when Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address that the U.S. had been in continuous existence since 1776, he was lying: The regime in which Lincoln won a place had been in existence only since 1832. The first U.S. republic had already been soundlessly overthrown by President Jackson.

Losurdo follows in the tradition of Marx and many other right-thinking academics in exalting Lincoln as an icon. While Losurdo gleefully besmirches Locke, Jefferson, Franklin, Tocqueville, et al.—making an exception only for Smith—Lincoln is the shining savior. But what about that beacon of beacons, the Gettysburg Address? Read from a critical standpoint, it is filled with lies. It is much worse than the *Declaration of Independence*, as there had been almost a century of history illuminating the gap between libertarian phrases and institutional practice. And there are several years of history to make it clear that Lincoln’s action against slavery was directed against states in rebellion, against sectional leaders—period. When Marx enthused over Lincoln, Marx totally forgot (or did he?) that he was supposed to be against capitalism.

As I intimated, Losurdo cannot separate his derogation of republicanism from the rehabilitation of monarchy. At any rate, the thesis that monarchy was more concerned about slavery than republics is already boldly stated in Adam Smith.⁴ To paraphrase Smith, monarchy is kinder to slaves than a republic, because a republic unleashes the will of the enfranchised. That means the will of the massed gentry, i.e., slaveowners.

But Losurdo embellishes Smith: He has Smith calling for a violent suppression of slavery. While Smith makes

his disapproval of slavery very clear, there are no calls for abolition anywhere in Smith. In general, Smith is far more matter-of-fact, far more descriptive, than Losurdo. Smith is famous for his pronouncement that wage labor is better than slavery,⁵ but this pronouncement is pragmatic: Wage labor is cheaper than slavery because the workman opts to be frugal.

Losurdo has found instances in which classic liberals let slip what they were up to. Constant *does* say that political actors should be limited to men of property. Mandeville *does* say, in *Fable of the Bees*, Volume 1, that the poor should be denied education, to prevent them from getting above themselves. Smith does depreciate the intelligence of workmen.⁶ And Locke does depreciate farm labor. But neither of the latter two examples is so incriminating in context. Smith does not claim that the workman’s stupidity is congenital, and he follows his remarks with a call for education of the poor. Locke is as irreverent toward country gentlemen as he is toward farm labor—so much so that the editor of Locke’s collected works feels the need to apologize in a footnote. Tocqueville does call Jefferson a perfect democrat in chapter 13 of the first volume of *Democracy in America*. The implication of these examples is that many early liberals were willing to write off eighty per cent of the

population—and that reveals much about how they thought. But the quote from Tocqueville is a throwaway line. Tocqueville’s phrase does not rise to the level of Sieyès’ doctrine of the excluded classes, as represented by Losurdo. Moreover, according to Losurdo, there is a condemnation of the slave rebellion in Haiti in volume four of Tocqueville’s *Oeuvres Complètes*. I could find no such passage there—nor in the editor’s footnote on Saint-Domingue.

Losurdo has a citation to a Tocqueville letter *On Penology* in which Tocqueville says that the worst criminals should be killed *en masse*. Losurdo places this side-by-side with a letter in which Benjamin Franklin tells a physician that most of the people he is treating are not worth saving. Losurdo takes Franklin’s wisecrack totally out of context. Putting it beside the Tocqueville remark about the worst criminals, Losurdo informs us that the liberals wanted a genocide of workmen. Losurdo is misusing his sources but, more to the point, the last thing the liberals wanted was a genocide of workmen. The great problem for them was the assembly of a labor force, i.e., finding people who were poor enough to submit to the wage bargain. In this misuse of his sources, Losurdo shows part of his agenda here. He needs for the Tocquevilles and Franklins not only to reflect their station, but also to be monsters.

It may not be considered a scholar’s responsibility to make his references accessible. In one case, the interviewers in the *Platypus Review* caught Losurdo, about whether La Mettrie contemptuously remarked that workmen are mere machines. La Mettrie was an early materialist, and, for better or worse, he equated humans with machines. But this was not, in La Mettrie’s own view, derogatory. The interviewers caught that—to their credit. But when Losurdo gave them a runaround, in response, they let it slide.

Losurdo offers, as a full-blown classic liberal brief for slavery, Benjamin Constant’s address, “The Liberty of the Ancients as Compared to that of the Moderns.”⁷ But this address turns out to be a set piece, a boilerplate tribute to classical civilization. When Constant comes to talk of his own time, his conclusion is that we should monitor our political representatives more carefully. In his own way, Marx said both of these things, as well. He famously remarked on the charm of classical art and, writing on the Paris Commune, he said that Communists should monitor their representatives carefully. Contrary to Losurdo’s expectations, Constant gives no clear-cut advocacy of plantations in the colonies.

Losurdo has also lost sight of the historical context of Bentham’s *Pauper Management Improved*. Non-state poor relief was a reality in England, which long had the Poor Laws, toward which all of England’s policy experts were supposed to have a position. Bentham’s scheme was horrible, but was what he wanted for British subjects worse than plantation slavery? All the same, the social arrangements of two or three hundred years ago were pervasively unconscionable by today’s standards. As for Bentham’s proposal, official England ignored it. The only point served by recalling it is to tarnish Bentham’s intentions.

Ultimately, Losurdo has not been forthcoming about what he advocates. Despite unburying evidence for a potentially incisive reexamination of classical liberalism,