

PART I: THE BREAKTHROUGH OF CAPITALISM AND THE RISE OF BOURGEOIS SOCIETY

1. The search for a new framework (1450-1650)

The concept of Renaissance in European history refers to various important changes in the political and economic organization of (European) societies, the changing place of religion (Catholicism, the institution of the Church,...) as well as the gradual emergence of new ideas about 'man' and society that have had a very slow but indelible impact on Western European societies. Historians often characterize the Renaissance as a period defined by the flourishing of the arts and literature based on the Antiquity. The Renaissance began in Italy in the 14th century and spread throughout Europe in the following two centuries. The term itself was first used by Italian humanists who wanted to show that after a long period of decline) – the so-called dark Middle Ages – Europe was undergoing a phase of rebirth. However, the Renaissance is more than just a rediscovery of classical antiquity, it also refers to the gradual demise of the feudal system and the emergence of new economic relationships, to the discovery of new countries and continents through the growth of shipping, to the development of new scientific insights (Copernicus,...) and the introduction (among other things through the discovery of the world) of knowledge from other worlds (compass, gunpowder,...). This is the time in Europe that the old world order starts being questioned. Not only does it appear that the earth is spherical and circles around the sun, human society and its organization is also being questioned. The obviousness of the Medieval order is being challenged. Some think of an ideal society guided by principles such as wisdom and justice; others try to build a society in practice, in which the monarchy is set aside. The end result is a rearrangement of forces within absolute nation-states. In some cases this is a waiting room for the bourgeoisie that will later gain political power. In other cases it only provides a new platform for the power of the monarch. The purpose of this introduction is obviously not to discuss the many debates on the Renaissance (When did it begin? Was it mainly a literary revival or the early beginning of modern times? ...). Suffice it to say here that there was indeed an early period, which historians Bronowksi and Mazlish characterize as an aristocratic Renaissance, in which the rediscovery of the classical works of Antiquity (and Platonic idealism in particular) was central, and a later,

more empirical and forward-looking Renaissance in which the focus was not so much on the idealization of the past but on 'faith' in man's future. No one typified this gradual transition better than Leonardo Da Vinci.

1.1. The end of the Catholic hegemony

The ecclesiastical ideology, in which the endeavor of humanity ultimately culminates in the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, and in which all facets of the universe are organically linked, does not survive the period 1450-1650. Science began to free itself from religious supervision, gradually replacing faith with rational inquiry of the world and rejecting the *mater dixit* (uncritical acceptance of the Church's dogma). The secularization of the scientific enterprise slowly gave rise to various sub-sciences, in which, over the courses of centuries, politics and economy emerged as independent disciplines. The emancipation of science from religion and church was a long process wrought with tensions and conflicts. While many scientists did not necessarily deny God's existence, this did not prevent them from searching for societal laws through ratio and interventions within society. Still, science itself had a long and slow evolution to root out its superstition, biases,...

In 1486 Henrich Kramer published his '*Malleus maleficarum*', the best known treatise on witchcraft. The 16th and 17th centuries were the centuries in which the persecution of witches and magicians took unprecedented proportions. It was not only the non-literate people who believed in witchcraft; as even the great lawyer Jean Bodin (1530-1596), for example, who advocated tolerance in the religious field, also published a work that claimed to describe the characteristics of witches. Kepler's *Mysterium Cosmographicum* (The Sacred Mystery of the Cosmos, 1596), while containing meticulous calculations also had a good dose of "magical mathematics".

Catholicism was not only challenged by science, it had to face up to a major religious movement, Protestantism, that thoroughly changed Christianity. "Heretics" have of course always existed, or, if necessary, certain groups were stigmatized as heretics for practical reasons. The Reformation and Counter Reformation were more than purely religious affairs. They were the externalization of social unrest, and attempts to establish a new community. The Bible, however, is open to many interpretations, and it is therefore not surprising that, according to the social group that made use of the saint texts, protests took a different form and content

depending on the. Max Weber (Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism) and R.H. Tawney (Religion and the rise of capitalism) have been the pioneers of seeing the political content through the religious form.

Luther (1483-1546) was the son of an educated mining worker from Eisenach who later on owned ovens and mines himself. Luther's father sent his son to the University of Erfurt when he was 17, hoping that he would become a lawyer. At the university there already existed a conflict – albeit until then a peaceful one – between the scholastics and humanists. Humanism, the 'Northern European Renaissance', as Bertrand Russel called it, saw the light of day during the Renaissance and culminated in the figures of Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More. Humanism has its origins in the renewed focus on classical Greek and Roman works. More than just a literary movement studied by the authors of Antiquity, humanism is an intellectual movement that expresses a new self-awareness of the human mind in which love for man and nature are central (Bronowski & Mazlish 1960: 61-63). Humanists resisted the scholastic dogmatic arguments and reasoning but were not anti-religious. Like all reform movements, the protest of the humanists was mainly focused on the abuses and abuses of the church. Humanists criticized clergy and scholastics but not Christianity. On the contrary, most humanists thought to cleanse Christianity of the many faults the medieval church had made in its faith. While Luther had sympathy for the humanists; he remained aloof of the dispute as he was more interested in the search for God, the direct experience of piety as opposed to the philosophical thinking of the humanists or the dogmas of the scholastics. A journey to Rome in 1510 changed Luther's life. Overwhelmed by piety, intoxicated by altars, relics and churches, he was also enormously shocked by what he described as the lush and decadent life of priests and bishops.

Finally, on the night of All Saints' Day, on October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his “*95 theses of indulgence*” to the door of the church in Wittenberg. By doing so, Luther wanted to protest against the far-reaching commercialization of indulgences because it undermined faith itself. Importantly, with his critique on the indulgences Luther took the whole theology of the church under fire. It was only a small step from the idea that no remission of temporary punishment was possible without repentance, to the idea that repentance alone, without the intervention of papal paraphernalia, was enough. By emphasizing repentance and personal piety to achieve salvation, Luther wanted to show that there was no need for sacraments and an administration to organize this, i.e. no need for a church.

Luther thus strived primarily for the religious liberation of man, the creation of a direct bond between individual and god, without the intervention of an ecclesiastical institution. This religious radicalism was, however, linked to political conservatism and an economic vision that by and large remained Medieval in scope. Luther himself had no concrete state system or organization in mind but he stressed that all believers must submit to a strong authority (*obrigkeit*). Luther could count on the support of both humanists and early German nationalists. Humanists first supported Luther's criticism of the excess and sinfulness of the church, but when they realized that Luther did not want to reform the church from within, but attacked the institution itself, most humanists turned their backs on him. German princes, knights, traders and farmers supported Luther for political and economic reasons. For decades the German princes denounced the greed of the "Italian" popes and saw Luther as an ideal ally. When Luther ordered the princes to expropriate the lands and property of catholic clergy, it became clear that Luther's universal message ended in the foundation of a German church and that what began as a religious reformation became entangled with political and economic struggles and was embedded in German social and national aspirations.

"No one needs to think that the world can be ruled without blood. The civilian sword will and must be red and bloody." And there is no doubt, Luther states, that there can be no equality. *"An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality. Some must be free, others must be serves, some must be rulers and others must be subjects ..."*. When, in 1525, peasants under the leadership of radical theologian Thomas Müntzer (who was inspired by Luther's teachings) revolted throughout Saxony against the greed of the noblemen, Luther quickly turned against this uprising. The peasant revolt was led by a new movement, the Anabaptists, who radicalized Luther's teachings. Not only was the institute of the church rejected, but Anabaptists thought they were in direct contact with the Holy Spirit and therefore did not need the Holy Scripture (i.e. the bible). Luther rejected the idea of any social revolution. He advised the princes to crack down on the peasants, to eliminate them where necessary and not to shy away from violence. All people may be princes before God, but those who rebel against worldly authority, should be harshly repressed or as Luther put it in a 'muscular' Christian language: *"Anyone who can, should crush, strangle, and kill them, in secret or openly, just like killing a mad dog."* The princes destroyed the peasant uprising resulting in 100,000 deaths. Luther of course lost a lot of support from farmers and city people but with the nobility behind him he was able to spread his doctrine further. Luther was convinced that serfdom was necessary in a society with unequal classes and therefore demanded passive obedience. Neither oppression nor injustice should be

an excuse for rebellion. Only spiritual demands may be made by serfs. This powerful call for strong authority arose paradoxically from Luther's conviction that Christianity had nothing to do with politics. The inner freedom of faith could only be lived freely if political power was obeyed blindly, otherwise peace would give way to anarchy and conflict that made spirituality impossible.

Just as Luther restored German as a cultural language, he is also an exponent of the proto-nationalism of the nobility. He withdrew the German states from the authority of Rome and can be considered as a pioneer of a larger German unity. Luther also continued to harbor the medieval suspicion towards trade and the financial world. Economic utility is, in his view, subordinate to the moral rule, and usury is one of the worst sins. He saw society as a distributional system, where everyone worked in their proper place, where goods were traded at a fair price, and production for the sake of production and profit was prohibited. Foreign trade and imports from far away land should not be allowed. Luther also condemned Copernicus that he described as 'a fool' who wanted to 'turn astrology upside down'. The same Luther who condemned medieval superstition and the perfidious practices of the Roman church, lived in a world populated by dark forces and demons. The fact that he attacked the power of the (Italian) church in no way means that he had a high opinion of free investigation or personal freedom. Luther is a product of agricultural Germany and can hardly be seen as a mouthpiece for mercantilist capitalists.

Calvin (1509-1564), rejected the Catholic doctrine in 1533, fled France and settled in Basel (Switzerland) where there was more religious tolerance. There the twenty-six-year-old began what would later, after many additions and adaptations, become his magnum opus, "*The Institutes of Christian Religion*". Contrary to Luther's passionate style, Calvin's work was an attempt to codify a rational and logically constructed morality, state order and dogma. Central to Calvin's dogma was the assumption that man was a helpless being in the light of God's omnipotence. Calvin radicalized Luther's vision by assuming that the fate of man was fixed and that he cannot do anything about it since it was God's will. In other words, man was destined for heaven or hell. In this predestination, man could only seek signs of God's favor in this worldly life.

In 1537, Calvin arrived in Geneva where he was persuaded by a French evangelist to reform the local church. Calvin, who at that time was already regarded as the leader of the Protestant

reform, had great moral power over the inhabitants of the city. However, his hard teachings also put bad blood on many citizens who eventually denied him access to the city for several years. Calvin's followers were able to convince him (and the inhabitants of Geneva) to return. Calvin only accepted on the condition that his *Ordannances ecclésiastiques* and *Ordonnances sur le régime du peuple* would be accepted without any prerequisite. Those who rejected these Orders left the city, were imprisoned or executed. Calvin's power was now not only moral, but clearly also political.

Geneva was a commercial city. For Calvin, profits could not be judged differently than the income that was paid out from a rent. After all, profit was the result of the diligence and hard work of individuals. Self-realization and work ethics were important values for Calvin. How could the result of this labor then, i.e. the wealth created, be reprehensible? Wealth, however, is not there to serve splendor and pompousness. Believers had to display an ascetic walk in life, live in the fear of God and banish pleasures. So money could only be spent in a useful way: as capital. With this ethics Calvin clearly embraced the newly emerging (early capitalist) economic order. In other words, Calvin rejected the Catholic ban on interest but regulated the use of interest by strict ethical rules.

The political principles of Calvin, as practiced by Calvin in Geneva, were the expression of a religious zealotry. In the *Ordannances*, Calvin explained how the theocracy of Geneva had to be organized. The government consisted of a Ministry and a Consistory. The Ministry consisted of a disciplined group of Protestant preachers who accepted and spread Calvin's strict doctrine. While the Ministry embraced religious doctrine, the Consistory was responsible for morality in the city. The Consistory also functioned as a kind of court where it investigated complaints about morality and pronounced (often very harsh) punishments. In this way questions about morality were turned into legal questions subject to the power of the ruling administration. The Calvin Church was therefore not only an institution that organized the worship of God but also an institution that wanted to perfect mankind in order to be able to worship God. Calvin and his church enforced these precepts with a heavy hand. Just like Luther Calvin rejected the new scientific insights that were slowly spreading in Europe.

In Calvin's conception there is no doubt that the worldly authority is subjected to the religious. However, this theocracy breaks with traditional forms of theocracy. Calvin's dictatorial theocratic regime that did not tolerate contradiction or deviation was paradoxically also the

breeding ground for a gradual development of individual freedom and political individualism. The medieval hierarchical order gradually gave way to an equal obligation to the Law. The worship of God and piety no longer depended on the social origin of an individual, but on the degree to which he realizes himself labor. The place a person occupies in society no longer derives from birth.

Halfway through the 17th century, the medieval Christian dream of one Christian Roman Empire in Europe was shattered. The Catholic Church saw its authority declining in large parts of the continent but especially in England and Germany. While the papal claims to supremacy lost all ground in England, in the Catholic states the princes were also to be feared. This was painfully illustrated in 1527 when the 'Landsknechte' (mercenary soldiers) of Charles V went to Rome because their wages had not been paid on time. Pope Clemens V could still hide in Castel Sant'Angelo, but the Holy City was looted and set on fire.

1.2. The flight to Utopia

With the Renaissance, literacy takes a significant step forward. The possibilities of printing opened up new perspectives, while Protestantism with its emphasis on Bible study, was another stimulus. This of course does not mean that illiteracy disappeared, but nevertheless the increasing number of people who could read and write was a growing problem for the authorities. Both supporters and opponents of the regime quickly understood what powerful weapons pamphlets, cartoons and newspapers were in the battle of ideas. This was especially apparent when they started publishing in the vernacular languages (as opposed to Latin).

Thomas More (1478-1535) was a statesman and writer who wanted to understand the political reality and the social problems in which he lived. Thomas More was a deeply Christian man who was convinced that the state should be there for its members and sympathized with the extreme poverty that affected a significant proportion of the English. Thomas More was born as the son of a prominent judge. After his studies in Oxford and London, he became a successful lawyer with a considerable income.

Thomas More's '*Utopia*' is the fictitious travelogue of Raphael Hythloday, who, on one of his wanderings, spent some time on a paradise island. The work consists of two parts, the first of which criticizes the situation in England. The main cause of poverty, More writes, is the

“exaggerated number of nobles, idle hornets that feed on the sweat and labor of others”, the mercenaries who are compared to “carnivorous animals” and the begging monks, “the worst vagabonds in the world”. To that, he adds, sheep farming for wool export and the associated enclosures. “These animals, so gentle, and so demanding everywhere else, are so voracious and wild that they eat the people and depopulate the countryside, villages and houses.” Society is crowned by a state that is nothing but a “conspiracy of the rich to have their own goods manufactured under the guise of the common good”. The sailor’s interlocutor remarks: “The poverty of the people is the fortress of the monarchy. Deprivation and misery take the courage, dull the souls, knead them to suffering and slavery ... to a point that the necessary energy to shake off the yoke is missing”. The answer to this is: “Doesn't he revive the one who can do nothing else but gain because he has nothing to lose?”.

The description of Utopia, which covers the second part, contains no reference to the gospel as a necessary underlying pattern for social order. The rule of life is tested against virtue and that is achieved by living according to the state of nature. Man, innately good of nature, is corrupted by private property. Therefore private property does not exist in Utopia. (For example, every ten years people change homes in order to prevent any urge to possess). Everyone is obliged to work for six hours a day and, in return, everyone should be able to support him- or herself. The government is elected indirectly and led by a king who can be deposed on the grounds of tyranny. Further characteristics of the islanders praised by the writer are: the lack of cruelty, an aversion of war, tolerance, the humanization of criminal law – all habits that were rather scarce at the time.

One would be wrong to dismiss Thomas More as a sort of 'flower-power' philosopher. He was Lord Chancellor and in that capacity he had persecuted heretics and opponents of Henry VIII. When William Tyndale had translated the Bible into English, he had demanded – as ‘Defender of the Faith’ – his head. In addition, Utopia appeared in Latin and it was only after a long insistence of the publisher that an edition appeared in vernacular English.

The desire to envision an ideal society in which money had no place seems to hide a longing for a return to an ideal Christian medieval order. However, More is convinced that the medieval order is crumbling and that a new economic order is coming into being, an order that he fears. More opposed the enclosure movement, sympathized with small traders and craftsmen and resisted the growing inequality. More resisted the new, early capitalist, economic order. His

views on money and prizes were largely in line with those of the Church. The doctrine of the right price stated that the price of a good is determined by the needs of both parties (buyer and seller) to keep themselves in their status. The idea of making the price dependent on supply and demand seemed more repugnant. Especially that all kinds of illegal practices by the socially privileged could influence fair pricing.

Thomas More may have meant the best for the people, but this does not mean that he wanted to help the people in a concrete sense or to give them any political power. ‘*Ou-to-pos*’ in Greek means: nowhere, no place, and there is no indication that More was trying to introduce the utopian order into real English society. More is undoubtedly driven by feelings of justice and the personal integrity of the chancellor is almost legendary. He realized that the increasing impoverishment of the people was not due to God’s will or mysterious forces, but to the advancing new socio-economic relationships (emergent capitalism). However, since he was unable to find leverage to reverse this evolution, there is nothing left for him to project his ideal into another world.

1.3. Calling the citizens to order

After the dissolution of the parliament (1629), Charles I reigned personally, but forced by a shortage of money, the king had to convene the parliament again in 1640. However, this so-called ‘Long Parliament’ was more uncontrollable than Charles had expected. The Puritans wanted to seize the opportunity to formulate their grievances against his regime and demand redress. The majority of the ‘House of Lords’ and a substantial part of the House of Commons, however, were opposed to this. That is why the opposition needed the support of the people to support its demands. The grievances were contained in the ‘Grand Remonstrance’: a list of all the failures and miscarriages of Charles's reign. These demands were directed towards the people, and not to the king as was usually the case. This open request for support to the people caused a great deal of concern, also among the opponents of the regime. To organize petitions or demonstrations had become customary but who could assure that once mobilized, the people would not go their own way? Lord Digby, for example, spoke from a typical position of condescending contempt: “*I am convinced , that no one with common sense thinks that it is appropriate for a parliament to lend its support to irregular and tumultuous popular assemblies, even if it is for such a noble purpose*”. If the proponents of parliamentarism, who usually also fought for a (moderate) reform of the English church, did not want to be crushed

by the royalists, they had to appeal to the numerical power of the middle-men. (The lower layers of society, especially in the countryside, thought to find protection in the king against capitalism, in particular against the 'enclosures'). What had essentially begun as a constitutional conflict, namely whether power lay with the king or with parliament, gradually took the form of a religious war. The 'godly people' were not satisfied with a few embellishments of the façade of the English church, but wanted a totally renewed religious inspiration. Strongly influenced by Calvinism, the reformers emphasized personal responsibility. Through this detour, the political element was reintroduced in a radicalized way, with all the social consequences that this entailed.

The core of the movement was formed by the Levellers and John Lilburne and Richard Overton were their main mouthpieces. Their anti-aristocratic views have their origin in so-called anti-Normandism. The "*original*" inhabitants of England were subdued by the Normans (from Normandy, France) and therefore foreign armies. Now, says Lilburne, the current House of Lords was nothing but the collected descent of "*William the Conqueror's fellow robbers, rogues, and thieves,*" who have no other claim to their current status other than that resulting from the original abuse of power. The institutionalized church and the clergy were dismissed in equally striking terms as "*dissembling hypocrites in a formal habit*". The anger of the Levellers was equally directed at the rich traders who controlled trade and industry through their monopoly position and exploited the poor. According to the Levellers, the core of the conflict lay in the social contradiction between the poor and the rich. By the poor they meant the broad layer of artisans and farmers, and not 'the mechanical people'. Starting from the work ethic, the Levellers were of the opinion that everyone should be able to live from his work, and this in no way implied a condemnation of private property. On the contrary, property is seen as the necessary condition for freedom. "*By natural birth all men are equal and born alike to like property and freedom*", wrote Overton in his '*An appeal*' (1647). The rich were defined as a moral category in being vain, pompous and sinful; while the rule should be that "*in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*".

The Levellers were not comparable to more radical groups such as, for example, the Anabaptists. In April 1649, a few poor people occupied communal land at St. George Hill and sowed corn on it. These 'diggers' called on others to do the same, and to establish communities where private property was abolished. Lilburne hurried to distance himself from the diggers. "*The Levellers were the truest and constantest assertors of liberty and property*" and none of

their actions was aimed at destroying freedom and property. Lilburne has two arguments to support private ownership: he wonders who will make the effort to labor if he has to share the results in an equal way with every “*lazy, simple, dromish sot*”? Secondly, says Lilburne, why do the men fight for their country if it is not to defend their property – i.e. their land, wife and children?

The views on political organization and rule of the Levellers can be found in the “Agreement of the People”. The basic principle of the new constitution is that the ultimate sovereignty rests with the people. For the sake of practical reasons, power must be delegated, but the basic mistrust of every authority remains the message. Elected persons could only remain on post for one or two years and were not immediately eligible for re-election. The practical administration rested with the 'Council of State', which had very precise and limited powers. In addition, the power must be decentralized as much as possible. The courts should use the vernacular language, use a simplified procedure, be assisted as much as possible by a jury. If possible, arbitration is preferable to case law. One problem remained though....who is “the” people?

More concretely, who was eligible and had the right to vote and could therefore participate politically? This question was one of the central points in the discussion of “*The case of the army truly stated*”, a document submitted to the army command at Putney (1647). The Levellers had a patriarchal view on society; the head of a family, the man, was the only representative person. Women, children and domestic servants therefore had no voting rights. In the first version of the document, voting rights were granted to all freeborn men over 21 years of age. Beggars and unemployed people were excluded, as they were placed outside society according to the Puritan ethics of labor. “*The poorest that lives, as true as a right to give a vote, as well as the richest and greatest,*” said Lilburne. Just like their view on the rich, the Levellers defined ‘the poor’ as a moral category (again, not including the ‘the mechanical people’). Later the universalization of voting rights was further restricted: all those “*receiving wages from any particular person*”, that is to say all employed persons, were excluded.

The movement of the Levellers was confronted with a dilemma. What tied the movement was the aversion of ‘the rich’, those who parasitize in sin. A part of the Levellers wanted to collaborate with ‘the poor’, the small farmers, artisans, etc. Another part of the movement wanted to entrust the government to ‘the saints’, people with high moral qualities, the better educated and therefore also the upper layers of society. Their fear was that once the rich would

be conquered or pushed aside, the middle layers of society would in turn be overrun by the poor. Therefore this part of the movement made far-reaching compromises with Oliver Cromwell and his army.

Although a Puritan himself, Cromwell was first and foremost a statesman; he was not the intolerant warmonger that some have seen in him. On the contrary, with regard to Presbyterians, Quakers and Jews he was tolerant to the extent that he regarded their religion as a private matter, as long as they did not endanger the stability of the country. When the Levellers set up a mutiny within the army, they were destroyed by Cromwell. Cromwell signed the death sentence for Charles I. He refused to accept the status of constitutional head of state. He also disbanded the parliament as it continued to conspire against him and replaced it by a rump parliament. For a short time, Cromwell led the republic as the 'Lord Protector', refusing to take the crown. Despite the numerous calls for 'the good old cause', the 'Long Parliament' was first re-installed and eventually Charles II is brought in as King.

1.4. Statism.

The result of the various showdowns and confrontations throughout Europe was the emergence of the nation-state under a strong central authority in the central countries of Europe, political fragmentation and absolutist rule in Italy and Germany, the absence of an actual nation-state but with an absolute ruler as head of state on the Iberian peninsula. In the core countries (France, England, ...) this gave rise to a proto-capitalist order, even though formal leadership remained in the hands of the aristocracy. In other cases, absolutism only meant a reorganization of feudalism with little room for maneuver for the weak bourgeoisie. These new polities all had one thing in common: the old freedoms, i.e. the relative autonomy of regions and cities were gradually becoming a thing of the past.

The new regimes naturally also needed legitimation. In contrast to ideologies such as that of the Levellers, there is still no need to focus on broad sections of the population. Legitimation was solely something for the upper echelons of society. The upper layer, that is the aristocracy, rich traders and top officials, those were the social layers that needed to be bound to absolutism. The more the state served their interests, the more they were inclined to accept absolutism. Absolute power had been the dream of many and the most diverse explanations have tried to explain it; if brute force alone was not a sufficient basis. Its justification only becomes

problematic if one wants to start from rationality, because then one is fraught with the discord between law and power, power from below or power from imposed above. “*The power of kings is founded on the reason and the folly of the people,*” says Pascal. If everyone were reasonable – whatever that means – the problem would not arise. But this is apparently not the case, or at least the reasonableness of the one does not coincide with the reasonableness of the other. This remains one of the major political issues during the Enlightenment and the question of who has a right to participate in public affairs will continue to dominate the debates. “*Unable to strengthen justice, strength was justified, so that justice and strength might be together, and peace be, which is the sovereign good*”. Peace is the highest goal, says Pascal, and in an ideal society it flows from the law. It is not possible to unambiguously determine what is ‘right’ and ‘just’, but power can be determined. Ergo, justice is what the powers define as such. This is the ambit of Machiavelli’s and Hobbes’ thinking.

The humanist and Latinist Niccollo Machiavelli (1469-1527) broke with the traditional royal mirrors that advised the ruler how to behave as a God-fearing leader. Machiavelli was not so much interested in describing moral or honorable behavior or how a society should be run, but rather in the factuality of how a society was governed and how people behaved. By rejecting morality as the basis of a reflection on politics, Machiavelli was the first to introduce a scientific view of human social behavior. To this end, Machiavelli based himself on the empiricism that assumed that knowledge came from experience and formulated a number of postulates on human behavior that reinforced his logical and rational pragmatism.

His main point of departure was that human nature was always and everywhere the same. Human nature was good and bad at the same time, but for politics one had to assume that man is bad by nature. Crucial in Machiavelli’s approach was his scientific method (just as Locke, Rousseau, Hobbes or Smith did after him in a different ways) which tried to focus on the essence of politics and not its contextual manifestation. His universal scientific ambition, however, remained largely speculative. Machiavelli’s postulates stemmed not so much from the analysis of the facts but, conversely, his facts stemmed from the postulates with which he began. Nevertheless, his empiricism and rationalism appeared to lay the foundations for a later scientific approach to politics. Moreover, the emancipation of religious politics heralded the gradual secularization of life and thought. Although anticlerical, Machiavelli’s secularism in no way implied an anti-religious attitude. Machiavelli recognized the importance of religion as a

social cement; i.e. as that which unites people. By approaching religion not as a spiritual force but as a more objectified thing, he made a secularized analysis of religion possible.

Il Principe is therefore not a philosophical treatise but an analysis of politics as an art stripped of morality and religion. Although the title of the work suggests that Machiavelli wrote the book as advice for a ruler, it is more about the state. Machiavelli assumed, mistakenly by the way, that the ruler coincided with the state. Machiavelli, who lived in a politically fragmented and divided Italy, expressly wished that Italy would build a strong state that would have its place in the concert of nations, a strong unitary state in which order and security would be assured. This state was not to be legitimized on the basis of religion, tradition or history, but only on the basis of results.

La raison d'Etat is an end in itself and to build it, all means are sacred. Persuasion, trickery, deceit can and must be used if necessary, and violence, or at least potential violence, is indispensable. A trustworthy army is therefore an important condition for anyone who wants to exercise and maintain power. Machiavelli pleaded for the establishment of a people's army, an army that was prepared to fight because it had something to lose and not an army made up of mercenaries who fight only for their reward.

Laconically, Machiavelli noted that when people talked about freedom, they actually meant security. For Machiavelli, security meant first and foremost order, but above all the inviolability of private property. He was convinced that a population would tolerate any regime - even a dictatorial one - as long as their property (including women) remained untouched. It was advisable for the ruler to try to be loved, to try to govern by consensus. "*But because it is difficult to unite love and fear, it is safer to be feared - when one has to miss one - than to be loved*". The reason for this is quite obvious. "*Whether one will love you depends on the people, whether one will fear you depends on you*". The fact that morality seems to have been pushed aside, leads to the adage that the end justifies the means; the basis of "popular Machiavellianism".

'*Il Principe*' is thus not a classic treaty about politics, nor an ontology of power or a justification of the state. Politics is seen as a political art, in which neither morality nor religion interfere. It is also a rational art, based on the analysis of regularly recurring movements in society. Machiavelli wanted to write something useful for the reader and rejects utopian writings: "*Many*

have devised empires and rulers, which in reality no one has ever seen. The reality of life is so far removed from the way one ought to live, that he, who disregards what one usually does because of what one should do, it will soon become apparent that he is more likely to destroy himself than to maintain himself. A man who wants to do good in all respects perishes among the many men who are not good". To this he adds that anyone who relies on his own strength and force, rarely finds himself in danger. "*Hence, all armed prophets have won while the unarmed prophets have perished*".

However, Machiavelli just describes what was already the reality of the day in Italy, while at least he has an ideal in mind. He sees the Italian Renaissance as a source of political change that has given rise to European innovations. By secularizing politics and grounding it in science, he wants to save Italy from political and economic fragmentation and foreign domination and create the conditions that must perpetuate the flourishing of mercantilist capitalism. A strong Italy, he hopes, can and should play the same role in the politico-military field as in the cultural.

Thomas Hobbes (1588- 1679), even more than Machiavelli, attempted to create a scientific philosophy as the core for the study of social problems. There is no place for transcendent values working in people and society in Hobbes' thinking. Hobbes was a staunch defender of critical inquiry but supported at the same time the idea of a blind acceptance of authoritarian rule. Not everyone who was willing to push the boundaries of science – what Hobbes did – was also willing to break social and political boundaries.

Hobbes had witnessed the English civil war which traumatized him. Every time he referred to it, it was in terms of the "*greatest calamities of mankind*", the "*greatest evil on earth*", ... comparing the turbulent period of the civil war to a period of anarchy and anomie. "*(...) if one man pretendeth that God commands one thing, and another man that commands the contrary; what equity is there to allow the pretense of one more than of another?*". As a result, the critical investigator who swept away numerous prejudices became the political scientist of a new myth, the myth of the Leviathan.

Hobbes started from the idea that if men lived together in a state of nature, he would give in to his inherent impulses that drove him towards self-realization. This implied that men will strive for power to be able to create the conditions of self-realization but also for power against others.

So one ends with a “*homo homini lupus*” society, a society in which each individual is both combative towards others and in a constant grip of fear of the power of the others and a fear of death. To end this fight from all against all, Hobbes advocated to give up freedom so that certainty can be gained. The unconditional transfer of sovereignty to the Leviathan, “*the mortal god*”, frees man from the possibility of self-realization and therefore struggle. The contractual transfer of sovereignty guarantees stability and peace, because the obligation to comply with the contract is assured. The state, as a counter-performance, assumes responsibility for the “*commonwealth*”.

By the state, Hobbes meant a body which, for the entire nation, was the only source for law and legal certainty, and which could impose its authority through its monopoly on the use of legitimate violence. The government needed to be embodied in a civil service, meaning it must consolidate inequality and protect private property. It must, however, also be responsible for poor relief. Government needed to do this all the more because, according to Hobbes, many men are ‘inevitably’ unable to maintain themselves. Those who were unable to take care of themselves because of weakness, old age or illness, should receive the necessary (scarce) resources. The rest was forcefully put to work by the state, and if this is not enough to discipline the worker, it became compulsory to emigrate.

As with Machiavelli, religious or moral rules were set aside in the analysis. Morality coincided with public morality which was contained in the legislation. Because state power was absolute, its expression was the law. The law cannot be tested against justice, because if everyone weighs the rule of law against subjective morality, the law ceases to exist. The same applies to religion that coincided with the state’s religion. Religion does not justify the Leviathan, on the contrary, the existence of absolute power is the reason for the existence of a state religion. The ultimate goal of the Leviathan – avoiding the anarchy that inevitably springs from the natural nature of man – was a necessary and sufficient reason for subjecting people to ‘law and order’. Hobbes was of course not blind to the dangers of a tyrant, more so, he did not dispute that there were objective moral laws. But, they could only have some reality when a state power enforced them. That this state power would turn against the citizens was a calculated but inevitable risk. Nowhere does Hobbes claim that he wanted to realize the ideal society, but asserted that for England the Leviathan was the best solution, because the most realistic, form of government.

Benedict (Baruch) De Spinoza (1632-1677) continued Descartes' rationalizing thinking. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* he took an innovative position with regard to the Bible and the knowledge it contained. In a gradual break with medieval philosophy, Spinoza stated that the Bible was not a scientific work, but rather a collection of historical stories that encouraged man to lead a virtuous life. "*With a for his time unbelievable daring, Spinoza does not bend his reasoning to the common image of God, but he folds the image of God to his reasonable understanding. For him, God remains the beginning, and love of God the end; but his conception of God is determined by reason and reason alone*" (Vermeersch & Braeckman 2019: 127). From there Spinoza developed an ethics, a doctrine of life, in which human egoism and his search for autonomy and power were central. Unlike Hobbes, Spinoza thought that this egoism could be perfected through the love of God. According to Spinoza, in contrast to Hobbes, the 'state of nature' cannot be dissolved through a social contract. Man remains selfish even after the social contract. Spinoza concluded from this that it was better that the power was not in the hands of one person. He thus defended the idea that a democracy was the only form of state that could balance the various opposing interests.

2. The genesis of bourgeois ideology

2.1. The political foundations

John Locke (1632-1704) gained fame through his "*Two treatises on government*", a book which was a great success in France with the opponents of the *Ancien Régime*. As English parliamentarism was idealized by this group, Locke has often been designated as the champion of civil liberties. Some corrections in this regard will teach us to place Locke's work in a more nuanced perspective.

The first treatise deals with the idea, defended by some during Locke's age, that the king is a direct descendant of Adam. As is to be expected, this 'proof' does not hold under Locke's sarcasm. The starting point of the second treatise is the natural state of man: "*All men are born free*" and everyone is "*equally alike*". This promising starting point does not mean that Locke, just like Hobbes for that matter, referred to a specific historical period, a lived reality. Locke rather outlined some premises from which, through logical deduction, he could proposed ideas to organize his community.

Everyone has the right to life, and therefore the right to acquire food, clothing, shelter, ... All these goods come from a combination of nature (resources) and labor, but, Locke says, labor makes up 99% of the value of the consumer goods. He refers here to the ‘Americans’ (i.e. the Native Indians) who have many natural resources, but do not work. The result is that “*a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges and is clad worse than a day laborer in England*”.

“*Labor of his body and the work of his hands are properly his...*”, which implies that the combination of one’s work that is added to nature is his property (you can draw from nature as long as there is plenty available for everyone). This natural state is initially not like Hobbes’ hell. However, Locke makes a number of modifications to this idea, which not only brought him closer to Hobbes’ point of view, but also didn’t benefit the coherence of his work. When money is introduced into society, a new situation arises. If labor is the property of a person, he may freely dispose of it. He may therefore also sell it, or another person may buy it. The buyer also becomes the owner of the labor, and thus, once mixed with the factor of nature, he also becomes the owner of its result: the products produced. What Locke wants to show is that a system of commodity production, and consequently of the social division between worker and entrepreneur, is not only not contrary to ‘*natural law*’, but logically results from it.

The differences in wealth, although perfectly natural or normal according to Locke, nevertheless do prompt individual or group envies. These are political issues that must get a political solution through the ‘*civil society*’ and thus make a state necessary. Sovereignty remains with the people, as an inalienable right, but legislative and executive powers are transferred through ‘*civil society*’ to the political authorities. This contractual transfer of power remains conditional and limited. According to Locke, the essence of man is that he is “*industrious and rational*”. Day laborers and workers are so taken by the daily struggle to survive, that they cannot rise to rationality. The unemployed, vagrants and beggars are even worse off and should be ‘protected’ by being forcefully put to labor in a workhouse. It is clear that these social categories are not full members of ‘*political society*’ that is “*nothing but the consent of any number of freemen capable of a majority to unite and incorporate into such a society*”. The transfer of sovereignty, and whether or not the contract is upheld, is based solely on the active consensus of the ‘Freemen’. The rest of the population gives its tacit consent and is therefore obliged to comply with the laws. Just as in the French colonies later there was a

distinction between ‘subject’ (sujet) and ‘citizen’ (citoyen), the vast majority of the population is not a citizen but a mere object of the state and passive element of the community.

State authority, which has the legitimate monopoly of violence, can of course restrain those who oppose the established order (primarily the lower classes) but Locke also realizes that a constant struggle is far from ideal. It is better that these *subjects*, accept, through a passive consensus, the system or at least tolerate it. Locke sees an important for religion in creating this (passive) consensus as he explains in his “*Reasonableness of Christianity*”. Religion should focus less on complex intellectual or theological discussions because “*where the hand is used to the plow and the spade, the head is seldom elevated to sublime notions or exercised in mysterious reasoning.*” Christianity must in the first instance lead people to accept the existing order by means of a simple system of punishment and reward (hell and heaven). With Locke, therefore, religion loses its position as the exclusive touchstone for all behavior, but becomes a functional instrument in the service of a political system.

Locke is an advocate of a separation of powers, but here too some clarification is needed. The judiciary is left aside as being an appendix to the legislative, which is in principle above the executive. The monarch not only ensures the implementation of the law, he also has the residual authority to take measures in all matters that have not been dealt with by the legislator. Moreover, the good monarch “the godlike prince”, relying on his prerogatives, can act against the law if it serves the interest of the people. Locke realizes the danger of this proposition since every tyrant can present himself as a servant of the people. Who will then judge the monarch and on the basis of which criterion? “*The people shall be judge*”, advocates Locke, by checking whether their interests are served or not.

For Locke, interests simply stand for the preservation and expansion of private property. Of course the interests of large landowners, traders, businessman or artisans,... are not always identical. For Locke, individual interests coincide with those of the majority. He defends ownership, private property, as a whole, not as a fragmented phenomenon, and in his views on “majority rule” it is explicitly the case that the minority is bound by a majority decision. The bottom line is that if the majority believes that its interests, and in the first instance those related to capital accumulation, are seriously damaged by the monarch, this should lead to the termination of the contract. In this way the king dethrones himself and becomes a rebel. Locke is therefore not the advocate of individual liberties vis-à-vis the state, nor is he necessarily an

advocate of constitutionalism. And his premise that everyone is born free and equal leads him ultimately to defend unequal rights and liberties. In a period of rising capitalism, he favors a strong state that promotes the system of private property.

If we describe Locke as *an advocate of a strong state that defends private property* we do so from the view from our current times. For the 17th century, his idea that it is justified to rebel against the monarch if he does not fulfill his contractual obligations, was indeed groundbreaking. All the pseudo-arguments of tradition, God's will and so on, are pushed aside in favor of the autonomy of the thinking person. That 'person' is definitely part of 'the elite' because the empiricist Locke sees that there is indeed a knowledge gap between social groups and a difference in judgment with the large masses. This does not mean that Locke accepted that this distinction would be natural or wanted by God. For him it was a consequence of the unequal opportunities that individuals were given. Locke therefore defended the institution of slavery.

Locke's way of thinking is a reflection of what was well established with English intellectuals: rationalism and empiricism. The skepticism of Hume (1711-1776) concerns the evidential value in the humanities. Definite and certain knowledge can only be acquired in algebra and mathematics. Causal consequences are a derivation from experience, that is, when A follows B, this is only a practical derivation based on a connection established in the past. It is not conclusive evidence, which shows that future projections are impossible. The unbridled belief in linear progress - spiritual and material - therefore lacks any reasonable basis. "*By all that has been said, the reader will easily perceive, that the philosophy contained in this book is very skeptical, and tends to give us a notion of the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding*" said Hume. Hume indeed has great doubts that what is referred to as reason should not be described as intuition, imagination, judgment ... even when one can come to valuable conclusions. Surely it cannot provide certainty, only probability. Hence his disdain for deduction and system building. Typical is his attitude vis-à-vis religion, and by extension ideology. Of course, he opposes superstition, but he also warns about "enthusiasm" with regard to the faith itself. Moderation and tolerance are logical conclusions from the fact that certainties are in fact extremely uncertain.

The limitations that were made by Scottish and English thinkers with regard to the rational capacities of men, was absent from the thinking of the French *philosophes*. Destutt de Tracy

described ideology as an independent scientific discipline, which provided a theory and an explanation for the origin and existence of ideas. The purpose of his research was to test the idea for its truthfulness through the usage of reason. Reason itself was considered not to be tainted by emotions, interests, traditions ... Armed with the lancet of reason, all prejudices, dogmas and false representations were tackled in the French Enlightenment. Thoughtfulness and doubt were put aside and just about all institutions became the target of critique. Faced with poorly functioning institutions, philosophers constructed an abstract and perfect counter world. Take the concept of freedom, for example. According to the *philosophes*, this can be accurately described through reason and is not influenced by place and time. But what if the concrete people do not want this kind of freedom? If necessary, the *philosophes* want then to oblige the people to be free. In France, the Enlightenment philosophy was forged into a radical political ideology that must liberate all humanity.

Most philosophers found each other around the publication of the *Encyclopédie* of which Diderot and d'Alembert were the driving forces. Encyclopedias were certainly not new as attempts to make an inventory of knowledge were made as early as Greek antiquity. The belief that this science would also be a motor for social change was similarly not an innovation. Vincent de Beauvais thought that his medieval "*Speculum majus*" would contribute to the improvement of the world. In the 17th century (F. Bacon) and especially in the 18th century (for example, P. Bayle and the Encyclopaedia Britannica), the encyclopedia experienced great growth. However, the Encyclopedists in France did more than make an inventory of knowledge. The many polemic articles, and the attack on many established beliefs also lent the work a political dimension that the rulers did not miss. However, it would be wrong to believe that the Encyclopedists were always on the same wavelength. By analogy with the circulatory system, Quesnay, himself a doctor, described the economic cycle for the first time, but contrary to what one would expect, agriculture was described as the only productive sector: trade does nothing but move goods and industry merely transforms raw materials... not a statement in favor of the new bourgeoisie...

The Enlightenment ideology is optimistic by nature, and it believes that the establishment of a rational and therefore happy society will gradually take place. This orientation towards the future is best expressed in Condorcet's "*Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*". "*Then there will come that moment when the sun will no longer illuminate on earth but the freemen, recognizing no other master but their reason; where tyrants and slaves,*

priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments will exist only in history and in theaters ... the more this equality will be real, the closer it will be to embrace all that interests happiness men". Man is not only rational, but also acts rationally, which necessarily leads to progress, *ergo* to greater happiness.

But the question remains: who is this torchbearer, who is that rational person? For some, this is just the white person. The polygenetic current holds the idea that are different types of people (races) that can be arranged in a hierarchical context. Hume had already defended this thesis. "*We must keep skepticism behind everything that happens to us*" he writes, but as soon as he tackles the issue of equality, he forgets his own point of departure. "*I tend to consider negroes (sic) and in general all other human species as naturally inferior*". Because, says Hume, they have never produced anything in the field of industry or in the field of art or science. This not only proves Hume's ignorance, it also illustrates that clear spirits can have many hollow ideas. Numerous Encyclopedists shared Hume's views. Voltaire, one of the so-called champions of the Enlightenment, even surpasses Hume's racism. Voltaire doubted whether Negroes (sic) were not a transitional breed between humans and apes. He thereby refers to the then widespread idea that blacks "driven by abominable passions" had sexual intercourse with monkeys. Diderot and d'Alembert were hardly more flattering in their article in the Encyclopedia (although they belonged to the monogenist current): "*When one moves away from the equator towards the South Pole, the black becomes lighter, but its ugliness remains ...*" Encyclopedists were generally more friendly to Asians, all the more so because the proposition that Europeans had Asian origins gained currency. However, there were also philosophers who, when talking about man, do indeed mean humanity as a whole. Montesquieu, Helvetius, Condillac, Condorcet ... are outspoken universalists. Witness the introduction of Condorcet's "*Épître aux nègres esclaves*": "*Although I am not of the same color as you, I have always considered you my brothers. Nature created you to possess the same spirit, the same reason and the same virtues as the whites*". In this vision, it is the upbringing that makes people human... at the risk that people, starting from this humanistic perspective, assign themselves the role to civilize others.

Typical of 18th-century French salons culture, the Encyclopedists take an unprejudiced position toward women. In general, they consider women to be reasonable creatures, not such an obvious proposition given the fact that the author of "*Controverse sur l'âme de la femme*" predicted in 1744 that at the end of the world women will cease to exist (no pun intended). After all, the

purpose for which they were created – reproduction – disappears, which immediately shows that women do not have an immortal soul. The Encyclopedists argue that is the upbringing and not the innate nature of women that is responsible for the relative absence of female artists, scientists, etc. According to them, there is no natural inferiority that would relegate women into social marginality, just as there is no reason why she would not participate in political life. (This aspect of the Enlightenment is not reflected in the later legislation, including in the Napoleon Code).

Is it then a true fact that, at least according to the majority of philosophers, white people march towards the enlightened Olympus? Obviously the philosophers realize that there was a major intellectual gap between the literate elite and the non-literate masses. While the philosophers, in theory, believed in the upbringing and uplifting of everyone, there was also a painful contradiction. Raised as they were in the better circles of society, exchanging ideas in the salons of the rich or in the courts of rulers who were open to their ideas, they felt only disdain for ‘the people’ ... and fear. The people must be freed from their chains of ignorance, but what happens when ‘*le bas-peuple*’, ‘*la populace*’, also starts to think? “*If the mob starts thinking, everything will be lost,*” Voltaire wrote. By this he meant that a society that was based on social inequality would inevitably be challenged, and this was not the intention of the philosophers. “*As far as the canaille is concerned, I have nothing to do with it; it will always remain canaille,*” Voltaire wrote to d’Alembert, and he added, almost apologetically, “*We have never pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants; this is the work of apostles*”. Diderot confirmed that “*the people is too stupid, too miserable*” to participate in the Enlightenment. In the end, the abstract human (and the ideal of emancipation) is thus made concrete in the figure of the white male learned person. This is a limitation which the philosophers themselves realized that it became difficult to sustain on theoretical grounds, but whose practical transcendence filled them with horror. Ultimately, the enlightenment philosophers wanted to prove the superiority of a modern capitalist but strongly layered, unequal, society in comparison with an *Ancien Régime*.

In this company, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is a bit of an exception. Rousseau rejected the idea that man was only a purely rational being. He did not reject reason; a point that is sometimes misinterpreted by both proponents and opponents of his philosophy. He denied, however, that man was solely rational, or should be. Emotions and passions are equally human, help determine human agency and that’s how it should be. Rousseau also rejected the necessary trinity of the enlightenment ‘rationality – progress – happiness’. To the question of the

Academy of Dijon, “*Has the development of the arts and sciences contributed to the purification of morals?*” Rousseau replied negatively. Romanticism was born in the midst of the Enlightenment.

Rousseau held the idea that man was innately and naturally good. He was only corrupted and made unhappy by civilization. He rejected the capitalist commodity economy, and everything that was related to it. The accumulation of private property and the satisfaction of individual interests did not serve the community. Holbach had stated that “*interest, or enlightened self-love, is the foundation of social virtues*”. According to Rousseau egoism led to social polarization and to the dehumanization of human relations because of the inequality that resulted from it. The equality guaranteed by the law is only an illusion, for laws “*are always for the protection of those who possess something, and harmful to those who have nothing*”.

A market economy necessarily implies efficiency and a division of labor. This destroys creativity and freedom, because everybody becomes constantly dependent on others. In addition, this is accompanied by the growth of cities, while “*people are not made to live in ant heaps ... the more you pile them up, the more you spoil them*”. The new social and economic relationships also necessitated, according to Rousseau, a centralized state with expanding powers. But “*a government that has to act all the time cannot account for every action; it justifies itself for the most important, and soon no longer at all*”.

Rousseau’s ideal society are rural communities, where free farmers have freed themselves from the yoke of feudalism. They produce according to their needs, not for the sake of profit, have job satisfaction and Arcadian happiness. However, he does not have many illusions about the feasibility of this form of cohabitation. Rejecting the optimism of progress was sufficient for Rousseau to be mistrusted by the other philosophers. After he had sent Voltaire “*Discourse on Inequality*”, the former replied: “*Never so much cleverness was spent trying to make us stupid. When we read your book, we feel the need to walk on our hands and feet. For sixty years I have unlearned it, and, unfortunately, I no longer feel able to learn it again*”.

On the political level, the Enlightenment philosophers were opposed to absolutism based on divine will, and against the monopoly of power of the higher classes (nobility and clergy). This did not mean that they were therefore in favor of parliamentarism, certainly not if this would

be based on broad electoral rights. They wished that the power would belong to the new emerging elites, of whom they considered themselves the mouthpiece.

Montesquieu, although only indirectly connected to the actual Enlightenment philosophers, has exerted considerable influence through his major work "*The Spirit of the Laws*". However, it is clear that he neither wanted to serve the interests of the emerging bourgeoisie, nor did he want to establish a democratic regime through his principle of the separation of powers. A nobleman himself, his intention was to secure the position of the nobility through a modernized state.

His starting position was as follows: the various institutions (e.g. marriage, ...) , wherever they are in the world, do not emerge by coincidence, but can be explained rationally by virtue of the social functions they fulfill. The result of this is reflected in the various legislations. This idea differs from the spirit of the times in that it does not presuppose a social contract as a transition to a civil society.

People have a natural desire to live together, and therefore also to an orderly way of interaction. It is implicitly clear to Montesquieu that there is also a natural order, and that order is found in a class society, crowned by a monarchy. His entire system of 'checks and balances' is aimed at preventing absolutism, but also at restraining people's participation. For him, "*Power must stop power...*" means in the first instance that the nobility should once again fulfill its intermediary function between the monarch and the people (or commons). If despotism prevails, the nation is governed, not by laws but by fear, but when the participation of the people is unlimited, then this leads to anarchy. The mediating and moderating influence of the nobility has therefore reconfirmed the predominance of the old order through the coalition between king and nobility. After all, the monarch dominates the executive, the House of Lords keeps the parliament under control and controls the judiciary. What was later seen as the foundation of a bourgeois state with a parliamentary regime was in fact conceived as a built-in brake on the political emancipation of the emerging classes.

Although Diderot later praised Montesquieu, the Enlightenment philosophers held a different political ideal. Almost all of them were in favor of enlightened despotism. Guided by reason, the monarch needed to serve the people in the sense of "*everything for the people, nothing by the people*"... It is evident that the philosophers ascribed themselves a major role as personal counselors of royals and princes. What they did not understand is that this 'marriage of

convenience' could not be permanent. After all, reason – contrary to what they think – is not above private or class interests. As soon as the monarch was harmed in his own interests, or in those of the class that he represented (and in the 18th century this was the nobility), he became simply a despot, thereby relegating the philosophers to their real position: “*Voltaire? Oh well, he's just an orange, you squeeze it out and afterwards throw the peels away....*”

Again it is Rousseau who takes a view that is peculiar to the Enlightenment. According to him, society should be based on a social contract, this is “*a form of cooperation that, with all the power at its disposal, protects the person and his property and in which every member, although he has united with all other members, only owes obedience to himself, and retains the same freedom as before*”. Contract theory is, of course, not new, but now it is an agreement between the people themselves, which means that sovereignty rests with the collective as an inalienable right. So there can be no question of a transfer of sovereignty to some sort of Leviathan; nor can there be a representative democracy. Parliamentarism is but a fiction, Rousseau says, the English people think they are free but this is wrong, it is only once every so many years that they are free, namely at the time of voting.

The starting point of his reasoning is egalitarianism. “*No citizen can be rich enough to buy another citizen and no one should be poor enough to sell himself*”. If this is the case, the private conflict of interest appears. Only if the latter has disappeared can there be such a thing as the ‘*volonté générale*’ (general will), the will of the community that serves only the interests of the community as a whole and not those of this or that group. The ‘general will’ is not the sum of all individual expressions of will, the ‘will of all’ (*volonté de tous*), because in the latter there are individual interests at stake. The ‘general will’ is the expression of the public interest, which only comes about when there is social equality. But who determines what this public interest is and what if some do not want to accept the ‘general will’? Why would the majority always be right? Conversely, what is the fate of those who do not adhere to the rules that unambiguously (at least according to Rousseau) follow from that ‘*volonté général*’? “*if it is expedient that he die, that he die,*” says Rousseau. In other words, there is a body that proclaims itself to be the guardian of this public interest, that must defend it and thus can and must punish the opponents, the apostates and the lukewarm. Robespierre, who was indebted to Rousseau, will be confronted with that issue during the French Revolution. The incorruptible, as he was called, was not, as often suggested, a bloodthirsty monster, but someone who rigidly adhered to his principles, saw himself as a unique defender of the public interest and thus – given the precarious situation –

committed to taking emergency measures. The question then arises whether the uncompromising pursuit of virtue does not bring humanity as much misfortune as the acceptance of impurity?

A society that has its foundations in a social contract is not a machine governed by mechanical laws: it is a moral community. The regulatory provisions that govern it are based on morality and reasonable feelings. Hence Rousseau's emphasis on education that is not limited to strict knowledge transfer. By emphasizing the equality that originates in the sphere of production and not in this of distribution, Rousseau could be regarded as a precursor of socialism. However, caution is appropriate here. What he envisaged was a community of farmers that was small enough for direct democracy to prevail. Precisely because he took on the defense of the peasants (the people), and because he did not see – or could not see – how capitalism could be transcended, his romanticized vision of the free and equal peasant community can just as well become a traditionalist framework. Although he was genuinely concerned about the fate of those farmers, he is at the same time afraid of what could happen if the masses would rise. Rousseau is not a revolutionary, but a revolting romantic. Again, like many other French Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau's ideals and ideas were not transposed to the institution of slavery. As much as he was concerned with equality, he never discussed the French slavery for economic profit.

Before concluding this section, we must make another detour to England, where the rationalistic project had its logical endpoint in the work of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham is the principal representative of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism starts from the idea that every human act must be measured by its consequences; whether or not it contributes to the increase of happiness. Not only does this idea cast aside morality, but Bentham also believed that happiness is quantifiable and therefore measurable. Simplified, it comes down to this: science can build a panoptic, from which the whole world can be viewed. The world can be divided into various parts, in which various shortcomings can be identified. This 'moral arithmetic' makes it possible to calculate "*the greatest happiness of the greatest number*". In this way the world can be reconstructed to relative perfection. The government must direct (and therefore control) the actions of its citizens in such a way that an optimum of happiness is achieved for the community. The government must aim for the common good, not the prosperity of one class – not even poor. This intervention does not take place through natural law – a notion that Bentham is skeptical about – nor is there any social contract. What counts is "positive legislation", a

reflection of concrete rules of conduct and agreements. It is superfluous to refer to the past; it is better to focus all attention on the development of a policy that causes individual and collective happiness to coincide and increase in the future. Happiness can be broken down into single and multiple utility factors.

Happiness particles can also be garnered, and long before the Marginalists, Bentham already ‘calculated’ that when someone accumulates more and more particles of happiness, the last units that are added represent less happiness than the first one that was collected. This is his principle of regressive utility. Suppose I have one lunch and I am also very hungry, then the value of this food is very high (10x). It is possible that I can eat a second time, but the usefulness of this will already be less (5x). Let us assume that I can eat a third time (maybe there is nothing tomorrow), then there is perhaps a small usefulness (x). But after that I will undoubtedly get into trouble and there will even be a negative usefulness. My first million euros on my bank account is very useful, but is it still useful when I add a 99th million?

As a rule of thumb, to measure happiness or well-being, Bentham takes (private) property. Based on the decreasing ratio of the number of happiness particles, it should logically follow that property and wealth should be distributed rather evenly, while in reality there was extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Here, however, Bentham clearly repositions himself because, he says, if we transfer wealth from the rich to the poor, then the certainty of ownership will decrease as a result of this transfer, the inventiveness and creativity of the upper classes will be curbed, so that, ultimately, the total well-being will decrease. The sum of the inflicted suffering (of the rich) will surpass this of the newly created happiness (for the poor), for the rich will become poorer while the poor will not become rich. This is one of the examples of the way in which Bentham and the radical philosophers blew alternately cold and warm.

The great merit of Bentham was that he argued for the first time that there was such a thing as a social optimum that could be achieved through scientific planning. It was a daring idea to state that perfection is definable and could be realized. At the same time, it was also possibly a nightmare that this perfection must be achieved and be enforced by the government. Bentham would probably have recoiled from Orwell’s 1984, but through a totalitarian interpretation of his work and the equalization of psychological and sociological happiness one can come to the idea of a ‘big-brother’ caregiver-oppressor.

2.2. The economic foundations

Born in 1723 in Kirkcaldy, a small port town across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh, Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a great admirer of David Hume and his skepticism. Predestined, like many in his day, to join the clergy after his studies, Adam Smith, under the influence of his teacher and professor of moral philosophy in Glasgow, Francis Hutcheson, soon became disillusioned with Protestant dogmas. He refused to devote himself further to a religious life and opted instead for philosophy. Smith first became famous in 1759 with the publication of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a book in which he laid the foundation for his later masterpiece, *The Wealth of Nations*. In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith asks himself a seemingly simple question: How can a man, who is mainly interested in himself, make moral judgments that also satisfy others? This question arose from Smith's analysis of Hobbes' work. If people are naturally selfish and have a lot left over to pursue their own interests, why is it, he noted, that the towns and villages of the land are nothing like the evil 'state of nature' Hobbes spoke of in his *Leviathan*? Smith looked for the answer in the way people come to a moral judgment. According to him, man does not judge on the basis of self-interest only but equally on the basis of compassion. When man needs to make a judgment, an imaginary 'neutral observer' speaks to him and gives him advice. Instead of counting purely on self-interest, man usually chooses on the basis of the observer's advice.

The purpose of Adam Smith was to provide his contemporaries with a complete social philosophy that covered all aspects of life. In the final years of his life Smith declared, with some resignation, that he lacked the necessary time to complete this work of titans. His "*Inquiry into Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations*" has become his best known work, although Smith would not have agreed to be known and celebrated as an economist. The "*Wealth of nations*" was the new bible for the emerging bourgeoisie. With the publication of this book modern economic thinking was born. Smith's goal in the book is to discover the causal laws that explain how wealth is created. In order to achieve this goal, Smith wanted to understand first and foremost how people were interconnected, how they functioned as it were. All in all, this banal starting point was revolutionary in his day. Smith, like some of his predecessors such as Hobbes or Machiavelli, wanted to describe how man was and not how he should be. Man became analyzable, an object of study, ... in short, understandable without religious knowledge interfering. Although it may be assumed that, like for many progressive persons Marx' Capital remained unread on the bookshelf, not everyone who called himself a supporter of Smith therefore necessarily studied his work. As the title states, the book was an

investigation into the nature of a nation's wealth, and the intention was more or less to show how one particular class (the bourgeoisie) developed, or how the distribution of the national product was divided over the different classes.

In short, the wealth of a nation was determined by two major factors: a thorough division of labor and the laissez-faire principle. The first factor stood for efficiency and increasing labor productivity, the second for private capital accumulation as an engine for further development. Both implied a social division into owners of the means of production and those who only have their labor-power to sell. On the domestic level, the state must follow a non-intervention policy; free trade is the rule with regard to foreign countries.

It is evident that the goal-means ratio was reversed, because the emphasis was clearly on production for the sake of production. Although the purpose of economic activity was to supply consumer goods that satisfied needs, the production of goods according to private profit expectations was considered to best meet this goal. And while it was about the wealth of the nation, the selfishness of the individual was supposed to achieve this most optimally. In his *"Theory of moral sentiments"*, Smith explained how this worked. He started with the observation that everyone is more concerned about what concerns him personally than about something that concerns others. *"Led by the invisible hand to promote an end which was not part of his intentions, and which he would not have promoted so well if he had deliberately aimed at the public good"*, the goal (the wealth of a nation) is achieved anyway. Thus the invisible hand stands for a number of economic laws which are beyond the control of men, which is not necessary, since these economic laws are automatically regulating the market and improving the general welfare.

However, Smith's position did not imply that this egoism can or should be without limits. What he called 'social sympathy', the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing (today we would talk about empathy) works as a moderating force. All this does not, of course, prevent the existence of great inequality in society. It would be wrong to assume that this wasn't Smith's concern. *"What improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be viewed as an inconvenience of the whole"*. It should not be forgotten that Smith was a classical liberal with an unbridled belief that the future, due to the evolution of technology, would look increasingly better for everyone. If the economy evolves favorably, i.e. when production increases, then this will trigger a greater demand for labor. Ultimately, when

everyone is employed, wages will also rise, the economy will continue to expand, and so on. Smith therefore sincerely hopes that poverty will be eliminated and that the workers will also have a decent life. But this must be done according to the rhythm of the market economy. Any attempt by the government to act as a producer itself, through the state power to redistribute wealth, will disrupt this spontaneous evolution. Of course there is poverty at the moment, but just as one cannot eliminate the laws of gravity, one cannot escape the laws of supply and demand. Inequality, according to Smith, is no longer justified by the Bible or commanded by nature, it is scientifically measurable and warranted. Yet Smith still thought that it is necessary to emphasize that wealth and happiness are not identical. *“The beggar who suns himself by the side of a highway possesses that security which kings are fighting for”*... the umpteenth variation on money does not mean happiness.

The basic problem that Ricardo (1772-1823) was struggling with, was the distribution of national income over interest, profit and wages or the tensions between landowners, entrepreneurs and workers. The division of wealth over the different classes in society was, according to Ricardo, the core societal problem. Ricardo wanted to provide the industrial bourgeoisie with the necessary intellectual weapons in the political debates between the proponents and critics of the Corn Laws.

In his introduction to *“On the principles of political economy and taxations”*, he stated that this distribution depended primarily on *“the actual fertility of the soil, on the accumulation of capital and population, and on the skill, ingenuity and instruments employed in agriculture”*. For Ricardo, thus, industrial profits were a derivative of those realized in agriculture. Due to population pressures, more and more land of lesser quality was being cultivated. These fall under the law of decreasing surplus yield, as more and more efforts are needed to compensate for the natural shortcomings of the soil. From there, he formulated his law of differential land rent. Because demand exceeds the supply of grain on the market, the price remains artificially high. Those who work with lesser grounds should, under normal circumstances, go bankrupt in a situation of full competition. This was not happening in England. Those who had good lands at their disposal collect a huge profit (the differential ground rate).

How, then, should the price of grain decrease? And why is this crucial? *“General profits on capital can only be raised by a fall in the exchangeable value of food”*. The price of grain could be lowered if either wages in agriculture would fall (which was difficult as most farmers were

at the survival minimum), or when agricultural techniques would improve production (which Ricardo thought was not feasible in the short term), or when grain was imported. Through import the offer would exceed the demand, the less suitable lands would no longer be used and the differential land rent would disappear. With this, Ricardo clearly points the finger at the main contradiction of his time, i.e. the diverging interests of the capitalists in the agricultural sector (the big landowners) and the capitalists of the industrial sector. The former want high grain prices, the latter low prices to reduce the (nominal) wages and strengthen their competitive position.

Lower wages would lead to lower prices for industrial products, which would benefit the competitive position of the nation on the international market. This proposition was generalized by Ricardo in his theory of comparative advantages. Every country must specialize in the production and sale of these products in which it is good. For example, it would be pointless for England to plant olive trees, because much cheaper olive oil is produced in Portugal. Conversely, it is better for Portugal not to focus on textiles, because the position of England is more favorable in that sector. If both specialize, they can exchange their surpluses and both benefit from it. In other words, a free market, without any hindrance, ensures the expansion of capitalism. The down side is that certain entrepreneurs or even certain sectors have to disappear. Translated into concrete political terms, this was the battle for the 'Corn laws', the question whether or not to remove the toll barriers. Only in 1846, after years of combined efforts of one of the largest pressure groups of the 19th century, the 'anti corn law league' led by Cobden, did the industrialists succeed in getting their way.

A second central point in Ricardo's theory is the labor value theory. A commodity is a product that is manufactured for the market (not something for own use, nor a unique work of art). If there is an exchange between two goods then there must be a common measure to test their value. The price expresses the value in money of the commodity on the market, but does not determine the value. Something can, for example, be sold above or below its actual value. The value of the goods is determined (in part) by the total amount of labor invested in it. An amount of direct labor is invested in each commodity (the time needed to produce it) in addition to an amount of indirect labor (a fraction of the value of machines, the raw materials,...). Given a balance between supply and demand, and an equal technical development within the production sector, there is identity between the natural value (expressed in labor) and the market value

(expressed in money). If this is not the case, then there is a temporary discrepancy between the two. Or, put differently: a free market optimally ensures that inherent value and price coincide.

Labor becomes thus a commodity that, like all others, has a price. “*The natural price of labor is that price which is necessary to enable the laborers ... to subsist and perpetuate their race, without either increasing or diminution*”. The market price of labor, i.e. the wage, necessarily revolves around this survival minimum. Two things are important here. Although the struggle between workers and entrepreneurs is not yet a central political theme, Ricardo is of course not blind to the contradictions between the two groups. What he emphasizes is that the purchase and sale of labor is an equal exchange, that is to say, there is no question of exploitation. All individual workers offer their commodity (labor) on a market, receive the equivalent (maintenance of the labor-power), which leads to a natural wage (the translation into money). Secondly, Ricardo is aware that the workers live in miserable conditions, but enforcing higher wages (e.g. through collective actions) goes against the free market. The only solution is that there should be a constant economic growth so that the demand for labor increases, eventually causing a certain scarcity, and ultimately leading to higher wages. The irony of the matter is that, later, Marx will take Ricardo’s positions, interpret them differently, and use it as the foundation for his radical critique of capitalism.

Both Smith and Ricardo explain inequality and poverty through the laws of capitalism, but there are no indications that they do not find this poverty regrettable, nor do they think it should necessarily remain constant. With Malthus this is somewhat different.

Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) published (anonymously) his “*First essay on population*” in 1789. “*I have read some of the speculations on the perfectibility of man and society with great pleasure,*” he writes in the first chapter. It soon becomes clear that Malthus does not share this optimism. Hunger and calamity are the inevitable fate of humanity. Every living being is characterized by a number of physical impulses, which strive for satisfaction. One of those impulses is hunger, another is sexual appetite. However, these two cannot be reconciled. Because, says Malthus, the sexual act leads to an increase in families. While the food supply grows according to an arithmetic series (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ...), the population increases according to a geometric series (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, ...), from which necessarily a discrepancy follows. Every effort to improve destiny is therefore bound to fail on the limits of human nature itself. If normal economic development cannot bring lasting progress, it is all the more superfluous to make an

attempt to improve fate through the care of the poor. These ‘demographic laws’ constituted an excellent argument for entrepreneurs to reject any demand for higher wages while maintaining the appearance that this was done out of charity (to avoid population surplus and therefore even greater poverty). In his later editions, Malthus took a slightly more nuanced approach. If wars and epidemics (the ‘*positive checks*’) were insufficient to keep the human numbers under control, could the individual not do birth control himself?

The only brake that Malthus considered acceptable is ‘moral restraint’, namely that anyone who cannot vouch for a child postpones the marriage or abandons the idea. Malthus did not have many illusions in this regard, because he did not think highly of free will. Malthus assumed that the sexual drive (which he evaluated negatively) in man was too well developed, and did not diminish even with increasing civilization. He simply rejected lust without burden, that is to say artificial birth control. But there is another reason why this is not allowed. He feared that if the families would become smaller, the urge to work would decrease, which would not benefit the economy. Only the fear of misery is a sufficient incentive to work. This misanthropic principle permeates the entire oeuvre of our preacher. As a result, the left side has often denounced Malthusianism and dismissed away from demographic factors. But Malthus was not in a good position in the Enlightenment camp either; his emphasis on instincts jeopardized the belief in the future perfectibility of men.

3. Aux armes citoyens

Three important historical events – the American struggle for independence, The Haitian revolution and the French revolution – marked the end of the 18th century. These events provided evidence that neither colonization, the *Ancien Régime* nor slavery were timeless phenomena, but that armed resistance could overthrow them. A large part of the European intelligentsia and bourgeoisie initially welcomed the events in France, although the Napoleonic wars of conquest soon put a damper on this joy. But despite everything – notwithstanding the Vienna Congress – Europe would never be the same again.

The American independence and Haitian revolution were also of major importance to Latin America in its struggle for emancipation. Two of the important figures from this period, de Miranda and Bolivar, were deeply influenced by these events. The former not only fought in the French army, he also maintained contacts with the new leaders of the United States. Bolivar

was raised by a follower of Rousseau, and visited France, where, among other things, the figure of Napoleon made an enormous impression on him. It is not only material goods that were traded worldwide, but also the exchange of ideas was globalizing.

3.1. The decolonization

The ‘Great war for the Empire’ (1754) marked the end of a series of conflicts between the French and the British over Native American (!) grounds. The French defeat was confirmed with the Treaty of Paris (1763). The British crown wanted to pass a part of the war costs to its colonies but as French danger had disappeared, colonists were less keen than ever to pay. The coming years were characterized by bitter tensions that practically all had to do with taxes. However, the big word ‘Independence’ had not yet been spoken openly; the battle theme remained ‘no taxation without representation’. Only in December 1775, when Thomas Paine published his “*On Common sense*”, did the decisive idea come forth.

A specific question immediately arose: should the colonists struggle for national independence and an internal revolution, or should they just strive for the separation from the mother country, while maintaining and strengthening the position of the dominant national classes? This question has remained an important and topical issue for all independence movements up to and including the second half of the twentieth century.

For Paine, it was clear that the struggle was not just about taxes, but about gaining independence. He emphasized that the new regime could only be democratic. “*Society is produced by our wants and governments by our wickedness,*” testifies to Paine’s fundamental mistrust of every form of government. The only thing the government has to do is to ensure that anyone can defend its interests, so that there can be harmony in society. Paine is an opponent of all forms of hereditary power, and of monarchy in particular. The monarchy cannot be a natural institution, he says, “*otherwise she would not frequently turn it into ridicule by giving mankind an ass for a lion*”. The people themselves must control the authorities through their representatives. These elected representatives must remain under the control of the people so that they never “*form to themselves an interest separate from the electors*”.

In his “*Rights of Man*” he argued for the necessity of the universal right to vote and opposed the system of censitary voting. “*The rich have no more the right to exclude the poor... than the*

poor have to exclude the rich, and wherever it is attempted or proposed on either side it is a question of force and not of right". Paine's ideal is a harmonious society of independent citizens who are not divided by strict property boundaries: "*when property is made a pretense for unequal or exclusive rights, it weakens the right to hold property and provokes indignation and tumult...*".

That is why Paine wanted to give the government an extensive task with regard to social utilities and policies of redistribution, precisely to mitigate these contradictions. According to him, military expenditures should be reduced to an acceptable minimum and the funds released should be affected to the social sector. Another source of income is a system of progressive taxes and the levying of heavy taxes on major inheritances. A social fund should be set up to care for the poor and for all those who are unable to work. In addition, the government must ensure that unemployment is curbed by means of public works and start-up capital for young, impoverished families. Education must be made available to everyone, not only because it is a right, but also because it is a necessary condition for an adequate democracy. Paine was therefore nicknamed the 'prophet of the modern welfare state'. However, many in America did not appreciate Paine's social vision. After participating in the French Revolution, Paine returned to the USA where he died in poverty of alcohol. 'The New York Citizen' wrote laconically: "*he has lived long, did some good and much harm*".

Independent America was not the 'morning of Reason', as Paine had hoped for, nor was it the dawn of the political emancipation of women. The famous letter from Abigail Adams to her husband John begins as follows: "*I long to hear that you have declared an independence, and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the Ladies..*". She informs her husband that, in the absence of this, the women are "*determined to forment a rebellion*". The founding fathers, however, were only moderately impressed by this threat and left the status of women for what it was.

Two other problems did not find a solution either: the state structures and the tensions arising from the diverse social orders in the North and South of the country. Figures such as Jefferson opted for a confederative state, because, according to them, large states necessarily tended to despotism and war, and for fear that the smaller states within the union would not have any influence. The group around Hamilton and Adams preferred a more centralized state, especially with a view to economic development. A second contrast was between the (aristocratic) south

where plantation farming based on slavery dominated (but whose proceeds were intended for the capitalist world market) and the north where the major industries were located. Only with the civil war, a century later, were these tensions (partially?) resolved.

3.2. The Haitian Revolution

The Spanish began to enslave native people soon after December 1492, when Christopher Columbus arrived at the island that he called La Isla Española (“The Spanish Island”; later Anglicized as Hispaniola.) The Spanish “*introduced Christianity, forced labour in mines. murder, rape, bloodhounds, strange diseases, and artificial famine (by the destruction of cultivation to starve the rebellious). These and other requirements of the higher civilisation reduced the native population from an estimated half-a-million, perhaps a million, to 60,000 in 15 years*” (C.L.R. James 1989: 4). The growth of capitalism in parts of Western Europe and the very slow emergence of modern and Enlightened ideas on freedom and equality “*began to take root at precisely the time that the economic practice of slavery-the systematic, highly sophisticated capitalist enslavement of non-Europeans as a labor force in the colonies-was increasing quantitatively and intensifying qualitatively to the point that by the mid-eighteenth century it came to underwrite the entire economic system of the West, paradoxically facilitating the global spread of the very Enlightenment ideals that were in such fundamental contradiction to it*” (Buck-Morss 2000: 821) .

Saint-Domingue was the jewel in the French colonial crown and was one of the most profitable colonies in the world. The production of cane sugar was the main source of income, but coffee, indigo and cotton were also in great demand in Europe. In the 18th century, 40% of the cane sugar and 60% of the coffee consumed on that continent came from the ‘Pearl of the Antilles’. This was only made possible because of the massive import of slaves. A large part of the slave population in Saint-Domingue was African-born. Most of the slaves worked in the fields; others were household servants or working at the sugar mills. The slavery regime was particularly harsh, brutal and ruthless on the island as the 30.000 or so White colonizers feared the slave majority (around half a million and also about 25.000 freed ‘mulattos’). Over time thousands of slaves fled to the inhospitable mountainous interior, where they became known as Maroons.

Under the command of charismatic leaders Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the colonial armies of the French and British were defeated. The first and only successful slave revolt in modern history started in August 1791. By 1804, after more than a decade of struggle, the richest colony in the western hemisphere became the first black sovereign modern state, Haiti. *“Together with the American and French Revolutions, the Haitian Revolution changed the course of modern history forever. But unlike those two other major revolutions, the impact and significance of the Haitian revolution soon disappeared from most history books. Hobsbawm, for instance, considers the revolution in Saint-Domingue hardly worth mentioning in his famous book”* (Bogaert 2019).

It is worth citing Koen Bogaert (2020) at length: *“The great accomplishment of the Haitian Revolution was not only the fact that the Haitians succeeded in driving out the two most powerful European Empires, but also that they violently exposed as myths the new European ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. (...) Haitian revolutionaries redefined the meanings of freedom, equality and humanity, and went far beyond what their enlightened European contemporaries thought possible or even desirable. (...) Unlike the American or French revolution, the Haitian Revolution led to a new constitution in 1805 that explicitly prohibited slavery, as well as discrimination based on skin color. It broke with the then prevailing racist worldview and considered all Haitians, regardless of their skin color, as black (...) These radical ideals of the Haitian revolution represented the aspiration for a new humanism in a post-racial world that lived on in the works of later revolutionary thinkers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon”*.

3.3. The French Revolution

The French revolution is usually portrayed as the prototype of a bourgeois revolution. It is of course true that feudalism and the monarchy were crushed and that the bourgeoisie eventually took over power (but partially relinquished it), but the period 1789-1799 is also characterized by an internal struggle. The various revolutionary movements were held together by two negative moments; i.e. they wanted to destroy the Ancien Régime, and wanted to avoid a foreign intervention. There were also very different views and conflicting interests on how the new society should look like. In the cities, the lower layers of the population were in favor of a guided economy that would ensure a fair distribution of wealth while the bourgeoisie naturally demanded a free market economy. In the countryside, the poor peasantry wanted a parceling of

the lands, whereby everyone would have sufficient land to provide for their maintenance. The large, capitalist-inspired, farmers wished for large agricultural companies in function of greater profitability and profit maximization. In the political field, the key question was who could exercise active and passive political rights: who was a citizen and who was a subject?

We can distinguish three periods within the French Revolution: 1789-92 (the Assembly), 1792-95 (the Convention) and 1795-99 (the Directoire). In the first phase where the Girondins held power, France became a constitutional monarchy in which the rich reserved the political power for themselves. With the Jacobins at the helm, during the Convention, the revolution radicalized: the republican form of government and the broadened popular participation were a clear break with the past. The takeover of power of the Directoire meant that many of the political and socio-economic achievements were being scaled back. According to some, this meant the ‘Thermidor of the revolution’: an accommodation to ‘normality’, i.e. that power is in the hands of a new elite (a mix of veterans and newcomers) or, "*the revolution devours its own*", the violence eventually turns against the radicals themselves during the radical period. With the seizure of power of Napoleon, the French revolution is ended and literally crowned.

In fact, it is the aristocracy that ignites the fire of the revolution by its refusal to pay taxes. The three estates jointly demanded the convening of the Estates General, which Louis XVI only allowed after much opposition. A dividing issue immediately arose. The king, supported by large parts of the nobility and clergy, stated that each estate should have one vote while the upcoming bourgeoisie (the third estate) demanded the establishment of one national assembly. The famous slogan of Sieyès: "*What is the third estate? Everything!*", points to the growing self-awareness of the bourgeoisie. When the Estates General congregated, it was transformed into an "Assemblée Nationale Constituante" (Constituent National Assembly). A non-violent transition to a constitutional monarchy now seemed perfectly feasible. However, the king decided otherwise by asking foreign troops to Paris, whereupon the Parisian population stormed the Bastille and armed itself. The King recoiled. The people had saved the bourgeois revolution for the first, but not the last, time. A period of national reconciliation followed, under the slogan: ‘the nation, the king, the law’. The nation, however, was very divided. There were passive citizens who were excluded from the right to vote due to insufficient ownership. Active citizens (in particular those who paid a certain amount of taxes) could appoint the electors. These electors, around 50,000, could in turn appoint the deputies. In order to be a candidate, it was not only necessary to pay substantial taxes, but to have land ownership.

The king, his ministers, and the aristocrats did not stop fighting the regime by supporting both domestic uprisings and foreign aggressions. However, the leading group within the Assembly, the Girondins, which represented the most wealthy part of the bourgeoisie, did not dare to mobilize the masses to secure the revolution. Hébert, in his magazine "*Le père Duchesne*", bitterly observed: "*The traders, Goddamnit (sic), have no homeland. As long as they believed that the revolution was beneficial to them, they supported it. They helped the sans-culottes to eliminate the nobility and parliaments, but it was to take the place of the aristocrats*". In the midst of tumultuous events, a large part of the lower bourgeoisie, organized in the Jacobin clubs, understood that the only way out of this impasse was one of radicalization, and to approach the masses for support. This resulted in an uprising in Paris, the capture of the Tuileries and the fall of the monarchy. With the Convention, the second phase of the revolution, power came in the hands of the Jacobins.

The new government was a revolutionary government, not a constitutional one. Robespierre explained this as follows. The only basis for a civil society is morality, virtue. Virtue means commitment to the public interest, so that the individual interest is absorbed into it. In times of great social change and war, terror is the necessary 'traveling companion' of virtue. After all, without terror, virtue is powerless, but without virtue, terror degenerates into tyranny. One cannot, Robespierre argues, lead a revolution without doing a revolution. The Convention, whose executive power rests with the 'Committees' including the *Comité du Salut Public*, rapidly changed the face of the revolution. As Marat wrote in 1793: "*It is through violence that freedom must be established and the moment has come to organize momentarily the despotism of freedom to crush the despotism of kings*". Rousseau agreed.

In June-July 1793 a series of laws were enacted whereby all feudal rights are abolished without compensation, the possessions of the émigrés are sold in small plots, and the communal lands were divided. These measures not only forged a tie between the revolutionary leadership and the poor farmers, they were also the death certificate of the Ancien Régime. A new constitution was promulgated on 24 June and a new Declaration of Human Rights was published. Article 1 of the Constitution stated that the purpose of any society is to provide for the necessities of life of needy citizens, either by offering them work or by providing them with what they need when they are unable to work. A system of general voting rights (for men) was proclaimed as well as the right to education. The army was democratized, and transformed by the '*levée en masse*'

(mass uprising). Saint-Juste, a spokesperson for the Jacobins, stressed that military victories depended on a republican spirit, and that soldiers must receive a political education. In addition, the soldiers have the right to choose their own commanders... the first modern revolutionary army was born.

However, hardly any mention was made of social relationships or other forms of popular participation. These themes were placed on the political agenda by the 'leftist' sans-culottes and by the far 'left', the so-called '*bras-nus*' (the bare-armed) and '*enragés*'. What does equality mean when a large part of the population lives in poverty? "*The rich who don't want to share their opulence with the poor are people's enemies,*" says Babeuf. What is liberty, wrote Leclercq, when the laws are made by those who are cut off from the reality? "*Three hours waiting in line at a bakery for bread, forms the legislator better than sitting on the benches of the Convention for four years*".

The '*Jardin-des-Plantes*'-section of the sans-culottes demanded from the Convention that fixed prices for food and fixed profit margins would be established, that a law on maximum earnings would be voted, that no one should own more land than he would be able to cultivate, that every citizen should not have more than one shop or workplace,... The Jacobins were between the hammer and anvil, because, on the one hand they did not want to compromise private property, but, on the other, they demanded urgent measures for the supply of the army and of the cities. At the beginning of September 1793, the armed sans-culottes entered the Convention by force, which put an end to the indecisiveness of the it. A system of guided economy was established. Necessary goods such as corn could be claimed, a system of price control and maximum profits were announced and state manufactures were set up (for the army). But the measures on maximum wages and the *Le Chapelier law* (which banned workers' associations) were maintained. The reign of terror ensured the forceful implementation of the decisions.

The government had been pushed to the limits of its concessions, but the sans-culottes were unable to lead the revolution themselves. They remained a pressure group, and it was not surprising that the government was out to curtail them. Danton said threateningly: "*We must not forget that for the overthrow of society perhaps peaks are needed, but for building and consolidating a society intellect and genius*". The popular societies were systematically eroded and the so-called '*exagérés*' (those who exaggerate) were eliminated. The Revolutionary Government had rid itself of the organized people's movement, but at the same time Robespierre

and his supporters had destroyed their protection against the political right. The danger of foreign invasions seemed to have been defused.

First cautiously, then increasingly more openly, the resistance against Robespierre's radicalism, which had lost a lot of credit with the ordinary population, gained momentum. The urban poor were demoralized because their living conditions had not improved. The farmers were disappointed because they were insufficiently compensated for their agricultural products. The believers were shocked by the way the Church was treated and by the introduction of the '*cult of reason*.' The people were tired after all the turbulences and disillusion, the majority mainly wanted to be left alone. The successive waves of cleansing during the reign of terror had a demoralizing effect. Robespierre now had to face criticism within the Convention without cover or back-up. He and, among others, Saint-Just were arrested on the stands of the Convention on the 9th of Thermidor. "*The republic is lost, the villains triumph*," was his last defense. Without any form of trial, all key figures of the government ended up on the guillotine the following days. Shortly before Saint-Just had already written "*The revolution is frozen*", now the ax fell.

Under the Directoire (1795-1799), the control of the state once again fell into the hands of the notables. A new constitution was promulgated and the preface of Bossy d'Anglas left no doubt about the new direction: "*We must be ruled by the best. The best are those that are the most developed, who have the greatest interest in maintaining order,... equality before the law, a reasonable person cannot ask for more*". Census suffrage (censitary voting) was reinstalled and the new Declaration of Human Rights no longer referred to the State's duty to provide assistance. Instead it stipulated that property was the right to enjoy and dispose of it, of its income and the proceeds of its labor and industry. Maximum prices were released and the manufactures were denationalized: economic freedom had been restored! The section meetings and the clubs were forcefully closed and the population disarmed.

With the reversal of the revolution, reactionaries and royalists benefitted again and a real shift in power threatened the 1797 elections. Who was supposed to save the republic? Certainly not the people. In the fall of 1795 Napoleon had already crushed an uprising of the pro-royal guard, after which he was promoted to the position of supreme army commander. The bourgeoisie had to appeal to the army, only to remain in power via a barely concealed legislation of exceptions. When a political crisis broke out again in 1799, Napoleon intervened again, but this time he held on to power. The bourgeoisie could retain its economic power but it had lost its direct

political power. The old nobility was curtailed and the clergy did not regain its former power base nor its property. The lower classes were no longer satisfied. In his *Manifesto of Equals*, Babeuf stated: “*equality was nothing but a beautiful and sterile fiction of the law. Today, when equality is claimed in a stronger voice, we are told: Silence, you miserable people! Equality of fact is only a chimera*”.

With Napoleon, every pursuit of real equality must give way to ‘*la grandeur de la France*’, which found its expression under the empire in an oligarchy of high soldiers, new nobility and rich. The term ideology gets a negative connotation and is called by Bonaparte ‘dark metaphysics’. Yet there is still the danger that “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*”, the trinity of the revolution, could be taken too literally or seriously by the people. According to the emperor, religion has a role to play here. “*Society cannot exist without the inequality of fortunes, and inequality cannot exist without religion. When a man dies of hunger beside another man who has plenty, it is impossible for him to reach this difference if there is not an authority which says to him: ‘God wants it so; there are poor and rich in this world, but then, and for eternity, the sharing will be different’*”. No social equality under Napoleon but if one monument has survived him, it is the ‘Code Napoleon’, the equality before law. In comparison with the Ancien Regime this is a huge step forward in terms of formal equality and legal certainty; not only is the work of Bigot de Préameneu, Malleville, Tronchet and Portalis a brilliant synthesis of the legal traditions with innovations, the civil code has left its mark on the legal cultures of the European continent.

There is, however, one important exception to the “all-French-people-are-equal-before-the-law”; i.e. women. During the revolutionary period, equality between men and women had progressed (at least in Paris). Not everyone was happy with that evolution. The president of the “*Association of Republican and Revolutionary Women*” was scornfully asked since when the women were allowed to renounce their sex! Access to the clubs was made difficult for them, but there were considerable improvements in the area of divorce, inheritance law, etc. Napoleon, as a good soldier, saw the woman primarily as a supplier of future soldiers. Women, again, received the corresponding status: this from mother under the authority of the husband.

At first sight, the trajectory of the French revolution is quite sarcastic: it starts with a monarchy and ends with an empire. Yet one should not lose sight of the fact that – even after the restoration – the Ancien Regime was a thing of the past: gone were the society of estates, the feudal

nobility, and the idea that the state was the expression of the prince, etc. The new elites, even in aristocratic travesty, serve the nation-state, and that nation-state, in turn, is the expression of capitalism. On the one hand, what was present as a dream (the revolution), which for many seemed like a total turnaround, was crushed. On the other hand, it was demonstrated that the social engineering of a society against a natural unchanging order was possible.

4. Conservatism

In 1818, Chateaubriand and de Lamennais published a magazine entitled '*Le conservateur*', probably the first time the term conservatism was used to describe a particular political movement. However, while liberalism can be more or less adequately linked to certain historical periods, this is much less the case for conservatism. According to some conservatism is part of '*la condition humaine*', a human characteristic to accept what exists as the norm and to feel aversion to any drastic change. This individual reflex – perhaps better called traditionalism – is indeed something that many have already experienced. But this is not the same as political conservatism, which refers to a more coherent attitude to social relationships, i.e. it is an ideology. Conservatism assumes that things are just what they are, and that all attempts by ideologists and other world improvers are bound to fail. People and societies are not malleable or only to a very limited extent: men remain men, the poor and the rich have always been there, oppression is of all times,... this does not need an explication; it is a simple matter of fact.

A distinction can be made between status quo conservatives who reject any form of change and those who allow gradual changes that are guided by societal elites. But didn't Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the 'father' of conservatism, say "*a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation*"? In other words, to save the societal system, adjustments are sometimes required, so the status quo does not mean a total freezing of social relationships. Burke does, however, unconditionally reject any sudden change, as is clearly stated in his "*Reflections on the French Revolution*". Man, as an incarnation of reason is an unacceptable abstraction, because man is a mixture of reason, emotions and other non-rational drives. The French philosophers are not only blind and haughty when they describe the individual as a rational, thinking, being, but they are also reckless when they think of him as a rational acting force.

“The science of governing, a practical matter in itself, and intended for practical achievements, is a matter that requires experience, and so much experience that no one can acquire it during his lifetime ...”. For Burke, the only touchstone is the social ratio or the ‘*common sense*’, namely all that exists therefore proves that it is valid. Or in other words, these are the traditions as they came to us in institutionalized form, purified by the experiences of former generations. Social equality is therefore a mental construction, if not it would already have been realized. ‘*Liberty is social freedom*’, because freedom is another word for justice, laid down in wise laws and secured by institutions. No metaphysics are involved, only empiricism. However, Burke also states *“We know, and what is better, we feel inwardly that religion is the basis of society and the source of all goods and comfort.”* The unconditional loyalty to the past, as expressed in the present, was for Burke ultimately nothing but the humble bow for God’s providence. History therefore appears to be nothing but the way in which God, through human actors, realizes his plan of salvation. Man is thus not the embodiment of reason but *“by his constitution a religious animal”*.

Alexis de Toqueville (1805-1859), an aristocrat, was a defender of democracy, but, as he wrote in one of his letters, *“I have a taste for democratic institutions but I am an aristocrat by instinct, that is to say that I despise and fear the crowd”*. De Tocqueville supported democracy; all the more so because *“any attempt to thwart democracy is equal to resisting God’s will”*, but not wholeheartedly. Equality and freedom are fundamental human rights, but whether they can be realized simultaneously is another question. With the disappearance of the estate society, which de Toqueville considered to be inevitable, there was no reason why equality should not become the rule. According to de Tocqueville equality implies, in the first place, that everyone is entitled to a comparable income and capital to satisfy his (material) needs. If the resources were available to an unlimited extent, this would not create a problem. But this is not the case, and, in addition, needs are not an ever-expanding social fact. The great danger lies in the fact that, in the absence of the realization of this ideal, equality would be enforced by leveling out differences, by using mediocrity as a mandatory norm. The certainty of equality that one obtains from the government would then take precedence over freedom that one must acquire by him- or herself. A powerful state would then not only owe its origins to social mediocrity, but would reproduce it for its own survival. This fear of ‘*Vermassung*’, which is also related to the atomization of society, is not in itself a characteristic of conservatism! It is the solutions that de Toqueville suggests, that are.

First of all, he was in favor of a geographic decentralization of power. It is easy to guess what this would have meant for France at the start of the 19th century. In rural areas in particular, power would almost automatically have ended up again in conservative hands. During the French Revolution, and certainly during the Convention period, the emphasis was on a centralized authority. That is why the term ‘Jacobin state’ is still used for a regime that wants to regulate the political from one central administration, one locus of power. This meant that power was transferred towards the urbanized and modern centers. De Toqueville was well aware that decentralization meant that change was slowed down as the countryside was more conservative and those who held positions of power were mostly of noble descent. Secondly, de Toqueville put his hopes on various intermediary organizations of a political, social and literary nature. These would not only promote social cohesion, but their leaders would also be a kind of substitute for the former aristocracy. Ultimately, the ‘code morale’, i.e. civic sense, sense of responsibility, ... must also be developed.

But de Toqueville was too much of a realist, to have high hopes for the nobility. In January 1848 he delivered the following speech to the Chamber: *“As long as property law was at the origin of many other things, it was easy to defend or, rather, it was not attacked: it was the citadel of our society. But today it is seen as the last non-destructive fortress of the aristocratic world ... Look into the hearts of the working class. It is true that they are less consumed by political passions in the narrow sense, but do you not notice that their passions have shifted from the political to the social? Don’t you see that, little by little, ideas and opinions are spreading, that are not satisfied with replacing this or that law, minister or government, but who want to change the foundations of society?”*. All of this, naturally, does not make him very hopeful or fill him with joy, but in the end this evolution could not be stopped.

Hegel (1770-1831) undoubtedly occupies a first-rate position among the defenders of an inevitable order. In the following, we will attempt to display a simplified image of his ideas in this regard, a classic self-defensive reflex for anyone trying to describe Hegel’s complex thinking. The Hegelian starting point is absolute idealism, which means that the idea is not a creation of subjective thinking, but is a reality, even more, the only objective reality. The development of the idea, into the universal all-embracing Idea – and therefore also reality – is nothing but history. History is therefore an evolution from the lower to the higher, at the same time it is the evolution to freedom.

How is development occurring? Everything that is, is a relationship. One can only grasp something reasonably when one sees that thing in its connection to the larger whole. Take an apple blossom for example. With my intellect I see the apple blossom as a cross-section of a process. Through the use of reason I see the connection with the apple blossom's origin (the apple tree); what the blossom is not yet (an apple); the difference with a cherry blossom etc. In other words, by making those connections, and only because of that, the content of a thing is determined. Within the becoming process, the emphasis is on dialectical relationships, on the relationship between what is (the Thesis) and what is not (the Antithesis). The tension between the two is 'Aufheben' (lifted up) in the Synthesis. *Aufheben*, for Hegel, meant to 'save' as well as to 'abolish', so it is not the middle way (the gray between white and black), but a union of the two moments (theses-antithesis) on a higher level.

For example, there was a strong commitment to worldly affairs among the Greeks and Romans, but freedom was lacking (Thesis). With Christianity the principle of freedom is introduced, but one turns away from worldly affairs to focus on the spiritual (Antithesis). The Reformation forms the synthesis of this dialectic tension as the worldly becomes secularized (through work ethics) and the spiritual is brought back to the world (through individual responsibility), so that both freedom and the worldly are reconfirmed. According to Hegel, this dialectical evolution proceeds in different 'jumps' or stages. Everything includes both quality and quantity. Step-by-step, quantitative changes turn into a qualitative leap at a certain point in time. In this way one can lose one's hair one by one (quantity), until the last fatal hair falls and baldness occurs (quality).

Now that we have described the laws of evolution and development in more detail, the question immediately arises of who is the bearer of this evolution, who is the central agent? Even though Hegel distinguished high qualities in certain individuals (e.g. Napoleon); because they strive for the universal through their '*Moralität*' (morality), the individual largely remained cut off from the whole by his selfishness. The people is the concrete incarnation in which evolution is taking place. But that same people is a '*formlose Masse*' (a mass without form) when it is not realized in a state. Ultimately it comes down to this: "*The state is the reality of concrete freedom*". Because the state issues laws, objective freedom is achieved, that is, freedom for the whole, which is different from the subjective freedom of each individual. Acquiring freedom for the individual mean to know the relationships in which he lives and to obey the laws. In this

way objective and subjective freedom coincide, individual morality (*Moralität*) merges with social morality (*Sittlichkeit*) and thus the individual is embedded in evolution.

Therefore civil society (*bürgerliche gesellschaft*) and state are not synonymous. Individual or group interests dominate in society, for the state only the universal interest counts. Hence the state is not an object of society, but finds a purpose in itself, it is a subject. Both are, however, not separate from each other. The family and the classes are in their own way transcending strictly individual interests. According to Hegel there are three estates. Firstly, the farmers, i.e. the substantial estate that has independence and stability. Secondly, the industrials or reflective estate, which, through this reflection stands for freedom and change, and ultimately the civil service, or universal position, that only serves the public, general, interest. The corporations are the political expression of the first two positions, which both defend private interests and stand for objective morality, through their emphasis on professionalism and honesty.

The substantial position, precisely because of its stability, has direct access to the first Chamber (in concrete terms, these are the Prussian Junkers). The industrial estate, which on the contrary is a fluctuating element in civil society, chooses its representatives for the second Chamber through the corporations. Although there is only a mediated relationship with the government, it is still present. This is necessary because the civil service is not yet perfect, and mainly to prevent it from developing a private interest that does not coincide with the general interest. The monarch bundles, in his hands, the three powers (estates) that are, to Hegel, indivisible. Because the monarchy is hereditary, the 'nature' of the monarch is inclined to see the public interest as his own and vice versa. The monarch is therefore not a despot, nor is he the sole ruler. In fact, he is nothing more than the personification of rationality, which rests with the civil service. Hegel's ideal state is in fact the '*Beamtenstaat*', of which the monarch is the concrete embodiment. Far from having a negative connotation, the bureaucracy (which only serves the public interest and has the necessary education to recognize and realize this) is the agent of universal evolution.

Equality in the social and political fields is neither possible nor desirable for Hegel. The only equality is that everyone can gain access to the civil service, to the universal class. We have already mentioned what Hegel meant by freedom: it consists in recognizing oneself in the institutions and laws of the state as an expression of universal reason. Private freedom cannot be completely suppressed however, because then one would ignore the internal oppositions that

exist within men: governed by individual interests but striving for the merging into the universal. There must therefore be room for freedom of the press, of parties, associations, ... but only to the extent that it does not harm the public interest.

It is in fact the 'Weltgeist' (world spirit) that determines evolution, using the great figures of history as its instruments. These historical individuals think they pursue their own goals with complete freedom, but through what Hegel calls the '*ruse of reason*' they do nothing but realizing rationality. Here Hegel is moving on tightrope, and some misinterpretation is almost obvious. "*A historical figure does not have the necessary calmness to want this or that, to show much caution, because he pursues a certain goal without taking anything else into account. So it happens to him that he harms, light-heartedly, interests, great interests, even holy interests, a behavior that is undoubtedly morally reprehensible. Such a 'big' figure necessarily tramples numerous innocent flowers on its way...*". If "world history is the Last Judgment", the door is dangerously opened for various crimes that 'become' historically 'necessary' in the name of rationality.

The state that Hegel is talking about is certainly not the *Ancien Régime*, and he did not fail to acclaim the French Revolution (because it was necessary). It is not a liberal state either because not only are the personal freedoms subordinate to the '*raison d'État*' (state reason), but the interests of entrepreneurs can also be in contrast to the general interests. Hegel sees his ideal state incarnated in the Prussian order. For Hegel, this is the most rational emanation of the pursuit that must bring Germany unity and economic progress. And yet there is ambiguity about Hegel's work. In his dialectical thinking, contradiction is the essence of every reality, and violence is often necessary to arrive at a synthesis. But if the Prussian state is the emanation of concrete freedom and reason, to what extent are the contradictions (the engines of progress) not frozen? Hegelianism, after Hegel's death, therefore falls apart into an 'orthodox school', which becomes conservative, and an 'Left Hegelian' tendency (e.g. Ludwig Feuerbach) that uses dialectical thinking as a critical method. Karl Marx will pick this line of thinking up and radically change it... the ruse of reason?

At first sight, there is a huge gap between the Byzantine metaphysical twists of Hegel and the positivism of Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Yet they find each other in the conviction that, ultimately, only one single order is possible. Comte was an apprentice and later collaborator of Saint-Simon. As a scientist, his main interest was to find a scientific basis for a positivist study

of society. He was convinced that a positivist social doctrine was possible, a science of politics could also be developed. According to Comte, the rapidly changing industrializing society was ruled too much by the struggle between different forms of egoism (of both workers and capitalists). It is the task of positivism to develop a common moral code, which would emerge from scientific findings and would transcend the utopian ideals of collective equality on the one hand and atomic egoistic individualism on the other. In other words, Comte believed that the social problems arising from industrial society could be solved by science, as summarized in his well-known motto "Savoir pour prévoir" (know to predict).

Auguste Comte's '*philosophie positive*' holds that human thinking occurred in three stages. In an initial period, an attempt was made to explain everything by the will of the gods, or by the existence of a single god. During a second stage, the metaphysical stage, the gods were brought down to earth and were now called rights, popular sovereignty, democracy, etc. But this era also must pass and give way to positivism. Positivism is not concerned with abstract reflections, but only with establishing facts and arranging them in order to arrive at (societal) laws. Thus, sociology, armed with the positivist method, will replace politics.

However, this positivism is being contradicted by Comte himself. The observation that workers are subordinate to entrepreneurs, that men and women are not equally entitled, etc. is (or may be) a neutral observation. However, with this starting point one can go in two directions: the facts either reflect a 'wrong' reality and therefore can or must be changed, or the facts reflect a reality that must be defended as such. Comte clearly opts for the preservation of the existing situation, so as not to disturb order and social unity. "*Les vivants sont toujours, et de plus en plus gouvernés par les morts: telle est la loi fondamentale de l'ordre humain*" (The living are always, and more and more ruled by the dead: this is the fundamental law of the human order). The attempted order is the updated version of the medieval functional order, in which everyone gets an assigned place, which connects them organically with the larger whole. The government must set two objectives: ensuring progress and ensuring order. These goals are intimately intertwined with each other and must be strengthened by stimulating the sociability of the individuals. Just as power must promote progress, so must the spiritual power (dominated by sociologists) convince the subordinates to accept their place and function. (The superiors rarely find it difficult to assume that they belong to the elite). "*C'est ainsi que le mouvement intellectuel et l'ébranlement social... conduisent l'élite de l'humanité à l'avènement décisif d'un véritable pouvoir spirituel, à la fois plus consistant et plus progressif que celui dont le Moyen*

Age tenta prématurément l'admirable ébauche” (Thus, the intellectual movement and the social upheaval ... lead the elite of humanity to the decisive advent of a true spiritual power, both more consistent and more progressive than that the Middle Ages prematurely tried to admirably sketch). Comte's positivist approach, in an attempt to transcend metaphysics, falls back on conservatism, whose ideological aspects are elevated to science.

Conservatism around the mid-19th century has clearly reconciled itself with industrial society and the interests of the new oligarchy. Anyone who still hoped for the restoration of the Ancien Régime at that time belonged more to Madame Tussaud's wax museum than being political thinkers. Moreover, conservatism has largely detached itself from anti-intellectualism. Social inequality does not stem from God's will or from philosophical presuppositions: it is scientifically demonstrable and defensible. At a time when the prestige of science had become indisputable, this is a new and powerful weapon of the conservative reaction.

5. Nationalism and a turn to empire?

Modern nationalism originated in the 19th century, and received a powerful boost from the French wars of conquest. Of course there has always been a kind of connection with the immediate social environment, based on a real or perceived unity of interests. This was nothing more than loyalty to the community in which one lived, except perhaps for the mystical attachment to a Christian world as a comprehensive totality during the Middle Ages. People from Ghent did not consider themselves Flemish, just as the people of Marseille did not feel French. Only with the rise of the modern centralized nation-state could nationalism gain traction. Immediately a conflictual situation arose, because the loyalty to the homeland that was demanded did not necessarily coincide with the loyalty towards the people to which one belonged. During the French Revolution, especially when foreign intervention was imminent, a wave of patriotism swept across the country, but at the same time the centralized Jacobin state conception left little or no room for regional differences (and French became the mandatory official language, which met with opposition, in, for example, Brittany).

Nationalism, as a political movement is more of an accompanying than an actual independent movement. Nationalism as such does not exist. It only gets its concrete content by its merging with another political movement, or by the social class that carries it. Terms such as the nation,

the people, the past express not one, but different realities. It is only by defining these vague terms that nationalism actually acquires content. In the first half of the 19th century, nationalism can still largely be described as liberation nationalism due to the influence of liberalism and romanticism. Both the French domination and the politics of the great powers after 1815 lay at the basis of this. This pursuit of political emancipation of foreign powers led in 1830 and again in 1848 to various national uprisings, which, however, were nearly all crushed.

The best example of a nationalist movement, spiced with liberal and romantic ingredients, is provided by Giuseppe Mazzini, whose life is entirely dominated by the Risorgimento, the reunification of Italy. Mazzini is the prototype of the idealistic and romantic nationalist, including an unfortunate love affair that denied him marriage. One of his (numerous) newspapers was called '*Pensiero ed azione*' (thought and action). According to Mazzini, God created all peoples as equals, so that no nation may oppress another one. On the contrary, all peoples must work together as brothers, and the (unsuccessful) 'Young Europe' movement was intended to be an umbrella organization between peers for cooperation. The people are not only threatened from outside; repression and atomization are also eroding their nature. Emancipation demands that materialism, which divides a people into classes and sets all individuals against each other, be replaced by a system based on morality and spirituality. The notion of individual rights – which leads to selfishness – should be replaced by that of duties to the people. The way out for alienation brings Mazzini dangerously close to conservatism. It would be impossible to list the conspiracies and rebellions in which Mazzini participated. In 1849, when the pope was expelled from Rome, he was part of the triumvirate. For a moment his effort seemed to be rewarded, but the French armies soon put an end to this dream "*Neither the pope nor the king, but only god and the people will open the way to the future for us*". Yet it were Victor Emmanuel's armies and cunning diplomacy that led to a united Italian kingdom. Cavour, the 'Macher' (man of action), described Mazzini as 'the head of a gang of murderers': the new, unified, state was not keen on those who disturbed the social order...

Not all nationalists were internationally inspired. Patriotism also emphasized a nation-state that was internally authoritarian and externally involved in a constant power struggle. There was no room for partial nationalisms (e.g. in Belgium), there was the rejection of parliamentarism in favor of strong leadership, and the army and war became the symbols of the 'soul of the nation'. Conflicts with other states were not only seen as inevitable, but as high points in which the power of the nation's own power could unfold.

France, although militarily defeated, remained under the spell of the historical role it had played, and the figure of Napoleon was given almost mythical proportions. This quest for grandeur is the guide of the historian Michelet, who in his 17-part “*History of France*” counterfeited France’s fame. It is a typical instance of exemplary historiography, in which ‘facts’ are created to glorify the greatness of the nation-state, and this from the earliest times... ‘national histories’ were thus born. (And which, if it did not exist, as was the case for Belgium, were invented by Henri Pirenne).

The nation was not an abstraction for Michelet, but “*une personne morale, un mystère admirable éclaté*”. It was a higher reality than the individual, who only found his identity through this collective past. The nation is the people, and Michelet also saw himself as part of the ‘normal people’, not as a representative of the upper class. But that love for the people is primarily a romantic feeling, the worship of a concept. Stendal wrote: “*I am horrified by the mob (I don't want to get in touch with it) while at the same time wishing them all the happiness of the world as a people ... I would do anything for the happiness of the people, but I'd rather spend 14 days a month in prison than live among shopkeepers*”. France’s greatness, however, had received a blow with Waterloo, with which Michelet still wasn’t reconciled. England and Russia, he wrote, were “*two weak and unsaturated giants cheating Europe, big empires but weak peoples...*”. The distinction between the exaltation of one’s own people, national chauvinism and open enmity with other people became very small.

In German nationalism, that line was soon crossed. Attention should be drawn here to the frustration to which the German intelligentsia was then exposed. If, on the one hand, there was a glorious past, Germany now offered the sight of a political patchwork, economically behind and without a bourgeoisie that could stand up against the kings. In this psychological context, it was very tempting to engage in overcompensation, to pass the blame for the backwardness of Germany, in a xenophobic way, on foreign countries and, ultimately, to see the only way out of this impasse, in a politics of power and violence.

Fichte (1762-1814) was at first an enthusiastic defender of the French revolution, who only changed camp in his famous “*Reden an die deutsche Nation*” (Speech to the German nation) after France’s invasion. Not only did he distance himself from his former principles, but he embarked on an anti-Latin rant. The French now only appeared to have a historical self-

awareness, while the Germans had a (superior) metaphysical ego; unveiling a ‘missionary idea’ of German’s role in the world. The same applied to Friedrich List (1789-1846), whose first concern was German reunification. The creation of a customs union (the Zollverein) was an important step in that direction. The internal tariffs (taxes) were abolished and replaced by one common external tariff. The starting point of List was a kind of evolutionary model, in which every state, in its development, went through various ‘*Stufen*’ (stages). In contrast to free trade ideology, he believed that the construction of toll walls (protectionism) was a necessary measure to protect a young industry. The power of a nation rested in its economic-industrial base, but this in turn was determined by the power of the mind, which was (how else could it be?) a pre-eminently German affair. The right to expansion is a logical consequence of this.

Looking back from the twenty-first century, it is sometimes argued that the first germs of Nazism were to be found in 19th century nationalism (and even Hegel gets involved). It is of course comfortable to situate fascism geographically, outside one’s own national borders, or to link it to the ‘nature’ of a (different) people. There is no doubt that many German nationalists honored the strong state and cherished elitist views. When discussing the second half of the 19th century, it is obvious that Germans did not have a monopoly on xenophobic nationalism as it affected all of Western Europe. It is true that German Nazi ideologists referred to 19th-century views, and thus inscribed themselves in what they saw as ‘a tradition’. But as it turns out, this says more about the Nazis than about Hegel, Fichte, etc.

In the second half of the 18th century, most influential intellectuals such as Smith, Bentham, Burke or Diderot were highly critical of European imperialist conquests without de facto rejecting colonialism. Less than fifty years later, by 1830, little remained of this critical attitude. In France and Great Britain, liberal imperialism, supported by diverse thinkers such as the Tocqueville or J.S. Mill, provided the arguments to subjugate non-European peoples and conquer their countries. *“This sea change in opinions on empire accompanied an increasingly exclusive conception among European thinkers of national community and political capacity. The liberal turn to empire in this period was also accompanied by the eclipse of nuanced and pluralist theories of progress as they gave way to more contemptuous notions of “backwardness” and a cruder dichotomy between barbarity and civilization.”* (Pitts 2005: 2).

Although liberalism as a specific political ideology did not emerge until the 19th century, the term was already in use earlier. At the beginning of the 19th century, the term stood, among other things, for the defense of individual rights (such as religious freedom, equality before the law,...), a critical as well as non-oppositional attitude towards royal power and the politics of mercantile states. The universalism that united liberal thinkers - regardless of their differences - was based on the principle that all people were equal and that certain moral principles were universal. However, liberal thinkers often defended de facto human inequality and legitimized the colonial adventure. The question therefore arises as to whether imperialism is an inherent part of liberalism; a question that remains at the forefront of contemporary debates.

Some claim that liberalism has always been imperialist because adherence to a specific concept of progress and the desire to establish the rule of law have always led liberals to support and legitimize imperialist projects. Uday Mehta, for example, argues that imperialism, far from contradicting liberal tenets, in fact stemmed from liberal assumptions about reason and historical progress. Confronted with unfamiliar cultures such as India, British liberals could only see them as backward or infantile. In this, liberals manifested a narrow conception of human experience and ways of being in the world. Others claim, just the opposite, that the ideals of liberalism are by definition anti-imperialist and that liberal support for imperialism is nothing more or less than the smuggling in of illiberal ideas.

The enthusiasm for imperialism among liberal thinkers remained a blind spot in the analysis of ideology for a long time. However, there is a crucial link between the defense of liberal ideas in Europe and the legitimization of colonialism and imperialism, or in other words, a link between the development of liberalism in Europe and the simultaneous justification of imperialism. Prominent British and French liberal thinkers, including John Stuart Mill (see further) and Alexis de Tocqueville, vigorously supported the conquest of non-European peoples. As theories of human progress and emancipation became less nuances, and less tolerant of cultural differences, a rise of European civilizational self-confidence boosted the belief that imperial expansion abroad could assist the emergence of stable liberal democracies within Europe. Without any doubt, there are “*interconnections between liberal nation-building in nineteenth-century France and Britain and the growth of their empires*”, suggesting “*that the process of democratization in western Europe generated exclusions not only internal to those societies but also globally, and that liberal thinkers of this period were deeply implicated in these exclusions.*” (Pitts 2005: 254).

Losurdo pushes this point further. In his “*Liberalism: A Counter History*” he asks the question whether John C. Calhoun, champion of the slave-holding south of the USA, should be seen as a liberal. Calhoun was to his contemporaries a liberal, someone who resisted absolute rule and defended minority rights against an overbearing majority. However, he also saw “*slavery to be ‘a positive good’ that civilization could not possibly renounce. Calhoun repeatedly denounced intolerance and the crusading spirit, not in order to challenge the enslavement of blacks or the ruthless hunting down of fugitive slaves, but exclusively to brand abolitionists as ‘blind fanatics’ who ‘consider themselves under the most sacred obligation to use every effort to destroy’ slavery, a form of property legitimized and guaranteed by the Constitution. Blacks were not among the minorities defended with such vigour and legal erudition*” (Losurdo 2011:1-2). As most would consider slavery to be the antithesis of liberty (and thus of liberalism), it is quite difficult to accept Calhoun’s liberalism. Losurdo then raises the question “why should we continue to dignify John Locke with the title of father of Liberalism”? Locke, while opposing so called political slavery practiced by absolute monarchy, considered slavery in the colonies to be absolutely acceptable. Losurdo illustrates thus illustrates how liberalism has always been an ideology full of contradictions, moreover one characterized by an unfolding tension between the freedom of some and the lack of freedom of some others. Liberty for ‘the community of the free’ has coexisted with oppression and exploitation for the many excluded from this community.

6. Utopian socialism

A social formation in which industrial capitalism is increasingly dominant, but in no way exclusive or able to directly affect the majority of the population; a predominantly rural economy in which strong remains of feudalism remain; a craft and artisanal activity that is involved in a survival battle; a Christian ideology, heavily compromised in its leading and hegemonic role, but certainly in the rural areas still very much present, ... all this is a typical image of a transitional society in which the old and the new are intertwined. This also has an effect on the way in which social forces see themselves. In the first half of the 19th century, the bourgeoisie is by no means that self-conscious class from after 1848, and the term ‘popular masses’ is preferred to that of the proletariat. The lower layers of the population consisted of impoverished rural people, day laborers, self-employed workers who could barely survive,

factory workers and so on. Not only was their objective situation far from homogeneous, but neither was it reflected in their consciousness. To the extent that there could be a spontaneous class consciousness, it was a mixture of desperate resistance, going back to an idealized past and some traces of more future-oriented thinking. Just as the capitalist mode of production would ultimately press society into a more uniform format, so this consciousness would only later come to more coherence. It is hardly surprising that even the early socialist ideologues had different sources of inspiration, were often inconsistent in their thinking, and came up with the most diverse solutions for societal issues. The result was a colorful and undoubtedly rich mosaic of views that resulted in a fragmentation of forces or... *'La foire des idées'* (the fair of ideas), as it was called in a French caricature. They did have one thing in common: almost all of them, inspired by morality or Christianity, acted in the name of 'justice'. No one doubted that justice was a noble affair, or that it involved a mobilizing force. The annoying thing was, of course, that when two groups had conflicting interests, two notions of what may or may not be fair and just were used. We bundle this broad range of views, which we only deal with in a fragmentary way, under the heading of early socialism.

Saint-Simon, although of noble descent, in no way identified with the Ancien Régime. Suppose, he said, that the king's brother would die, and with him the nobility, the clergy, the military commanders and everyone else. *"This accident would certainly aggrieve the French (...) this loss of thirty thousand individuals deemed the most important of the state would cause them grief only in a purely sentimental way, because the state would not incur any harm"*. The real power of the state lies elsewhere: *"the industrial class is the fundamental class, the nurturing class of society"*. Saint-Simon defined the industrial class as all those who produce, so not only the *'haute bourgeoisie'*. For him it is primarily a moral category, all those who do not spend their days inactive and unproductive.

Saint-Simonism was an optimistic social and political movement that believed in the incremental growth of science and industry that were, moreover, synonymous with emancipation. Saint-Simon was opposed to the anarchy of the prevailing production system, and believed that government planning could provide a solution. The government did not have a political task in his opinion, it was rather a technocratic elite that lets its decisions be determined by (neutral) economic motives. The organization of the credit system, in particular, seemed very important to him. Saint-Simon was opposed to any egalitarian concern and, on the contrary, favored a strongly layered society in which, however, poverty must be reduced. The

task of the government was “*to improve as soon as possible the moral and physical existence of the poorest class*”. Saint-Simonism contains a dissonance, moral indignation in the face of poverty on the one hand, and scientific and planned development of the economy on the other. A part of Saint-Simon’s followers rushed into ‘*Le Nouveau Christianisme*’, while the more ‘sober’ followers engaged in the digging of the Suez and Panama Canals or the development of the French railways. Socialism, technocracy, new religion, or a bizarre mix?

Groups gain their consciousness through their actions and mobilizations, and it is almost always the case that the first attempts are aimed at making quantitative improvements within their own immediate sphere of life. For the workers, this meant improving their working conditions, higher wages, in short, raising their living conditions. In practically all countries there were legal restrictions on associations and strikes, such as the *Combination Acts* in Great Britain or the *Le Chapelier* law in France (and Belgium). The so-called ‘*mutuelles*’ (support funds and health insurance funds that were tolerated) functioned as hidden strike funds.

The problem of the general work strike, a strike with clear political objectives (for example enforcing the general right to vote), soon arose. It was not always clear where an economic strike ended and where a political one began, especially with a repressive state apparatus that was manifestly on the side of capital. Even those who opted to use the weapon of the strike only to enforce ‘union (i.e. economic) demands’ admitted this. The more radical wing saw the general strike as a means for profound change of the whole system. Shorter working days (the 10-hour day) or work regulations (prohibition of underground mining work for women) demonstrated the possibilities of the trade union movement. It should not be forgotten that the state, as the regulator of capitalism, also benefited from the physical maintenance of the labor factor. Making political concessions encountered a much tougher resistance. As the achievements grew and the trade union stabilized, the tendency increased to no longer embark on ‘dangerous adventures.’ What was later to be called ‘trade unionism’ is precisely the limitation of the field of action of labor to the purely socio-economic level.

The refusal to enter the political field, either to gain power within the state apparatus, and ultimately to take control of the state itself, or to break state power through a revolution, was also shared by other currents. The underlying argumentation can be varied. One of these tendencies proposed the creation of an alternative form of production, the cooperative, as an objective. The supporters of this strategy believed that creating a second, alternative, economic

system or circuit would gradually drive back capitalism. The concrete examples of these first projects meant that more and more people would be attracted to this, so that it became a competitor to capitalism.

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was co-owner of one of the most modern cotton mills in Scotland, 'The new Lanarck Mills'. Owen was not satisfied with being a successful businessman alone. What he wanted as he described it in a '*New view on Society*' was to come to another society. This new society, which was based on the natural goodness of the people, had to be reorganized through education. "*Man's character is made for, and not by him*", so if one wished to proceed with this necessary mental conversion, one had to change first the environment. Owen converted his company into an institution where efficiency and a humane work situation were combined. Not only were the working days shorter and the wages higher, child labor limited and combined with school education, but the factory even made profits.

Robert Owen was widely admired for this, until the moment he tried to set up such projects all over Britain. Owen argued that cooperative communities should be established everywhere, engaging both in agricultural and industrial activity, and that would be largely self-sufficient. After encountering various refusals and setbacks, he decided to take his chance in the New World. His 'New-Harmony' community attracted a colorful mix of inexperienced enthusiasts and adventurers. The experiment failed as the participants had too much disputes. Back in Britain, he remained active in the trade union movement, founded a labor bank, traveled through the country like a good-thinking prophet, but failed time and time again. In spite of all of this, Owen has been one of the pioneers of the workers' movement, mainly because he did not only write about the workers with sympathy, but he actually tried to find ways to alleviate their misery.

When asked whether he was a republican or a democrat, Proudhon replied he was neither, that he was an anarchist. Anarchism is not synonymous with anarchy, the lack of norms. "*The true laws come from the essence of society, they do not come from any authority.*" Anarchism means the rejection of any power, both secular or spiritual, that imposes rules from above. because a society is a coexistence of free individuals, and may not go beyond or against that freedom. The principle of justice is like '*a central star that controls the community,*' and everyone has a moral standard by which to test their behavior. This does not lead to egoism, whereby a community is seen as a random collection of people who have nothing to do with each other, but to social

individualism. This social dimension is the starting point to fight against inequality, individualism is the motivation of Proudhon's *anti-étatisme*.

Proudhon's outspoken language "*Qu'est-ce que la propriété? La propriété c'est le vol*" (What is property? Property is theft"), frightened the bourgeoisie. However, Proudhon was not in favor of the abolition of private property, he was the defender of the producer. "*What is the producer? Nothing. What should he be? Everything*". In a large-scale company, the result of the cooperation (and of the division of labor) benefits the entrepreneur, therefore the workers are exploited. Proudhon wanted to rebuild the economic sector on the basis of mutualism. Society needed to be organized starting from workers who voluntarily associated themselves and had their own means of production, so that everyone could fully reap the benefits of his work. Mutual contracts should be concluded between these communes, so that a network of agreements starting from the base spun society. Property is the last of the false gods, says Proudhon, also adding that property comes from the desire of humanity to escape the slavery of primordial communism. A paradox? Although there are quite a few in his work, this is not necessarily the case. Proudhon, himself from the region of Besançon, remained his entire life determined by that environment of small farmers and artisans, individualistic and attached to their property which they saw as a mainstay of their independence. Concentration of ownership and capitalism are for Proudhon primarily a moral problem, a rejection of wealth and richness from the angle of the (obligatory) austerity of the little man.

Proudhon saw the state as the major attacker of individual freedom. And it did not matter to him whether this state implemented social policies or not, or even nationalized the industry. The state remained, in his view, an attack on freedom. Therefore the workers' strategy could not be aimed at conquering state power, either through parliamentary means or through violence. That state could only be destroyed and replaced by a federated system. "*Just as man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchism.*" Parallel to the socio-economic aspect, this is a voluntary association of autonomous entities, which logically would lead to the abolition of state borders.

Large parts of the workers, while seeking political participation, gradually sought a path within the state system. In England, the Chartists pursued, by peaceful means, an extension of the right to vote. It was soon clear that the regime had no intention of giving in. Not everyone intended to undertake the long march through the institutions, or saw salvation in a parliamentary

presence of the workers. ‘*La société des saisons*’, led by August Blanqui (1805-1881), was an example of a radical movement. Blanqui was convinced that the general right to vote could, except for Paris, only lead to a strengthening of the political right. After all, it is not the case that factory work or low income automatically resulted in a voting behavior that would punish the oppressors. The ruling classes had an ideological hold on large parts of the people (who were not politically educated), but they also had all kinds of deterrent techniques to intimidate the unwilling. Blanqui held the idea that a small conscious group had to seize power and install a transitional regime that would implement a policy in the interest of the masses, so that it could also be educated politically. Much more than a revolution, this is a coup. Neither the good intentions nor the personal courage of ‘*l’enfermé*’ – he spent 33 years in prison – can be questioned. The political validity of his romantic *putschism* is. In May 1839 his hour seemed to have arrived: Blanqui and his followers conquered the Paris town hall, from which the revolution was proclaimed. The occupiers were of course expelled, Blanqui sentenced to death (but obtained mercy later).

1848: a year in which many regimes trembled, but rarely fell. In France, the *roi-bourgeois* Louis Philippe was rejected by large parts of the population. In February, after riots in Paris, he renounced the throne after appointing Napoleon’s grandson as his successor. A kind of provisional government was formed from parliament, but radical republicans and socialists had meanwhile set up their own government in the town hall. Ultimately, a single government was formed through the cooptation of the more radical members. The political inexperience of the newcomers and the political games of the conservatives soon brought the government in difficulties. In 1851, the new president Louis Napoleon committed a coup, and the second empire soon became a reality.

The historian Hobsbawm made a pertinent comment on this: “*In 1948-49 the moderate liberals of Western Europe made two important discoveries: that revolution was dangerous and that some of their essential demands (especially in the economic field) could also be met without revolution. The bourgeoisie ceased to be a revolutionary force*”. In 1848 Marx and Engels wrote “*The Communist manifesto*”.