A Historical – Philosophical Analysis of Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France"

by

AHMET OZCAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

SABANCI UNIVERSITY

FALL 2008

ABSTRACT

This study is a historical – philosophical analysis of Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France". There are two main theses of this study. First of all, it is argued that "Reflections" as a classic text cannot be understood and explained without analyzing the interaction between the text and its historical – philosophical context. In that sense, it is contended that "Reflections" was written in order to defend the 18th century British political system by the arguments which that system already used in its own defense against the omnipresent air of change in Europe, triggered by the industrial revolution and spread by the Enlightenment, which declared the intellectual, moral, political, and economic bankruptcy of Europe's ageing political institutions, beliefs, and practices, and on the inevitable necessity of the wholesale restructuring of the European society. Thus, "Reflections" is read as a theoretical defense of the 18th century English political system as being (1) prudently progressive, (2) aristocratic and (3) post feudal and as the system of *chivalry* which represented the advanced stage of the historical development of the "European civilization" where the interaction of commerce, as the source of wealth, and manners, deriving from noble governance and religious superstition, compounded the spirit of chivalry.

Secondly, "Reflections" is interpreted as an inside critique of the Enlightenment thought which obliges the interpreter to study two interconnected dimensions of the text. On the one hand, Burke is by no means read as an anti – Enlightenment hero. On the contrary, "Reflections" is interpreted as an Enlightenment text which used the core conceptions, acknowledged the main assumptions, and philosophized in the very framework of the Enlightenment thought. However, on the other hand, it is argued that Burke in the "Reflections" developed a theoretical criticism, through an intellectual assault to the French Revolution, of the exaggerated role that the Enlightenment put on the concepts of reason,

progress, and rights of man, by displacing the “abstract reason” with his “practical reason”, contextualizing the discourse of the “rights of men” with his discourse of the “rights of Englishmen”, and integrating the concept of progress into, and excluding the concept of perfection from, his theory of prudent reform. It is argued that whilst Burke was attacking (1) to the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysicians and their theories as abstract and dangerous speculations, (2) to the paper money and unimpeded monied interest as the tyranny of economists and calculators, (3) to the sacred and infallible reason as the new superstition displacing religion as the old one, and to the extremely self – assured will to defame and deconstruct everything associated with the past and to recreate a new world from scratch in an abrupt process, he was directly launching a crusade to the very heart of the Enlightenment thought itself; however within certain limitations because of the organic roots of his political theory in the Enlightenment thought. In the conclusion, the actuality of the “Reflections”, as an early modern text, is discussed for our late modern era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank to my thesis supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Nedim Nomer for sharing his wealth of knowledge and theoretical insights on political philosophy throughout the development of this thesis. In one word, the realization of this study would be totally impossible without his invaluable, since friendly and patient, guidance. I would also like to thank to Prof. Serif Mardin who laid the very solid foundations of my perspective on political thought by directing my intellectual interest to the relationship between history and philosophy, to Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayhan Akman for enabling me to ask totally new questions on Burke's political thought, to Assist. Prof. Dr. Buket Türkmen who guided me to re-evaluate the linkage between Burke's political thought and our contemporary society, and to Assist. Prof. Dr. Cengiz Çağla who has extended the limits of my political thought by constantly reminding the importance of rereading early modern political philosophers, especially Tocqueville and Burke.

I am also grateful to The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) for its support of my graduate education and to the employees of the Information Center of the Sabanci University who patiently provided a great number of resources to my study.

I would also like to thank my friend, Feride Sercan Baysal, who has never hesitated to support and encourage me throughout the writing process of this study, even when I became unbearable. Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to my father, Abdullah Ozcan, who has always supported my intellectual interest in politics and political thought.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This study is an analysis of Edmund Burke's political thought essentially through a reinterpretation of his classic "Reflections on the Revolution in France". There are two ways of interpreting, in Pocock words, two histories to be written of, a classical text.[1] The first is the history of authorship in which the interpreter studies, first of all, the historical – philosophical context that produced the text and the subsequent effect of the text itself on its historical – philosophical context, i.e. an analysis of the interaction between the text and its context; secondly, the intention of the author of the text in producing the text and the eventual degree of realization of that intention; and finally, how the author of the text came to do the what he did, i.e. an analysis of the conceptions of the author as the theoretical means of the text. The second is the history of readership and reception in which the interpreter studies how the text was read. This study belongs to the history of authorship.

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze the relationship between Burke's political thought and the Enlightenment by starting from the naïve question "How can Burke, as an Enlightenment philosopher, be designated as the master theorist of prejudice, prescription, myth, and superstition, and the champion of noble, clerical, and royal mystery?" The main argument of this study is that "Reflections" is an inside – critique of the Enlightenment thought, though Burke was certainly not an anti – Enlightenment hero. On the one hand, "Reflections" was a critique from inside; since Burke was an Enlightenment philosopher and he believed in, and wrote with, the fundamental notions of the Enlightenment thought, such as reason and progress. On the other hand, while "Reflections" developed a theoretical criticism, through an intellectual assault to the French Revolution, of the fundamental conceptions of

[1] J. G. A. Pocock, "Introduction", in Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, p. viii.

the Enlightenment, such as reason, progress, social change, and rights of man; he was directly launching a crusade to the very heart of the Enlightenment thought itself, however within certain limitations because of its organic roots in the Enlightenment.

In order to examine the relationship between Burke's political thought and the Enlightenment, the relationship between the text and its historical context should be examined. In this respect, it is argued that "Reflections" was written in order to defend the 18th century British political system by the arguments which that system already used in its own defense against the omnipresent air of change in Europe, triggered by the industrial revolution and spread by the Enlightenment, which declared the intellectual, moral, political, and economic bankruptcy of Europe's ageing political institutions, beliefs, and practices, and on the inevitable necessity of the wholesale restructuring of the European society. The 18th century British political system was based on the Glorious Revolution of 1688 – 1689, and according to its defenders, including Burke, it had three main characteristics: First of all, this political system was already progressive; however, by the invention of the concept of the "ancient constitution", which the king could not alter at will and which provided certain liberties, rights, and duties for the people and the crown, it was argued that a prudent spirit of change prevailed in the 18th century British political system which derived from the "ancient constitution" and expressed itself in the Glorious Revolution. The English Revolution of 1688 was interpreted as glorious because it did introduced no new principles of government; on the contrary, it was realized to secure the rights of the Englishmen and to preserve the existent, however abused, hereditary principle by protecting its substance and regulating its operation. By adhering to the means of preservation, i.e. church and aristocracy, and of improvement, i.e. commerce and learning (science), the English constitution was neither wholly new in what it improved nor wholly obsolete in what it retained. In short, 18th century British political system was prudently progressive, therefore never destructive. Secondly, 18th century English

political system was an aristocratic regime in which aristocracy had a central position in the state structure by dispensing favor, interest, and influence in exchange of reverence. However, thirdly, 18th century English political system being aristocratic does not make it feudal, since the state structure had been already bourgeoning since the growth of trade and commerce, and the English political system was *consciously postfeudal.*

By paying attention to these three points, Burke's defense of the 18th century English political system – as being (1) prudently progressive, (2) aristocratic and (3) post feudal – reflects his cardinal belief in the prudent progress and the harmony between landed and commercial wealth. For Burke, 18th century English political system was the system of *chivalry* which represented the advanced stage of the historical development of Europe where the interaction of commerce, as the source of wealth, and manners, deriving from noble governance and religious superstition, compounded the spirit of chivalry. Therefore, Burke argued very strongly that the French Revolution was more than the subversion of the monarchy; it was in fact a crusade, an uncompromising war against the chivalry which would lead to the demise not only of aristocracy, clergy, and monarchy, but also of commerce.

By depending on this historical background, this study is divided into two main chapters, though the first chapter only serves as an introductory part for the analysis of the "Reflections" in the second chapter. In the first part of Chapter I, Burke's political life is examined by paying close attention to his political career and to his positions towards the "American problem", Gordon Riots, and the "Indian business". It is crucial to note that because Burke defined himself as a "Whig politician" after his connection with Rockingham until the French Revolution, when he preferred the title of "Old Whig", the definition of these conceptions is examined. In this respect, Lewis Namier's deconstruction of the conventional historiography, which explains the eighteenth century British politics through a historical narrative based on the dichotomy of Whig vs. Tory parties, in his "The Structure of Politics at

the Accession of George III", served as a guide for the study to grasp the 18th century England. Because it is hardly necessary to defend the use of the term "Whig Party" in the late 18th century England, especially after the disintegration of the Rockingham Whigs, it is contended that when Burke referred himself as a "Whig", or an "Old Whig", and when his rivals, such as Paine or Price, designated him as a "Tory", they were referring to his defense of the 18th century British political system. In the second section of Chapter I, the historical background of the main arguments of the "Reflections", with reference to the 18th century England, is presented briefly, and the reactions of Burke's contemporaries to the "Reflections" are examined.

Chapter II constitutes the core of this study where the relationship between the text and the Enlightenment thought is analyzed by examining the text, its historical – philosophical context, and their interaction It is argued that while Burke was attacking (1) to the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysicians and their theories as abstract and dangerous speculations, (2) to the paper money and unimpeded monied interest as the tyranny of economists and calculators, (3) to the sacred and infallible reason as the new superstition displacing religion as the old one, and to the extremely self – assured will to defame and deconstruct everything associated with the past and to recreate a new world from scratch in an abrupt process, "Reflections" became an inside critique of the Enlightenment thought. In this respect, Chapter II is divided into three sub-sections.

In the first section on the "Revolutionary Men of Letters", Burke's analysis of the French Revolution, as the sign of the total destruction of the Chivalry, i.e. the unique 18th century European political system, and his criticism of the modern revolutionary mind are analyzed and discussed in detail. In this respect, Burke's understanding of the historical role of the French Revolution is examined with reference to one of his most loyal readers, Tocqueville. In the second section on the "Moneyed Interest, Paper Money, and Commerce",

Burke's perspective of the historical development of the European political system, his position towards commerce and free trade, and his theory on the relationship between commerce and manners with reference to his belief in the harmony between landed and commercial wealth are explained. In this respect, it is contented that Burke shared the classical defense of the 18th century British political system as progressive, aristocratic, and postfeudal, in which landed and monied interest coexisted peacefully. On the other hand, it is noted that unlike most of his contemporaries, Burke designated the *manners*, which were the direct products of religion and nobility, as the reason of the growth of commerce, not the other way around. In the third and final section, Burke's displacement of "abstract reason" with "practical reason", his theory of social change with reference to the prudent reform, and his defense of superstition are analyzed. Moreover, in this section, Burke's systematization of the classical defense of the 18th century British political system, with reference to its traditional, historical, sacred, and natural aspects, is examined.

In conclusion, along with the main arguments of this study, the actuality of the "Reflections" for our contemporary world is discussed and the questions that remained unanswered in this study about Burke's political thought, which would lead us to various directions of political theory, are examined.

I. "Reflections on the Revolution in France" and the Eighteenth Century British Politics

By the publication of Lewis Namier's "The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III", the conventional historiography, which explains the eighteenth century British politics through a historical narrative based on the dichotomy of Whig vs. Tory parties, shattered. Prior to 1929, British political history from 1688 was broadly conceived of as a two-party rivalry of Whig and Tory, underpinning a constitutional monarchy and a modern cabinet system based on a party majority in the House of Commons. That was the classic "Whig interpretation" of history for the period. Though "Whig history" went through various phases in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; it always promoted a certain type of methodology and of message about the British politics. It had two methodological assumptions: First of all, the study of British history should be rooted in political or constitutional developments; and secondly, past could, indeed should, be examined with the present controversies constantly in mind.[2] Through this methodology, Whig history promoted certain historical messages, that Britain's past was the history of progress, that its primary domestic products were the unique British constitution, the modern cabinet system, and the office of Prime Minister, and that the benefits obtained from these institutions were extended to other countries. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Whig history presented English politics as a sacred struggle, in the name of the "ancient constitution", against the attempts of all Stuart monarchs to subvert that constitution and impose a foreign model of government, i.e. absolutist monarchy.[3] In the nineteenth century, Whig history became the

[2] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, Ed. Iain McLean, "Whig Interpretation", Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 529.
[3] Ibid, p. 530.

orthodox history of professional historians, such as Lord Macaulay, W.E.H. Lecky, G.O. Trevelyan, and G.M. Trevelyan.[4]

In the "Structure of Politics" Namier argued very strongly that, far from being tightly organized groups, both the Tories and Whigs were collections of ever-shifting and fluid small groups whose stances altered on an issue-by-issue basis. Namier, instead of reading political history as the deeds of great men, such as George III, Pitt, Fox or Burke, concerned himself with the behavior of ordinary Members of Parliament, MPs, revealing a political system of infinite subtlety, with the great majority of MPs simultaneously seeking favors from government and professing their independence, varying permutations of these two attitudes constituting political reality. By displacing generalizations of the earlier historians with accurate historical detail, Namier used prosopography or collective biography of every MP and peer who sat in the British Parliament in the late 18th century to reveal that local interests, not national ones, often determined how parliamentarians voted. In addition to prosopographic methods, whose usage Namier bolstered for small groups instead of larger ones like those in the House of Commons, he collected facts about club memberships, wills, and tax records of various MPs and then attempted to co-relate them to their voting patterns. Through those methods, Namier wanted to deal with the most fundamental questions of political science: "Why did men go into politics?" "What determined the conduct of individual MPs?"

Namier's "Structure of Politics" has also been the most outspoken criticism of Burke's "Reflections" since Thomas Paine's "Rights of Men", but for very different reasons. Paine was arguing that Burke with the "Reflections" did not write a history, but constructed a tragedy: "*I can consider Mr. Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance; and he must, I think, have considered it in the same light himself, by the*

[4] Macaulay's five volume "History of England" and G. M. Trevelyan's "The History of England" best represent the historiography described above. See: G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, London: Longmans Green and Co., Third Edition, 1948.

poetical liberties he has taken omitting some facts, distorting others, and making the whole machinery bend to produce a stage effect."[5] Though Paine neglected the fact that French Revolutionaries were also artistically inclined and they presented themselves as tragic-comedians playing in a serious drama and Burke was constructing a counter – drama with the "Reflections" in order to combat the "imitative" theatre of the Jacobins[6], Paine's observation on the "Reflections" was brilliant. Indeed, Burke knew that he was not writing a history, but constructing a tragedy. Namier's criticism of the "Reflections", on the other hand, attacked Burke's account of the 18th century British politics. In his political life and writings, Burke constantly promoted the scenario of the villain George III set against the virtuous House of Commons. Indeed, one of the main allegations expressed both in the "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents" and the "Reflections" was the existence of a "double cabinet" between George III and hidden Tory advisors acting against the constitution and the Whigs. In this respect, Namier wrote: "*What I have never been able to find is the man* (George III) *arrogating power to himself, the ambitious schemer out to dominate, the intriguer dealing in an underhand fashion with his ministers; in short, any evidence for the stories circulated about him by very clever and eloquent contemporaries.*"[7] According to Namier, Burke's version of double cabinet was a fiction and Burke was the author of the legend that George III was out to destroy the constitution. Namier's principal argument was that there was no danger of tyranny in Britain in the 1760s because of the superiority of the modern party government and of the heir-apparent cycle.[8]

---

[5] Thomas Paine, "The Rights of Man", *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. 2, 1779 – 1792, Ed. Moncure Daniel Conway, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Liberty Fund, 1894, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/344 (01/03/2008), p. 297.

[6] For an examination of the historical accounts of the French Revolutionaries and of the "Reflections" as theatrical productions, see: Peter H. Melvin, "Burke on Theatricality and Revolution", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 1975, pp. 447 – 468.

[7] Lewis Namier, "King George III, A Study in Personality", in Isaac Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", *Political Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1983, p. 198.

[8] An heir - apparent is an heir who cannot be displaced from inheriting. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr., "Sir Lewis Namier Considered", *The Journal of British Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 1, 1962: p. 28.

However, Namier's criticism of Burke's account of the 18th century British politics was more fundamental than this and it was not restricted with Burke's scenario of "double cabinet". Kramnick argues that "*Namierism is itself a profoundly positivist indictment of the role of ideas and ideals in eighteenth century politics.*"[9] Indeed, Namier clearly argued that in order to grasp the structure of politics, one should concentrate not on party pamphlets and manifestos, or what Burke and Bolingbroke wrote, but on configurations of interests; since men were moved not by ideas but by interests. In this respect, ideas became mere rationalizations for the positions that were determined by interests. Therefore, Burke's writings were read as *hypocritical cloaks* thrown over the personal interests of faction and connection. "*Burke's writings admired beyond measure and most copiously quoted for nearly two hundred years, stand as a magnificent facade between the man and his readers… When the trend of his perceptions is examined, he is frequently found to be a poor observer, only in distant touch with reality, and apt to substitute for it figments of his own imagination, which grow and harden and finish by dominating both him and widening rings of men whom he influenced.*"[10]

Though Namier's methodology is criticized of undervaluing the role of ideas and ideologies in politics, his "Structure of Politics" destructed the image of the 18th century Britain as being neatly divided up into Whigs and Tories. Notwithstanding the sincerity of Burke's writings, Burke defined himself as a "Whig politician" and wrote the "Reflections" in order to defend a certain type of English political system, the rule of Britain and Ireland by the monarchy and aristocracy of the eighteenth century Whigs. However, as Namier demonstrated, there was never a Whig and a Tory party in the 18th century Britain which acted collectively to carry out certain goals by the guidance of certain principles. Therefore, in order to analyze the "Reflections", it is crucial (1) to define these concepts, (2) to study the

[9] Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 198.
[10] Lewis Namier, "The Character of Burke", in Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 199.

political system that the text defended, and (3) to examine the historical context that produced the text. In the following two sections, I shall try to carry out these goals by examining the political life of Burke and the British politics during the French Revolution.

1. Edmund Burke's Political Life

The ambivalence of Edmund Burke's (1729 – 1797) political thought and political career finds its seeds in the religious affiliation of Burke's family. The only daughter of Burke's family would be raised a Catholic, while the three sons were guided into the established Church of Ireland to be raised Irish Protestants.[11] Indeed, Burke's mother was a Catholic herself; and most probably, the families of Burke's parents, Mary Nagle and Richard Burke, had only recently converted from Catholicism.[12] In his political career, when Burke advocates the relief of Irish Catholics from, at least, some of the disabilities imposed on them by the Ascendancy, the Anglo-Irish Protestant landowning class, he would be accused of harboring secret Catholic sympathies by his political adversaries and he would be caricatured as a Jesuit, a member of Roman Catholic order, by political cartoonists.[13] At this point, I would like to note that these political attacks on Burke would be fruitless, because of his baptized membership of the Church of Ireland, of his insistent and passionate defense of the Church of England, and of his education in the Protestant stronghold of Trinity College, Dublin.

By following his father's expectations, he studied law and history at the Trinity College, later enrolled in the study of law in the Middle Temple.[14] However, in the pursuit of his personal ambition to become a man of letter, he gave up the study of law which caused a breach with his father that would never be repaired. At this point of Burke's life, we encounter two crucial writings of young Burke which he had already been working on for almost eight years since his undergraduate education at the Trinity College: "Vindication of Natural Society" (1756) and "The Sublime and the Beautiful". (1757) The reverberations of

[11] David Bromwich, "Introduction", in Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, Ed. David Bromwich, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 1.
[12] J. G. A. Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. ix.
[13] Ibid, p. ix.
[14] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 2.

these studies had an astonishing effect on Burke's life. While the former became a parody to indict the injustices of society in the political literature, the latter had launched an enormous discussion on aesthetics, and its relationship with social and political world. Indeed, after the publication of "The Sublime and the Beautiful", Burke would be known hereafter as "the sublime and the beautiful Mr. Burke".[15]

In addition to his membership to various clubs of literary men, such as Dr. Samuel Johnson's Club, Burke was also an editor of the *Annual Register of the Year's Events*, a leading political review of the time, for many years, in which the year 1758 as the date of the first issue.[16] The importance of the *Annual Register* shall be emphasized in the succeeding sections in order to grasp Burke's position on trade, commerce, and free market. For now, I would only like to note that Adam Smith's studies of "Theory of Moral Sentiments" (1759) and "Wealth of Nations" (1757) were reviewed quite favorably in the *Annual Register* by Burke.[17]

Similar to the careers of the most of the political men of letters, which were dependent on their intellectual and literary talents, Burke was also obliged to seek the patronage of independent political aristocrats to serve as a political adviser, writer, and agent. In this regard, Burke was firstly appeared in the British politics as the private secretary of William Gerard Hamilton (1729 – 1796) in 1759. However, this patron – client relationship came to an end in 1765; most probably because of Burke's extreme self-trust and his ambivalent feelings and opinions towards aristocracy. Bromwich argues that "*both the passion of his advocacy of an aristocratic society and the passion of his criticism of it, issued from a single complex consciousness.*"[18] Likewise, Pocock contemplates that ambivalence of Burke towards the aristocracy he served and defended was not only due to the fragility of his own personality,

[15] Ibid, p. 4.
[16] Ibid, p.3.
[17] Donal Barrington, "Edmund Burke as an Economist", *Economica*, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 83, 1954, p. 255.
[18] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 6.

but also due to the fragility of the aristocracy's own political and historical position.[19] Indeed, Burke's ambivalent position towards aristocracy was first revealed in his particular manner towards Hamilton, and for the rest of his political career, we will witness the constant recurrence of this phenomenon either towards his succeeding patrons, Rockingham and Fox, or his aristocrat colleagues, such as Earl of Shelburne and Duke of Bedford. Burke's own words in the "Letter to a Noble Lord" concerning the political attacks of Duke of Bedford against Burke's pension can best illustrate this phenomenon: "*I have done all I could to discountenance their inquires into the fortunes of those, who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own. I have strained every nerve to keep the duke of Bedford in that situation, which alone makes him my superior.*"[20]

In 1765, Burke was appointed private secretary of Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marques of Rockingham (1730 – 1782) and through this position; he secured a seat in the House of Commons.[21] After this connection, Burke would define himself as a Whig until the French Revolution when he would emphasize the classification of "New and Old Whigs". In British usage, the concept of "Whig" originally referred to a Scottish Presbyterian opponent of Anglican government.[22] However, the concept subsequently applied in 1679 to those who opposed the succession of Catholic James II to the throne and thence to those who supported the "Glorious Revolution" of 1689. Similarly, though today the concept of "Tory" is employed in common parlance as a synonym for "conservative"[23], Tories were designated as Jacobites, i. e. supporters of the deposed James II and his descendants in their claim to the British throne, partisans of patriarchal monarchy and divine right, and the enemies of the

[19] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. x.
[20] Edmund Burke, "Letter to a Noble Lord", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 487.
[21] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 6.
[22] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, "Whig", p. 529.
[23] For an analysis of the political journey of this concept and of conservatism, see: Rod Preece, "The Anglo – Saxon Conservative Tradition", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1980: 3 – 32.

eighteenth century British political system by denouncing it as corrupt and oligarchical.[24] However, after 1780s, as B. W. Hill argues, it is hardly necessary any longer to defend the use of the term "Whig Party".[25] Indeed, between 1784 and 1789, the Opposition used it continuously to describe themselves, and Government supporters, while sometimes claiming the term "Whig" for themselves as individuals, did not claim that they collectively constituted a Whig party, preferring to describe themselves as the government or court party. Therefore, it is crucial to examine what Burke meant by referring himself as a "Whig politician". In order to accomplish this goal, one should study the political career of Burke after his connection with Marques of Rockingham and the 18th century British politics.

In this period, people who called themselves Whigs were divided by ideological and personal rivalries, and Rockingham Whigs claimed to be a party, based on definite principles, which sought to preserve the authority of the House of Commons against the king and any radical parliamentary reformers. As Hill argues, the correspondence, speeches and polemical literature of the Rockingham Whigs between 1762 and 1782 were marked by constant public or private references to their party principles.[26] These principles mainly included personal rectitude, the rights of the individual and of corporate bodies under the law, and the upholding of the constitution as amended in 1689. However, even among the members of the Rockingham Whigs, there would emerge severe disagreements on the issues of the American Revolution and of reform.

During his connection with Rockingham, Burke's "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents" (1770) emerged as a manifesto of the idea of the "party" and as a

[24] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xix.
[25] B. W. Hill, "Fox and Burke: the Whig Party and the Question of Principles", *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 350, 1974, p. 1.
[26] Ibid, p. 3.

defense of the principles of Rockingham Whigs.[27] If we reserve "The Sublime and the Beautiful" as a distinct text of Burke, "Thoughts" could be counted as his only-full scale attempt at political theory until the publication of the "Reflections", since most of the writings of Burke are composed of letters and speeches on various political issues.

"Thoughts" was a manifesto of the idea of the party. Burke's conceptualization of the "party" and his designation of affection and friendship as the foundation of a party directly emerged from his argument in "The Sublime and the Beautiful".[28] Therefore in the "Thoughts", by applying his idea of "social principle of friendship" to the idea of the party, which was already present in "The Sublime and the Beautiful", Burke distinguished party membership as "voluntary association" from the notions of "partisanship" and "faction". The importance of the "Thoughts" on the idea of the party derives from the fact that Burke defined party on the "principles" and "loyalty" which was a counterweight to the monarchical or ministerial authority, and an obstacle to the egotism of day-to-day bargaining.[29] Burke's definition of party "as the counterweight to the ministerial authority" seems very reasonable, since the Rockingham Whigs were always on the opposition, except the short period between 1765 and 1766, and a shorter one in 1782. "*When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.*"[30] Moreover, Burke developed his notion of "prudent, humble, and moderate statesman" in the "Thoughts" by emphasizing the relationship between the party and the political leader. He defined the true statesman who was answerable to a certain interest by the goals of qualified advice and assistance, and thus he was not born, but made statesman by experience. In the "Reflections",

[27] See: Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents", in Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 1., 1770, Ed. Francis Canavan, A New Imprint of the Payne Edition, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/796 (01/03/2008)

[28] In "The Sublime and the Beautiful", Edmund Burke argues that the social principle of friendship is the foundation of every community, large or small, commonwealth, party, or family. For a similar argument, see: Neal Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought", *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1964, p. 50.

[29] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 8.

[30] Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents", p. 146.

Burke would further develop his standard of statesman, however this time not contrary to despotic leaders, but to the sophisters, as an honest reformer by the following statement: "*But in this, as in most questions of state, there is a middle. There is something else than the mere alternative of absolute destruction or unreformed existence. (...) A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman. Everything else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution.*"[31] Finally, "Thoughts" was also based on an allegation of conspiracy, which was called "double cabinet" by Burke, between George III and hidden Tory advisors against the constitution and the Whigs. At this point, Burke perfectly represented the 18th century "Whig interpretation of history" which was denounced as a historical fallacy by Namier. Indeed, Burke would continue to advocate such allegations of conspiracy between the Crown and the Tories, which were nonexistent also for Pocock[32], and later in the "Reflections" the theory of conspiracy between "Revolutionary men of letters" and "paper money speculators" would be insistently emphasized on. However, in the succeeding sections on Burke's conception of social change, I shall argue that the role of conspiracy in his conception of social change is not primary for Burke, although it is persistently existent.[33]

Burke's association with Marques of Rockingham involved the crisis of the American Revolution. The Declaration of Independence indicts the conduct of George III and declares that his power in the American colonies has reverted to the people, and his government therefore dissolved. During the crisis of American Revolution, Rockingham Whigs appeared as the primary source of opposition to the proceedings of the Crown and of its government on the American colonies. They opposed against the imposition of new taxes on American colonies, against the punitive acts, against fighting the war itself once the colonies had

[31] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, p. 138.
[32] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxiii.
[33] For a similar argument, see: Michael Freeman, "Edmund Burke and the Theory of Revolution", *Political Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1978: 277 – 297.

declared their independence, and they argued in favor of early termination of the war even when a British victory seemed likely.[34]

In this process of Rockingham opposition, Burke was distinguished by his passionate speeches which designated the actions of the ministry of Lord North, and the coercive acts of George III, as the main reasons of the rebellion of the American colonies. He understood this phenomenon as "the American problem" of the British Empire and read the struggle to suppress American colonies as leading to a domestic conflict within the empire, and thus, his main anxiety about the possible consequences of such a civil war was the loss of the civil liberties which were, for Burke, the most precious inheritance of the British Empire. Moreover, just like he would oppose the discourse of the "Rights of Men" in the French Revolution as logical but abstract and impractical, he objected the proceedings of the British Crown which based on the equally abstract discourse of the "Rights of the Sovereign". Burke's opposition to these abstract notions derived from his constant doubt that they eventually would lead either to the destruction of the established institutions, as in the former, or to the aggrandizement of the monarchy, as in the latter. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that Burke was always in pursuit of the political and constitutional balance which he believed the only solid foundation that the whole English society had built on. Burke's speeches and actions on the American Revolution, such as "On Conciliation with America"[35] (1775), were aimed at keeping the colonies within the empire through conciliation. Beyond this, Burke did not comment on the Declaration of Independence or on the proceedings and processes that led to the Constitution of the United States. Therefore, as Pocock argues, Burke being the pioneer of the American Revolution, while at the same time being the enemy of the French Revolution, would only be a speculation.[36]

---

[34] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 9.
[35] Burke, "Speech on Conciliation with America", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, pp. 62 – 134.
[36] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xv.

In 1774, Burke successfully secured a seat in the House of Commons as the representative of Bristol, because of his recent popularity that was realized by his opposition to the policy of taxation and coercion on the American problem. The merchants of Bristol, who opposed the taxation policy of the government for their own material interests, were the principal supporters of Burke's candidacy.[37] Beginning from the period that Burke was elected to the House of Commons as the representative of Bristol to his dead in 1797, three great events deeply influenced his political thought and action: Gordon Riots (1780), Indian problem (between 1783 and 1795), and the French Revolution (beginning in 1789 until his death.) While I shall study the importance and the impact of the Gordon Riots and the Indian problem on Burke's political thought in the rest of this section, I shall examine that of the French Revolution in the succeeding sections.

"*A mob is usually a creature of very mysterious existence, particularly in a large city. Where it comes from or whither it goes, few men can tell. Assembling and dispersing with equal suddenness, it is as difficult to follow to its various sources as the sea itself; nor does the parallel stop here, for the ocean is not more fickle and uncertain, more terrible when roused, more unreasonable, or more cruel.*" told Charles Dickens in his historical novel "Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty" to describe the Gordon Riots that launched in the summer of 1780.[38] Indeed, all London, including the House of Commons, was at the mercy of a violent mob in the weeks of June 1780 that was composed of tens of thousands people and was led by Lord George Gordon[39] who was a Protestant fanatic and demagogue. The main target of these religious riots was the mitigation of the official discrimination against and of the imposition of certain penalties and disabilities on the Catholic religion that was recently occurred with the Papist Acts in 1778. The crucial point that tied the Gordon

[37] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 11.
[38] Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty*, London: GBR: ElecBook, 2001, p. 557.
[39] Lord George Gordon is described as a mad man both by Pocock and Bromwich, while Dickens talks about him as a true pious man among prisoners. It may be interesting to note that he eventually converted to Judaism for which he was ostracized. Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxiv.

Riots with the American Revolution was that the government needed the Catholic manpower to feed the American war effort.[40] The evidence of this linkage can be seen clearly by the famous decision of the Acts to absolve the Catholics from taking the religious oath when joining the British Army. Actually, the Gordon Riots were not the only expression of opposition to Catholic emancipation, since similar outbreaks in Scotland preceded them which were successful to achieve their ends.[41] The crucial point for us is that Gordon Riots left a deep impression on Burke and on his colleagues, and it is not unreasonable to argue that this event was one of the causes of Burke's unhesitating and rapid discountenance of the French Revolution. Indeed, Burke mentioned Lord Gordon and the Gordon Riots in the "Reflections" itself to demonstrate how they treated people who insulted and degraded the authority of the King and the Queen of France in England, contrary to France where the whole Revolution was based on an official degradation of the Crown and its authority which eventually aimed at the total destruction of the monarchy.[42]

"*We have Lord George Gordon fast in Newgate, (...), in his zeal against Catholic priests and all sorts of ecclesiastics, raised a mob (excuse the term, it is still in use here) (...)"*[43] With the industrial revolution, there emerged massive crowds in the large cities as a totally new phenomenon, since it turned the "slave" peasants into "free" workers and it invited passionately those masses into the energetic environment of industrial cities from the "indolent" environments of villages. After that, nothing would be same, since a new actor was on the stage and every philosopher, in that period and in the succeeding ones, should confront

[40] Alexander Murdoch, *British History (1660 – 1832): National Identity and Local Culture*, London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998, p. 115.
[41] Alexander Murdoch demonstrates that government's effort to provide manpower from Catholics with Papist Acts was largely successful for Irish Catholics, but not for Scottish Catholics, because of the success of those outbreaks in Scotland. See: Ibid, pp. 115 – 118.
[42] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 73 – 74.
[43] Lord George Gordon was imprisoned in Newgate for defaming Marie Antoinette. Ibid, p. 73.

that crowd and denominate it.[44] Then the crowd became “mob”, “class”, “nation”, “herd”, and “people”. Then there emerged a confrontation between the theorists of the crowd, Marx for instance, and theorists that were anxious of the crowd and its theorists, Tocqueville and Burke for instance. I think that Burke like Tocqueville, Hegel, Marx, Fichte, Renan, or Le Bon confronted that phenomenon and tried to interpret it in his own way. In the “Reflections”, Burke was sure that the main actor was not “le peuple" in the French Revolution, as it was argued. It was metaphysicians and sophistics, i. e. Revolutionary men of letters and speculators, that were the main actors and he implied over and over again what they created, led, and directed was not “le peuple" in the French Revolution, but a mere mob.

We should not forget that Burke saw himself as a moderate reformer. As I shall examine in the succeeding sections in detail, for Burke the main goal of the “Reflections” was the manifestation and the justification of gradualist reform.[45] Nonetheless, from the 1780s onwards, Burke appeared as an extremely radical figure, in the realms of both political thought and practice, who was insistently lamenting the destruction of the old order despite his clear awareness of its deficiencies and his consistent attitude as a reformer. He gradually became a solitude character, as he was increasingly excluded from the government and doomed to be remained in the opposition, who was interpreted both by his colleagues and enemies sometimes as the wisest, but more often as a tragic-comic figure. His appearance as the radical embodiment of the requiem for the past derived from his insistent rejection of two phenomena of the newly emerging society that has begun to dominate not only Europe, but also the very whole world. These were the unimpeded monied interest, which was sometimes called “unimpeded avarice” by Burke, contrary to his eulogy to “laudable avarice”, and audacious and arrogant will to reconstruct the whole society from scratch. While the former

[44] Le Bon in his “The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind” (1895) argued that “*the modern era was the era of the crowds*”. J. S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, Part 28: “Liberalism’s Special Enemies: The Crowd and Its Theorists”, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 663.
[45] James Conniff, “Edmund Burke and His Critics: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1999, p. 301.

was led by the monied interest of the speculators, the latter was led by metaphysical theories of the Revolutionary men of letters. While the former was most evident in the Indian problem, the latter manifested itself perfectly and presumptuously in the French Revolution. Thus Burke designated the former as "Indianism" and the latter as "Jacobinism", which were called as the two obsessions of Burke by Isaac Kramnick.[46] However, such a differentiation does not mean that Indianism was restricted to the Indian problem, and Jacobinism to the French Revolution. On the contrary, according to Burke, they were organically interconnected and they reflected the very seeds of the newly emerging society. They were what we found in the Pandora's Box and which threatened to destruct the essential foundations not only of the old order, but also of the human civilization, itself. Therefore, the last issue that I shall consider in this part of the study is Burke's problem, in his own words, with the "Indian business"; since this was definitely not a secondary issue for Burke, and more importantly for us, not independent from the problem of the French Revolution.

Both the Rockingham Whigs, whose unity was already weakened by the disagreements of its members on the issues of the American Revolution and of reform, and the alliance between Shelburne and Rockingham, came to an end by the death of Rockingham in 1782.[47] After the end of the unity over the title of Rockingham, the political entity that was called the "Whig Party" became so heterogeneous and disintegrated that it is impossible to designate it as a party, even in comparison to Rockingham Whigs who had also a loose unity. By 1783, it was led in the House of Commons by the reformer Charles James Fox, it contained such elements as the conservative Lord North, and the Prince of Wales representing a royal "reversionary interest". Its heterogeneity made it impossible for its members even to challenge to their exclusion from office by what they considered to be the unconstitutional act of George III and of the ministry of William Pitt. Indeed, between 1784 and 1789, Burke

[46] See: Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, Chapter 7: "Indianism", Chapter 8: "Jacobinism", New York: Basic Books, 1977.
[47] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 13.

could not obtain any support from his colleagues about the impeachment of Warren Hastings for misgovernment in India and about the Regency Crisis, in which Burke tried to seize the opportunity of King's illness to combine support of monarchy – in the name of Prince of Wales – with party interest. However, under Rockingham, Burke thought, the "Whig Party" had united men of the same right principles. Burke, who argued that party was necessary to give joint force to men of similar principles, started to doubt whether the times were producing men of virtue enough to make a party workable. "*Party is necessary at this time. I thought it was always so in this country ever since I have had any thing to do in public business; and I rather fear, that there is not virtue enough in this period to support party, than that party should become necessary on account of the want of virtue to support itself by individual exertions."*[48]

Thus Burke, who became the "Paymaster General" during this short coalition between 1782 and 1783, was again excluded from the government. After the collapse of this coalition, Burke concentrated all of his energy on the Indian problem and on the nearly obsessive demand for the impeachment of the governor – general of India, Warren Hastings. Burke's problem with the Indian business would last twelve years and during this period Burke would strongly and uncompromisingly oppose the unregulated proceedings of the East India Company and its attitude of acting in place of a constituted government in India. Indeed, while in 1740 East India Company was purely a commercial company; by 1815 the Company owned the most powerful army in India and became a major Asian power.[49]

For Kramnick, Burke's personal failure in his political life after 1783, when he constantly remained in opposition alone without the support of his colleagues, and his relative independence from any patronage relationship prepared the necessary circumstances for the

[48] Edmund Burke, in Hill, "Fox and Burke: the Whig Party and the Question of Principles", p. 1.
[49] Lawrence James, *The Rise and the Fall of the British Empire*, London: Abacus, 1998, p. 123.

emergence of Burke's first obsession, i.e. his problem with the Indian business.[50] In accordance with his general theory on the eighteenth century politics[51], Kramnick argues that Burke saw in Warren Hastings and in his energetic and young upstarts "the personification of the bourgeois spirit"[52] Indeed, for Kramnick, what Burke saw in Hastings was his other bourgeois self, and Burke in India problem, and later in the French Revolution, launched an attack not only to the radical middle classes, but also to his very bourgeois ego. By the ambition of the defeated, with reference to his failure in politics, and by the autonomy of the unpossessed, with reference to his rupture from patronage relationship, Kramnick argues that "*Indianism also represented his aristocratic self at war with his own bourgeois inclinations*."[53] Pocock, on the contrary, argues that "*Burke neither belonged to nor feared a class of entrepreneurial capitalists.*"[54]

It is crucial to remind ourselves that Burke was definitely not against the colonial rule in India. According to Burke, the main sources of the English prosperity and progress were commerce, aristocracy, monarchy, and clergy, as the constituting parts, that were intertwined by "the ancient constitution", of the British political system. Burke's main thesis either in the "Reflections" or in his ambitious speeches on the "Indian business" was that deconstructing one part of this whole, such as clergy and aristocracy, would lead to the total destruction of the society, along with the other parts of the whole, such as monarchy and commerce. Burke's emphasis on the concept of "the ancient constitution" was not very original, since it was a classic argument of the "Whig interpretation" of history in the 18th century British politics that Namier criticized. Moreover, as Pocock demonstrates, his thesis organically derived from the

[50] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 127.
[51] See: Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in the late Eighteenth Century England and America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
[52] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 130.
[53] Kramnick also implicitly argued that this psychological confrontation among Burke's two selves was due to his ambivalent position to the bourgeois class where envy and condemnation were mutually present in an antagonistic coexistence. Ibid, p. 132.
[54] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. x.

18th century Whigs' cardinal belief in the harmony of landed and commercial wealth.[55] In that sense, Conniff brilliantly grasps Burke's position on commerce: "*The love of lucre, Burke admitted, could lead to numerous excesses and abuses, but it was nonetheless a source of much that was good.*"[56]

In order to grasp Burke's radical opposition to the proceedings of the East India Company, we should differentiate Burke's conceptualization of "commerce" as "laudable avarice" from that of "unimpeded monied interest" as "unimpeded avarice". At a glance, such a differentiation may seem rough; but the latter would be designated by Marx as the stage of "primitive accumulation" of the European bourgeois society, and it was analyzed by Burke as the omnipotent raise of "speculators" and "monied men", along with the metaphysicians, i.e. Revolutionary men of letters, which would lead to the total destruction of all of the foundations that the European civilization was based on. Therefore, Burke attacked Warren Hastings as the personification, thus material embodiment, of the "unimpeded avarice" with all of his energy.

Most importantly, Burke's attack on the proceedings of the English rule in India was composed of his moral anxiety about the future of the humanity, an anxiety about not only European but also Indian people, and of his clear understanding of the "masculinity of the English rule" in India. Regarding the former point, as Bromwich argues, what was in question was the bond of humanity for Burke.[57] The following statement of Burke was from a report of speech of July 1784: "*(Laying his hand on a volume of Reports which lay on the table) I swear, said he, by this book, that the wrongs done to humanity in the eastern world, shall be avenged on those who have inflicted them: They will find, when the measure of the iniquity is full, that Providence was not asleep. The wrath of Heaven would sooner or later fall upon a nation, that suffers, with impunity, its rulers thus to oppress the weak and the innocent. We*

[55] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xix.
[56] Conniff, p. 302.
[57] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 13.

had already lost one empire, perhaps, as a punishment for the cruelties authorized in another. (...) It was not whether the interest of the East India Company made them necessary, but whether they coincided with the prior interests of humanity, of substantial justice, with those rights which paramount to all others."[58] Regarding the "masculinity of the English rule", Kramnick argues that Burke gave to the Western world one of its earliest and most perceptive insights between sexuality and capitalism.[59] Indeed for Burke, by arguing that what Hastings did in India became "*pander and bawd to the unbridled debauchery and licentious lewdness of usury and extortion*"[60]; he represented the irresponsible, aggressive, and conquering masculinity of the West over the East. Therefore, the amalgam of the "unimpeded avarice", "an abandoned love of sensual pleasure", and the "arrogant and audacious will" to reconstruct the whole society from scratch would destroy everything "great and laudable" in India. In that sense, India under the English rule was a prototype of France in the hands of speculators and revolutionaries.

In addition, Burke also used his aesthetic understanding, expressed in "The Sublime and the Beautiful", to bolster his argument on the Indian problem. For Burke, while the English Empire was the *sublime*, which was characterized by not only immense power, but also affection for its subjects, the India was the *beautiful*, which was not only weak but also fruitful, generous, and abundant. English Empire, therefore, was the superior and the India was the subordinate by their own nature.[61] In his theory of aesthetics, Burkes explicitly associated "sublime" with masculinity and "beautiful" with femininity.[62] Therefore, for Burke, the proceedings of the East India Company were not associated with "authentic sublimity", but a "pseudo sublimity" which depended only on force and lacked the affective-

[58] Ibid, p. 14.
[59] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 141.
[60] Ibid, p. 134.
[61] Stephen K. White, "Burke on Politics, Aesthetics, and the Dangers of Modernity", *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1993, p. 514.
[62] Ibid, p. 513.

aesthetic dimension of government.[63] Indeed, in all of his speeches, Burke proposed an alternative colonial rule in India which depended on affective-aesthetic superior masculinity of England over subordinate femininity of India through love and protection which did certainly not exclude the "extraction of wealth". In other words, Burke proposed a "patriarchal love", rather than "rape", for the English rule over India.

Nonetheless, it is evident that Burke experienced a profound self-contradiction towards not only the methods, but also the aims of the imperial rule. This can best be illustrated by the following statement of Burke in a draft for a speech in India: "*In an hundred instances, the Interest of our Empire is scarcely to be reconciled to the Interest of our Constitution.*"[64]

[63] The differentiation between "authentic" and "pseudo" sublimes was not present in Burke's thesis on aesthetics. However, White originally argues that Burke implicitly made such a differentiation. See: Stephen K. White, "Burke on Politics, Aesthetics, and the Dangers of Modernity", *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1993.
[64] Bromwich, "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 15.

2. British Politics during the French Revolution

"*To say that the Reflections is a "classic" of English conservatism … is to remind ourselves that it took shape within a context of English politics and political literature; that it was shaped by that context and itself continued to shape it.*"[65] (J. G. A. Pocock)

Pocock argues that conservatism of the "Reflections" was of a particularly English type: "*It was written in order to defend an English political system – the rule of Britain and Ireland by the monarchy and aristocracy of the eighteenth century Whigs – and its conservative arguments were based on those which that system already used in its own defence.*"[66] This political system was mainly based on the Revolution of 1688 – 1689, i. e. Glorious Revolution, and Burke's indictment of the revolutions in general and his reading of the Glorious Revolution as occurred in the framework of the ancient constitution in particular was not an extreme, but an orthodox interpretation.[67] Indeed, as Pocock argues, it was John Locke, with the "Second Treatise of Government" (1688) proposing the dissolution of government and a recourse to civil war, who stood against the mainstream.[68] Despite this clear difference, it is interesting that Burke does not mention Locke's "Second Treatise on Government" in the "Reflections".[69] It was Josiah Tucker who would saliently accused Locke, in addition to Price, as being a reactionary and an archaic ideologue.[70]

---

[65] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. viii.
[66] Ibid, p. viii.
[67] For an analysis of Burke's conception of "ancient constitution", see: J. G. A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution: a Problem in the History of Ideas", *Politics, Language and Time*, New York: 1971.
[68] See: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Ed. Peter Laslett, London: Cambrigdge University Press, 1988.
[69] Likewise, after Burke, Macaulay who wrote the nineteenth century Whig account of the Revolution did not mention Locke either, in his "A History of England from the Accession of James II" (1848). Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xiii.
[70] See: Josiah Tucker, *A Treatise Concerning Civil Government in Three Parts*, London: T. Cadell, 1781, The Liberty Fund, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1674 (22/03/2008) Also see: Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xvi. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 167.

According to this orthodox interpretation of the English history, which Burke represented perfectly, there were three main characteristics of the English political system which was consolidated by the Glorious Revolution. First of all, by the invention of the concept of the "ancient constitution", which the king could not alter at will and which provided certain liberties, rights, and duties for the people and the crown, it was argued that Glorious Revolution represented "the prudent spirit of change of the English political system". Burke argued that the English Revolution of 1688 was glorious because it did introduced no new principles of government; on the contrary, it was realized to secure the rights of the Englishmen and to preserve the existent, however abused, hereditary principle by protecting its substance and regulating its operation. For Burke, in every crisis, the prudent spirit of the English ruling elites, that derived from the ancient constitution, confined the change to the "*peccant part only, to the part which produced the necessary deviation.*"[71] Burke argued that the English constitution was itself a product of the evolution and change of the English politics; however it was designated as the "ancient constitution" solely because the principle of inheritance "*was survived with a sort of immortality through all transmigrations.*"[72] By the notion of inheritance, he did not argue that the crown was held by divine hereditary and indefeasible right. "*These old fanatics of single arbitrary power dogmatized as if hereditary royalty was the only lawful government in the world, just as our new fanatics of popular arbitrary power maintain that a popular election is the sole lawful source of authority.*"[73] Burke, with the principle of inheritance, referred not only to the inheritance of the crown regarding the king, but also to the inheritance of the rights and liberties regarding the House of Lords and House of Commons. "*... our liberties as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity – as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom, without any reference*

[71] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 19.
[72] Ibid, p. 20.
[73] Ibid, p. 23.

whatever to any other more general or prior right. We have an inheritable crown, an inheritable peerage, and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties from a long line of ancestors."[74] By adhering to the means of preservation, i.e. church and aristocracy, and of improvement, i.e. commerce and learning (science), the English constitution was neither wholly new in what it improved nor wholly obsolete in what it retained.[75] In short, according to this interpretation, English political system, whose core was the ancient constitution and reflected itself in the Glorious Revolution, was already progressive, but never destructive.

Secondly, 18th century English political system was an aristocratic regime in which aristocracy had a central position in the state structure by dispensing favour, interest, and influence in exchange of reverence. However, thirdly, 18th century English political system being aristocratic does not make it feudal, since the state structure had been already bourgeoning since the growth of trade and commerce, and the English political system was "*consciously postfeudal.*"[76] Indeed, "Reflections" was based on the most basic assumption that commercial progress was perfectly compatible with hereditary monarchy and landed aristocracy. For Burke, 18th century English political system was the system of *chivalry*. It is crucial to note that the term "chivalry" was not used as an emotive term in the "Reflections." For Burke, it represented the advanced stage of the historical development of Europe where the interaction of commerce, as the source of wealth, and manners, deriving from noble governance and religious superstition, compounded the spirit of chivalry. In that sense, as Pocock argues, just like William Roberston and Adam Ferguson did, Burke read the chivalry of the European civilization as superior to the primitive virtue of the Greco – Roman civilization.[77]

[74] Ibid, p. 29.
[75] Ibid, p. 30.
[76] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xix.
[77] Ibid, p. xxxii.

By paying attention to these three points, Burke's defense of the 18th century English political system – as being (1) prudently progressive, (2) aristocrat and (3) post feudal – reflects his cardinal belief in the prudent progress and the harmony between landed and commercial wealth. This particular reading of the English history – 18th century Whig interpretation of history – constitutes the historical background of Burke's conception of social change. In the following chapter of this study, I shall continue to examine the historical context of Burke's conception of social change in detail. For the rest of this section, I would like to concentrate on the disagreement in the English politics over the French Revolution and on the reactions of Burke's contemporaries to the "Reflections".

In 1783, Burke supported Charles James Fox in his short – lived coalition with Lord North which was succeeded by the long administration of William Pitt that lasted until 1801. As far as the French Revolution, Burke's political connections were with Fox; indeed they did not only struggle on political issues together, i. e. on the American Revolution against Lord North's Coercion policies, there was also a close friendly relationship between Burke and Fox until the eve of the French Revolution. However, one of the greatest impacts of the French Revolution on the British politics between 1789 and 1793 was the ultimate disintegration and regrouping among the Whigs who had already lost unity long before the French Revolution. Pocock argues that with the French Revolution "*a relatively organized entity known as the Whig party lost contact with several great Whig connections but contrived to retain its name.*"[78] With the publication of the "Reflections", deep disagreements, that were already visible between the Whigs before the French Revolution on the issues of reform and of American Revolution, reached its zenith. While Burke read the French Revolution as the destruction not only of the monarchy, clergy, and aristocracy in France, but also of the notion of "Gentleman" in the whole world and of the very foundations on which the whole European

[78] J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 279.

civilization was based on; Fox welcomed it as "*the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty, which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country.*"[79] Although Fox dismissed the arguments of the "Reflections" as "in very bad taste" and "favouring Tory principles"; in order to preserve his relationship with Burke, he did not press the matter for a while. However, the split between Burke and Fox occurred by Burke's rejection of support for Fox's effort to repeal the onerous Test and Corporation Acts which prevented dissenters from holding government and municipal positions and whose logical implication was the separation of church and state.[80] After this split, Burke designated those who advocated the ancient constitution, and moderate and prudent reform as the Old Whigs, including himself, and those who followed Fox as the New Whigs, i. e. radicals, in his work "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs" (1791). However, at this point, it is crucial to note that Foxite faction was only one Whig group among several, but who claimed to speak for all. Burke explained the main reasons of this split in a letter to a Bristol merchant and dissenter mainly as Foxite faction's zealous approval of the French Revolution, their abstract and metaphysical language of natural rights, as it was evident in their opposition to the Test and Corporation Acts, and their leaders' (Price and Priestley) close connections with Shelburne.[81] In addition, it should also be noted that Burke opposed Duke of Richmond's effort to extend the right to vote to all adult males in which Richmond's sole goal was merely the triumph of the influence of aristocracy over that of the crown.[82] For Burke, all of these actions of the "radical Whigs", who betrayed their own class, were too dangerous for the whole foundations of the English society, i.e. the establishments of aristocracy, clergy, learning, and commerce.

---

[79] Edmund Burke, "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs", in Edmund Burke, *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1789 - 1796, Ed. Daniel E. Ritchie, Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, 1992, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/660 (10/04/2008), p. 88.
[80] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 149.
[81] Ibid, p. 150
[82] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxiv.

"Reflections" begins examining the French Revolution with a relatively long part devoted to the criticism of certain clubs in England which supported the French Revolution, which read it as the recurrence, or even extension, of the Glorious Revolution of England in France, and thus which interpreted it as illuminating the whole Europe, i.e. "Constitutional Society" and "Revolution Society", of which the latter was definitely the target of Burke's criticism. Burke's main accusation of these clubs in the "Reflections" is that "*under the pretext of zeal towards the Revolution and the constitution*", these clubs violated the true spirit of them.[83] By Revolution and the constitution, it is evident that Burke was alluding respectively to the Glorious Revolution and the "ancient constitution", which were, for Burke, the very products of a prudent spirit in the English history. Indeed, the goal of Burke's attitude of overemphasizing on these clubs, on their preachers, and on their sermons was to reach a fully-developed analysis of the role of the Revolutionary Men of Letters and a merciless obloquy of their theories by presenting them not only as abstract, thus impractical and if applied dangerous, but also as being political cabals which was active in all Europe.[84] In that sense, according to Burke, Dr. Richard Price's sermon "Discourse on the Love of Our Country" (1789), preached in one of the meetings of the Revolution Society, was the perfect embodiment of the theories of the Revolutionary men of letters.[85]

Most of the harsh reactions to the "Reflections" of Burke's contemporaries mainly belonged to a political circle in which Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Paine were the leading figures, though there were substantial differences among the circle. Likewise, despite the various differences between Price and Priestley, their common patron was Lord of Shelburne who became Burke's one of the principal enemies on the issues of India and of separation of Church and state, and who implemented a political

[83] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 4.
[84] Throughout the whole text, Burke explicitly and repeatedly contended that the main characteristic of these men of letters and their theories was that of a cabal. See as an example: "*the complexion of fraud*" Ibid, p. 7
[85] See: Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country,* Second edition, London: T. Cadell, 1789, The Liberty Fund, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/368 (03/03/2008)

attack with Duke of Bedford to Burke's pension.[86] It is also interesting that Richard Price was always successful to trigger theoretical polemics and to agitate severe counter-arguments in the intellectual community. On the issue of the American Revolution, Price's strongly pro-American work "Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty" (1777) motivated Josiah Tucker's counter-argument of "Treatise Concerning the Civil Government" (1781). Indeed, Pocock argues that "*it was Price's gift to provoke conservative responses.*"[87] Both Tucker and Burke shared a similar counter – argument against Price respectively on the American and on the French Revolution: A radical insistence on the primacy of abstract natural rights would destroy not only moral, but also commercial ties. Pocock, in his "Virtue, Commerce, and History", demonstrated the crucial difference between Tucker and Burke that while the former emphasized the importance of civil government; the latter concentrated on the importance of ancient traditions and habits that have gradually become the irreversible part of the human nature.[88]

Indeed, the debate between Price and Burke was in particular a continuation of the century – old debate regarding the true meaning of the Glorious Revolution. On the one hand, Price argued that by the principles of the Glorious Revolution, the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights: "*First, the right to liberty of conscience in religious matters, secondly, the right to resist power when abused, and thirdly, the right to choose our own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to frame a government for ourselves.*"[89] The third right which was associated by Price to the Glorious Revolution was the main target of Burke in the "Reflections." Price stated regarding the English crown that "*I honour you not*

[86] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 131.
[87] Pocock gives an additional example in which Turgot's letter to Price on American government led John Adams to compose "A Defence of the Constitution of the United States". Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, footnote: 29, p. li.
[88] Tucker's thesis on American Revolution is quite complicated: He advocated driving out the colonies, since the endeavor to keep them within the empire would lead to the ultimate disestablishment of the whole empire, itself. Thus, Tucker opposed to the conciliation thesis of Burke on the American Revolution. See: Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, "Josiah Tucker on Burke, Locke, and Price: A Study in the Varieties of Eighteenth Century Conservatism", pp. 157 – 193.
[89] Price, p. 34.

only as my King, but as almost the only lawful King in the world, because the only one who owes his crown to the choice of the people."[90] Burke argued that because it was evident that the king of Great Britain did not owe his crown to any form of popular election, the only goal of this "spiritual doctor of politics" was in the short run and in theory to exclude the king of Great Britain as the lawful ruler, not as a usurper, and in the long run and in practice to destruct the whole foundation that the English crown was based on, i. e. hereditary succession.[91] For Burke, Glorious Revolution (1688 – 1689) was occurred without a civil war, without dissolution of government, and without any interlude of rule only because of the constant presence of an insistent and permanent *prudence* in the English history.

As I stated earlier, Burke's conception of "prudence" in the English history engages a central position in his theory of social change and of history, and in his criticism of metaphysical theories of Revolutionary men of letters; since for Burke that prudence was the soul of the ancient constitution, of its every principle, and of its cornerstone "Declaration of Rights". It was the only engine of social change and of reform in the English history. Even in the extreme circumstances where the act of necessity was inevitable, the soul of prudence acted so moderately and cautiously not to harm on the one hand the liberties of the English people and on the other the principle of hereditary succession.

Richard Price attacked Burke in the second edition of "A Discourse on the Love of Our Country" as being extremely inconsistent in the "Reflections" with reference to the following statement: "*The Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons, do, in the name of the people aforesaid, most humbly and faithfully submit themselves, their heirs, and posterities for ever…*"[92] Likewise, Thomas Paine attacked Burke in "The Rights of Man" (1792) as being reactionary in the "Reflections" with reference to the following statement, in addition to

[90] Ibid, 25.
[91] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 13.
[92] Ibid, pp. 17 – 18. Price's argument on the inconsistency of Burke in the text is not my interest at this point of the study. For his argument, see: Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, Fourth Edition, footnote 23.

Price's quote: "… *bind 'us and our heirs, and our posterity, to them, their heirs, and their posterity'... to the end of time*…"[93] Their similar counter-argument against Burke is that neither could we bind our posterity with the rules and principles of our time, nor could our ancestors bind us with those of their time. However, on the one hand, Burke's position on the relationship between the ancestors and their heirs was more complex than Paine and Price allowed it to be. Indeed, Burke did not allude to the inescapable imposition of the acts and of the principles of the ancestors upon their posterities, but to a general soul, i. e. *prudence*, which exceeded the acts and the principles of the ancestors, and which was the very invaluable accumulation of experience and of wisdom of the whole generations. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, Burke was no reactionary, he saw himself as an "honest and moderate reformer", and his conception of prudence does not exclude the principle of innovation and of reform. At the very beginning of the "Reflections", he emphasized on the fragile and delicate relationship between change and conservation with a brilliant statement: "*A state without the means of its social change is without the means of its conservation.*"[94] Therefore, Burke's prudence was not the cruelty of imposition of the death rules of the ancestors upon their posterities; but was the very intersection where experience and wisdom of the old ages and the innovative soul of the new ones had intertwined indissolubly.

One of the most famous passages of the "Reflections" is the one in which Burke lamented the loss of "age of chivalry" with reference to the 6th October: "*I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists; and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that*

[93] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 21. Paine mainly opposed Burke's suggestion that parliament might bind the people in the future with the following statement: "*... for his arguments are that the persons, or the generation of persons, in whom they did exist, are dead, and with them the right is dead also.*" Paine, p. 276.
[94] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 19.

dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."[95] I shall examine this passage in detail in the succeeding sections, however at this point; I would like to demonstrate to the reader how awkward, original, astute, and exceptional Burke was for an Enlightenment philosopher. This is certainly not a passage of the Enlightenment thought; indeed radical novelist Robert Bage's transformation of it into a typical and hackneyed Enlightenment passage would substantiate Burke's originality: "*Ten thousands pens must start from their inkstands, to punish the man who dares to attempt to restore the empire of prejudice and passion. The age of chivalry, heaven be praised, is gone. The age of truth and reason have commenced, and will advance to maturity in spite of cants and bishops. Law – active, invincible avenging law, is here the knight – errant that redresses wrongs, protects damsels, punishes the base miscreants who oppress them… All this happily changed. Philosophy and commerce have transformed that generous loyalty to rank, into attachment into peace, to law, to the general happiness of mankind; that proud submission and dignified obedience into an unassuming consciousness of natural equality; and that subordination of hearth into an honest veneration of superior talents, conjoined with superior benevolence.*"[96] Let me note that Burke would certainly agree with Bage that the responsibility of this transformation was on philosophy and commerce, although he would displace these terms with Revolutionary men of letters and unimpeded monied interest.

[95] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 66.
[96] Robert Bage, *Man as He is,* in Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 190.

Joseph Priestly also denounced Burke as a reactionary and the philosopher of prejudice by using Burke's own metaphor. "*Cherish them (prejudices), then, sir, as much as you please. Prejudice and error is only a mist, which the sun, which has now risen, will affectively disperse. Keep them about you as tight as the countryman in the fable did his cloak; the same sun without any more violence than the warmth of his beams, will compel you to throw it aside, unless you chose to sweat under it, and bear the ridicule of all your cooler and less encumbered companions.*"[97] However, both Priestly and Bage neglected another passage of "Reflections" in which Burke argued that the passionate destruction of superstition and prejudice was also the construction of a new type of superstition and prejudice, i.e. "*the superstition of the pretended philosophers of the hour.*"[98] This passage is the most evident source that we find the very seeds of a fully developed criticism of Enlightenment. One century later, Adorno and Horkheimer would designate Enlightenment as the destruction of the old myths and becoming a myth, itself.[99]

However, two of the most famous radical replies to Burke's "Reflections" were Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man" (1792) and Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Men" (1790) and "A Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective" (1792). One of the common arguments of Paine and Wollstonecraft was that Burke ignored the historic suffering of the common people in his preoccupation with the brutality of Revolutionary justice. "*Mr. Burke must compliment all the Governments in the world, while the victims who suffer under them, whether sold into slavery, or tortured out of existence, are wholly forgotten.*"[100] For Paine, Burke and his allies were simply hypocrites with reference to Burke's animosity towards the French Revolution despite his support for the American Revolution: "*When the French*

[97] Joseph Priestly, *Letters to Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, in Kranmick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 190. For an analysis of Priestly as a "scientific liberal", see: Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, pp. 71 – 99.
[98] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 140.
[99] See: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 2001.
[100] Paine, p. 286.

Revolution broke out, it certainly afforded to Mr. Burke an opportunity of doing some good, had he been disposed to it; instead of which, no sooner did he see the old prejudices wearing away, than he immediately began sowing the seeds of a new inveteracy, as if he were afraid that England and France would cease to be enemies."[101]

Wollstonecraft's reaction to the "Reflections" was more complicated and the transformation of her position in the course of the French Revolution would reflect us the very transformation of the positions of Burke's colleagues on the given issue. In her first encounter with the "Reflections", Wollstonecraft believed that Burke was a former reformer who was corrupted by the patronage of the English political establishment as he grew old and confused. She read Burke as a "sentimentalist" who abstained from relying on reason. She thought that Burke was insincere in his writings whose sole objective could be a rationalization of the interests of the privileged, since it was logically impossible to agree with his arguments, such as "*that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity… and that, if we do discover some errors, our feelings should lead us to excuse, with blind love,… the venerable vestiges of ancient days.*"[102] However, as I mentioned before, this was certainly a typical misreading of the "Reflections" by its contemporaries regarding Burke's conceptualization of "prudence"; and at least in this sense, what these thinkers and political actors attacked was only a "straw man argument".[103]

At first, Burke's moderate colleagues, such as Philip Francis and James Mackintosh, agreed neither with the passionate embrace of the "radical Whigs" of the French Revolution nor with Burke's violent rhetoric against any of attempts of Revolution.[104] On the course of

[101] Ibid, p. 271.
[102] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in Conniff, p. 306.
[103] A "straw man argument" is a common, logical fallacy based on misrepresentation of an opponent's position. By setting up a "straw man argument", a new position is created which is theoretically easy to refute, and then is attributed to the original position of the opponent. In that sense, "straw man argument" depends on a strategy of misrepresentation and/or oversimplification to create an imitation or a caricature of an original position. Although it is a successful rhetorical technique in the sense of persuading people not to bolster the opponent's argument, it is in fact a fallacy in which the original position of the opponent remain untouched and undefeated.
[104] Conniff, p. 300.

the French Revolution, we observe that while Burke's position towards the Revolution was hardened and consolidated, the position of moderates took a path that came gradually closer to Burke's position. If one of the reasons of this rapprochement and of the ultimate limited reconciliation between moderates and Burke was their maintenance of contact with Burke over the course of the French Revolution, the other reason was a common general perspective that was shared both by Burke and his moderate colleagues. They, including Burke, contrary to the general misreading, all share a common commitment to progress achieved by gradual reform. Indeed, as I shall examine in the succeeding sections, Burke's theory of reform and of social change depends on the intricate relationship between progress, moderation, and gradualism, and Burke was against not progressivism, but perfectionism and a total denial of the past, which were particularly evident in Thomas Paine.[105] Conniff demonstrates that the disagreements between "moderate and Old Whigs" were on the "subordinate" issues, such as on the detail, timing, and pace of the progress, on human nature, on equality, on the degree of flexibility of the social system, and on the value of education.[106] In that sense, even Mary Wollstonecraft, who had close contacts with Richard Price and William Godwin, reassessed her view on the French Revolution, became more pessimistic, but remained nonetheless a purely Enlightenment personality. In addition, I would also like to note that there was also a disagreement among Burke and his colleagues regarding the agents of progress. For Burke, these agents were distinguished into two branches according to their nature: church and aristocracy as the means of preservation, and commerce and learning as the means of change: "*A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.*" [107] "Revolutionary men of letters" and their theories were not only excluded

[105] "*The best constitution that could now be devised, consistent with the condition of the present moment, may be far short of that excellence which a few years may afford. There is morning of reason rising upon man, on the subject of government, than has not appeared before. As the barbarism of the present old governments expires, the moral conditions of nations with respect to each other will be changed.*" Paine, p. 453.
[106] Conniff, p. 300.
[107] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 138.

from the agents of progress by Burke, but they were also designated as the principal enemies of progress and of order. On the contrary to Burke, Wollstonecraft embraced Revolutionary men of letters as the primary agent of progress while excluding church and aristocracy from the picture of the new world.[108]

[108] Conniff, p. 308.

II. Burke's Criticism of the French Revolution: A Textual Analysis of the "Reflections on the Revolution in France"

In order to reach a fully – developed textual analysis of Edmund Burke's "Reflections", one should firstly study the respective stage of the French Revolution when Burke was writing the "Reflections". When a historian thinks about the French Revolution, he/she would visualize it by the fall of Bastille, by the transformation of États Généraux into Assemblée Nationale, by the abolition of feudal privileges and the confiscation of the Church's property, by the execution of Louis XVI, by the reign of Terror, by the fall of the Jacobins, by the Directoire period, and by the Napoleonic Wars in which the Republican army overthrew the Ancien Régime in Europe. When Burke was writing the "Reflections", only the first three of them meant the French Revolution. However, as I shall demonstrate in the succeeding sections, Burke's analysis of these early proceedings of the French Revolution almost predicted the following course of the Revolution.

"Reflections" had its origins in a correspondence between Edmund Burke and Charles Francoit Depont, in Burke's words, "a young gentleman in Paris", who would later translate and publish the "Reflections" in French. The initiative event of its emergence was the March of October 5 – 6, 1789, when Parisians marched to Versailles in order to "demand bread" from the king. Thus, the textual structure of the "Reflections" was very complicated for the reader; it is not divided into chapters, it is not systematic for a book, and it is too long for a pamphlet. Nonetheless, when closely examined, it is visible that Burke developed his analysis of the Revolution upon certain proceedings of the French Revolution. On the one hand, "Reflections" began with a harsh criticism of Dr. Richard Price's sermon on the French Revolution and progressed by Burke's interpretation of the 18th century English history,

particularly of the Glorious Revolution and of the "ancient constitution". Regarding the French Revolution, on the other hand, Burke developed his analysis on the following proceedings of the French Revolution: (a) Summoning of the États Généraux by Louis XVI, his loss of control over it, and the transformation of the Tiers-États into Assemblée Nationale, (b) abolition of the feudal privileges in August 1789, (c) confiscation of the lands of the Church in October 1789 and their use as a loan by the National Assembly from March 1789, and (d) march of the Parisians to Versailles in October 5 – 6, 1789, and the forcible bringing of the royal family to Paris.

As I shall examine closely in the succeeding section on Burke's conception of "social change", there are certain scholars who designated Burke's analysis of the French Revolution as "no – explanation" or "conspiracy theory".[109] It was argued either that Burke's political thought cannot present the necessary means to grasp and explain the causes of revolution or anarchy, i. e. thesis of "no – explanation", or that it can only attribute social change to conspiracy, i.e. thesis of "conspiracy theory". I shall demonstrate that although conspiracy plays a crucial role in Burke's analysis of the French Revolution, Burke did find other historical and sociological phenomena as the true causes of the Revolution. In other words, for Burke, conspiracy was only a trigger whilst the true causes of the Revolution had already prepared the necessary conditions for the transformation to occur. However, without giving any references to Burke's conception of social change in the "Reflections", one could still refute these theses of "no – explanation" and "conspiracy theory" by studying the importance of the French Revolution for Burke.

Burke immediately grasped the global significance of the French Revolution. For him, it did not only threaten the foundations of the French and English Empires, but of the whole human civilization in Europe. "*It appears to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs*

[109] Micheal Freeman examplifies these readings of Burke with John Plamenatz and his work "Man and Society" regarding the thesis of "no – explanation" and with Canavan, Wilkins, and Cobban regarding the thesis of "conspiracy theory". Freeman, "Edmund Burke and the Theory of Revolution", p. 279, footnote: 10, p. 296.

of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French Revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world."[110] Indeed, it was the most salient sign that the ancient regime, meaning that the age of chivalry, royal mystery and thus proud submission and dignified obedience, and clerical mystery and thus the protective warmth of prejudice and superstition over shivering human nature, has gone forever. The age of secular sophistication, of rational servitude, of cold bureaucratic and scientific calculation, and of tyranny of economists has begun. In other words, French Revolution, "*this monstrous tragicomic scene*"[111], was the sign of the beginning of a deadly arrogant and capable age. Therefore, for Burke, such a fundamental change could not be the direct consequence of a delicate conspiracy of Revolutionary men of letters, thus their being the principal actors did not mean their being the causes of the transformation process. Indeed, Burke was well aware of the self - defeating defects of the Ancien Régime, and this consciousness led him to designate himself as a moderate reformer in order to both improve and conserve the theoretical and practical accumulation of the human civilization for centuries. However, he had also an intuition that this process of total deconstruction of the Ancien Régime and the construction of the Regime of calculators, sophisters, and economists was inevitable. "*If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it. The general opinions and feelings will draw that way… Then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself.*"[112]

Before going a step forward, it is crucial to briefly present one of the main controversies of the historiographies on the French Revolution: Most of the historians of the French Revolution read the ultimate rise of the Napoleon to power in 1799, from the General

[110] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 9.
[111] Ibid, p. 9.
[112] Edmund Burke, in Michael A. Mosher, "The Skeptic's Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790 – 1990", *Political Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1991, p. 391.

Bonaparte through the Consul Bonaparte to the Emperor Napoleon I, as the end of the French Revolution. Therefore, the Napoleonic Wars that threw the Ancien Régime in Europe were excluded from the history of the French Revolution. Pierre Larousse in his famous Dictionnaire Universel, devoted to the 19th century, describes Bonaparte as "*a general of the Republic, born in Ajaccio in August 1769, died at the chateau of Saint-Cloud, near to Paris, on 18 Brumaire Year VIII of the Republic.*" (9 November 1799) In other words, Larousse alludes that the French Revolution and the Jacobin General Napoleon died when the French Empire and the Emperor Napoleon I were born. Moreover, Albert Mathiez's great work of "La Révolution Française" ends with the 9 Thermidor when Jacobins were overthrew from power.[113] Indeed, when George Lefebvre tried to fulfil the legacy of Mathiez by writing the fourth volume of Mathiez's French Revolution on the Thermidorians, the history ends by an examination of the insurrection of Vendemiare on October 5, 1795.[114] However, it should be questioned whether the end of the French Republic in 1799, or the fall of the Jacobins in 1794, meant the end of the French Revolution. Actually, the answer of a historian to this question derives from his/her view on the main quality of the French Revolution. After four years of the "Reflections", Edmund Burke in "Letter on a Regicide Peace" (1795) still passionately opposed the French Revolution, struggled to put an end to a possible compromise between England and France, and openly advocated the declaration of war against France, despite the fall of the Jacobins and of the Terror Period in 1794. Likewise, he would most probably see the soul of the French Revolution in action in the Napoleonic wars as well. In 1856, Tocqueville, who was a good reader of the "Reflections", had already fought against such a narrow reading of the French Revolution; since for him the main quality of the French Revolution was its uncompromising objective of the total destruction of the Ancien Régime. Tocqueville saw the soul of the French Revolution alive both long before the fall of

[113] Albert Mathiez, *La Révolution Française*, Paris: A. Colin, Vol. 1, 2, 3, fourth edition, 1933.
[114] George Lefebvre, *The Thermidorians*, trans. Robert Baldick, New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

Bastille, and thus in the Ancien Régime itself, and after the rise of the Empire, in the Napoleonic wars and even in the 1848 Revolution, where he marvelled at the imitative nature of the revolutions.[115] In that sense, Francoit Furet was the first historian who reminded the writings of Tocqueville to the French historians. However, contrary to Tocqueville's distinction between 1789 and 1793 with reference to the dichotomy between liberty and equality, Burke read the French Revolution as a whole and avoided to glorify any part of it.

In order to reach an intricate analysis of the "Reflections", the rest of this study is divided into three main parts. In the first part, I shall examine Burke's emphasis on the role of the Revolutionary men of letters, as metaphysicians and sophistics, and of their theories in the French Revolution. In the second part, I shall clarify Burke's ambivalent position on commerce, on monied interest, and on paper money, and in the third part, I shall examine his conceptions of reason, prudence, social change, and superstition and of his criticism of the French Revolution in that light. Eventually, the main thesis of this study by depending on an analysis of these three main pillars of the "Reflections" shall be that "Reflections" as a classic text was an intricate inside critique of the Enlightenment thought, whose author, though was certainly an Enlightenment thinker himself, had certain fundamental doubts on the very core assumptions of the Enlightenment thought and on its practical consequences for societies. In other words, I shall argue that while Burke was attacking (1) to the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysicians and their theories as abstract and dangerous speculations, (2) to the paper money and unimpeded monied interest as the tyranny of economists and calculators, (3) to the sacred and infallible reason as the new superstition displacing religion as the old one, and to the extremely self – assured will to defame and deconstruct everything associated with the past and to recreate a new world from scratch in an abrupt process, he was directly launching a crusade to the very heart of the Enlightenment thought itself; however within

[115] Melvin, "Burke on Theatricality and Revolution", footnote: 15, p. 452.

certain limitations because of the organic roots of his political theory in the Enlightenment thought.

1. Revolutionary Men of Letters as the Metaphysicians and Sophistics

"*The fact is that as money increases and circulates, and as the circulation of news in politics and letters, becomes more and more diffused, the persons who diffused this money, and this intelligence, become more and more important.*"[116]

Burke was very quick to point out that the French Revolution was not just another event in political history. It was certainly not like the English Revolution of 1688, and only a bit like the American Revolution of 1776 which preceded it. The French Revolution, for Burke, was made in the name of a new view of the world which threatened the very foundations of the existing world. Most of his contemporaries read it as the event marking the end of monarchical tyranny, like Wordsworths and Foxes, or as the event very similar to the American Revolution, like Thomas Paine. Indeed, Paine, in a letter to Burke in January 1790 before the publication of the "Reflections", simply assumed that since they had similar positions on the American Revolution, which was itself a wrong assumption, Burke would share Paine's great joy for the French Revolution. He wrote excitedly as good news to Burke that "*the Revolution in France is certainly a forerunner to other Revolutions in Europe.*"[117] Unlike most of his contemporaries, Burke perceived the true historical role and the sole reason of existence of the French Revolution, i.e. destruction of the Ancien Régime as a whole and construction of a totally new world. "*It is great object is not… the destruction of all absolute Monarchies, but totally to root out the thing called the Aristocrate or Nobleman and Gentleman.*"[118] French Revolution was more than the subversion of the monarchy; it was

[116] Burke, in Bromwich "Introduction", in Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, p. 17.
[117] Thomas Paine, in Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 143.
[118] Edmund Burke, "Letter to Fitzwilliam" (1791), in Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 144.

in fact a crusade, an uncompromising war against the daily way of life of the Ancien Régime which involved mystical superstition, noble governance and obedience, and gentry.

In the "Reflections", Burke mainly read the French Revolution as an assault not only towards aristocracy, monarchy, and clergy in the Ancien Régime, but also towards commerce as the principal source of wealth; thus the absence of the formers as the means of conservation would inevitably lead to the destruction of the latter as the means of change, since a prudent sense of change was impossible without a certain sense of preservation. In this assault towards the Ancien Régime, Burke designated, first, Revolutionary men of letters and their metaphysical theories, and then, paper money speculators as the two principal actors behind the French Revolution. He conceptualized these two types of political actors of the new world respectively as "Jacobinism" and "Indianism". Although one could illustrate Jacobinism with Robespierre in the French Revolution and Indianism with Hastings in the Indian problem, these conceptions were intertwined indissolubly in Burke's political thought. Indeed, they were the two sides of the same coin, and thus Indianism as well as Jacobinism was in action in the French Revolution. This section is devoted to an analysis of Burke's conception of Jacobinism, i. e. Revolutionary men of letters and their metaphysical theories aimed at the total destruction of the old order and the reconstruction of a new one from scratch.

In order to analyze Burke's conception of Revolutionary men of letters, the first question that one should deal with is that who those men of theory were for Burke. Though in that sense there are certain salient references to Dr. Richard Price and J. J. Rousseau and latent allusions to Turgot and Robespierre in the "Reflections", Burke did not single out particular individuals for condemnation. On the contrary, Burke was attacking an entire stratum of political intellectuals, hundreds of philosophers, theorists, writers, poets, journalists, political actors, and propagandists, who constantly gave sermons, made political speeches either in the Assembly, in the saloons, or in the streets, wrote novels and poets, and

propounded theories all on the intellectual, moral, political, and economic bankruptcy of Europe's ageing political institutions, beliefs, and practices, and on the inevitable necessity of the wholesale restructuring of the European society. In order to illustrate the total denial of the Ancien Régime as the first constituent of the common denominator of the Revolutionary men of letters, in addition to the restructuring of the society from scratch, Burke made a brilliant quotation in the "Reflections". M. Rabaud de St. Etienne who was a leading member of the National Assembly expressed the main principle of the French Revolution by the following statement: "*All the establishments in France crown the unhappiness of the people: to make them happy they must be renewed, their ideas, their laws, their customs must be changed; … men changed, things changed, words changed … destroy everything; yes, destroy everything; since everything is to be recreated.*"[119] This quotation becomes more valuable, when one discovers that Jean Paul Rabaud was among the moderate revolutionaries of the French Revolution, i.e. Girondins, in comparison with Jacobins, Les Enragés, and Hébertists.[120] In other words, Burke was well aware of the fact that this particular kind of discourse had become dominant and pervasive in the whole Europe and it was what directed the machine then at work in France. Indeed, this was the political air in Europe in the eighteenth century that everyone, including Burke himself, breathed. This political air was the air of change. It consisted of, on the one hand, a harsh criticism of the present political institutions and morality, and on the other hand, an arrogant contention to reconstruct society from scratch. Burke did resist, but only to a certain degree, the political air of his age by proposing prudent reform that involved both innovation and preservation.

The situation of the Ancien Régime in the face of this omnipotent and omnipresent political air of change was tragic. First of all, the Ancien Régime was in an urgent need of defending itself theoretically with its own view of the world against the revolutionary view of

[119] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, footnote 44, p. 147.
[120] Like most of the other Girondins, Rabaud opposed the establishment of the Republic as an unnecessary step and the trial of Louis XVI. Rabaud was guillotined in the Terror Period.

the Enlightenment critique. However, the tragedy of the Ancien Régime did not derive from its need to defend itself, but its need to defend itself by the very means of its enemy. The traditional theoretical means, such as the divine right monarchy, became inadequate to match the sheer diversity of the Enlightenment's critique and Burke's "Reflections" emerged as a defense of the Ancien Régime by the very means of the Enlightenment thought. In McClelland's words, "Reflections", "*is an attempt to clothe pre-Revolutionary social and political institutions with an ideological justification which is in its way just as comprehensive as the revolutionary ideology in whose name those institutions were being attacked.*"[121] This is the reason why the "Reflections" has become an inside critique of the Enlightenment thought; since Burke was defending the Ancien Regime by the very means of the Enlightenment thought. Secondly, the Ancien Régime embraced the political air of change itself, let alone resisted; in a word, it precipitated its own end. This crucial point was wholly grasped by Tocqueville, rather than Burke, who empirically studied the proceedings of the central administration before the Revolution. Burke constantly asked the right questions in the "Reflections", but could not find the right answers: Regarding the reformist character of Louis XVI, Burke wrote: "*They have seen the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch with more fury, outrage, and insult than ever any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper or the most sanguinary tyrant.*"[122] and "*… as some spirit of reform has prevailed through the whole reign…*"[123] Regarding the mass intolerance to the landed property of the aristocracy and to its privileges, Burke wrote: "*Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus product of the soil, appear intolerable to you or to me when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries … through great collections of ancient records, medals, and coins … through paintings and*

[121] McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, "The Limitations of Enlightenment: Hume and Burke", p. 413.
[122] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 34.
[123] Ibid, p. 129.

statues … through grand monuments of the dead … through collections of the specimens of nature which … open the avenues to science?"[124]

The tragic situation of the Ancien Régime and the omnipresent power of the political air of change in the eighteenth century France were best illustrated by Tocqueville. He empirically demonstrated in the part "How the spirit of revolt was promoted by well – intentioned efforts to improve the people's lot?" of "The Old Regime and the Revolution" that the King, his Intendants, his Ministers, aristocrats, and clergymen were constantly, ceaselessly, and publicly criticized their very privileges and complained about the miserable conditions of the peasants, as if peasants could not hear and understand these Enlightened conversations.[125] In other words, Revolutionary men of letters were not confined with the radical bourgeois class; on the contrary, the king and the aristocrats were in a way also the eager men of theory. On the other side of the coin, however, the feelings of the aristocrats towards the peasants were full of contempt. In that sense, Tocqueville's example is remarkable: "*We are reminded of the conduct of Mme. Duchatelet, as reported by Voltaire's secretary; this good lady, it seems, had no scruples about undressing in the presence of her menservants, being unable to convince herself that these lackeys were real – and – blood men!*"[126]

Before analyzing Burke's theoretical rejection of the theories of the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysics, it is crucial to examine Burke's description of these men of theory in the "Reflections". After the transformation of the Tiers-États into National Assembly, Burke closely investigated the professions, ages, and origins of the representatives of the French National Assembly which became the sole source of authority until the emergence of the "Committee of Public Safety" in 1793 as the most superior body of the

[124] Ibid, p. 142.
[125] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1995, p. 180 – 187.
[126] Ibid, p. 183.

French government. The first observation of Burke on these representatives and on their most salient pioneers was that they were young, vigorous, bold, presumptuous, and passionate individuals. Indeed, it is really difficult to find out different words then those of Burke to describe Robespierre in the age of thirty five standing at the crown of the Terror kingdom, Saint – Just at the age of twenty six when he was recommending the Assembly to execute Louis XVI even without a trial, Jacques René Hébert, the leader of Hébertists, at the age of thirty six proposing the abolition of Christianity and the introduction of the Cult of Reason, or Jacques Roux, the leader of Les Enragés, at the age of forty one demanding more and more blood from the Assembly. The second observation of Burke was that Revolutionary men of letters were not only uncompromisingly insolent and arrogant in their goals; but they were also energetic and talented in comparison to the indolent, sluggish, and timid privileged and propertied aristocracy. Indeed, the dichotomies of young and old, of energetic and inert, and of bold and timid as the representations of the new and the old human beings were constantly presented in the eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, such as the contrast between Oblomov and Stoltz in Goncharov's novel or between the father and the son in Turgenyev's novel. In his "Letter on a Regicide Peace", Burke described Jacobinism as "*talents which assert their pretensions, and are impatient of the place which settled society prescribes to them.*"[127] Kramnick, with reference to "Letter to a Noble Lord" where Burke described Bedford as an indolent aristocrat and himself as a talented political actor, argued that Burke also experienced an inner struggle within himself between the Jacobin self and the aristocratic self.[128] For Burke, these two observations alone were sufficient to grasp the fact that coming

[127]Note that Burke used the concept of "Jacobinism" to describe the Revolutionary men of letters, not a specific political faction among them. Edmund Burke, in Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 145.
[128] Ibid, p. 147.

to power of the Revolutionary men of letters was an *irreparable calamity* for the French society.[129]

The third observation of Burke was on the professional background of the representatives of the National Assembly of France. Burke observed that it was mostly composed of individuals of the "*inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession.*"[130] Indeed, most of them were practitioners in the law. The fourth and final observation of Burke was that most of these political actors were excluded from the political practice until 1789, and they also lacked the possession of property, meaning landed property, which stabilized their political motives.[131] "*Men of letters, fond of distinguishing themselves, are rarely averse to innovation. Since the decline of the life and greatness of Louis the Fourteenth, they were not so much cultivated, either by him or by the regent or the successors to the crown, nor were they engaged to the court by favours and emoluments so systematically as during the splendid period of that ostentatious and not impolitic reign. What they lost in the old court protection, they endeavoured to make up by joining in a sort of incorporation of their own; to which the two academies of France, and afterwards the vast undertaking of the Encyclopedia, carried on by a society of these gentlemen, did not a little contribute.*"[132] Therefore, Burke's accusation of the theories of the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysics alluded to their inexperience in the practical politics. Burke would argue that their abstract ideas had no applicability to social reality since they were not tempered by any practical knowledge of political participation. Indeed, Tocqueville would agree with Burke by demonstrating that the main reason of the inexperience of the

[129] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 33.
[130] Ibid, p. 37.
[131] Ibid, p. 38.
[132] Ibid, p. 97.

Revolutionary men of letters derived from their exclusion from the practical politics by the French monarchy.[133]

However, Burke was himself a man of letters, and as I mentioned above, his intellectual assault towards the theories of the men of theory as metaphysicians and sophistics was based on the same ground as that of its enemies, i.e. the Enlightenment thought. Therefore, when Burke attacked the theories of the Revolutionary men of letters, he directly attacked to the very heart of the Enlightenment thought itself; however within certain limitations because of the organic roots of his political theory in the Enlightenment thought.

Kant defined Enlightenment as "*man's emergence from his self – incurred immaturity.*"[134] In this definition, the concept of immaturity refers to the inability of man to use his own understanding without guidance of another and the concept of self – incurred immaturity argues that this inability does not derive from man's lack of understanding, but from his sluggishness and cowardice. The new enlightened man would be courageous enough to reject any institutions' grace of thinking on behalf of him and to rely on nothing, but on his own reason. Thus, as Kant put it, the motto of the Enlightenment is "*Sapare Aude!*"[135] This infinite courage and confidence of the enlightened man on his reason, though the Enlightenment was still an on-going process for Kant, led to the Enlightenment claim that a science of politics, just like the natural sciences, capable of rendering up finished truths about the moral and political worlds is definitely possible. Now, Burke would designate this courage and self-confidence, in a word, as arrogance. An arrogance, not innocent but dangerous,

[133] Both Burke and Tocqueville paid great attention to the Revolutionary men of letters. For a comparison of these thinkers on this issue, see: Susan Dunn, "Revolutionary Men of Letters and the Pursuit of Social Change: The Views of Burke, Tocqueville, Adams, Madison, and Jefferson", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 53, No. 4, 1996: 729 – 754. Also see: Seamus Deane, "Burke and Tocqueville: New Worlds, New Beings", *Boundary 2*, Vol. 31, Issue 1, 2004: 1 – 23. Finally for an analysis of Burke and Tocqueville as "liberal conservatives", see: Sanford Lakoff, "Tocqueville, Burke, and the Origins of Liberal Conservatism", *Review of Politics*, Vol. 60, Issue 3, 1998: 435 – 464.

[134] Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment", Ed. H. S. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Second Edition: Cambridge University Press, p: 54.

[135] Ibid, p. 54.

desiring and believing in finished and simple truths, that threatened the essential foundations of the human civilization root and branch.

According to Burke, human societies are complex. To say that societies are complex does not mean that they are perfect. Burke is no reactionary. He recognizes social change not because they are inevitable and unavoidable, that for him they certainly are; but because they are necessary. However, as I shall analyze more closely in the succeeding sections, Burke's conception of change is of a particular type of change that has also an ability to preserve. The complexity of human societies derives from two reasons: On the one hand, moral and political truths, that are the truths of human societies, are context – dependent. Thus, the only thing that a society can rely on is the wisdom of its past, which is nothing but the manifestation of the accumulation of experience: "*I cannot stand forward and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial and noxious to mankind.*"[136] This is why Burke denominated the liberties deriving from the English political history as the "rights of Englishmen", rather than "the rights of men" as an abstraction. Burke as an Enlightenment philosopher was not against the notion of "Rights"; but he was, as a loyal critique of the Enlightenment thought, against the notion of "universal rights."[137]

On the other hand, moral and political truths are the wonders of the mind of a very complex God, as the other reason of the complexity of human societies. Thus, these truths can never be wholly understood by mankind, though the main logic of them latently reflects itself in the established institutions as the manifestation of the accumulation of experience of the

[136] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 7.
[137] Ibid, p. 28.

past generations. As if there are latent mechanisms that mysteriously working behind the human societies, which are by no means obvious and may be seen as trivial at first glance, however are actually the condition of the preservation and the change of the order; human societies are not only intricate, but more importantly delicate structures. The arrogance, which is already baffled by the delicacy of the truth and eventually preferred the short – cut solutions by avoiding the complexity of the difficulty, can easily destroy the invaluable because of the intricacy of the truth with its abstract theories. This is the metaphor of Burke in which the Revolutionaries are the presumptuous, impatient, and ignorant children turning the intricate human society upside down.

Revolutionaries, "*the leaders of the legislative clubs and coffee-houses*", who "*are intoxicated with admiration at their own wisdom and ability*", who "*speak with the most sovereign contempt of the rest of the world*", and who "*tell the people … that they are a nation of philosophers*"[138] neglect the difficulty of grasping and analyzing the intricate social reality by *prudence*, *care*, and *deliberation* and prefer short – cut method of destroying what they cannot understand by *rage* and *frenzy*. However, abstaining from wrestling with difficulty leads them to be superficial on their object and the same difficulty finds them again by multiplying itself: "*The difficulties, which they rather had eluded than escaped, meet them again in their course; they multiply and thicken on them; they are involved, through a labyrinth of confused detail, in an industry without limit and direction; and, in conclusion, the whole of their work becomes feeble, vicious, and insecure.*"[139] However, "*difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental God and Legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better, too … He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our best helper.*"[140]

[138] Burke reminds us "Gulliver's Travels" for the idea of countries governed by philosophers. Ibid, p. 117.
[139] Ibid, p. 147.
[140] Ibid, p. 146.

Regarding Burke's allusion to the latent mechanisms of the complex mind of God working behind the dynamics of human societies, McClelland argues that "*Burke very prudently neglect to give a list of latent causes, so as not to fall into the trap of saying that he can spot causes which are in fact very difficult to identify*"[141], let alone to grasp. However, Burke's argument of "latent causes" was itself used by the very Revolutionary argument without any inconsistency. When the age of revolution began, the war of "religious" ideologies with reference to Burke and Tocqueville, that endured, at least for now, two hundred years not only in Europe, but in the whole world, there emerged political philosophers associated them with latent causes. In other words, notwithstanding being pro – revolutionary or anti - revolutionary, certain theories saw latent causes in action under the bloody, however completely "rational", transformation of societies. Hegel saw the soul of God in Napoleon, and the cunning of reason in the Napoleonic wars. As a loyal student of Hegel, Marx saw the relations of production, which were themselves consequences of modes of production, as the latent causes of historical change. However, in this regard, Tolstoy's "War and Peace" was remarkable. Tolstoy began by asking the most legitimate question about the Napoleonic wars: Why did suddenly tens of thousands of Frenchmen decide to slaughter tens of thousands of Russian men whom they didn't know and to set on fire Moscow from where their country was far away? And why did their sacred objective of burning Russia suddenly become null for them and why did they suddenly give up what they most desired at the very edge of accomplishing it? Tolstoy's answer was that Napoleon was nothing but a historical puppet of latent causes, just like all other historical figures, as if they were delicately selected for their particular roles in history: "*By discarding a claim to knowledge of the ultimate purpose, we shall clearly perceive that just as one cannot imagine a blossom or seed for any single plant better suited to it than those it produces, so it is impossible to*

[141] McClelland, p. 413.

imagine any two people more completely adapted down to the smallest detail for the purpose they had to fulfil, than Napoleon and Alexander with all their antecedents."[142] For Tolstoy, when the historical figure became more ignorant of his/her historical role, their success in carrying out their role would become more likely: "*In historic events the rule forbidding us to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is specially applicable. Only unconscious action bears fruit, and he who plays a part in an historic event never understands its significance. If he tries to realize it his efforts are fruitless.*"[143] Therefore, not only order, but also Revolution may also be presented as the result of latent causes. "*We need only penetrate to the essence of any historic event- which lies in the activity of the general mass of men who take part in it- to be convinced that the will of the historic hero does not control the actions of the mass but is itself continually controlled.*"[144]

Without a shadow of doubt, Burke has always served as an inspiration for conservative political thought regarding his criticism of the Revolutionary mind. However, there immediately emerge certain doubts for the former statement, if the author of this study does not clarify his conceptualization of "conservative political thought". Here, I don't refer to Burke of a certain type of "conservatism", with reference to Pocock, such as what is meant by the word in the contemporary United States: "*a blend of American patriotism, evangelical religion and free – enterprise values.*"[145] In other words, I don't refer, in Kramnick's words, to the "*mystic Burke as the prophet of conservatism from holy war to cold war.*"[146] I certainly refer to Burke's conservatism as part of the history of philosophical conservatism in which the main claim is that human beings are not absolutely free to reconstruct the human society as they wish; since the circumstances in which they act are based on historically determined

[142] Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, First Epilogue, Chapter II, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude, The Literature Network, http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/war_and_peace/ (10/05/2008)
[143] Ibid, Book Twelve, Chapter IV.
[144] Ibid, Book Thirteen, Chapter I.
[145] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. vii.
[146] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, pp. 39 – 51.

contexts. This claim of the philosophical conservatism, which owes great debt to Burke, appears as a theoretical challenge to the Revolutionary arguments of the Enlightenment which invited man first to believe in himself, i.e *sapere aude*, and then to transform both the physical and the social world from scratch. At this very point, Pocock argues that Revolutionary arguments may be more complex than Burke or philosophical conservatism allowed them to be: "*it may claim either that revolutionaries are free from the constraints of history, or that they are constrained by history to act in a revolutionary way.*"[147] The latter part is exactly the main thesis of Marx, and indeed, the above argument of the conservative thought reminds the reader that of Marx: "*Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in present circumstances, given and inherited.*"[148] For Marx, the inevitability of the transformation of the human society does not derive from the actions and theories of the agents, rather from the nature of the circumstances, themselves. Moreover, "reason d'être" of the revolutionaries and their passion, capability, and will to change also derive from the very circumstances on which they act. However, this does not mean that circumstances can be changed by themselves, since history is certainly a humane performance.

Regarding the Revolutionary men of letters, as Pocock argues, for Burke, this is the intellect divorced from all natural relations – from manners and subordination and from the laws of nature and nature's God.[149] However, in order that mind left alone with its own fantasies, "paper money despotism" has to subvert every source of manners in society, i.e. property, meaning landed property whose destruction would also influence the commercial wealth, and natural subordination. Nonetheless, if one study Burke's political thought through an intertextual analysis, from "Reflections" (1791) to "Letter on a Regicide Peace" (1795),

[147] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. vii.
[148] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in Karl Marx, *Later Political Writings*, Ed. and trans. Terrel Carver, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 32.
[149] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 204.

he/she would discover that Burke's anxiety of the paper money speculators who circulated capital would fade away, while of the Revolutionary men of letters who circulated knowledge and ideas remained constant and even strengthened. In place of the alliance between monied interest and men of theory of the "Reflections", Burke concentrated on the alliance of "the philosophers and the politicians" in "Letter to a Regicide Peace".[150] This intertextual reading does not argue that the monied interest had lost its importance for Burke in 1795, but it is now the bureaucrats and technicians of national power as the means of national aggrandizement that commanded the monied interest. Such an alliance is exactly what Pocock designates as the "Republicanism" in the "Machiavellian Moment", which involves the soul of totalitarianism in its nature, and, where the republic destroys *man* of the chivalry as a social being to recreate him as armed *citizen* of the nation. This intertextual development of Burke's political thought led scholars to designate Burke as one of the first political thinkers who grasped the true nature of the emerging phenomenon, i.e. totalitarianism. Later, Tocqueville would follow Burke's path by his conception of "tyranny of majority" in the "Democracy in America".

[150] Ibid, p. 206.

2. Monied Interest, Paper Money, and Commerce

When Burke was writing the "Reflections", the French Revolution meant (a) summoning of the États Généraux by Louis XVI, his loss of control over it, and the transformation of the Tiers-États into Assemblée Nationale, (b) abolition of the feudal privileges in August 1789, (c) confiscation of the lands of the Church in October 1789 and their use as a loan by the National Assembly as from March 1789, and (d) march of the Parisians to Versailles in October 5 – 6, 1789, and the forcible bringing of the royal family to Paris. Therefore, in order to develop a solid criticism of the Revolutionary men of letters and their theories, and to argue that abstract theories in practice upset the delicate balance of things, Burke did not only study the structure of the National Assembly, but also its proceedings which were used by Burke to refute the French Revolution as a political calamity. However, among these proceedings of the French Revolution, Burke's emphasis was clearly on the expropriation of the lands of the Church and their use as a loan by the National Assembly, i.e. *assignats*. Indeed, it is surprising that Burke wrote little about the abolition of the feudal and seigniorial privileges. Moreover, when Burke began to analyze the great project of the National Assembly of France to reconstruct society from scratch towards the last pages of the "Reflections", by designating it *geometrical* as the basis of territory, *arithmetical* as the basis of population, and *financial* as the basis of contribution[151], he would feel obliged to return to the case of expropriation of the Church.[152]

There are, at least, two dimensions of Burke's (over)emphasis on this issue. First of all, Burke read the French Revolution aimed at nothing less than the elimination of the Christian religion from politics. Burke wrote "*the literary cabal had some years ago formed*

[151] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 152. This part constituted the most criticized thesis of the "Reflections", and it was denied by its critics as being simply an incorrect observation.
[152] Ibid, p. 167.

something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian religion"[153] and "*in short, Sir, it seems to me that this new ecclesiastical establishment is intended only to be temporary and preparatory to the utter abolition, under any of its forms, of the Christian religion, whenever the minds of men are prepared for this last stroke against it, by the accomplishment of the plan for bringing its ministers into universal contempt. They who will not believe that the philosophical fanatics who guide in these matters have long entertained such a design are utterly ignorant of their character and proceedings.*"[154] Indeed, especially in the last year of the Terror Period of the French Revolution, the churches would be closed, the religious festivals would be displaced by the revolutionary and civic cults, i.e. Cult of Reason and subsequently Cult of Supreme Being, the religious saints by the revolutionary martyrs, and the religious monuments by the paintings of Jacques Louis David. Moreover, the French Republican Calendar would be introduced which designated the establishment of the Republic in September, 22, 1792, rather than the birthday of Jesus, as the beginning of the year, and "the Goddess Reason" in the Notre Dame Cathedral would passionately be celebrated. Long after the end of the French Revolution, in 1856, Tocqueville would designate "equality", rather than dechristianisation, as the true soul of the French Revolution by arguing that "*the campaign against the all forms of religion was merely incidental to the French Revolution, a spectacular but transient phenomenon, a brief reaction to the ideologies, emotions, and events which led up to it- but in no sense basic to its program.*"[155] Indeed, Burke's emphasis on the confiscation of the lands of the Church had a second dimension which constituted the core of most his writings on this issue in the "Reflections": unimpeded monied interest. For Burke, the two political acts, expropriation of the Church and the issue of assignats, constituted the Revolution as he saw it in 1789 – 90. Monied interest was attacking through the Church to the

[153] Ibid, p. 97.
[154] Ibid, p. 130.
[155] Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Part One, Chapter Two: "How the chief and ultimate aim of the Revolution was not, as used to be thought, to overthrow religious and to weaken authority in France", p. 5.

nobility and monarchy, three preserving constituents of the Ancien Régime. This dominant second dimension of the case of "the expropriation of the Church" in the "Reflections" presents us the opportunity to analyze Burke's conceptions of monied interest, of paper money, and of commerce.

Regarding Burke's conception of monied interest, and his emphasis on the alliance between the Revolutionary men of letters, i.e. Jacobinism, and the Revolutionary creditors of the state, i.e. Indianism, one encounters with two different images of Burke that are mutually exclusive, i.e. Burke as an early critique of capitalism vs. Burke as a pioneer of commerce and free trade.

On the one hand, Burke's political thought, with reference to his emphasis on an alliance between monied interest and revolutionary metaphysics, is presented as an early critique of capitalism. Harold Laski, for instance, argued that Burke's defence of tradition enabled him to grasp the destructive characteristics of capitalist society for the human civilization.[156] Isaac Kramnick's reading of Burke, though more intricate than Laski's reading and well aware of Burke's support of free trade and of commerce, analyzed "Reflections" within a fatal conflict in the eighteenth century England between a radical middle – class bourgeoisie that possessed the economic power and desired the political one, and a ruling aristocracy that lost everything except its privileges in the political realm. In that sense, Kramnick located Priestley, Paine, and Price among the representatives of the radical bourgeoisie pursuing a liberal ideal, and Burke among those of the aristocracy.[157] Therefore, the intellectual battle between Paine's "Rights of Men" and Burke's "Reflections" was

[156] Isaac Kramnick, "Liberalism, Marxism, and the Enlightenment: The Case of Harold Laski", in Bernard Yack (ed.), *Liberalism without Illusions*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 138.

[157] See: Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in the late Eighteenth Century England and America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. Pocock, on the contrary, argued that the revolutionary debate was largely a struggle between Whig ancient constitutionalists, including Burke, and a republican alliance of disciples of Harrington and Machiavelli. See: J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Also see: J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

actually the manifestation of the material conflict between bourgeoisie and aristocracy.[158] In addition, Kramnick also diagnosed an inner conflict between bourgeois and aristocratic selves in Burke's political thought itself.[159]

On the other hand, Burke's political thought, with particular reference to his other writings and speeches, i.e. Tract on the Popery Laws" (1761), "Speech on Economical Reform" (1780), "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity" (1795), and "Letter on a Regicide Peace" (1795), was read as an advocacy of free trade and of commerce. In this respect, being completely compatible with his theory of "possessive individualism"[160], C. B. Macpherson took a step forward by arguing that Burke granted the theory of hierarchy and status in the "Reflections" to the service of the free market.[161] Thus, for Macpherson, Burke provided liberal order "a theory of class subordination" by his defense of status quo, privilege, superstition, and deference.[162] In order to analyze Burke's conceptions of monied interest, of paper money, and of commerce in the "Reflections", it is crucial to deconstruct these various images by analyzing Burke's political economy in general and his conception of "monied interest" in the "Reflections" in particular.

Burke had a fully – developed understanding of political economy long before the publication of the "Reflections". One can observe from the note of William Gerard Hamilton, who employed Burke from 1759 to 1765, that Burke grasped the political economy deeply even in the 1760s: "*though* I *myself was a Lord of Trade, though* I *had access to all the official documents, and though* I *had studied them conscientiously, nevertheless* I *felt at a loss*

[158] Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, p. 143.
[159] See: Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*, New York: Basic Books, 1977.
[160] See: C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
[161] See: C. B. Macpherson, *Burke*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. Donal Barrington did exactly what Macpherson did in his reading of Burke with his essay "Edmund Burke as an Economist", but with a quite different intention, i.e. blessing Burke as one of the first political economists with Adam Smith. See: Donal Barrington, "Edmund Burke as an Economist", *Economica*, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 83, 1954: 252 – 258.
[162] Isaac Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 205.

when talking to Burke, so great was Burke's knowledge of this subject."[163] Likewise, as Macpherson argued, Burke read the function of civil society as the secure enjoyment of private property and the encouragement of industry, and praised "the desire of acquisition" and "laudable avarice" in the "Tract on the Popery Rights".[164] (1761) In the parliament, he was repudiated as an expert on commerce and trade. Indeed, when Burke was recommended to the government as the "Lord of Commissioner of the Board of Trade", he was rejected because his ideas on political economy and his advocacy of free trade were found too unorthodox.[165] In the "Speech at his Arrival at Bristol" (1774), Burke had already developed his idea that two sources of the power of England were liberties, which derived from the "ancient constitution" of England, and commerce.[166] The loss of his seat in Bristol in 1780 was the result of his advocacy for free trade for Ireland.[167] Moreover, there was a close intellectual relationship between Adam Smith and Burke who were members of the same literary clubs, such as Dr. Johnson's Club. While Smith proposed Burke a chair in Glasgow University after the publication of "The Sublime and the Beautiful", Smith's studies of "Theory of Moral Sentiments" (1759) and "Wealth of Nations" (1757) were reviewed quite favorably in the *Annual Register* by Burke.[168] More importantly, Smith was reported as having said that "*Burke was the only man I ever met who thought exactly as I myself did on economic problems without any prior communication having passed between us.*"[169]

However, in the 1790s, Burke's political economy became fully developed with the emergence of the French Revolution. Regarding Burke's political economy, the most

---

[163] Barrington, p. 253.
[164] Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 202.
[165] Barrington, p. 253.
[166] Edmund Burke, "Speech at his Arrival at Bristol", in Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, pp. 46 – 47.
[167] Barrington, p. 257.
[168] We are sure that the review on the "Theory of Moral Sentiments" belongs to Edmund Burke, while Barrington advocates that also the review on the "Wealth of Nations" most probably belongs to Edmund Burke. There is no reason to doubt Barrington's allegation which is completely compatible with Burke's political thought. Ibid, p. 255.
[169] Ibid, p. 204.

important study of Burke is "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity" which was written in 1795 and published in 1800. The preface written by Dr. Laurence, one of the most loyal disciples of Burke, to "Scarcity" summarized Burke's political economy: Burke became more convinced that "*unrestrained freedom of buying and selling is the great animating principle of production and supply.*"[170] As Macpherson pointed out, while Burke was writing the "Scarcity", there was certain government intervention to the large – scale economic crisis in Speenhamland, Berkshire, such as giving supplementary wages to laborers. Burke opposed this paternalist reflex of an older economy by arguing that government intervention would disturb the natural laws of the competitive market. Burke argued that "*labour is a commodity like every other, and rises and falls according to the demand. This is the nature of things. … The producer should be permitted and even expected, to look to all possible profit which without fraud or violence he can make; to turn plenty or scarcity to the best advantage he can.*" [171] Therefore, Macpherson argued that Burke's political economy was strikingly like Adam Smith's invisible hand, though Burke's assumptions were more theological. Indeed, Burke wrote: "*The benign and wise Disposer of all things … obliges men, whether they will or not, in pursuing their own selfish interests, to connect the general good with their own individual success.*"[172]

Burke's intention to analyze political economy thoroughly by expanding the "Scarcity" into a series of "Letters on Rural Economics" did not realize because of the launch of peace negotiations between France and England. However, Burke's "Letters on a Regicide Peace" (1796) was also interpreted as a study of political economy by various scholars, such as Pocock, Kramnick, and Macpherson. Indeed, in the "Letters" Burke wrote: "*Monied men ought to be allowed to set a value on their money; if they did not, there could be no monied*

[170] Ibid, p. 257.
[171] Edmund Burke, "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity", in Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 4, 1795, p. 73.
[172] Kramnick, "The Left and Edmund Burke", p. 203.

men. The desire for accumulation is a principle without which the means of their service to the state could not exist. The love of lucre, though sometimes carried to a ridiculous, sometimes to a vicious excess is the grand cause of prosperity to all states. In this natural, this reasonable, this powerful, this prolific principle…"[173]

Now, how could not Burke as the master theorist of prejudice, prescription, myth, and superstition, and the champion of noble, clerical, and royal mystery in the "Reflections" be contradictory with Burke as a political economist who uncompromisingly advocated the free trade? As Macpherson contended, was "Reflections" merely granting the traditional hierarchical society as a necessary ingredient to the capitalist market economy, or, as Kramnick argued, was the main target of the "Reflections" a radical middle-class bourgeoisie with its conceptions of "monied interest" and "Revolutionary men of theory", though Burke experienced an inner struggle between his bourgeois and aristocratic selves?

First of all, "Reflections" should be read as a text that advocated the 18th century British political regime by using the main arguments of its contemporary political economy. In that sense, Burke devoted long passages in the "Reflections" to analyzing the financial and macro-economical implications of the French Revolution for Europe. Moreover, the political system of the eighteenth century England, for which "Reflections" was written as a defense, was based on the most basic assumption that commercial progress was perfectly compatible with hereditary monarchy and landed aristocracy.[174] Indeed, Burke read the French Revolution as a more serious challenge, then the challenges of arbitrary monarchy, to this political order which was identified with the growth of commercial society and with the aristocratic government under the protection of the ancient constitution. As Pocock argued,

[173] Edmund Burke, "Letters on a Regicide Peace", in Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 3, 1796, p. 258.
[174] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 194.

Burke embraced the political economy as the new science of the 18th century political order which was, for Burke, a progressive system itself.[175]

Burke argued in the "Reflections" by using the concept of "burghers" that the outcome of the Revolution will be the political dominance of the towns and their "burghers."[176] However, one should question whether Burke's conception of "burgher" and the sacred Revolutionary alliance between "the political men of letters" and "the revolutionary creditors of the state" in the "Reflections" corresponded with our conception of "bourgeois" who invests his/her capital in trade and industry? Burke's conception of "burghers" involves not the French merchants and businessmen, whose alleged leading role in the French Revolution was deeply questioned by various French historians, such as Francoit Furet[177], but provincial lawyers and petit officials who had certain political and legal controlling power over the public funds and their alliance with the "Revolutionary men of letters". In that sense, Pocock argued that Burke was neither belonged to nor feared a class of entrepreneurial capitalists.[178]

In the "Reflections", Burke repeatedly designated the French Revolution as an assault against the "property". For instance, Burke wrote: "*So that this legislative assembly of a free nation sits, not for the security, but for the destruction, of property, and not of property only, but of every rule and maxim which can give it stability, and of those institutions which can alone give it circulation.*"[179] However, in order to grasp what Burke meant by writing on the emergence of animosity to property, one should examine Burke's conception of property in the "Reflections." While Burke was defending the nobility as the "*graceful ornament to the*

[175] Pocock argues that the political assault against the political regime in the eighteenth century England was directed not to its support of trade and of commerce, but to its aristocratic patronage as governmental corruption and to its warlike expansion with particular reference to the demise of the commercial empires of Athens and Rome. This political regime responded to this intellectual assault by embracing the arguments of the political economy by characterizing the ancient citizen as an economically underdeveloped being. Ibid, p. 195.
[176] Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 170 – 172. Pocock questioned why Burke preferred to use the Dutch word "burgher" instead of the French "bourgeois". Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxx.
[177] See: Francoit Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
[178] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxx.
[179] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 134.

civil order", it is evident that Burke was alluding to the landed property by his quotation of Cicero on the reasons of the demise of the Ancient Greece: "… *How can it be fair that a man who owned no land should now possess that which was owned for many years, or even generations, previously, and that the man who owned it should now lose it.*"[180] Thus, one can safely ask how the animosity to landed property emerged for Burke which was visible in the acts of the paper money speculators in the confiscation of the lands of the Church. Did the animosity to property emerge firstly in the Revolutionary Men of Letters in their alliance with the paper money speculators and through their metaphysics and abstract theories spread to society? If we accept this, it is still crucial to ask how a mass of men of letters emerged who were, or became, decisive to abolish the landed property of the Church and aristocracy. In short, I do not seek Burke's empirical reasons of the emergence of these destructive classes, i.e. Revolutionary Men of Letters and paper money speculators; but Burke's historical reasons of the emergence of this destructive idea, i.e. mass animosity to landed property, whether within Revolutionary Men of Letters and/or within people.

For Burke, the problem emerged because of the confrontational relationship between landed property and commerce, i.e. monied interest. In that sense, his goal was not to defend the landed property, but to stabilize the relationship between land and commerce. Indeed, as Pocock argues, this was also the main problem of the Scottish and French Enlightenment thought, from Hume and Smith to Montesquieu.[181] Burke was also in agreement with Tucker, Hume, and Smith on the solution of the problem: Modern commercial economy could, and should, be stabilized and rendered more dynamic through the control of the landed aristocracy. Therefore, aristocracy and bourgeoisie were not at war in his mind. "Paper money despotism" which was the sole reason of the ruins of the French Church appeared as the main obstacle on the peaceful coexistence of the landed aristocracy and commercial society.

[180] Ibid, footnote: 42, p. 136.
[181] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xx.

Indeed, for Burke, confiscation of the lands of the Church and making them the security for the issue of a national loan, whose paper *assignats* were to be made legal tender everywhere, was the central and the unforgivable crime of the French Revolution. "*In the meantime, the pride of the wealthy men, not noble or newly noble, increased with its cause. They felt with resentment an inferiority, the grounds of which they did not acknowledge. There was no measure to which they were not willing to lend themselves in order to be revenged of the outrages of this rival pride and to exalt their wealth to what they considered as its natural rank and estimation. They struck at the nobility through the crown and the church. They attacked them particularly on the side on which they thought them the most vulnerable, that is, the possessions of the church, which, through the patronage of the crown, generally devolved upon the nobility. The bishoprics and the great commendatory abbeys were, with few exceptions, held by that order.*"[182]

Burke's usage of the old Tory concept of "monied interest" in this light, which was used by Tories against the Whig rule itself[183], best clarifies his position towards commerce and paper money speculators. Burke was not against the monied interest, on the contrary he embraced it as the new and dominant, but also profligate, source of wealth for the nations: "*In this state of real, though not always perceived, warfare between the noble ancient landed interest and the new monied interest, the greatest, because the most applicable, strength was in the hands of the latter. The monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure, and its possessors more disposed to new enterprises of any kind. Being of a recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelties. It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be resorted to by all who wish for change.*" [184] Therefore, Burke was opposing "the unimpeded monied interest" which was not stabilized, and not rendered dynamic, by the landed property of a landed aristocracy.

[182] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 96.
[183] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 196.
[184] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 96.

Burke designated the sources of the immense influence of public creditors as the European states' vast debt in the eighteenth century. In this sense, public creditors emerged as a new species of wealth, since they could determine, and speculate, the rate at which money could be borrowed. This was exactly Hume's and Smith concerns in their studies, respectively "Of Public Credit" and "Inquiry Concerning the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations."[185] "*Nations are wading deeper and deeper into an ocean of boundless debt. Public debts, which at first were a security to governments by interesting many in the public tranquillity, are likely in their excess to become the means of their subversion. If governments provide for these debts by heavy impositions, they perish by becoming odious to the people. If they do not provide for them, they will be undone by the efforts of the most dangerous of all parties- I mean an extensive, discontented monied interest, injured and not destroyed. The men who compose this interest look for their security, in the first instance, to the fidelity of government; in the second, to its power. If they find the old governments effete, worn out, and with their springs relaxed, so as not to be of sufficient vigor for their purposes, they may seek new ones that shall be possessed of more energy; and this energy will be derived, not from an acquisition of resources, but from a contempt of justice.*"[186]

However for Burke, the 18th century political system in England was more stable then the Ancien Régime in France, because it encouraged the investment of money into land and the conversion of land into money, and supported the fluidity of capital, in comparison to the rigid barriers in the Ancien Régime in France. "*By the vast debt of France a great monied interest had insensibly grown up, and with it a great power. By the ancient usages which prevailed in that kingdom, the general circulation of property, and in particular the mutual convertibility of land into money, and of money into land, had always been a matter of difficulty. Family settlements, rather more general and more strict than they are in England,*

[185] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxi.
[186] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 136.

the jus retractus, the great mass of landed property held by the crown, and, by a maxim of the French law, held unalienably, the vast estates of the ecclesiastical corporations - all these had kept the landed and monied interests more separated in France, less miscible, and the owners of the two distinct species of property not so well disposed to each other as they are in this country."[187]

Most importantly, Burke's original contribution into the debate of the problem of monied interest and landed property derived from his position towards the relationship between commerce and manners. Most of the Enlightenment thinkers, even Hume who was designated as the other "loyal critic" of the Enlightenment with Burke by McClelland[188], argued that the sole agency capable of refining the passions and polishing the manners was commerce.[189] For these thinkers, commerce was the unique reason of the growth of manners, culture, and the Enlightenment. According to Burke, however, this was mistaking the effect for the cause. Burke argued that commerce was dependent on the manners, not the other way round, and manners were the direct products of religion and nobility, towards which the new theory of men and paper money speculators launched an uncompromising crusade by refuting them as superstition and servitude. "*Even commerce and trade and manufacture, the gods of our economical politicians, are themselves perhaps but creatures, are themselves but effects which, as first causes, we choose to worship. They certainly grew under the same shade in which learning flourished. They, too, may decay with their natural protecting principles. With you, for the present at least, they all threaten to disappear together.*"[190] Therefore, Burke read manners deriving from religion and nobility not only as a stabilizing, but also as a creative force. Now, this is the reason why Burke read the overthrowing of religion and nobility, the distinctive foundations of the European civilization, as destroying the possibility of

[187] Ibid, p. 95.
[188] See: J. S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, "The Limitations of Enlightenment: Hume and Burke", New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 402 – 424.
[189] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 195, 199.
[190] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 69.

commerce. "*This mixed system of opinion and sentiment had its origin in the ancient chivalry; and the principle, though varied in its appearance by the varying state of human affairs, subsisted and influenced through a long succession of generations even to the time we live in. If it should ever be totally extinguished, the loss I fear will be great. It is this which has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the states of Asia and possibly from those states which flourished in the most brilliant periods of the antique world. It was this which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality and handed it down through all the gradations of social life. It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power, it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination, vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.*"[191]

This is the reason why Burke defended religion as the necessary superstition covering the "shivering nature" of mankind and championed the servitude towards the nobility as the "proud submission" and "dignified obedience." "*Nothing is more certain than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and with civilization have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles and were, indeed, the result of both combined: I mean the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood, and paid it with usury, by enlarging their ideas and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union and their proper place!*

[191] Ibid, p. 67.

Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude."[192]

According to Burke, it is evident that "chivalric manners" and "clerical learning" constituted, respectively, the moral and aesthetic standards of intercourse which cemented the European societies of his time and they tempered feudal ferocity and fostered a spirit of stable liberty and predictability in which the growth of commerce became feasible. Nevertheless, once the emergence of commerce was accomplished, it did contribute to the further growth of the European civilization by creating more frequent intercourse among people which gave rise to more polite manners and more regular communal administration. However, other than providing the necessary circumstances for the emergence of commerce, Burke did not present any mechanism that explained how manners themselves continued to assist the progress of the European civilization.

When one looks backwards to Burke's assumption that the commercial progress was perfectly compatible with hereditary monarchy and landed aristocracy, and to his belief in the possibility of harmony between the political culture of the Old Regime, i.e. religion and nobility, and the commerce, it is reasonable to argue that Burke could not exactly attribute the disappearance of the "age of chivalry" to "commerce", i.e. emergence of capitalism. In other words, Burke could not understand that "commerce" would deconstruct the political culture of the Old Regime by creating itself a new. Indeed, the social, economic, and political conditions of his era were not mature enough to demonstrate the destructive effects of "commerce" for the Old Regime. Burke, in his writings on political economy, could clearly grasp the immense productive power of "commerce" as the new great source of wealth, and he even sensed its destructive power in the examples of the French Revolution and of the Indian problem;

[192] Ibid, p. 69.

however, Burke could not attribute this destruction exactly to the "commerce" as the emerging of capitalism. Burke, therefore, became a *Don Quixote* who attacked to the wrong targets, i.e. Burke's mills were the Revolutionary men of letters who were themselves the products of the emergence of commerce. Burke could touch the causes of the destruction, i.e. paper money and monied interest, but he could not grasp their roots, i.e. commerce. Neither his period nor the philosophical roots of his political thought in the Enlightenment allowed him to come up with such a conclusion. One can find out every seeds of criticism of modernity in his political thought, whilst he/she would be astonished to discover praises for its main constituents in the following sentence. Indeed, his theoretical means to explain this new social phenomenon were already product of that phenomenon itself. Thus, his sword was made of wood. Therefore, I do not mean that Burke was insincere when lamenting the loss of age of chivalry; unlike Namier who designated his ideas as mere rationalizations of his political selfish interests or unlike Macpherson who equated Burke with Smith, by reaffirming the vulgar image of Smith as a mere capitalist, as a political thinker granting the old means of oppression and of obedience to the new ruling system, I find Burke totally sincere in his ideas.

In the nineteenth century, young Marx would have the opportunity to examine the French Revolution in a more subtle way: "*The revolutions of 1648 and 1789 were not English and French revolutions; they were revolutions of a European pattern. They were not the victory of a particular class of society over the old political order; they were the proclamation of the political order for the new European society. In these revolutions the bourgeois gained the victory; but the victory of the bourgeoisie was at that time the victory of a new social order, the victory of bourgeois property over feudal property, of nationality over provincialism, of competition over the guild, of the partition of estates over primogeniture, of the owner's mastery of the land over the land's mastery of its owner, of enlightenment over superstition, of the family over the family name, of industry over heroic laziness, of civil law*

over privileges of medieval origin. The revolution of 1648 was the victory of the seventeenth century over the sixteenth century, the revolution of 1789 was the victory of the eighteenth century over the seventeenth century. Still more than expressing the needs of the parts of the world in which they took place, England and France, these revolutions expressed the needs of the whole world, as it existed then."[193]

[193] Francoit Furet, *Marx and the French Revolution*, trans. Deborah Kan Furet, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 47. Francoit Furet, in "Interpreting the French Revolution", developed a harsh criticism of a certain type of historiography on the French Revolution, which he designated as "the Revolutionary catechism", and recommended rereading of the writings of Tocqueville and Marx on the French Revolution. Since Marx never wrote a book on the French Revolution and his writings on this case were scattered among his correspondences and drafts, Furet gathered his notes on the French Revolution in this book.

3. On the Relationship between the "Reflections" and the Enlightenment Thought: An Analysis of Burke's Conceptions of Reason, Prudence, Social Change, and Superstition

The main thesis of this study is that "Reflections" is an inside – critique of the Enlightenment thought, though Burke was certainly not an anti – Enlightenment hero. Indeed, "Reflections" was a critique from inside; since Burke was an Enlightenment philosopher and he believed in, and wrote with, the fundamental notions of the Enlightenment thought, such as reason and progress. In this final section of the study, I shall try to demonstrate that "Reflections" developed a theoretical criticism of the exaggerated role that the Enlightenment put on the concepts of reason, progress, and rights of man by concentrating on the relationship between Burke's political thought and the Enlightenment through an analysis of the following fundamental conceptions of the "Reflections": Burke's conceptions (1) of reason, prudence, and wisdom as the political reason in the practical realm, (2) of political good in the moral realm, (3) of social change, and (4) of superstition, religion, and chivalry.

Burke in the "Reflections" used the terms "political wisdom", "civil wisdom", "prudence", or simply "reason" interchangeably. Though he did not use the term "political reason", he meant "practical / political reason" by all of these terms. In the "Thoughts", when he wrote about the idea of the "party", he defined the politician as the philosopher in action who concerned with the adaptation of means to the ends in the very realm of policy formation and decision making. "*It is the business of the speculative philosopher to mark the proper ends of Government. It is the business of the politician, who is the philosopher in action, to find out proper means towards those ends, and to employ them with effect.*"[194]

[194] Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents", p. 150.

However, this does not clarify the reasons of the existence of political action, in a word, the object of political reason. In the "Speech on Conciliation with America" (1775), Burke argued that "*man acts from adequate motives relative to his interest, and not on metaphysical speculations.*"[195] Therefore, man acts for the political good, instead of politically true or wrong. Here, political good is not necessarily, or always, in the moral realm. In other words, the reason why man may act in a morally false way despite his clear awareness of its falseness is that he acts for the sake of what he considers to be in some sense good for himself.

Up until now, one may contemplate that Burke made a distinction between moral and practical realm, i.e. "what ought to be?" and "what is?", by rejecting speculative philosophy with its conceptions of truth and falsehood, and by creating a prudent political agent that relies solely on experience. Regarding the positivist distinction between the moral and the empirical, I would like to note two of my observations: First of all, the main assumption of such a distinction is saliently that while the moral realm is the realm of value or norm, the empirical realm is the realm of fact. Thence, according to this assumption, these two realms are in their nature separate; and the business of the social scientist is to dissolve them and to confine himself / herself with the empirical realm. Secondly, such a distinction latently trivializes the moral realm as the realm of speculators and metaphysics. As I shall analyze below in detail, Burke's position towards such a distinction was clear: The political was indissolubly the moral, even I doubt if he ever contemplate about such a distinction. For him, the prudence of a political action derived not only from experience, but also from a moral good. Indeed, Burke asserted that a genuinely prudent political action aimed at a morally good end.[196] This does not mean that a prudent political action may even aim the impossible, as long as the goal is a moral good; on the contrary, only the theory which grasps the practice

[195] Burke, "Speech on Conciliation with America", p. 121.
[196] Canavan, p. 61.

had the capability to change it. This is the reason why Burke defined the politician as the "philosopher in action" by making a salient allusion to himself. Indeed, when he refuted the theories of the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysics, he was alluding to the immense gap between their theories and the social reality.

The political good, as the object of prudent political action, has four main characteristics in the "Reflections": (1) concreteness, (2) practicableness, (3) complexity, and (4) imperfection.

First of all, political good is concrete; thus limited and contextual. In other words, the object of the prudent political reason is the limited and concrete political good of a particular community, not the good of man in abstract. As I noted in the preceding section on "the Revolutionary Men of Letters as Metaphysicians and Sophistics", this is the main reason why Burke denominated the liberties deriving from the English political history as the "rights of Englishmen", rather than "the rights of men" as an abstraction. Burke as an Enlightenment philosopher was not against the notion of "Rights"; but he was, as a loyal critique of the Enlightenment thought, against the notion of "universal rights."[197] "*Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial and noxious to mankind.*"[198] The concreteness of the political good can best be illustrated by presenting Burke's position towards "liberty" in the "Reflections". Most of Burke's contemporaries saw nothing in what has been done in France, in Burke's words, *but a firm and temperate exertion of freedom*.[199] Burke openly accepted that liberty, which should be classed among the blessings of mankind, as well as government, was good in the abstract. However, the concreteness of the political good obliged the prudent philosopher in action to check the combination of liberty in practice "*with government, with*

[197] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 28.
[198] Ibid, p. 7.
[199] Ibid, p. 9.

public force, with the discipline and obedience of armies, with the collection of an effective and well – distributed revenue, with morality and religion, with the solidity of property, with peace and order, with civil and social manners."[200] This was the main reason of Burke's prudence in the "Reflections" towards the French Revolution which was unhesitatingly and passionately congratulated and embraced by most of his colleagues. "*The wild gas, the fixed air, is plainly broke loose; but we ought to suspend our judgement until the first effervescence is a little subsided, till the liquor is cleared, and until we see something deeper than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface.*"[201]

Secondly, political good is practical. If the political good is shaped and limited by circumstances; thence, they also limit the possibilities of prudent political action and narrow the range of good attainable. Therefore, as Canavan argues, the object of prudent political action is not an abstract ideal, but a concrete reality within the boundaries of practical possibility.[202] This characteristic of political good does not exclude morality or political ideals from the prudent politics, on the contrary, it does oblige them to keep in touch with social reality. Political good as being practical reminds us the statement of Bismarck: "*Politics is the art of the possible.*"[203] Similarly, Marx also studied on the crucial linkage between theory and practice by emphasizing the practicableness both of the problem and of its solution: "*Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation.*"[204]

Thirdly, political good is complex. Burke wrote in the "Reflections": "*The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore,*

---

[200] Ibid, p. 8.
[201] Ibid, p. 8.
[202] Canavan, p. 64.
[203] Eddie J. Gridner, *People and Power: An Introduction to Politics*, Second Edition, Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University, 1999, p. 3.
[204] Karl Marx, "Preface", *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Maurice Dobb, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya, fourth edition, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981, p. 21.

no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of his affairs."[205] Therefore, although a particular goal may seem simple and clear, it is indeed one part of a vast, intricate, and thus not fully comprehensible order. As I shall study below, this complexity of political good derives, first of all, from its organic linkage with the circumstances of a particular period in a particular society, which was the main reason of Burke's emphasis on experience as the wisdom of the past, which is nothing but the manifestation of the accumulation of experience, and secondly, from the assertion of Burke's metaphysics that moral and political truths are the wonders of the mind of a very complex God. Thus, these truths can never be wholly understood by mankind, though the main logic of them latently reflects itself in the established institutions as the manifestation of the accumulation of experience of the past generations. Therefore, human societies are not only intricate, but more importantly delicate structures which are extremely vulnerable to the abstract theories that upset the delicate balance of things in practice. In the "Reflections", Burke's refused the proceedings of the Revolutionary men of letters in the French Revolution by presenting a definition of the state that emphasized on its complicated nature: "*It cannot escape observation that when men are too much confined to professional and faculty habits and, as it were, inveterate in the recurrent employment of that narrow circle, they are rather disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive, connected view of the various, complicated, external and internal interests which go to the formation of that multifarious thing called a state.*"[206]

Fourthly, and finally, political good is imperfect. In other words, political good as being complex does not mean that it is perfect. However, the imperfection of the political good has two fundamental dimensions that one, who examines Burke's political thought, should pay close attention. First of all, we should not forget that Burke saw himself as a

[205] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 54.
[206] Ibid, p. 39.

moderate reformer; indeed, for Burke, the main goal of the "Reflections" was the manifestation and the justification of gradualist reform.[207] Burke is no reactionary. He recognizes social change not because they are inevitable and unavoidable, that for him they certainly are; but because they are necessary. In a word, Burke thought that what the Ancien Régime in France needed was a prudent spirit of reform. Secondly, and more importantly in order to grasp the true nature of Burke's thesis in the "Reflections", perfection should not be aimed not because it is unattainable, yet it definitely is, but because imperfection is necessary as a corrective in the face of human agency aiming at perfection. "*There is, by the essential fundamental constitution of things, a radical infirmity in all human contrivances; and the weakness is often so attached to the very perfection of our political mechanism, that some defect in it, something that stops short of its principle, something that controls, that mitigates, that moderates it, becomes a necessary corrective to the evils that the theoretic perfection would produce.*"[208] Burke's emphasis on the imperfection of the political good became more crucial when one contemplate about most of the Enlightenment thinkers' ideal of "the ultimate perfect world." Thomas Paine's following statement best illustrates Burke's point: "*The best constitution that could now be devised, consistent with the condition of the present moment may be far short of that excellence which a few years may afford. There is a morning of reason rising upon man, on the subject of government, than has not appeared before.*"[209]

Regarding Burke's conception of social change with his emphasis on prudent reform, "Reflections" becomes a philosophical critique of the modern Revolutionary mind. I have already studied Burke's critique of the Revolutionary men of letters as metaphysicians in the preceding sections. Now, in accordance with the main thesis of this study, Burke did not refute the core notions of the Enlightenment thought, such as reason, progress, and social change; rather, as an inside critique of the Enlightenment, he criticized its particular

[207] Conniff, p. 301.
[208] Burke, in Canavan, p. 65.
[209] Paine, p. 453.

conceptions of these notions and displaced them with his own conceptions in a quite subtle way. In that sense, in this section, I shall analyze Burke's displacement of the Enlightenment's Revolutionary social change with his prudent social change and the abstract reason with his "political / practical reason" which find their manifestations in Burke's conceptions of "prudence" and "political / civil wisdom" in the "Reflections".

However, before analyzing Burke's conception of social change, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the Revolutionary mind in this study and its linkage with the Enlightenment thought. When one observes the modern revolutions, i.e. all of the social revolutions[210] after the French Revolution, he/she should find out, at least, two common characteristics of them. Indeed, these two features of the modern revolutions are the legacies of the French Revolution to the succeeding ones, whether they interpreted themselves as its followers or not, and they derive from the particular Revolutionary mind of the Enlightenment thought. First of all, modern revolutions, by their nature, have a motivation to rupture from the past and to recreate everything from scratch. Therefore, they tend to esteem themselves as the absolute beginning. Furet paid close attention to this point: "*... starting with the French Revolution, every revolution, and above all the French Revolution itself, has tended to perceive itself as an absolute beginning, as ground zero of history, pregnant with all the future accomplishments contained in the universality of its principles.*"[211] French revolutionaries, for instance, scolded and attacked everything that belonged, and even seemed to belong, to the Ancien Régime. In order to wipe out all the traces of the Ancien Régime in

[210] An examination of the concept of social revolutions is certainly out of the borders of this study. Without involving into the antediluvian controversy between Skocpol, Moore, and Gurr, I confine myself with Skocpol's definition of social revolutions and of their difference from the social rebellions and the political revolutions. "*Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation. In contrast, rebellions, even when successful, may involve the revolt of subordinate classes – but they do not eventuate in structural change. Political revolutions transform state structures but not social structures, and they are not necessarily accomplished through class conflict.*" Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 4.

[211] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 83.

the society, they passionately renamed the streets, destructed the old and sacred monuments, transformed the daily linguistic usage by addressing themselves as *Citoyen,* rather than *Monsieur*, and introduced a totally new calendar which began with the first day of the Republic, not with the birth of Jesus. The total denunciation, and anathema, of the Ancien Régime and of all its symbols was the main motivation of the French Revolution, since every revolution needs to clarify and reclarify who its enemy is and what it will deconstruct, even before clarifying what it will construct. The fall of Bastille was of symbolic importance as representing the fall of the Ancien Régime along with its notion of justice, though the revolutionaries were aware that most of the prisoners were indeed criminals.[212] In the French Revolution, revolutionaries knew that most of the accusations towards Marie Antoinette were unfounded; but she was guilty by representing the Ancien Régime at first hand, just like aristocrats and clergymen represented. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Robespierre or Saint – Just were not the reasons of the bloody terror of the French Revolution. They were, indeed reluctant, representatives of a pervasive will to destruct everything that belonged to the past. For instance, Robespierre was not a fanatic, bloody revolutionary; he was even against the death penalty by arguing in 1791 "*1- that the death penalty is essentially unjust and, 2- that it isn't the most repressive of penalties and that it multiplies crimes more than it prevents them.*"[213] This was the same Robespierre who argued in 1793 that, by advocating the execution of the Louis XVI without a trial, a king could not be judged justly at all, and adjudicated guilty or guiltless; since he was, naturally, guilty as soon as he became the king of France. Louis should be executed, without a trial, because he was the Ancien Régime itself.

Without witnessing most of the proceedings of the French Revolution, Burke would grasp this tendency of the French Revolution to denounce the Ancien Régime as "the devil

[212] Likewise, in the 1905 Russian Revolution, for instance, everything in the palace of the tsar was destroyed, but nothing was stolen by the poor Russian people; because their act was an attack towards the symbols of the old regime, not a plunder.

[213] Maximillien Robespierre, *On the Death Penalty*, trans. Mitch Abidor, 1791: Creative Commons, Marx / Engels Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/robespierre/index.htm (01/06/2008)

and the dark age" and thus denominate it not only as arrogance, but also as patricide. The attempt to rewrite a constitution from scratch was sufficient for Burke to predict the following course of the French Revolution, since this was debasing the accumulation of experience of the ancestors as useless, if not harmful, and claiming that no important discoveries about what a political system should be like were ever made in the past. I would like to note that since Tocqueville had the opportunity to observe the whole course of the French Revolution, he developed a more subtle argument on this issue. According to Tocqueville, despite the claim of the French revolutionaries on their rupture from the Ancien Régime, they did indeed nothing new; since the Ancien Régime was destructed in, and even by the very dynamics of, the Ancien Régime itself.[214]

Because of the total denunciation of the past, revolutions become lonesome and unfounded. Therefore, the second common characteristic of the modern revolutions was their attempt to create a tradition or a history for themselves which involves a selective historiography at its heart. In the beginning stage of the French Revolution, revolutionaries tried to construct a linkage between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution, and found their roots in the English history. Indeed, "Reflections" was also a theoretical response to this attempt. As I study below, the first long part of the "Reflections" was devoted to a historical reading of the Glorious Revolution as an inevitable change whose sole objective was to preserve the existent and the distressed principle of government, i.e. the principle of inheritance; thus Burke argued that the French Revolution was unique and unprecedentent in its obsession of destruction. In the Terror Period, however, this attempt to create a linkage between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution was displaced with another, Republican, attempt to denominate the Ancient Greece, especially Sparta, and Roman Republic as the true tradition of the French Revolution. In that sense, most of the drawings of

[214] Later, Poggi would deconstruct the image of the Ancien Régime as "the dark ages" by examining the relationship between vassals, lords, kings, and later, estates. See: Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, California: Stanford University Press, 1978.

Jacques Louis David, which were exhibited in the public places like courts, illustrated the Republican virtue of the Ancient Greeks and Roman citizens.[215]

In order to grasp Burke's conception of social change thoroughly, one should not confine oneself with his emphasis on experience regarding the prudent reform; since experience constitutes only one part of his conception of social change. As Pocock argues, in the "Reflections", Burke vindicated the social system in England, to illustrate the true prudent spirit of social change; first of all, as *traditional* that relied on experience, custom, and inheritance with reference to the Glorious Revolution and the "ancient constitution"; secondly, as *historical* that became the product of the progress of society from barbarism to manners – chivalry, and commerce; *thirdly*, as sacred which the complex mind of the God intervened in; and finally, as *natural* where the interaction of the divinely – ordained order of universe and the constant exercise of man's political reason took placed.[216] At the rest of this study, these four characteristics of Burke's conception of social change that derived from his reading of the English social system in the late eighteenth century, as the true representative of the prudent reform in comparison to the French Revolution, shall be examined.

Regarding the first characteristic of Burke's conception of social change, i.e. the emphasis on the experience, Burke's main assumption is that there is an inevitable uncertainty in the realm of politics in determining the ends, rather than the means, of the political reason. In Burke's words; "*The means to any end being first in order, are immediate in their good or evil; - they are always, in a manner, certainties. The end is doubly problematic; first, whether it is to be attained; then, whether supposing it attained, we obtain the true object we sought for.*"[217] Therefore, a priori conclusions become dangerous and experience emerges as the only

[215] Likewise, regarding the October Revolution, Sergei Eisenstein's movies "Ivan the Terrible" and "Alexander Nevsky" best illustrated this second tendency of modern revolutions which in this example involves nationalistic foundations. However, it is important to note that Eisenstein's image of Ivan also hides a subtle critique of Stalin, though the movie was ordered by the Communist Party to create a national tradition for the Soviet Union.
[216] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xlv.
[217] Edmund Burke, in Canavan, p. 67.

thing that one can safely relies on in this uncertain political realm. "*The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught a priori. Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science … In states there are often some obscure and almost latent causes, things which appear at first view of little moment, on which a very great part of its prosperity or adversity may most essentially depend. The science of government being therefore so practical in itself and intended for such practical purposes- a matter which requires experience, and even more experience than any person can gain in his whole life, however sagacious and observing he may be …*"[218]

However, Burke's conception of prudence does not exclude innovation and solely include preservation. He was no ancestor – worshipper and his argument on prudent reform was too subtle to get into the theoretical trap, what Bentham designated as, "the wisdom-of-our-ancestors fallacy".[219] This point can best be illustrated by explaining Burke's analysis of the "prudent spirit", he claimed, that prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century English politics. Before interpreting the "Reflections" in this light, I would like to note that Burke was also against the heavy reliance on the past; since experience was not always conclusive, particularly on the unprecedented events like the French Revolution. Burke wrote: "*The world of contingency and political combination is much larger than we are apt to imagine. We never can say what may, or may not happen, without a view to all the actual circumstances. Experience upon other data than those, is of all things the most delusive. Prudence in new cases can do nothing on grounds of retrospect. A constant vigilance and attention to the train of things as they successively emerge, and to act on what they direct, are the only sure courses.*"[220]

[218] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 53.
[219] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xlvi.
[220] Edmund Burke, in Canavan, p. 67.

The main objective of the Enlightenment was to expose the social, political, and moral causes that prevented the reason from being, with reference to Hegel, "the rightful sovereign of the world". Indeed, the prevailing idea in the second half of the eighteenth century was that every existing social, political, and moral institution was unnatural and irrational, and they should be displaced by natural and rational ones. As McCleland argues, Enlightenment, first of all, was adept at showing up the absurdities of the existent world, and secondly, concentrated on the causes of why reason had failed to acquire its dominion over the affairs of men.[221] Now, "Reflections" emerged as an intellectual assault to this Enlightenment thrust to rationalize and naturalize the irrational and unnatural world. It was a counter –argument, in the shape of a lecture on the English constitutional history, to the theoretical attempt to construct an organic linkage between the French Revolution and the English Revolution of 1688. By using the concept of the "ancient constitution", Burke argued that the English Revolution of 1688 was glorious because it introduced no new principles of government; on the contrary, it was realized to secure the rights of the Englishmen and to preserve the existent, however abused, hereditary principle by protecting its substance and regulating its operation. For Burke, in every crisis, the prudent spirit of the English ruling elites, that derived from the ancient constitution, confined the change to the "*peccant part only, to the part which produced the necessary deviation.*"[222] Burke argued that the English constitution was itself a product of the evolution and change of the English politics; however it was designated as the "ancient constitution" solely because the principle of inheritance "*was survived with a sort of immortality through all transmigrations.*"[223] By this notion, he did not argue that the crown is held by divine hereditary and indefeasible right. "*These old fanatics of single arbitrary power dogmatized as if hereditary royalty was the only lawful government in the world, just as our new fanatics of popular arbitrary power maintain that a popular*

[221] McClelland, p. 405.
[222] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 19.
[223] Ibid, p. 20.

election is the sole lawful source of authority."[224] Burke, with the principle of inheritance, referred not only to the inheritance of the crown regarding the king, but also to the inheritance of the rights and liberties regarding the House of Lords and House of Commons. "*... our liberties as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity – as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom, without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right. We have an inheritable crown, an inheritable peerage, and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties from a long line of ancestors.*"[225] By adhering to the means of preservation and of improvement, the English constitution was neither wholly new in what it improved nor wholly obsolete in what it retained.[226]

This was also the reason behind Burke's opposition to the definition of Tiers-État by Abbé Sieyès.[227] Sieyès in his pamphlet "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?" (1789) asked and answered three questions: "What is the third estate? Everything. What has it been permitted to be? Nothing. What does it desire to be? Something."[228] Although Burke did not refer to these questions, his answers to them were latently expressed in the "Reflections". First of all, the third estate was not "everything" in France; Burke witnessed the chivalry with reference to nobility and the learning with reference to clergy totally alive as central constituents of the French society when he visited France before the Revolution.[229] Moreover, it was not "nothing"; though the Ancien Régime in France needed serious reform in comparison to England, French people had also a tradition of rights as an inheritance from their ancestors. When Burke referred to the rights of Frenchmen in the Ancien Régime, he was totally aware of the late proceedings of the French monarchy before the revolution on the parliaments of

[224] Ibid, p. 23.
[225] Ibid, p. 29.
[226] Ibid, p. 30.
[227] Ibid, p. 28.
[228] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xliv.
[229] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 66.

France either to abolish or to trivialize them through central administration[230]: "*Your privileges, though discontinued, were not lost to memory. Your constitution, it is true, whilst you were out of possession, suffered waste and dilapidation; but you possessed in some parts the walls and in all the foundations of a noble and venerable castle. (...) In your old states you possessed the variety of parts corresponding with the various descriptions of which your community was happily composed. (...) You had all these advantages in your ancient states, but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society and had everything to begin anew.*"[231] Finally, the third estate did not desire to be "something", but to be "everything" by destructing every point of difference in French society. This final point also constituted the core, of Tocqueville's definition of democracy in the "Democracy in America"[232] and of the soul, *esprit dominant*, of the French Revolution in "The Old Regime and the Revolution". When Burke in the "Reflections" invited the Frenchmen to look towards the England in order to find "the ancient common law of Europe", if it was impossible to recover the obliterated features of their constitution, Tocqueville would wrote: "*Burke did not see that what was taking place before his eyes was a revolution whose aim was precisely to abolish the ancient common law of Europe, and that there could be no question of putting the clock back.*"[233]

---

[230] Tocqueville in "The Old Regime and the Revolution" studied empirically this tendency of central administration of the French monarchy as the true soul of the French Revolution that had already begun, and even come to an end, in the Ancien Régime. It is obvious that Tocqueville read Burke thoroughly; for instance, it is difficult to decide to whom the following statement belongs: French revolutionaries "*... have met in their progress with little or rather no opposition at all. Their whole march was more like a triumphal possession than the progress of a war. Their pioneers have gone before them and demolished and laid everything level at their feet.*" Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 35.

[231] Ibid, p. 31.

[232] "*I think that democratic peoples have a natural taste for liberty. Left to themselves, they seek it out, love it, and suffer if deprived of it. For equality, however, they feel an ardent, insatiable, eternal, invincible passion. They want equality in liberty, and if they cannot have it, they want it still in slavery. They will suffer poverty, servitude, and barbarity, but they will not suffer aristocracy.*" Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, "Why Democratic Peoples Show a More Ardent and Enduring Love of Equality than of Liberty", trans. Arthur Goldhammer, New York: The Library of America, 2004, p. 584.

[233] Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Part One, Chapter Five: "What did the French Revolution accomplish?", p. 21.

The second characteristic of Burke's conception of social change, i.e. the emphasis on the historical development of Europe, was based on his cardinal belief in the harmony between landed and commercial wealth. Burke's understanding of the historical development of Europe was two dimensional. On the one hand, Burke shared the main problem of the Scottish and French Enlightenment thought, from Hume and Smith to Montesquieu, to stabilize the relationship between land and commerce. Burke was also in agreement with Tucker, Hume, and Smith on the solution of the problem: Modern commercial economy could, and should, be stabilized and rendered more dynamic through the control of the landed aristocracy. However, on the other hand, Burke's original contribution into the debate on the problem of monied interest and landed property derived from his position towards the relationship between commerce and manners. For most of the Enlightenment thinkers, including Hume, commerce was the unique reason of the growth of manners, culture, and Enlightenment. According to Burke, however, this was mistaking the effect for the cause. Burke argued that commerce was dependent on the manners, not the other way round, and manners were the direct products of religion and nobility, towards which the new theory of men and paper money speculators launched an uncompromising crusade by refuting them as superstition and servitude.

Burke's defence of the 18th century political system in England in the "Reflections" with its conservative, i.e. nobility and clergy, and improving dynamics, i.e. commerce, was also an intellectual assault to the main assumptions of the Enlightenment thought. First of all, Burke defined the European civilization by the very two principles, i.e. the spirit of gentleman and the spirit of religion, which were declared as the principal enemies of the Enlightenment thought by designating them as the principles of inequality, or of privilege, and of superstition. "*Nothing is more certain than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and civilization have, in this European world*

of ours, depended for ages upon two principles and were, indeed, the result of both combined: I mean the spirit of gentleman and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence…"[234] Secondly, and more importantly, Burke embraced these principles by accepting that they represented, respectively, inequality and superstition. On the one hand, he embraced the spirit of gentleman as the core of prudent governance not depending on their names or titles, but on their virtue and wisdom.[235] Burke championed the one that was commonly degraded, i.e. the generous loyalty to rank and sex, by designating it as the proud submission and as the dignified obedience, as the "*subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of exalted freedom*"[236], and he degraded the one that was commonly championed, i.e. the revolutionary destruction of all the differences, by arguing that the existence of opposing and conflicting interests and of estates were of primary importance for the maintenance of a just social order, in addition that the attempt of the revolutionaries were not for equality, but for levelling the society[237]: "*They render deliberation a matter, not of choice, but of necessity; they make all change a subject of compromise, which naturally begets moderation; they produce temperaments preventing the sore evil of harsh, crude, unqualified reformations, and rendering all the headlong exertions of arbitrary power, in the few or in the many, for ever impracticable.*"[238] It is crucial to note that the term "chivalry" was not used as an emotive term in the "Reflections." For Burke, it represented the advanced stage of the historical development of Europe where the interaction of commerce, as the source of wealth, and manners, deriving from noble governance and religious superstition, compounded the spirit of chivalry. In that sense, as Pocock argues, just like William Roberston and Adam Ferguson

[234] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 69.
[235] Ibid, p. 44.
[236] Ibid, p. 66.
[237] Ibid, p. 43.
[238] Ibid, p. 31.

did, Burke read the chivalry of the European civilization as superior to the primitive virtue of the Greco – Roman civilization.[239]

On the other hand, Burke embraced religion as the superstition and prejudice that covered the "shivering human nature". "*Instead of casting away all our prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them … it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice and to leave nothing but the naked reason; because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and affection which will give it permanence.*"[240] Moreover, Burke grasped the emerging tyranny of "reason and light" and designated this blind confidence on reason as the new superstition, i.e. "*the superstition of the pretended philosophers of the hour.*"[241]

Burke argued that a *perfect democracy* was not only the most shameless, but also the most fearless political system; since, for Burke, where popular authority was absolute and unrestrained, the people have an infinitely greater confidence in their own power and have no feeling of responsibility at all.[242] Therefore, Burke argued that "*We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in degree it exists, and no greater.*"[243] Burke brilliantly analyzed that when these "pleasing illusions", i.e. the spirit of gentleman and of superstition, "*which made power gentle and obedience liberal*", were abolished, the world would belong to the private interests

---

[239] Pocock, "Introduction", in Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. xxxii.
[240] The reader of "Reflections" should pay attention to the point that Burke did not refute "reason" in this statement, in accordance with the roots of his political thought in the Enlightenment. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 76.
[241] It is incredible in the "Reflections" to find the seeds of Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of Enlightenment as the destruction of the myths and of its emerging as the exclusive modern myth itself. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 66, 76, 140. See: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 2001.
[242] The resemblance between Burke's definition of "perfect democracy" and Tocqueville's "tyranny of majority" is obvious. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 82.
[243] Ibid, p. 80. For Burke's distinctive restatement of this possible harmony between monarchy, aristocracy, clergy, and democracy; also see: Ibid, p. 32.

of private individuals.[244] Now, let the reader allow the author of this study to quote Marx again: "*The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.*"[245]

The third and fourth characteristics of Burke's conception of social change is defining the social order, respectively, as sacred that reflected a complex mind of the God and as natural where the interaction of the divinely – ordained order of universe and the constant exercise of man's political reason took placed. These two characteristics of Burke's political thought intertwined in his argumentation and "Reflections" cannot be wholly grasped by neglecting them as nothing more than "religious possessions" of an eighteenth century political philosopher. Indeed, Burke's theory of prudence did not deny the existence of a natural moral order, and for Burke, above the rules of prudence, as Canavan argues, there were the principles of moral law.[246] According to Burke, on the one hand, order, which was one of the central concepts of Burke's political thought, is not only a social and political, but also a universal order. Burke wrote: "*I love order so far as I am able to understand it, for the universe is order.*"[247] The universal order, of which the political and social orders are parts, is governed by moral laws whose core was the "original justice". In the "Reflections", Burke

[244] Ibid, p. 68.
[245] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, intr. Eric Hobsbawn, London: Verso, 1888, p. 37.
[246] Canavan, p. 70.
[247] Ibid, p. 72.

defined the "original justice" as "*the eternal, immutable law in which will and reason are the same.*"[248] While moral laws are the same everywhere, laws made by men are subordinated to the moral laws and though they varied in the political and social orders, they indeed bound up in their superiors. Therefore, although the mode and application of the justice may alter, the original justice always remains unchanged. "*There is but one law for all, namely, that law which governs all law, the law of our Creator, the law of Humanity, Justice, Equity: -the law of Nature and of Nations. So far as any laws fortify this primeval law, and give it more precision, more energy, more effect by their declarations, such laws enter into the Sanctuary, and participate in the sacredness of its character.*"[249]

However, moral laws are not exclusively transcendent; they are also immanent to man and they manifest themselves in the nature. Nature is shaped and reshaped by God, but it is exercised by man, and man finds its true nature when he acts in accordance with the natural laws by "*combining the principles of original justice with the infinite variety of human concerns.*"[250] In that sense, prudence lies between the unchanging general principles, i.e. the realm absolutes, and constantly varying circumstances, i.e. the realm of dynamics, where it does not work against, but complement the moral laws. Canavan, therefore, develops the concept of "principled pragmatism" to describe Burke's conception of prudence.[251] Indeed, although Burke was strictly against the notion of "Rights of men" in abstract, he argued in the "Reflections" that men have certain irreversible rights that are acquired by birth; such as the right to entertain all of the advantages of civil society, the right to live, the rights to the fruits of their industry and to the means of making their industry fruitful, the right to the acquisitions of their parents, the right to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring

[248] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 83.
[249] Edmund Burke, in Canavan, p. 75.
[250] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 83.
[251] Canavan, p. 78. In his study, Canavan argues that Burke took the postulates of natural – law doctrine for his moral theory without analyzing the doctrine itself. In that sense, he argued that, only Burke's early study "Sublime and Beautiful" became inconsistent with the natural – law doctrine with its sensistic epistemology. Ibid, p. 71.

etc.[252] In short, "*whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combinations and skills, can do in his favour. In this partnership all men have equal rights, but not to equal things.*"[253] Moreover, when Burke attempted to define the civil society in the "Reflections", as Pocock observes, he illustrated exactly a Lockean understanding of civil society and rights: "*One of the first motives to civil society, which becomes one of its fundamental rules, is that no man should be judged in his own cause. By this each person has at once divested himself of the first fundamental right of uncovenanted man, that is, to judge for himself and to assert his own cause. He abdicates all right to be his own self-defense, the first law of nature. Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil and of a civil state together.*"[254]

Thence, with Burke's emphasis on the *sacred* and *natural* characteristics of social order in addition to its *contextuality* and *historicity*, "Reflections" also became a theoretical defense of the eighteenth century British political system by the very means of the Enlightenment thought. According to Burke, the Revolutionary men of letters were perverting the natural order of things: "*In this you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with the nature.*"[255]

[252] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 51.
[253] Ibid, p. 51.
[254] Ibid, p. 52.
[255] Ibid, p. 43.

Conclusion: Burke as an Inside Critique of the Enlightenment Thought

In this study, my main concern was to analyze Burke's political thought through a reinterpretation of the "Reflections". By paying close attention to the inextricable linkage between political history and political theory, I emphasized on the historical background of Burke's political thought by which "Reflections" was read as a theoretical defense of the 18th century English political system, as being (i) prudently progressive, (ii) aristocratic, and (iii) post feudal by using the very means of the Enlightenment thought, such as reason, progress, and rights of man, instead of the traditional theoretical means of the Ancien Régime, such as the divine right of monarchy.

By depending on this historical foundation, I analyzed the problematic relationship between Burke's political thought and the Enlightenment through studying the three main conceptualizations of the "Reflections": Revolutionary men of letters, commerce, and social change. In the section on the "Revolutionary men of letters", Burke's analysis of the French Revolution as the total destruction of the Old Regime in Europe, i.e. chivalry as the advanced stage of the 18th century European civilization, his criticism of the modern revolutionary mind which led the "Reflections" to be the principal source of philosophical conservatism, and his definition of the "Revolutionary men of letters" and designation of them as one of the main actors of the French Revolution were studied. In the section on "Commerce", Burke's position towards commerce through his distinction between "unimpeded moneyed interest" and "laudable avarice" was examined. In this respect, the relationship between Burke's political thought and the Scottish Enlightenment was discussed by paying attention to Burke's differentiation between commerce and manners. In the final section on "social change",

Burke's re-conceptualization of the fundamental concepts of the Enlightenment was analyzed. It was argued that Burke conceptualized "political good", i.e. the object of social change, as (i) "concrete", thus limited and contextual, (ii) "practicable", thus shaped by historical circumstances, (iii) "complex", as a product of the accumulation of experience of past generations, and (iv) "imperfect", as a necessary corrective in the face of the arrogant human agency aiming at perfection. However, by reminding the historical background of Burke's political thought, it was contended that Burke's conception of social change had four main pillars which were expressed in his vindication of the political system of the 18th century England as a product of a prudent social change: Burke argued that the social system in England was, first of all, "traditional" that relied on experience, custom, and inheritance with reference to the Glorious Revolution, secondly, "historical" that became the product of the progress of society from barbarism to manners and commerce, i.e. chivalry, thirdly, "sacred" which the complex mind of the God intervened in, and finally, "natural" where the delicate interaction between the divinely-ordained order of universe and the constant exercise of man's political reason took placed.

I would like to confess that this study is only a preliminary step towards a fully-developed analysis of Burke's political thought. There are still significant questions one could concentrate on about Burke's political thought which would lead us to various directions of political theory.

In this respect, the relationship between Burke's political thought and the Scottish Enlightenment on the issue of commerce and manners should be studied. In this study, I examined the problematic relationship between Burke's political thought and the Enlightenment as a whole. Though Enlightenment refers to a cluster of political thinkers, beliefs, and theories, I emphasized on the most basic and common assumptions of the Enlightenment as a paradigm which were taken for granted by these different political

thinkers, beliefs, and theories. Against these basic assumptions of the Enlightenment thought, only Burke and Hume were designated by the 20th century scholars as the "loyal" (inside) critics of the Enlightenment. Because both of these two thinkers derived from the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment, it is crucial to study the dialectic relationship between Burke's political thought and the Scottish Enlightenment.

One of the main historical allegations of the Scottish Enlightenment was the compatibility between commercial progress and hereditary monarchy and landed aristocracy. In other words, the 18th century English political system was read as the representative of the advanced stage of the European civilization where the interaction of commerce, as the source of wealth, and manners, deriving from noble governance and religious superstition, created the spirit of chivalry, which was superior to the primitive virtue of the Greco-Roman civilization. Now, though Burke shared the belief on the compatibility between commercial progress and hereditary monarchy and landed aristocracy, he disagreed with the idea that commerce was the source of manners in European society. On the contrary, according to Burke, manners were the reasons of existence of commerce. This allegation was particularly a theoretical challenge of Burke against William Robertson whom he also admired.

But two questions remained unanswered. First of all, how did Burke see manners as the source of commerce and what were the positive implications of manners for the European society? Secondly, what were the historical implications of Burke's differentiation of commerce and manners, or in other words, did Burke refer to the dominance of values, i.e. aristocratic virtue, or classes, i.e. aristocracy, with the concept of manners? For a fully – developed analysis of these questions, I should extend my study into an intertextual reading of Burke's writings, since "Reflections" presents little clues about Burke's position on the relationship between commerce and manners.

Nonetheless, there are several passages in the "Reflections" that could assist us to make a preliminary step towards an analysis of Burke's conception of manners. First of all, according to Burke, it is evident that "chivalric manners" and "clerical learning" constituted, respectively, the moral and aesthetic standards of intercourse which cemented the European societies of his time. For Burke, these standards consisted of "*that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom … which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity.*" It was this system of morality and aesthetics which has distinguished European civilization "*to its advantage, from states of Asia, and possibly from those states which flourished in the most brilliant period of ancient world.*" For Burke, manners and learning tempered feudal ferocity and fostered a spirit of stable liberty and predictability in which the growth of commerce became feasible. Nevertheless, once the emergence of commerce was accomplished, it did contribute to the further growth of the European civilization by creating more frequent intercourse among people which gave rise to more polite manners and more regular communal administration. However, other than providing the necessary circumstances for the emergence of commerce, Burke did not present any mechanism that explained how manners themselves continued to assist the progress of the European civilization.

Nonetheless, regarding the issue of the historical implications of Burke's allegation on manners, we can infer, even from the limited passages of the "Reflections", that Burke supported an aristocratic governance, i.e. government by aristocratic virtue and clerical learning, instead of a government by aristocrats. Indeed, in the "Reflections", Burke wrote much about the confiscation of Church's property and very little about the abolition of feudal and seigniorial privileges.

Another issue that could be studied further in detail is a comparison of the perspectives of Burke and Tocqueville on the French Revolution. On the one hand, there are remarkable similarities between the perspectives of these two thinkers. For instance, both of them had doubts on the certain characteristics of the newly emerging society, such as "equality", and both designated "Revolutionary men of letters" as the primary political actors in the transformation process of the European world. Moreover, they both challenged the Revolutionary historiography of the French Revolution in their own ways, either by combating the Revolution or by analyzing it empirically. On the other hand, however, Tocqueville seems more optimistic regarding the problems of the newly emerging modern world. Notwithstanding the similarities and differences, such a comparison of early modern political thinkers, who reflected on the emerging characteristics of the new world in critical and original ways, could shed light on our contemporary problems.

Finally, I would like to share my opinions of the significance of rereading "Reflections" for a 21st century reader. The importance of Burke for a political theory student is evident, since Burke's theoretical position against the French Revolution also constitutes the position of philosophical conservatism against the modern Revolutionary mind. However, for a 21st century reader, I think that Burke's political thought becomes crucial with his original, but not wholly developed, criticism of the most basic assumptions of the Enlightenment. Though he was himself an Enlightenment thinker, he defied the exaggerated role that we still put on reason, the meta-narratives that claim to explain and direct every aspect of an individual's life, and the modern arrogance that has begun to reconstruct the world in a social engineering rationale thanks to those meta-narratives. Burke could not grasp fully the destructive power of "commerce", i.e. emergence of a capitalist world, but he could give us a new sight to reevaluate our modern world. Therefore, after more than two hundred years of the French Revolution, the importance of rereading "Reflections" in our

contemporary world is still unavoidable. The promise of the Enlightenment thought to humankind was that if man relied only on his reason by denying any type of guidance between himself and the knowledge, he would immediately grasp the irrationality of the existent social, political, and economic institutions and he would overcome the causes that prevented the triumph of the reason in the world. Indeed, the triumph of the reason and of rationality has been realized; however, the dream has ended. The world witnessed two great world wars along with the infinite destructive wars, holocausts, a terrifying balance of mutually assured destruction, prevailing fatal diseases, and great social inequalities. The "slave peasants" turned into "free workers" and from a working class in the urban areas, there emerged great masses as the new political actor designated by the political philosophers, as the mob, the people, the herd, the proletariat, and the nation. These masses passionately involved in dying and killing other people in the name of sacred ideologies until Francis Fukuyama "declared" the end of history. Now, it is crucial to ask whether the age of men of letters and their speculations has ended. In the pursuit of the answer, the following statement represents more than an emotional reaction of an early conservative modern thinker: "*But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists; and calculators has succeeded.*"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARRINGTON, Donal, *Edmund Burke as an Economist*, **Economica**, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 83, 1954: 252 – 258.

BEVAN, Ruth A., **Marx and Burke: A Revisionist View**, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1973.

BROOKE, John, *Namier and Namierism*, **History and Theory**, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1964.

BURKE, Edmund, **Further Reflections on the Revolution in France**, 1789 – 1796, Ed. Daniel E. Ritchie, Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, 1992, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/660 (10/04/2008)

BURKE, Edmund, **On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters**, Ed. David Bromwich, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

BURKE, Edmund, **Reflections on the Revolution in France**, Ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.

BURKE, Edmund, **Select Works of Edmund Burke**, Vol. 1, 2, 3, 1770 - 1795, Ed. Francis Canavan, A New Imprint of the Payne Edition, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1883 (01/03/2008)

BURKE, Edmund, **The Works of Right Honourable Edmund Burke**, ed. Paul Murray, Vol. 1 (of 12): The Project Gutenberg, 2005, http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/15043 (10/03/2008)

CAGLA, Cengiz, **Tocqueville ve Ozgurluk**, Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2007.

CANAVAN, Francis P., *Edmund Burke's Conception of the Role of Reason in Politics*, **The Journal of Politics**, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1959: 60 – 79.

CONNIFF, James, *Edmund Burke and His Critics: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft*, **Journal of the History of Ideas**, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1999: 299 – 318.

DEANE, Seamus, *Burke and Tocqueville: New Worlds, New Beings*, **Boundary 2**, Vol. 31, Issue 1, 2004: 1 – 23.

DICKENS, Charles, **Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty**, London: GBR: ElecBook, 2001.

DUNN, Susan, *Revolutionary Men of Letters and the Pursuit of Social Change: The Views of Burke, Tocqueville, Adams, Madison, and Jefferson*, **The William and Mary Quarterly**, 3rd Ser., Vol. 53, No. 4, 1996: 729 – 754.

ELSTER, John, and Rune Slagstad (eds.), **Constitutionalism and Democracy**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

FREEMAN, Michael, *Edmund Burke and the Theory of Revolution*, **Political Theory**, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1978: 277 – 297.

FURET, Francoit, **Interpreting the French Revolution**, trans. Elborg Forster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

FURET, Francoit, **Marx and the French Revolution**, trans. Deborah Kan Furet, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

GARGAN, Edward T., *Tocqueville and the Problem of Historical Prognosis*, **the American Historical Review**, Vol. 68, No. 2, Jan. 1963: 332 – 345.

GRAHAM, George J., *Edmund Burke's Developmental Consensus*, **Midwest Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1972: 29 – 45.

GRIDNER, Eddie J., **People and Power: An Introduction to Politics**, Second Edition, Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University, 1999.

GURR, Ted Robert, *Burke and the Modern Theory of Revolution: A Reply to Freeman*, **Political Theory**, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1978: 299 – 311.

HILL, B. W., *Fox and Burke: the Whig Party and the Question of Principles*, **The English Historical Review**, Vol. 89, No. 350, 1974.

HORKHEIMER, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 2001.

JAMES, Lawrence, **The Rise and the Fall of the British Empire**, London: Abacus, 1998.

KANT, Immanuel, **Political Writings**, Ed. H. S. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Second Edition: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

KRAMNICK, Isaac, *Liberalism, Marxism, and the Enlightenment: The Case of Harold Laski*, in Bernard Yack (ed.), **Liberalism without Illusions**, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

KRAMNICK, Isaac, **Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in the late Eighteenth Century England and America**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

KRAMNICK, Isaac, *The Left and Edmund Burke*, **Political Theory**, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1983: 189 – 214.

KRAMNICK, Isaac (ed.), **The Portable Enlightenment Reader**, New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

KRAMNICK, Isaac, **The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative**, New York: Basic Books, 1977.

LACKOFF, Sanford, *Tocqueville, Burke, and the Origins of Liberal Conservatism*, **Review of Politics**, Vol. 60, Issue 3, 1998: 435 – 464.

LEFEBVRE, George, **The Thermidorians**, trans. Robert Baldick, New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

LOCKE, John, **Two Treatises of Government**, Ed. Peter Laslett, London: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

MACPHERSON, C. B., **BURKE**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

MACPHERSON, C. B., **The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke**, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

MANSFIELD, Harvey C., *Sir Lewis Namier Considered*, **The Journal of British Studies**, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1962.

MARX, Karl, **A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy**, ed. Maurice Dobb, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya, fourth edition, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981.

MARX, Karl, **Capital**, Vol. 1, Ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887, Marx / Engels Internet Archive, http://www.marxfaq.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch31.htm (15/04/2008)

MARX, Karl, **Later Political Writings**, Ed. and trans. Terrel Carver, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

MARX, Karl, and Frederick Engels, **The Communist Manifesto**, intr. Eric Hobsbawn, London: Verso, 1888.

MATHIEZ, Albert, **La Révolution Française**, Paris: A. Colin, Vol. 1, 2, 3, fourth edition, 1933.

McCLELLAND, J. S., **A History of Western Political Thought**, New York: Routledge, 1996.

MELVIN, Peter H., *Burke on Theatricality and Revolution*, **Journal of the History of Ideas**, Vol. 36, No. 3, 1975: 447 – 468.

MOSHER, Michael A., *The Skeptic's Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790 – 1990*, **Political Theory**, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1991: 391 – 418.

MORLEY, John, **BURKE**, London: The Macmillan Company, 1888, fullbooks.com, http://www.fullbooks.com/Burke1.html (15/04/2008)

MURDOCH, Alexander, **British History (1660 – 1832): National Identity and Local Culture**, London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998.

NAMIER, Lewis, **The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III**, MacMillan, 1927.

PAINE, Thomas, *The Rights of Man*, **The Writings of Thomas Paine**, Vol. 2, 1779 – 1792, Ed. Moncure Daniel Conway, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Liberty Fund, 1894, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/344 (01/03/2008)

POCOCK, J. G. A., *Burke and the Ancient Constitution: a Problem in the History of Ideas*, **Politics, Language and Time**, New York: 1971.

POCOCK, J. G. A., **The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

POCOCK, J. G. A., **Virtue, Commerce, and History**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

POGGI, Gianfranco, **The Development of the Modern State**, California: Stanford University Press, 1978.

PREECE, Rod, *The Anglo – Saxon Conservative Tradition*, **Canadian Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1980: 3 – 32.

PRICE, Richard, **A Discourse on the Love of Our Country**, Second edition, London: T. Cadell, 1789, The Liberty Fund, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/368 (03/03/2008)

RIGNEY, Ann, **The Rhetoric of Historical Representation**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, first edition, 1990.

ROBESPIRRE, Maximillien, *On the Death Penalty*, trans. Mitch Abidor, 1791: Creative Commons, Marx / Engels Internet Archive, 2004, http://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/robespierre/index.htm (01/06/2008)

SKOCPOL, Theda, **States and Social Revolutions**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de, **Democracy in America**, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, New York: The Library of America, 2004.

TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de, **The Old Regime and the Revolution**, trans. Stuart Gilbert, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1995.

TOLSTOY, Leo, **War and Peace**, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude, The Literature Network, http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/war_and_peace/ (10/05/2008)

TREVELYAN, G. M., **History of England**, London: Longmans Green and Co., Third Edition, 1948.

TUCKER, Josiah, **A Treatise Concerning Civil Government in Three Parts**, London: T. Cadell, 1781, The Liberty Fund, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1674 (22/03/2008)

VAUGHN, Karen, *John Locke's Theory of Property: Problems of Interpretation*, **Literature of Liberty: A Review of Contemporary Liberal Thought**, Vol. 3, No. 1, Ed. Leonard P. Liggio, Cato Institute, 1980: The Liberty Fund, http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1797 (27/04/2008)

WHITE, Stephen K., *Burke on Politics, Aesthetics, and the Dangers of Modernity*, **Political Theory**, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1993: 507 – 527.

WOOD, Neal, *The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought*, **The Journal of British Studies**, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1964: 41 – 64.