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Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography

Robert E. Shalhope*

THE effect upon American intellectual history of the symbolic statement, *Locke et praeterea nihil*, has been both profound and unfortunate.¹ That popular formula has helped to obscure an understanding of early American thought by obstructing a full appreciation of the vital shaping role of republicanism. Only within the last decade have historians clearly discerned the unique and dynamic qualities of republicanism in the period 1760 to 1789. Their efforts represent the culmination of a long, slow process, and implications arising from this work have yet to be extended to other periods of American history. It should prove fruitful, then, to trace this evolution of ideas in order to perceive those important strands of thought that can be drawn together into a tentative synthesis. Hopefully, this "republican synthesis" will shed new light upon early American history and provide insights for future research.

A brief explication of the ideas of George M. Dutcher reveals the older view of republicanism in America.² Dutcher, in an essay published

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¹ In the present essay this phrase denotes the frame of reference that for so long dominated studies of American thought and may be referred to as the "orthodox" position of republicanism. Stanley Katz claims that "*Locke et praeterea nihil*, it now appears, will no longer do as a motto for the study of eighteenth-century Anglo-American political thought." "The Origins of Constitutional Thought," *Perspectives in American History*, III (1969), 474. J. G. A. Pocock believes that "it is clear that the textbook account of Augustan political thought as *Locke et praeterea nihil* badly needs revision." "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXII (1965), 551.

² Scholarly works propounding the traditional position are legion. Dutcher's essay is singled out only because it presents the orthodox view so succinctly and is cited so often by later authors. Other examples include Merle Curti, *The Growth*

in 1940, maintained that Americans in 1776 had little if any knowledge of past republics and that consideration of these was "clearly irrelevant to the discussion of the origins of republican institutions in America."³ After discussing the ideas of the English Civil War, Dutcher contended that "republican and democratic ideas of that revolutionary period passed into unpopularity and oblivion with the Restoration in 1660, not to be revived and repopularized until the nineteenth century."⁴ While Dutcher felt that Americans did draw upon the English Bill of Rights and the ideas of John Locke, he held that between the English Civil War and the American Revolution "republican ideas were practically taboo and no direct contribution to their development was made except by Algernon Sidney."⁵ Believing this, Dutcher could confidently affirm that "available evidence indicates clearly that republican government in America developed in 1775 and 1776 from political necessity and not from political theory or public agitation, exactly as in England in 1649, and apparently, without any recognition of the precedent."⁶ He then concluded that "popular acceptance of republican government and devotion to it were, however, primarily the work of the twelve years from 1789 to 1801. . . . It was the genius of Jefferson, in the great struggle between the Federalists and his followers, that focused American opinion against monarchy and in favor of republicanism."⁷

The salient characteristics of the orthodox view emerge from Dutcher's essay: Republican authors of importance were those of the English Civil War, but their ideas were dead until after the American Revolu-

of *American Thought* (New York, 1943); Zera S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth Century England* (Evanston, Ill., 1945); Correa Moylan Walsh, *The Political Science of John Adams: A Study in the Theory of Mixed Government and the Bicameral System* (New York, 1915); Randolph Greenfield Adams, *Political Ideas of the American Revolution* (Durham, N. C., 1922); Andrew C. McLaughlin, *The Foundations of American Constitutionalism* (New York, 1932); C. Edward Merriam, *A History of American Political Thought* (New York, 1903); Benjamin Fletcher Wright, *American Interpretations of Natural Law: A Study in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931); and Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York, 1922).

³ "The Rise of Republican Government in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly*, LV (1940), 199-216. The quotation is on pp. 199-200.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

tion; John Locke's ideas dominated American thought; and the great impetus to republicanism came from Thomas Jefferson in the post-Confederation period. Scholars assumed that republicanism represented simply a form of government; no hint of republicanism as a dynamic ideology assuming moral dimensions and involving the very character of American society appeared in these early studies.

Seven years after the appearance of Dutcher's article Caroline Robbins published an essay initiating an approach which would gradually erode the orthodox position. She contended that Sidney's ideas did not die with him in 1683, but instead were taken up by radical whigs such as Robert Molesworth, John Toland, Thomas Gordon, John Trenchard, Richard Baron, and Thomas Hollis.⁸ While these men did not affect English politics, they did manage to transmit their libertarian heritage to America where it acquired great vitality.

Robbins felt that radicals or revolutionaries could find greater sustenance in Sidney's *Discourses* than in Locke's more temperate *Essays*. By the 1770s Englishmen, eager for accommodation and harmony, came to view Sidney either as irrelevant or dangerous and thus his ideas lost their popularity. The opposite took place in America: As tension mounted between mother country and colony Sidney's belief in restricted sovereignty and resistance to power became critical elements in American thought. These ideas emanated from his contention that the people were sovereign and must protect that sovereignty against incursions by their leaders. Since power always corrupted, the people must erect safeguards to ensure that magistrates did not encroach upon their sovereignty and thus deprive them of their liberties. Robbins delivered a trenchant observation when she noted that "the debt of English reformers to America, and of America to the men who failed to impose their ideas on England in 1689, has not yet been properly assessed. English and American intellectual history from 1640 to 1840 needs rewriting between the covers of one book."⁹ While it would be years before other scholars took up this challenge, Robbins made an important contribution to scholarship by initiating a move toward understanding English libertarian thought and indicating its influence in America.

In 1950 Robbins added substance to her earlier insight in a discussion

⁸ "Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*: Textbook of Revolution," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., IV (1947), 267-296.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

of Thomas Hollis (1720-1774), who spent the greater part of his life disseminating throughout the world books, medals, and coins that would foster liberty.¹⁰ It was, however, a peculiar kind of liberty that he desired to stimulate; his was the liberty of ancient republics reflected in the writing of Milton, Marvell, and others. The great fear in Hollis's mind was that the vast new prosperity being enjoyed by England would be her downfall just as luxury had caused the political decline of the ancient republics. Public virtue and private frugality seemed to be the only way to avoid this impending danger. The best way for a people to maintain their liberties was to guard them carefully and have frequent parliamentary elections in order to enforce restraints upon their rulers.

Robbins made it explicit that Hollis's peculiar brand of liberty struck a responsive chord in America. That these ideas reached America was certain; the question of what shape they assumed there she left unanswered; her primary concern, after all, was to understand the English Commonwealthmen. Nonetheless, she had made another contribution through further explication of libertarian thought and by noting its passage to America.

Historians directing their efforts to American thought received a boost from an essay on the Tenth *Federalist* by Douglass Adair in which he maintained that the work of Charles A. Beard and other progressive historians had cast a shadow over study of the Constitution—and by implication over all of early American history—by minimizing the importance of ideas and ideological factors.¹¹ Adair held that political ideas and philosophies were central to the writing of both *Federalist* Number Ten and the Constitution and that Madison's Tenth *Federalist* was "eighteenth-century political theory directed to an eighteenth-century problem; and it is one of the great creative achievements of that intellectual movement that later ages have christened 'Jeffersonian democracy.'"¹² Adair's

¹⁰ "The Strenuous Whig, Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., VII (1950), 406-453. The editors of the *Quarterly* noted that this essay was one of a series being printed to better illuminate the relationship between whig thought and the American Revolution. These included Robbins's earlier essay on Algernon Sidney; Peter Laslett, "Sir Robert Filmer: The Man versus the Whig Myth," *ibid.*, V (1948), 523-546; Lucy Martin Donnelly, "The Celebrated Mrs. Macaulay," *ibid.*, VI (1949), 173-207; and Felix Gilbert, "The English Background of American Isolationism in the Eighteenth Century," *ibid.*, I (1944), 138-160.

¹¹ "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," *ibid.*, VIII (1951), 48-67.

¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

essay assumes importance not because it clearly delineated eighteenth-century American thought, but because it helped to shift attention toward ideological factors in the creation of the Constitution and in the understanding of early American society.

It must be emphasized that historians, while beginning to analyze intellectual factors, were still wrestling with separate and distinct strands of thought that lacked an integrative frame of reference. Carl Cone mentioned English radical thought in a book published in the early 1950s, but the relationship between English and American ideas remained unclear.¹³ Historians could gain from Cone's work the knowledge that Price—and by implication other English radicals—exerted a great influence upon American thought, but the nature of that thought and the form it took in America remained vague. The fact that scholarship relative to English and American thought progressed along parallel rather than convergent paths caused this lack of clarity to persist.¹⁴

This predicament became obvious in 1954 with the appearance of essays by Neal Riemer and Caroline Robbins. Riemer contended that James Madison was best understood in the light of his complete dedication to republicanism rather than through any pursuit of economic interests.¹⁵ He presented a sophisticated analysis of Madison's struggles with problems confronting and confounding those who would establish a republican form of government and offered sound evidence that "Republican ideology—not economic interest, not social class, not sectional outlook—[was] the key to his [Madison's] political thought and actions."¹⁶ While Riemer

¹³ *Torchbearer of Freedom: The Influence of Richard Price on Eighteenth Century Thought* (Lexington, Ky., 1952).

¹⁴ This same vagueness permeated Clinton Rossiter's massive *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origins of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York, 1953). Rossiter claimed that *Cato's Letters*, written by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, were far more influential in America than Locke's *Two Treatises on Civil Government* and that Locke's role had been greatly overemphasized (p. 141), yet he vacillated between this position and one lauding Locke's influence (pp. 328, 358). In an article published the same year and also incorporated in the book Rossiter portrayed Richard Bland as "the whig in America" yet made no mention of libertarian thought. Bland was a Lockean whig, not at all like Trenchard or Gordon. "Richard Bland: The Whig in America," *Wm. and Mary Quly.*, 3d Ser., X (1953), 33-79. Clearly Rossiter recognized, or at the very least suspected, the libertarian influence, yet its impact in America remained blurred.

¹⁵ "The Republicanism of James Madison," *Pol. Sci. Quly.*, LXIX (1954), 45-64; Riemer, "James Madison's Theory of the Self-Destructive Features of Republican Government," *Ethics*, LXV (1954), 34-43.

¹⁶ Riemer, "Republicanism of Madison," *Pol. Sci. Quly.*, LXIX (1954), 63.

recognized that republicanism was a motivating force in Madison's life, he did not discuss the content of that ideology. To Riemer, as to those before him, republicanism represented only the allegiance to a specific form of government. Riemer also tended to reinforce the orthodox belief that republicanism gained its greatest strength from Jeffersonian democracy, for while he substituted Madison for Jefferson, the result was identical. Thus, although Riemer ably refuted Beard and supported an emphasis upon republicanism, just what "republicanism" was remained unclear.

In an essay on Francis Hutcheson Caroline Robbins refined her analysis of radical English thought, but at the same time moved further away from its American implications.¹⁷ Hutcheson was intimately associated with Robert Molesworth, whom Robbins described as "the catalytic agent in the transfusion of the ideas of the English classical republicans with the philosophic and political theories of his own time."¹⁸ Through Molesworth and others—Benjamin Hoadley, Trenchard, Gordon, Moyle—Hutcheson soaked himself in the dissenting tradition, which struggled to keep alive the ideas of Harrington, Sidney, Marvell, and others of the Commonwealth period. Hutcheson's friendship with Molesworth began at the very time when the latter was supporting the right of resistance, agitating for an equitable redistribution of parliamentary seats, and struggling against the corruption and luxury he perceived around him. Molesworth's *An Account of Denmark* taught Hutcheson that people who did not constantly guard their liberties were bound to lose them.

Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* constituted his greatest philosophical contribution, for in that work he revealed his controlling belief that virtue and happiness were closely related and that virtue must be cultivated above all else in any society. He wholeheartedly endorsed the right of resistance to a power which was subverting the good society, since he believed that governments existed only to further the common good, not to exalt a few.

In evaluating Hutcheson's significance Robbins emphasized that his thought represented the product of the total environment into which he

¹⁷ "When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent": An Analysis of the Environment and Politics of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746)," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 214-251.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

had been born and in which he lived rather than being reflective of his single genius. She explicitly demonstrated the emergent dissenting tradition in England and the "mind set" being transferred to America. The outlines of republicanism as it would emerge in America could be seen in Hutcheson's analysis of moral philosophy; while Robbins did not make this point, her work contributed fertile ideas that could be taken up by scholars when they directed their attention to America and accordingly to the form dissenting thought would take in a different culture.

Two other works published in 1954 began to draw a connection between English and American thinkers, but again the exact nature of the thought and the connection lacked clarity. Through a study of the political and religious reform societies flourishing in England, Nicholas Hans identified English radicals such as Joseph Priestley, Price, and others, and demonstrated concrete connections between these men and Benjamin Franklin and Jefferson.¹⁹ In his *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago, 1954) Gerald Stourzh hinted that many of the ideas commonly circulating in America were drawn from English radicals, but he did not develop this insight. Both works underscored the fact that a frame of reference regarding English radical ideas and American revolutionary thought was yet to be established.

An essay by Cecelia Kenyon exhibited this same handicap, although it is a tribute to the brilliance of this scholar that she was able to study the institutional nature of antifederalist thought as incisively as she did without the benefit of this frame of reference.²⁰ Kenyon's analysis represented a major step toward understanding the ideological nature of the dispute between the Federalists and antifederalists, which had been so badly obscured by Beard and his followers. Kenyon viewed the fundamental issue separating these two groups as the question of whether a republican government could be extended over a vast area. To her the antifederalists, rather than being the democrats pictured by Beard, were conservative "men of little faith" who drew upon the thought of Montesquieu and clung tenaciously to the ideas of the past; rather it was the Federalists who "created a national framework which would accommodate

¹⁹ "Franklin, Jefferson, and the English Radicals at the End of the Eighteenth Century," American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings*, LXXXVIII (1954), 406-426.

²⁰ "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XII (1955), 3-43.

the later rise of democracy."²¹ While Kenyon shed new light upon the dispute between the Federalists and antifederalists, there were two problems to which she did not address herself. First, she identified the antifederalists solely with Montesquieu rather than making any connection with the dissenting tradition. Second, she did not see that both the Federalists and antifederalists drew their ideas from a common source, and thus she failed to inquire into what caused the Federalists to deviate from the original mode of thought while the antifederalists clung so desperately to the ways of the past. Her insight into institutional thought revealed a great need for an understanding of republican ideology as it emerged in America; such a comprehension would allow the scholar to deal with both the Federalists and the antifederalists within a common framework.

In an essay dealing with James Madison and the Tenth *Federalist* in which he explicitly held the Federalists to have been motivated by ideological rather than economic factors, Douglass Adair implied the existence of such a common frame of reference.²² Adair contended that Madison's use of history in the Constitutional Convention did not represent "mere rhetorical-historical window-dressing, concealing substantially greedy motives of class and property" and analyzed Madison's intellectual struggle with Montesquieu, showing how, drawing upon David Hume, he worked to fashion a republican form of government that encompassed the entire nation.²³ In his Tenth *Federalist* Madison turned Montesquieu on his head by showing that stability—that most precarious commodity in a republican government—could be better achieved in a large geographic area by checking factions against each other within a vitalized federalism.

It remained to be demonstrated why Madison felt the need for a vitalized federalism; to show that he thought as a political scientist and not as a class-conscious elitist did not explain why he behaved as he did. Nonetheless, Adair's article represented an important step toward a republican synthesis, because it established Madison's concern for re-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

²² "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science": David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth *Federalist*," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XX (1956-1957), 343-360.

²³ *Ibid.*, 347. It is clear that Adair did not recognize the libertarian heritage, but, nonetheless, he did see that Madison worked from a body of knowledge shared with antifederalists.

publicanism and showed that he reasoned within this context. What was still lacking was a sophisticated understanding of the context; republicanism was yet to be clearly defined other than simply as a form of government. It was still not perceived as a pervasive political ideology.

H. Trevor Colbourn drew much closer to an understanding of American republicanism in an essay dealing with Thomas Jefferson's vital interest in history.²⁴ Colbourn pointed out that Jefferson was not drawn equally to all history, but rather to "Whig history." An avid scholar of Thomas Gordon's translation of Tacitus, Catherine Macaulay's *History of England*, *Cato's Letters*, and the writings of James Burgh, Jefferson immersed himself in whig thought. Drawing upon this persuasion in his *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, Jefferson held that Americans, by resisting British tyranny, stood for their rights as transplanted Englishmen just as the dissenting radicals stood against the corruption and decadence that seemed to be taking England away from her true ideals. Thus Colbourn identified a persistent and enduring motivating force in Jefferson's life—and certainly by implication in the lives of thousands of other Americans—long before he forged "Jeffersonian democracy." While Colbourn did not make explicit reference to the libertarian heritage or to American republicanism—neither being clearly discernible at this point in scholarly research—his essay did provide the rudiments of an understanding by historians that a republican political ideology was developing in pre-Revolutionary America. American historiography still lacked a clear definition of the heritage upon which Americans drew and the shape republicanism would assume, but the former was not long in coming.

In 1959 Caroline Robbins published *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*.²⁵ This book represents a turning point in the effort to understand American republicanism since Robbins fully developed her earlier observations and precisely delineated the English libertarian heritage upon which Americans drew so heavily. Through a discussion of the ideas of individual Commonwealthmen from Neville through Joseph Priestley, Robbins revealed the libertarian thrust which was responsible for keeping alive the ideas of Harrington, Nedham, Milton, Ludlow, Sidney, Neville,

²⁴ "Jefferson's Use of the Past," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XV (1958), 56-70.

²⁵ *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development, and Circumstances of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

and Marvell. These "Real Whigs," who admired the Leveller inheritance but tempered it with an admiration for the English Constitution, could only view the development of the Cabinet as a threat to the balance of the Constitution. They believed in the separation of powers of the three branches and rotation in office, and urged parliamentary reform, the redistribution of seats, and annual parliaments. They struggled for freedom of thought and for the sovereignty of the people in the face of what they considered increasing corruption and tyranny by both the monarch and Parliament.

While no attempt will be made to summarize the entirety of this work, certain strains of thought that shed light upon American republicanism should be mentioned. Robert Molesworth's *An Account of Denmark* constituted one of the strongest warnings that people must constantly guard their liberties. The quickest way to forfeit cherished liberties was to fail to call ministers and kings to account. Molesworth's clearest warning, however, was against an institution that would be the bane of republicanism: the standing army. The people must be ever wary of the establishment of a standing army, for it was through such a device that kings and ministers most often deprived the people of their rights. In its stead militias composed of the people were the safest method to defend a country against both foreign enemies and domestic tyrants.

These same ideas permeated the work of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. In *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*—both of which circulated widely in America and were to be of the utmost importance in the creation of American republicanism—the authors emphasized the necessity for discussing everything political as well as religious. They believed that all men were naturally good and that citizens became restless only when oppressed. Every man should act according to his own conscience, judge when a magistrate had done ill, and should possess the right of resistance. Without this right man could not defend his liberty. *Cato* paired liberty and equality, and the preservation and extension of liberty became all important. Since the greatest danger to the liberty and thus to the equality of the people came from their leaders, the people must constantly be wary of men coming to power, being corrupted by it, and stealthily usurping power and liberty from the people.

For the development of an understanding of American republicanism, Robbins's book is of utmost importance, for it thoroughly explored

the thought upon which Americans drew and began the essential historical shift away from Locke. A prominent scholar would later note this shift and observe that "the state of nature, doctrine of consent, and theory of natural rights were not as important, before 1776, as the ideas of mixed government, separation of powers, and a balanced constitution. The preservation of individual liberty through careful engineering of governmental structure was the dominant concern of political theorists in the new world and the old."²⁶ With this set of ideas, moreover, there evolved a peculiar way of viewing society, its people, and its rulers. It was this peculiar view of society that demanded study, since this constituted the heart of American republicanism.

The same year that Robbins's book appeared Colbourn published an article dealing with John Dickinson that demonstrated the growing historical awareness of the English experience.²⁷ As in his earlier article on Jefferson, Colbourn showed Dickinson's reliance upon whig history and the whig interpretation of the English past: Dickinson was particularly drawn to *Cato's Letters*, which described the failure of the eighteenth-century English to reclaim their Saxon heritage. "Instead," Colbourn observed, "contemporary England was frequently shown racing toward economic, moral, and political collapse, ridden with corruption, and afflicted with an unrepresentative Parliament."²⁸ Dickinson's reading of the libertarians gave him a "disturbing portrait of a mother country on the high road to ruin, oblivious of her ancestral liberties, and mostly unaware that the way to salvation lay in a return to Saxon simplicity, with annually elected and uncorrupted parliaments, and a people's militia rather than a dangerous and expensive standing army."²⁹

The composite picture drawn by these writers received reinforcement through Dickinson's personal observation during his tenure at the Middle Temple, and so his anxiety over conditions in England in the 1750s could only turn to outright alarm in the 1760s when English colonial policy appeared to change drastically. Dickinson's reading, now reinforced

²⁶ Katz, "Origins of Constitutional Thought," *Perspectives*, III (1969), 474.

²⁷ "John Dickinson, Historical Revolutionary," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXII (1959), 271-292. Colbourn is clearly aware of Robbins's interpretation by this point and notes that her "forthcoming book" would discuss writers of the whig persuasion who were influential in America (p. 273, n. 6).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

through correspondence with Catherine Macaulay and James Burgh, heightened this anxiety since it appeared that the mother country was now attempting to spread her own decadence and corruption to America. These views shaped Dickinson's response to British actions throughout the 1760s and 1770s and permeated his writing. A consistent theme ran throughout his work: Americans were Englishmen struggling to maintain English (Saxon) liberties against usurpers.

The significance of this essay for the emergence of an understanding of republicanism lies in the clear connection made between the libertarian persuasion and American thought and action. This was, however, simply a beginning, since it still remained necessary to clarify the form republicanism assumed in America. It could not be presumed that English libertarian ideas transferred to the colonies intact, and so the process of transformation and clarification they underwent in America still existed to challenge scholars.

In the early 1960s historians more clearly delineated the nexus between English libertarian thought and the American experience while making tentative gestures toward understanding the dynamics of that thought. Leonard Levy discussed the American reliance upon *Cato's Letters* in his analysis of freedom of speech and the press in early America while Jackson Turner Main made the libertarian heritage central to his discussion of the antifederalists.³⁰ Main, believing that the antifederalists drew upon "left-wing Whiggism," tied them to the libertarian heritage and cogently discussed *Cato's Letters* and the work of James Burgh. He recognized the Commonwealthman's suspicion of the evil effects of power and the consequent warning for the people to maintain a vigilant watch over their elected leaders. From these basic beliefs, he maintained, stemmed the antifederalists' desire to keep power responsive to the people through frequent elections, rotation in office, and reliance upon the lower house of the legislature where leaders could be more closely watched. Oppression could be avoided by tying the government more closely to the people and by denying it easily abused powers.

Although Main made excellent use of the libertarian heritage and aided in clarifying its connection to American thought, he also tended to obscure future research on republicanism. By tying the antifederalists

³⁰ Levy, *Legacy of Suppression: Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1961).

to the Commonwealthmen Main attempted to make the former great democrats. However, in so doing he clouded a more important issue: What was the Federalists' response to this same body of thought? This question could only appear irrelevant to Main since he did not believe that the Federalists drew upon this persuasion. Main inadvertently read history backward: He observed that the antifederalists drew heavily upon the libertarians and that the Federalists did not and concluded that only the antifederalists responded to these ideas. The problem was that he observed Federalist behavior after the fact—that is, after they had begun a transformation in their thought and had altered libertarian ideas—and thus Main failed to attain a full understanding of the influence of republicanism in America by making it the sole possession of one faction instead of an ideology that permeated all of American society.

In the same year that Main's work appeared Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, Oscar and Mary Handlin, and Perry Miller published essays that contributed to the emergence of a republican synthesis.⁸¹ The Elkins and McKittrick article posed the important question of why the Federalists and antifederalists split; the Handlins presented a superb analysis of the thought of James Burgh and its impact in America; and Miller's essay injected a vital word of caution for historians to avoid becoming too secular in their analyses of early America.

Elkins and McKittrick, while never explicitly discussing republicanism, maintained that the variance between the Federalists and antifederalists did not hinge upon disagreements over "democracy," but rather over differences in their willingness to see republican government extended beyond state boundaries. The chief disparity lay "in the Federalists' conviction that there was such a thing as national interest and that a government could be established to care for it which was fully in keeping with republican principles."⁸² The authors added to an understanding

⁸¹ Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution," *Pol. Sci. Qly.*, LXXVI (1961), 181-216; Oscar and Mary Handlin, "James Burgh and American Revolutionary Theory," *Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings*, LXXIII (1961), 38-57; Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, eds., *Religion in American Life*. Vol. I: *The Shaping of American Religion* (Princeton, N. J., 1961), 322-368.

⁸² Elkins and McKittrick, "Founding Fathers," *Pol. Sci. Qly.*, LXXVI (1961), 201.

of the Confederation period by indicating that for the Federalists this was indeed a "critical period," because, imbued with a vision of a prospering republican nation and committed to its survival, they felt that the government must be restructured if this was to be the case. The authors—while not casting direct light upon republicanism—noted that both sides adhered to a single ideology and so directed attention to the need to analyze both the Federalists and antifederalists within the same intellectual framework.

Oscar and Mary Handlin studied James Burgh's impact upon American revolutionary theory and posited that Burgh's perceptive insights into the evils of eighteenth-century English society caused him to be avidly read by Americans. He and his coterie of friends believed that the corruption they saw all about them had perverted politics. Burgh's concern with moral issues led him into a moral view of politics and the belief that the prerequisite to change was a nationwide moral regeneration. All of his writings rang with the call for a rebirth. The essential first step in such a process—the only way to save England from tyranny or anarchy—was to institute a government that truly represented all the people.

The Handlins believed that the ease and assurance with which Americans employed Burgh's ideas was the result of "a significant congruence between Burgh's ideas on government and those which the colonists had developed out of other sources in other ways."³³ This observation disclosed a concept of importance: While Americans made great use of Burgh's thought, his ideas did not cross the Atlantic intact. Americans adapted his conceptions—ideas about consent, constitution, liberty—to their specific and concrete problems, so that even when the same words were used, and the same formal principles adhered to, novel circumstances transformed their meaning. The Handlins considered Burgh a significant aid in discerning those elements of distinctiveness: "Precisely because he was not a great theorist, he reflected the attitudes of a particular time and place. By virtue of his situation, he was as close to American thought as any European of his time; and the differences between his ideas and those of the colonists who read him illuminated an important facet of the development of the 'American mind.'"³⁴ Thus, the Handlins suggested a critical element for understanding American

³³ Handlin and Handlin, "James Burgh," *Mass. Hist. Soc., Proceedings*, LXXIII (1961), 52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

republicanism: Americans drew fully upon English ideas—especially libertarian ones—but while doing so, created a unique mode of thought. While the Handlins did not address themselves to the concept of republicanism, their essay did lend support to the thesis that a unique ideology emerged in America, an ideology that historians would soon recognize as republicanism.

Perry Miller's essay "From the Covenant to the Revival" is of great importance in understanding republicanism in America, for by carefully examining the Puritan jeremiad Miller cautioned scholars not to become too secular in their search for the dynamic qualities of the American mind. While not addressing himself directly to republican ideology, Miller discussed elements that permeated it, especially the belief that America was unique—a city on a hill—and constantly in need of revitalization. This dark view of the present, accompanied by a desperate sense of urgency, pervaded the "republican jeremiads" of John Taylor of Caroline and other later republicans. These constituted legacies of Puritan thought which Miller knew to be a vital part of the American mind that emerged between the Revolution and the Civil War. Puritanism, with its heavy emphasis upon regeneration, strenuous morality, and a sense of community, prepared the way for republicanism.

In 1962 Cecelia Kenyon made another contribution to the emerging republican synthesis.³⁵ Her "old-fashioned" interpretation of the American Revolution maintained that one of the profound changes wrought by that movement was the establishment of republican governments in place of monarchical ones.³⁶ She then noted another change that provided perceptive insight into American thought: Americans developed an ideo-

³⁵ It should not be presumed that the "emerging republican synthesis" represented a goal toward which the authors under discussion consciously strove; nor should it be presumed to be the only "synthesis" that could be drawn from research being undertaken throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Merrill Jensen's *The New Nation: A History of the United States During the Confederation, 1781-1789* (New York, 1950); Elisha P. Douglass's *Rebels and Democrats: The Struggle for Equal Political Rights and Majority Rule During the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1955); and Jack P. Greene's *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1963) are only a few of the outstanding treatments of the period that do not fit the republican synthesis. Greene presents an excellent analysis of the "neo-whig" school of Revolutionary historiography in "The Flight from Determinism: A Review of Recent Literature on the Coming of the American Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXI (1962), 235-259.

³⁶ "Republicanism and Radicalism in the American Revolution: An Old-Fashioned Interpretation," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XIX (1962), 153-182.

logical attachment to republicanism. Good government had come to mean republican government. If this ideological attachment to republicanism represented a break with the past, it also carried with it far-reaching consequences for the future, since the "ideological habit thus acquired has been extended to other areas and has become a major factor in American political thinking. Like republicanism, socialism, imperialism, and colonialism are all terms which have become stereotypes for Americans, frequently exercising a powerful ideological force at odds with our alleged pragmatism."³⁷ These observations regarding the doctrinaire quality of American republicanism added a significant perspective to the study of that ideology and its role in early American society.

Two years after the appearance of Kenyon's article Richard Buel published an essay central to an understanding of the emergence of republicanism.³⁸ Discussing the same problem as Kenyon—democracy—Buel contended that Americans relied on sources in addition to Montesquieu whom her research had stressed nearly to the exclusion of all others. Buel, believing that historians had despaired unduly of finding a point of departure from which to assess the meaning of the revolutionary experience, maintained that the English dissenting tradition constituted the common initial frame of reference for American intellectuals.³⁹

Just as the Commonwealthmen found themselves forced to rely heavily upon the power of the people, so too did Americans; and "like all eighteenth-century English thinkers the provincial leadership sought to control power by limiting and dividing it."⁴⁰ While this principle was not unique, the scope with which Americans applied it certainly was. Most important, "rather than confine the balance of the constitution to the autonomous composition of the supreme power, to the parliamentary components of king, Lords, and Commons, Americans turned to a conception of balance between two broad, countervailing forces in political society, the rulers and the ruled."⁴¹ Only in such an elaboration of the relationship between rulers and ruled could Americans define an arrange-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁸ "Democracy and the American Revolution: A Frame of Reference," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XXI (1964), 165-190.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-167. Buel's discussion of the "dissenting tradition" was drawn specifically from Robbins's work.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

ment "whereby society might benefit from the exercise of power without suffering from its corresponding abuses."⁴²

The people expressed their power over their rulers through representation, and Buel presented a cogent analysis of this process as well as its implications, the most important of which was that Americans entered the Revolution with the assumption that the "power the people did possess was not designed to facilitate the expression of their will in politics but to defend them from oppression."⁴³ Here Buel revealed a valuable point: Americans entered the Revolution armed with a common set of assumptions stemming from a negative view of government. Government was something to be carefully watched and restricted, not a dynamic force in society. ✓

While Buel's analysis of the common point of departure in American Revolutionary thought constituted an important contribution, his concluding remarks were even more provocative. He believed that the dissenting tradition, which undergirded American thought, underwent subtle transformations as Americans found themselves forced to respond to the logic of revolutionary events. With this observation Buel cut to the heart of the problem which had eluded so many previous scholars: What caused men starting with a common intellectual heritage to pursue separate paths? While Buel did not answer this, his essay, by establishing an initial point of departure, made it easier for future scholars to pose more penetrating questions in directing their own research. Further, Buel's essay provided an additional impetus for scholars to turn their attention toward the unique frame of mind that emerged when power seemed not to be balanced between a triumvirate of king, Lords, and Commons, but between the people and their rulers.

This frame of mind became much clearer in 1965 with the publication of the initial volume of Bernard Bailyn's *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), the most important single statement of the new synthesis.⁴⁴ Bailyn finally made clear the shape English dissenting thought had assumed in America and the implications for American society of the intellectual life of the Revolution. Viewing ✓

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁴ Two years later the introduction to this volume, "The Transforming Radicalism of the American Revolution," appeared in slightly expanded form as *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

the intellectual history of the years from 1763 to 1776 as "the story of the clarification and consolidation under the pressure of events of a view of the world and of America's place in it only vaguely and partially seen before," Bailyn analyzed the sources of this world view.⁴⁵ He mentioned the classical influence, the Enlightenment rationalism of Locke and others, the common law, and New England Puritanism, but considered these to be disparate strands, some of which were contradictory. The thought that brought these fragments into a coherent whole emanated from the English Civil War and Commonwealth period, but while Americans respected this thought, they identified with the "early eighteenth-century transmitters of this tradition of seventeenth-century radicalism."⁴⁶ This single "peculiar strain of thought" provided the framework within which Enlightenment abstractions and common law precedents, covenant theology and classical analogies were brought together into a comprehensive theory of politics.

Bailyn believed the theory of politics which emerged in the pre-Revolutionary years rested "on the belief that what lay behind every political scene, the ultimate explanation of every political controversy, was the disposition of power." To the colonist power meant "the dominion of some men over others, the human control of human life: ultimately force, compulsion." Colonial discussions of power "centered on its essential characteristic of aggressiveness: its endlessly propulsive tendency to expand itself beyond legitimate boundaries," but what "gave transcendent importance to the aggressiveness of power was the fact that its natural prey, its necessary victim, was liberty, or law, or right." The emergent colonial persuasion saw society "divided into distinct, contrasting, and innately antagonistic spheres: the sphere of power and the sphere of liberty or right. The one was brutal, ceaselessly active, and heedless; the other was delicate, passive, and sensitive. The one must be resisted, the other defended, and the two must never be confused."⁴⁷

The meaning imparted to events after 1763 by this integrated group of attitudes lay behind the colonists' rebellion: British actions seemed to fit into a growing "logic of rebellion." The colonists saw an ominous

⁴⁵Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets*, 20.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 29. These "transmitters" were Robbins's Commonwealthmen. It should be noted that Bailyn does not eliminate Locke's influence, he simply places it within its proper context. *Locke et praeterea nihil* becomes *Locke et multum praeterea*.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 38-39.

attempt to spread British corruption into America by deceit. Their belief that British actions stemmed from corruption "gave a radical new meaning to their [American] claims; it transformed them from constitutional arguments to expressions of a world regenerative creed."⁴⁸ Americans must preserve the light of liberty. It would be treason for them not to revolt.

Bailyn applied the ideas inherent in this new philosophy to American society as it emerged from the Revolution and noted its effect upon various segments of American life: Americans began to question established religion, slavery, and the deferential society found in America. There emerged a faith in the idea that a better world "could be built where authority was distrusted and held in constant scrutiny; where the status of men flowed from their achievements and from their personal qualities, not from distinctions ascribed to them at birth; and where the use of power over the lives of men was jealously guarded and severely restricted. It was only where there was this defiance, this refusal to truckle, this distrust of all authority, political or social, that institutions would express human aspirations, not crush them."⁴⁹ Thus, in an attempt to better explain the American Revolution, Bernard Bailyn provided brilliant insight into the development of American republicanism, since the unique frame of mind that developed in the Revolutionary period would be a dynamic force in the development of American society in later years as well.

In the same year that Bailyn published his *Pamphlets* other works appeared that served to broaden historians' comprehension of the libertarian heritage and its role in the American experience even further.⁵⁰ H. Trevor Colbourn brought his research to fruition with the publication of *The Lamp of Experience*.⁵¹ He amplified his earlier discussions of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 82. The idea of regeneration becomes a key element in republicanism and helps to explain the doctrinaire attitude identified earlier by Kenyon.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵⁰ Libertarian thought reached a wider audience with the publication of David L. Jacobson, ed., *The English Libertarian Heritage, From the Writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in The Independent Whig and Cato's Letters* (Indianapolis, 1965). This comprised a volume in the Bobbs-Merrill American Heritage Series which attempts to bring primary sources within the reach of a greater number of students.

⁵¹ *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1965).

Jefferson and Dickinson to show how a great many Americans were influenced by whig history. While Bailyn's research provided a sharper picture of the unique frame of mind that existed in America, Colbourn's work was more valuable when looking beyond the Revolutionary period. His chapter on Thomas Jefferson indicated that this frame of mind constituted a continuing dynamic with Jefferson until his death. This was an important contribution, for it indicated that this mode of thought continued well beyond the Revolutionary period and revealed the need to pursue it into the 1820s.

Works by Alan Heimert and Edmund S. Morgan appeared within a year of one another and gave yet another dimension to the evolving synthesis.⁵² Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* developed the thesis that two streams of thought—evangelical and rational—represented the divisions into which American Protestantism had been divided by the Great Awakening. He contended that these streams were “part of a process, wherein competing intellectuals [sought] to make their ideologies efficacious in the lives of Americans, and in their communities” and suggested, but did not develop, the idea that these divisions continued past the Revolution.⁵³ Were these divisions to be applied to republicanism in the 1780s, an added dimension could be given to the struggle between the Federalists and the antifederalists—both operated within a single ideology, but differed over means to maintain it within their society. James Madison—the rationalist—wanted to change the structure while John Taylor of Caroline—the evangelical—desired a rebirth of the spirit of the people within the existing structure. This schism in American thought needs to be developed in a later period, for while Heimert did indicate that the religious ideas of the Calvinists after the Great Awakening were caught up in the Jeffersonian party of the 1800s, his focus remained too narrow. Rather than dealing solely with the Jeffersonian political party Heimert might have done better to expand his analysis to deal with republican political ideology since this was clearly not the exclusive possession of any particular party or group.

Morgan suggested that American policies and thought from 1760 to

⁵² Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966); Edmund S. Morgan, “The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution,” *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XXIV (1967), 3-43.

⁵³ Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, ix.

the 1790s were affected, not to say guided, by a set of values he termed the Puritan Ethic. This ethic encouraged frugality and a suspicion of luxury, distrusted prosperity, and called for a constant renewal of virtue. Morgan's central ideas dovetailed nicely with those of Perry Miller and Alan Heimert and gave another dimension to the study of republicanism through the revelation of the affinity of ideas between Puritanism and republicanism.⁵⁴

In 1967 Bailyn made still another contribution when he applied his ideas regarding the ideological origins of the Revolution to the unique form that politics assumed in America.⁵⁵ Bailyn demonstrated how Americans translated the libertarian persuasion into a style of politics; the Commonwealthman's dominating concern lest power usurp liberty became the American's controlling concept in politics. "What in England were theoretical dangers decried by an extremely vocal but politically harmless opposition, appeared in the colonies to be real dangers that threatened an actual and not a theoretical disbalancing of the mixed constitution in favor of an executive engrossment, with all the evils that were known to follow from that destructive event."⁵⁶ On the other hand, the possibility that "democracy" might "overreach its proper boundaries and encroach upon the area of power properly entrusted to the first order of the constitution, seemed continuously to be at the edge of realization. Both fears seemed realistic; neither merely theoretical; neither merely logical." Thus did Bailyn hint that in order to protect republicanism in the future it might be necessary to restrain the democracy, not the executive.⁵⁷ Bailyn's excellent portrait of American politics in the Revolutionary period provided the nucleus for analyses of post-Revolutionary political life.

The publication of Gordon Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* constituted another landmark in the creation of a republican synthesis. Wood drew already present strains of thought into

⁵⁴ The similarities between these two persuasions are striking and a thorough analysis of them should prove rewarding. Gordon Wood considers republicanism to be "a more relaxed, secularized version" of Puritanism. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1969), 418.

⁵⁵ Bernard Bailyn, "Origins of American Politics," *Perspectives*, I (1967), 9-120. This appeared under the same title in book form one year later (New York, 1968).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* With this insight Bailyn laid the groundwork for a discussion of both Federalists and antifederalists within the same ideological framework.

a masterful synthesis of the "Whig science of politics" and added original contributions that carried American thought to 1787. Throughout the whole he drew a brilliant portrait of republicanism by emphasizing the deeply felt American belief that "they had created a new world, a republican world." For them "republicanism meant more . . . than simply the elimination of a king and the institution of an elective system. It added a moral dimension, a utopian depth, to the political separation from England—a depth that involved the very character of their society." Wood maintained that "Americans had come to believe that the Revolution would mean nothing less than a reordering of eighteenth-century society and politics as they had known and despised them—a reordering that was summed up by the conception of republicanism." He devoted his volume to considering that "reordering."⁵⁸

Wood was the first author both to clearly recognize the dynamic qualities of republicanism and effectively define and analyze these qualities. He penetrated the unique persuasion that permeated American society. Americans believed that what either made republics great or ultimately destroyed them was not force of arms, but the character and spirit of the people. Public virtue became preeminent. A people noted for their frugality, industry, temperance, and simplicity were good republican stock. Those who wallowed in luxury could only corrupt others. Easily acquired wealth had to be gained at the expense of others; it was the whole body politic that was crucial, for the public welfare was the exclusive end of good government and required constant sacrifice of individual interests to the greater needs of the whole. Thus the people, conceived of as a homogeneous body (especially when set against their rulers), became the great determinant of whether a republic lived or died. The essential prerequisite for good government was the maintenance of virtue. Those forces which might sap or corrupt virtue were un-republican and were to be purged before they destroyed the good society.

By identifying this persuasion Wood opened the way for his interpretation of the years following the Revolution. Having noted that republicanism involved the whole character of society, Wood argued that the social dimension of republicanism was precisely the point of the Revolution and that which provided the dynamic for later action.

⁵⁸ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 47-48.

Americans were anxiety-ridden over whether they were the stuff out of which republicans were made, and they continually called for moral reformation. They experienced constant concern over the need to maintain public virtue and ardently believed that republicanism must ever maintain a regenerative character.

It is within this context—the shaping and omnipresent force of republicanism—that Wood explained the formation of the American system of government and traced the intellectual twists and turns of the years leading up to the Constitution. Thus the creation of the Articles of Confederation and the battle between the Federalists and antifederalists is played out within this controlling intellectual framework. Wood explored the piecemeal manner in which Americans evolved their own peculiar theory of politics, a theory that resulted from their attempts to institutionalize their experiences and to fashion a government in accord with the way they saw man and society. “The Americans of the Revolutionary generation had constructed not simply new forms of government, but an entirely new conception of politics, a conception that took them out of an essentially classical and medieval world of political discussion into one that was recognizably modern.”⁵⁹

Wood’s book is crucial to the formation of a republican synthesis, for as he noted, the approach of many historians to the American Revolution “had too often been deeply ahistorical; there had been too little sense of the irretrievability and differentness of the eighteenth-century world.” The ahistorical character of a great many studies of the Revolution and the Constitution—and by implication of later periods as well—resulted from “a failure to appreciate the distinctiveness of the political culture in which the revolutionary generation operated.”⁶⁰ It is the great contribution of Wood’s book to provide insight into this distinctive culture so that others may begin their studies with an understanding of the intellectual milieu in which eighteenth-century Americans lived rather than assuming that words like “democracy,” “virtue,” “tyranny,” and “republicanism” have a timeless application.

With the publication of Wood’s book the main outlines of a republican synthesis became clear: Americans, drawing heavily upon English libertarian thought, created a unique attitude toward government and society

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

that literally permeated their culture. A consensus holding the concept of republicanism to stand for the new world Americans believed they had created, quickly formed. This unique persuasion outlined so skillfully by Bailyn, Wood, and others, caused anxiety for eighteenth-century Americans and bafflement for twentieth-century historians because it placed so much stress upon intangibles such as "virtue" and "character." Republicanism meant maintaining public and private virtue, internal unity, social solidarity, and it meant constantly struggling against "threats" to the "republican character" of the nation. This led to an oftentimes paranoid outlook on the part of many Americans who were constantly fearful lest irresponsible or vicious fellow citizens were at work to corrupt their society. This anxiety resulted from the firmly held belief that republics were short-lived due to their innate susceptibility to internal subversion and external attack.

Vague and supple as the concept of republicanism may be, historians who ignore it do so at great risk if their goal is an understanding of early American society. What is most important, indeed vital, to bear in mind if republicanism is to stimulate further research is the fact that Americans quickly formed a pervasive ideological attachment to the concept. It was not the creation of any single political party or faction and certainly was not restricted to the Jeffersonians or "Old Republicans"—an insight that may be applied to the pre-Revolutionary period as well since research following Bailyn has not sufficiently explored the possibility that both whigs and tories responded to the same ideological stimuli. Equally as important is the observation that republicanism represented a general consensus solely because it rested on such vague premises. Only one thing was certain: Americans believed that republicanism meant an absence of an aristocracy and a monarchy. Beyond this, agreement vanished—what form a republican government should assume and, more important, what constituted a republican society created disagreement and eventually bitter dissension.

This was a consensus that promoted discord rather than harmony, for if republicanism remains a difficult concept for historians to define today, eighteenth-century Americans found it deceptively simple. Different groups or factions in various sections of the nation defined "republicanism" as they perceived it and could only view their opponents as dangerously antirepublican. The Jeffersonian-Republicans and the Federalists, each firmly believing themselves to be the true servants of republicanism, at-

tacked one another for being a subversive force which would corrupt and destroy republican America.⁶¹ It is a mistake to interpret Thomas Jefferson as the champion of republicanism and his Federalist opponents as its great foes. To do so is to accept only Jefferson's version of the argument.

The works of Gerald Stourzh and James M. Banner are recent examples that both break new ground and revise older interpretations of the early national period.⁶² Stourzh, by examining Alexander Hamilton's actions within this fresh framework, has been able to cast new light upon the man and his policies. "Regard to reputation" became for Hamilton what "corruption through power" was to most radical whigs in England and republicans in America. In essence, Hamilton, while operating within the same ideological framework as his fellow Americans, did not behave similarly to other republicans. This is an important point to bear in mind with reference to the use of republicanism as a historical tool; the concept should not become a catchall to be superimposed upon everything and everybody. To do so would oversimplify history and place the historian in a straitjacket. To say that Americans were republicans is not to say that they all behaved alike; historians should not create "republican automats." As John Howe pointed out, "Republicanism was obviously subject to a variety of readings when individuals as diverse as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and John Taylor could each claim allegiance to it."⁶³ Stourzh's study is the first to reexamine a prominent and oft-studied figure from this fresh vantage point; hopefully, his will not be the last.

Just as Stourzh took a new approach to an old problem, so too did Banner when he reexamined the impetus leading to the Hartford Con-

⁶¹ Marshall Smelser clearly identified this passion, but attributed it to differences of political and social principles and to state and sectional rivalries. "The Jacobin Phrenzy: Federalism and the Menace of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," *Review of Politics*, XIII (1951), 457-482; Smelser, "The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion," *American Quarterly*, X (1958), 391-419; Smelser, "The Jacobin Phrenzy: The Menace of Monarchy, Plutocracy, and Anglophilia, 1789-1798," *Rev. of Pol.*, XXI (1959), 239-258. For a perceptive analysis which places this turmoil within the republican synthesis see John R. Howe, Jr., "Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s," *Amer. Qily.*, XIX (1967), 147-165.

⁶² Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford, Calif., 1970); James M. Banner, Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York, 1970).

⁶³ Howe, "Republican Thought," *Amer. Qily.*, XIX (1967), 153.

vention. By proving the Massachusetts Federalists' adherence to republicanism, Banner provided a sophisticated reinterpretation of the Hartford Convention and effectively demonstrated that republican ideology was not restricted to either the South or the Jeffersonians. Out of this commitment to republicanism emerged a political party; Banner maintained that the New England Federalists who pressed for the convention did so out of a belief that it was the only way to preserve American republicanism from corruption at the hands of the Jeffersonians.

The research of Banner and Stourzh, with that of Linda Kerber, David H. Fischer, and others, demonstrated that the Federalists have been too long stereotyped as latent monarchists whom the Jeffersonians had to dispatch for the good of American society.⁶⁴ While she does not analyze the ideology of the Federalists with the perceptivity of Banner, Kerber clearly reveals their organic view of society and the consequent fear and distrust of the Jeffersonians emanating from that conception of the social order. Fischer's book demonstrates that the "young Federalists" adapted to the changing political styles and attempted to retain their conception of government and society while operating within the confines of the new politics.

The emergence of the republican synthesis requires that a key development of the 1790s—the rise of political parties—be wholly reviewed. This phenomenon may well have emerged as a natural result of the prior existence of a widely held ideology. Banner noted that the Federalist party emerged in Massachusetts after the growth and definition of a political ideology, not before. His perceptive study of the social, economic, religious, and psychological processes working in Massachusetts to create an ideology and then a political party might well be expanded to the entire process of the formation of parties in early America. This takes on added significance upon noting the distinctions between parties as they developed in America and their English counterparts as described by Lewis Namier, Richard Pares, and others.⁶⁵ The English conception of government—that

⁶⁴ Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1970); David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution and American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1965).

⁶⁵ Sir Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2 vols. (London, 1929); Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 3 vols. (London, 1964); Richard Pares, *King George III and the Poli-*

the general government existed not to legislate but simply to govern—caused political parties to vie for office and little else. In America the government of necessity played a far more dynamic role and thus the competing parties believed it necessary to gain power in order to shape society; government actually legislated in the United States.⁶⁶

Within this context Joseph Charles's observation that "the fundamental issue of the 1790's was no other than what form of government and what type of society were to be produced in this country" reveals perceptive insight.⁶⁷ Charles's "fundamental issue" should become the measure by which early American leaders are analyzed rather than as Federalists or Jeffersonians. To lump all Jeffersonian or Federalist leaders together in their respective party obscures the subtle—and at times gross—nuances of difference existent within those political camps.⁶⁸ Viewed from this perspective Madison might well be seen as in many ways ideologically closer—especially with respect to the role of government in society—to Hamilton than to Jefferson and Jefferson's affinity to John Taylor of Caroline would also become clearer.⁶⁹

Just as the republican synthesis can contribute to an understanding of the emergence of political institutions, so too might it help to reveal the social dynamics of early American society; the search for the foundations of American democracy may gain much from this viewpoint. Within this perspective the progressive and neo-whig schools of thought no longer

ticsians (Oxford, 1953); Betty Kemp, *King and Commons, 1660-1832* (London, 1957); John B. Owen, *The Rise of the Pelhams* (London, 1957).

⁶⁶ Bailyn presents a stimulating analysis of this point in *Origins of American Politics*, esp. 101-105.

⁶⁷ *The Origins of the American Party System: Three Essays* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1956), 6. Elements of thought which made up American reactions to historical process may have been even more subtle than indicated by Charles. For provocative essays on this subject see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 1964); and David Bertelson, *The Lazy South* (New York, 1967).

⁶⁸ While aiding in bringing James Madison to his rightful place in American intellectual development, Adrienne Koch blurs distinctions far more subtle and sophisticated than simply the differences between the "practical" Madison and the "idealistic" Jefferson. *Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration* (New York, 1950).

⁶⁹ While a good number of Federalists and Jeffersonians could profitably be re-examined in light of this new perspective, Gordon Wood's brief but incisive hint that John Taylor of Caroline had an extremely perceptive understanding of American society requires amplification. *Creation of the American Republic*, 587-592.

need to polarize historical research. J. R. Pole's perceptive studies—especially with regard to the breakdown of a deferential society in America—have drawn the essence from each of these approaches and presented a cogent analysis of early American culture that blends nicely with Bailyn and Wood: American society, operating within the ideology of republicanism, underwent constant transformations as it moved from a deferential society toward a democratic one.⁷⁰

Closely related is the ability to observe the social psychology of polarization within American society. It is fascinating to observe the thought of Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts and John Taylor of Virginia since, while both men operated within the controlling confines of the single ideology republicanism, each came to view the other and his followers as a dangerous enemy. The parallels in their thought are striking. Each perceived his own style of life as beneficial to America, believed that it should be emulated by others, and therefore considered the other subversive of the good society. Each man even contemplated the secession of his section in order to preserve republicanism as he defined it. This is a provocative phenomenon that should yield fruitful results to the historian who investigates it.

Recent work by a number of social historians raises an intriguing problem related to the social dynamics and polarization of American society. Their research indicates that American society was becoming more stratified at the very point in time when republican ideology was becoming more popular and egalitarian. Kenneth A. Lockridge maintains that by the time of the Revolution much of New England was "becoming more and more an old world society: old world in the sense of the size of farms, old world in the sense of an increasingly wide and articulated social hierarchy, old world in that 'the poor' were ever present and in increasing numbers."⁷¹ He concludes that this sense of becoming like the

⁷⁰ Pole's approach is most succinctly presented in "Historians and the Problem of Early American Democracy," *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, LXVII (1961-1962), 626-646. The concept of deference is central to both Bailyn's and Wood's discussions of early American society.

⁷¹ Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society 1630-1790," *Past and Present*, No. 39 (Apr. 1968), 62-80. The quotation is from p. 80. Lockridge expands his ideas in *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736* (New York, 1970). Similar views may be found in Charles S. Grant, *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent* (New York, 1961); and in James A. Henretta, "Economic De-

old world was one of the strains that led to an acceptance of the rhetoric of the Revolution, but believes that the egalitarianism of the Revolution and the later migration out of New England eased the "overcrowded" condition of the area, thus allowing it to escape class tension and conflict.

Stephan Thernstrom's research indicates that the stratification process identified in the pre-Revolutionary period by Lockridge continued on unabated, indeed with increased intensity, through the nineteenth century. His study of Newburyport reveals a working-class people "unable to escape a grinding regimen of manual labor: this was the sum of the social mobility achieved by Newburyport's unskilled laborer by 1880."⁷² Yet, these people seemed to accept the "mobility ideology" and, by inference, the prevailing republicanism. These studies reveal a great need to analyze the social-intellectual processes at work within a society that is undergoing stratification while at the same time accepting an increasingly egalitarian ideology.⁷³

There is pressing need to carry the synthesis forward past 1800. A number of studies employ the concept of republicanism in some manner or other: Roger H. Brown's *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (New York, 1964), Robert Remini's *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York, 1959), and Marvin Meyers's *Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford, Calif., 1957) among others presently appear as scattered and isolated bits of a theme that need to be brought together.

velopment and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *Wm. and Mary Qly.*, 3d Ser., XXII (1965), 75-92.

⁷² *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 163. Thernstrom expands his views in "Urbanization, Migration, and Social Mobility in Late Nineteenth-Century America," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York, 1968), 158-175. His view of increasing stratification is supported by Douglas T. Miller, *Jacksonian Aristocracy: Class and Democracy in New York, 1830-1860* (New York, 1967); and Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968). While not touching upon stratification or ideology, Daniel H. Calhoun does present a provocative study of social change in this same period in his *Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspiration, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

⁷³ Though not addressing himself specifically to this matter, Michael B. Katz presents a fascinating study of the upper class in control of education in Massachusetts, the ideology they attempted to implement through the schools, and the lower-class response. This approach needs to be applied to the relationship between stratification and republicanism. *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

Just as the ideas of Bailyn, Wood, and others provided a frame of reference for the Revolutionary and early national periods, so too can republicanism become a unifying theme in this later period.⁷⁴ The ideology would very likely not perform the same functions as it had earlier; rather than being the dynamic shaping force of the Revolutionary years, republicanism may well have assumed a static, doctrinaire quality to which people clung mindlessly in times of social malaise. It may have provided stale answers for fresh questions and thus have assumed a stagnant—indeed stultifying—character. Nonetheless, its role needs to be examined since it can offer a synthetic framework for scattered studies and provide the opportunity to approach the dynamics of an ideology in stable as well as fluid times and thus the transformations it undergoes over time.

If this new understanding of republicanism is to prove valuable a word of caution must be heeded. Jackson Turner Main has warned scholars that intellectual history of the sort represented by a study of republicanism may become a dead end.⁷⁵ If an explication of republicanism is the sole end of a scholar, such could prove to be the case, but if one recognizes republicanism as ideology, then new doors of scholarship are opened. Research needs to be directed toward a definition of ideology, its functions, its origins, and its special language.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ In a narrative of the activities of the "Quids" Norman Risjord attempts to trace the descent of republican ideas of the 1790s to the Calhounites in the 1830s. *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatives in the Age of Jefferson* (New York, 1965). His book is seriously flawed, however, because he misunderstands republicanism. While extremely vague, Risjord appears to consider republicanism to be the product of the Jeffersonian party and to be epitomized by the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. To consider the Quids to be the "missing link" between republican ideas of the 1790s and Calhoun not only seriously constricts republicanism, but fails to take into account the fact that Calhoun's ideas were anathema to republicans (even the southern ones Risjord studies) in the 1820s and 1830s. Richard H. Brown presents a more perceptive analysis of republican thought and politics in the Jacksonian era in "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery and the Politics of Jacksonianism," *So. Atlantic Q. J.*, LXV (1966), 55-72.

⁷⁵ Jackson Turner Main's review of Wood, *Creation of the American Republic, Wm. and Mary Q. J.*, 3d Ser., XXVI (1969), 604-607.

⁷⁶ The concept of ideology is itself the subject of much disagreement among social scientists. As employed in this essay ideology denotes the "unconscious tendency underlying religious and scientific as well as political thought: the tendency at a given time to make facts amenable to ideas, and ideas to facts, in order to create a world image convincing enough to support the collective and the individual sense of identity." Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis*

Some recent students of ideology contend that strain rather than interest serves as the impetus to the creation of an ideological system; that is, ideologies should be viewed as symptoms of strains present in a culture rather than as reflections of the interests of particular groups or factions.⁷⁷ Thus the identification of a particular ideology should be taken as a symptom of social dislocation in the society within which it is found. Further, ideology needs to be viewed as "symbolic action" rather than as an actual reflection of reality.⁷⁸ Indeed, a prominent sociologist believes that it is the absence of an understanding of symbolic action that has "reduced sociologists to viewing ideologies as elaborate cries of pain." They have failed to construe the import of ideological assertions by simply failing to recognize it as a problem. He feels that sociologists have viewed the simplified language of ideologies as just that. "Either it deceives the uninformed (interest theory) or it excites the unreflective (strain theory). That it might draw its power from its capacity to grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered

and History (New York, 1958), 22. For analyses of varying definitions and usages of the term see Ben Halpern, "Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage," *History and Theory*, I (1961), 129-149; Karl Lowenstein, "The Role of Ideologies in Political Change," *International Social Science Bulletin*, V (1953), 51-74; David W. Minar, "Ideology and Political Behavior," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, V (1961), 317-331; and Jay W. Stein, "Beginnings of 'Ideology,'" *So. Atlantic Q. J.*, LV (1956), 163-170. For an understanding of the emergence of the idea of ideology see George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology, and Other Essays* (New York, 1967). Norman Birnbaum includes a 46-page, double-columned bibliography of works dealing with ideology in his "The Sociological Study of Ideology (1940-60): A Trend Report and Bibliography," *Current Sociology*, IX (1960), 91-172.

⁷⁷ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill., 1951); Winston White, *Beyond Conformity* (Glencoe, Ill., 1961); Francis X. Sutton *et al.*, *The American Business Creed* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (Glencoe, Ill., 1964), 47-76.

⁷⁸ The symbolic action concept, which has been skillfully employed by social scientists in various ways, originated with Kenneth Burke and is most clearly discussed in his *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge, La., 1941). Making sophisticated use of Burke's insight, Gene Wise notes that "language to Burke is action. Further, it is 'symbolic' action in that it expresses men's efforts to communicate with their environment and to create symbols to order that communication. Language, in whatever form and of whatever quality, is interpreted by Burke as a series of humanly-created 'strategies' for responding to selectively-perceived 'situations.'" "Political 'Reality' in Recent American Scholarship: Progressives versus Symbolists," *Amer. Q. J.*, XIX (1967), 306. It is within this context that republicanism should be viewed as symbolic action.

language of science, that it may mediate more complex meanings than its literal reading suggests, is not even considered." Simple language may not be a label but a trope. More precisely, it "appears to be a metaphor, or at least an attempted metaphor."⁷⁹

Historians need to take up these insights and apply them to the study of republicanism, for in this manner they may be able to more fully understand the strains American society underwent in its infancy. Further, rather than viewing cries about "corruption," "tyranny," "virtue," "regeneration," and "republicanism" as simple language used as weapons by competing interests—and thus dismissing what a man said while paying attention to his actions or his socio-economic status—scholars might do well to view these terms as the symbolic action of early Americans. These people encountered reality strategically and refracted reality rather than reflected it.⁸⁰

Banner, with reference to the Federalists' use of such terms as "tyrant," "Jacobin," and others, maintains that "to dismiss these impassioned charges of corruption, despotism, and conspiracy as so much partisan hyperbole would be seriously to misinterpret the central thrust of the Massachusetts Federalist ideology. If Jeffersonian policy was neither tyrannical nor cabalistic, neither was it in the best interests of New England as the Federalists of Massachusetts—farmers, merchants, lawyers, clerics, and artisans—defined them."⁸¹ Banner's insight—which should similarly be applied to Jeffersonian rhetoric—indicates that republican language may well hold a key to understanding American society in this period.

Viewed in these terms an understanding of republicanism becomes a tool that aids the historian in his attempt to gain access into the social, economic, political, and religious life of a period. Hopefully, an understanding of republicanism might open the door to provocative new insights about American society.

⁷⁹ Geertz, "Ideology as Cultural System," in Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent*, 57-58.

⁸⁰ Wise offers a stimulating discussion of "refraction" and "reflection" which indicates that his "symbolist" approach should prove fruitful to those interested in republican ideology. From this point of view "the individual does not so much reflect the world, as he refracts his selectively-perceived environment." In this approach "the external world is the raw material which the human being uses to shape (not fully according to his own purposes, but not quite according to its either) into that which can be understood, communicated with, manipulated." "Political 'Reality,'" *Amer. Qily.*, XIX (1967), 323.

⁸¹ Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 45.