

interpretation

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interpretation

Volume 11 number 2

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The Pursuit of Happiness in Jefferson and its Background in Bacon and Hobbes

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John Dewey Fellow, 1983–84

When Thomas Jefferson maintained that government is instituted among men to secure their inalienable rights, including “preservation of life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness,”¹ he was stating what he felt to be a conviction widespread among his compatriots, but also making—particularly with respect to the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness—a complex and subtle claim with far-reaching implications for constitutional theory. The series is an ascending order: self-preservation is a prerequisite of liberty, and liberty, for Jefferson, provides the basis for all sorts of individual and joint endeavors. Following Hume and Montesquieu, Locke and ultimately Hobbes, he tends to construe political liberty as individual security, as safeguarding pursuits that are not themselves political, nor necessarily public. If he thus conceives of liberty in so-called negative terms, not as an end in itself but as making possible other ends, Jefferson also conceives of the ‘ultimate goal’ as open-ended, a pursuit which generates new purposes as it progresses.

Jefferson is not asserting that legitimate government has an obligation to provide for the happiness of its citizens. On the contrary, with regard to the constitution of the state the emphasis is as much on ‘pursuit’ as on ‘happiness’. Not only is it not the place of the state to determine what might constitute happiness or what should be the particular goals for its citizens; the quality of endeavor itself represents a value both for the individual and for the state. In securing the pursuit of happiness, the state is meant to protect and encourage a spirit of enterprise in its people, a sense of venturesome self-reliance which is essential to happiness. It may seem one-sided to make support of the individual’s spontaneous striving for self-fulfilment the crux of the legitimacy of the state, until it is recognized that the individual’s urge to enjoy and develop this natural liberty is in turn crucial to the good of the whole, to maintaining a just government and constitution.

The task of the present essay is to elucidate the relation of these ideas in Jefferson’s writings against the background of analogous constellations of ideas in Bacon and Hobbes, who were the first to recognize and promote a new psychology of endeavor associated with the emergence of experimental science in the seventeenth century. Hobbes’s own continuity with Bacon has been underestimated and neglected in the secondary literature, as has the extent

1. From his “original Rough draught” of the *Declaration of Independence*, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton, 1950ff.), I: 423.

of his affinities with leading writers of the later Enlightenment.² To discern continuities and affinities is not the same as tracing sources or influences. No attempt will be made here to contribute directly to the debate on the immediate antecedents of the ideas and expressions of the *Declaration of Independence*, but it can be shown, for example, that the understanding of endeavor in Bacon and Hobbes is more relevant to Jefferson's conception of the pursuit of happiness and its political ramifications than the ideas elaborated by Locke under the heading 'pursuit of happiness.' The latter in fact reflect a distinctly different and even opposite psychology. Intellectual history which proceeds in terms of continuities and affinities need not be less rigorous or less illuminating than that which insists on the attribution of actual influence. Its cogency will depend on the depth of understanding which it reveals in interpreting configurations of ideas, whether in an individual writer or a particular period, and on the capacity to ground its correlations between different writers or disparate ages in this deeper level of coherence.

I. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

At the beginning, we must see how the pursuit of happiness is related, in Jefferson's thinking, to political order and liberty and to the progress that is bound up with social enlightenment. In 1786 he wrote to George Wythe that "no other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness" than "the diffusion of knowledge among the people."³ The underlying idea is that only the people are a reliable judge of what is in their interest, and then only when they are well informed. The connection becomes more complex when enlightenment is taken to mean not only the spread but the advance of knowledge, and corresponding change of interests and purposes. In 1816 Jefferson wrote,

laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.⁴

It is significant that this was said not to vindicate the Revolution, the constitution of a new republic, but to caution the present generation as well

2. I have followed up several strands linking Bacon to Hobbes, and Hobbes to various figures of the Enlightenment, in essays cited in notes 11, 18, 28, 35, 37, 40 and 50-52.

3. August 13, 1786, *Papers X*: 244f. Cf. to James Madison, December 20, 1787.

4. To Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C., 1903ff.), XV, 41. Next paragraph: XV, 40. (Where the appropriate volume of *Papers* has not yet been published, I will cite *Writings*.) Jefferson's letter to John Adams, June 15, 1813, *Writings XIII*: 254f., makes the same point in broader terms.

as posterity against venerating the Revolution in the wrong way. "Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence." Jefferson remarks.

They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well; I belonged to it. . . . It was very like the present, but without the experience of the present; and forty years of experience in government is worth a century of book-reading.

Forty years earlier he had written that "it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish" a form of government that has become destructive of their inalienable rights "and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles . . . as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." Reformulating this in 1816, Jefferson adapts the motive of revolution to support a provision for constitutional revision and renewal on a regular and perpetual basis. "Each generation is as independent of the one preceding, as that was of all which had gone before. It has then, like them, a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness."

The Revolution sets a precedent for the government that follows from it. For Jefferson, at least, the founding of the Republic does not call for perpetuation in its original form, like an architectural foundation that can be built upon but not altered, but rather calls for emulation, that is, for repeated renewal which reaches deeper than mere adaptation of the heritage, to measure the form of the present polity against the prevailing (common) sense of the goals it was instituted to promote. We will come back to consider the implications of this conception of a republic as a perpetual founding (not 'permanent revolution'), its introduction of a new understanding of time into the sphere of political constitution.

For Jefferson it was precisely a safeguard, as well as a virtue, of the new republican form of government that it was responsive to public happiness. Writing from Paris in his 1786 letter to George Wythe, Jefferson saw kings, nobles and priests as "an abandoned confederacy against the happiness of the mass of people," and conversely the pursuit of happiness of an informed people as security against the rise of priests, nobles or kings in a republic or representative democracy. This is Jefferson's point when he tells Wythe, "Preach . . . a crusade against ignorance, establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our Countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against these evils."

In the preceding year he had written to Richard Price that "the people were becoming universally sensible" of "the want of power in the federal head" as "the flaw in our constitution which might endanger its destruction," and that accordingly "a spirit to enlarge the powers of Congress was becoming general." In this response he recognizes an essential trait of republicanism,

The happiness of governments like ours, wherein the people are truly the mainspring, is that they are never to be despaired of. When an evil becomes so glaring as to

strike them generally, they arouse themselves, and it is redressed. He only is then the popular man and can get into office who shows the best disposition to reform the evil. This truth was obvious on several occasions during the late war, and this character in our governments saved us. Calamity was our best physician.⁵

The letters we have drawn on so far present a variety of contexts, yet a coherent outline of the relations between public happiness, as the people's own concern, and the progressivity and stability of republican government has begun to emerge. The capacity to recognize and respond to negative situations, with popular welfare and approval as criterion and touchstone, and to change accordingly, is what "promises permanence" for a republic. The idea that each generation is or should be its own focus, that the earth (to use Jefferson's expression) "belongs to the living," is precisely, and not at all paradoxically, the basis of the continuity and enduring strength of the polity.

A new conception of history is introduced into political thought with the idea that each generation should consider itself independent of the preceding and "all which had gone before." One critic has seen this functional self-centeredness as necessarily leading to a lack of concern for the needs and 'rights' of posterity, but I think, on the contrary, that it brings with it both a concern for 'our' posterity (however broadly we construe 'our') and the concern not to 'entail' opinions and institutions and constraining situations, such as the national debt, on future generations.⁶

Jefferson in fact offers a rationale for concern with the rights of posterity, the obligation not to foreclose their possibilities, which is based not in a responsibility entailed in the heritage, but precisely in the idea that the fruits of the earth belong to the living. It is in a letter to Madison from Paris, September 6, 1789, that he takes up "the question, whether one generation of men has a right to bind another." Again the context of French politics, now very different, is an important influence; the preceding month had seen

5. February 1, 1785, *Papers* VII: 631.

6. In *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1978), Garry Wills goes overboard in his eagerness to debunk the "pulse-quickening purposes" for which "modern liberals" quote 'the earth belongs to the living.'

By making each generation live only for itself, Jefferson would not only inhibit the entailing of one's posterity, but the enhancing of its life. He would teach men not only to live quit of any claim from the dead, but quit of the unborns' claims as well—since only the living should enjoy earth's usufructs. (p. 127)

Wills even suggests it would be consonant with Jefferson's idea if one generation were to "acquire the means for its own enjoyment by alienating the land itself—sell it off and leave none of it to native posterity, or use up the land by short-sighted management, returning quick profits." Jefferson, on the contrary, counted on the interest in posterity as part of the self-interest of the living, as when he writes to the Marquis de Lafayette, April 11, 1787, criticizing the short leases on land in France, in contrast to England where long leases, linking the generations, "render the farms there almost hereditary. [and] make it worth the farmer's while to manure the lands highly." *Papers* XI: 284.

the decrees abolishing 'feudal' privileges. The immediate implication of his principle seems to be the very opposite of what Garry Wills inferred. "I set out on this ground, which I suppose to be self-evident, that the *earth belongs in usufruct to the living*; that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it. The portion occupied by any individual ceases to be his when himself ceases to be, and reverts to the society." Jefferson argues that a man inherits property

not by natural right, but by a law of the society of which he is a member, and to which he is subject. Then, no man can, by *natural right*, oblige the lands he occupied or the persons who succeed him in that occupation, to the payment of debts contracted by him. For if he could, he might during his own life, eat up the usufruct of the lands for several generations to come; and then the lands would belong to the dead, and not the living.⁷

The principle that the earth belongs to the living—and the qualification 'in usufruct' only brings out what is implied in the emphasis on 'the living'—is connected with Jefferson's view that property is not a natural right but one which is established by and subject to the civil power. This view of property is in turn closely linked to the conception of the pursuit of happiness as a natural right. In 1785 Jefferson had written,

Whenever there is in any country, uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labour & live on. If for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labour the earth returns to the unemployed.⁸

Whether or not Jefferson's original reference to the pursuit of happiness in 1776 was influenced by the idea of effecting a correction of the conventional (Lockean) triad 'life, liberty and property,' it seems highly probable that by 1789 Jefferson saw the pursuit of happiness as an inalienable right which is incompatible with a natural right to property or inheritance, and that this conflict was addressed in his principle 'the earth belongs to the living.' When Jefferson pencilled in suggested emendations of Lafayette's draft for a 'Declaration of the rights of man and citizen,' early in 1789, he bracketed two of the phrases put forward under the 'essential rights of man': "le soin

7. *Papers* XV: 392–93. Wills does not recognize the connection between the idea that the earth belongs to the living and the idea that property is not a natural but a civil right. In a different context, p. 231, he refers to the latter idea as setting Jefferson apart from Locke and linking him with Hutcheson, a correlation that has been challenged, in this regard and in general, in a trenchant critique of *Inventing America* by Ronald Hamowy, "Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment," *William and Mary Quarterly* '36, no. 4 (October 1979): 503–23. If neither Locke nor Hutcheson saw property rights as civil in origin, Hobbes did.

8. To the Reverend James Madison, (the statesman's cousin and President of the College of William and Mary.) October 28, 1785, *Papers* VIII: 682.

de son honneur” and “le droit de propriété” and apparently suggested that the latter be replaced by “la recherche du bonheur.”⁹

The stability and continuity of the republic are thus seen to depend on each generation and each individual being ‘self-centered’ in and through the pursuit of happiness. This configuration of ideas in Jefferson’s writings in effect introduced a new conception of historical time into political thought, as will be argued below, but it is a conception (based on analogous configurations) that had already proved its worth in other spheres of culture in the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. This characteristic interrelation of pursuit, progress and posterity as dimensions of historical time can be delineated most clearly in the work of Francis Bacon.

Jefferson regarded Bacon as one “of the three greatest men the world has ever produced,” yet little has been written on what he might owe to Bacon.¹⁰ Beyond any strictly identifiable debt in scientific matters or methodology, I believe Jefferson may have derived from his reading of Bacon a basic theme of his political thought. Such a connection, lacking explicit testimony, is incapable of proof, but what is important is the breadth and depth of the analogy, that is, its systematic character and psychological grounding.

9. *The Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson*, ed. Gilbert Chinard (Baltimore, 1929), pp. 80–82; Chinard, *Thomas Jefferson, The Apostle of Americanism* (Ann Arbor, 1957), pp. 232–34, and Adrienne Koch, *Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration* (New York, 1964), pp. 80–81. Chinard claims that Jefferson was also responsible for the insertion of an additional reason, beyond abuses that might arise and the need to keep abreast of the “progrès des lumières,” for revising human institutions: “le droit des générations qui se succèdent,” the right of succeeding generations.

In her discussion of ‘the earth belongs to the living,’ pp. 62–96, Koch resists the tendency to oppose ‘the pursuit of happiness’ to a natural right of property, citing the letter to Madison quoted in note 8. This issue is also addressed in chapter 3 of William B. Scott, *In Pursuit of Happiness: American Conceptions of Property from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington, 1977). Scott writes, p. 42, “it is tempting to conclude, but impossible to prove, that in 1776 Jefferson sensed the disparity between certain contemporary forms of private property and Locke’s idealized ‘natural property’ and that in an effort to restore the old moral content to the concept of individual property, Jefferson substituted in its stead the more suggestive phrase ‘pursuit of Happiness.’” This is fair enough as far as it goes, but Locke’s idealization was linked from the beginning with an interest in safeguarding established property relations. The Jeffersonian natural right to a *pursuit* of happiness would keep sovereign power at a distance in a very different direction. Hamowy, (see preceding note 7) p. 519 and n. 62, made this point at just the time the present paper was first delivered, in slightly different form but with this same emphasis, at the plenary session of a conference on ‘The Pan-Atlantic Enlightenment’ sponsored by the East-Central region of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, November 8–10, 1979, at Williamsburg, Virginia.

10. To Benjamin Rush, January 16, 1811, *Writings* XIII: 4. Cf. to Walter Jones, January 2, 1814, *Writings* XIV: 48. Douglass Adair explores one aspect of the deeper resonance of Bacon’s ideas and attitudes in Jefferson, in his essay, “Fame and the Founding Fathers,” reprinted in *Fame and the Founding Fathers* (New York, 1974), pp. 3–26, esp. 16–20. The only substantive reference to Baconian method that I have been able to find is in “Report on the Methods for Obtaining Fresh Water from Salt,” *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. Saul K. Padover (New York, 1943), p. 970.

Bacon conceived of science as a disciplining of the mind through deliberate experience. He was thus opposed both to a naive passive mode of experience and to reliance on teachers, tradition and particularly classical philosophy. According to Bacon, Plato and Aristotle presented (their) science as a closed and completed whole, exploiting and reinforcing the predisposition of the mind, which is evident in common induction or experience in its passive mode, to ignore 'negative instances,' that is, experiences that do not fit its expectations, and thereby to preserve the vain pretense to a knowledge without gaps or loose ends.

Science, to Bacon, therefore involves overcoming a conservatism (and pride) native to man's mind. The natural concern for continuity and closure of experience must be countered and mediated by curiosity, innovation and attention to the faults and limits of current knowledge. (It is in an analogous sense that accident or even calamity can be a teacher.) Experience as initiative and enterprise is the foundation of science, for Bacon, because it throws into relief the active contact with reality that is 'first hand'—one's own experience. Only this pervasive, if implicit, recourse to 'personal' experience and the individual responsibility for knowledge assures a real continuity in science, that is, an advancement which is at the same time a form of tradition or handing on.

Bacon criticized the presentation of (supposed) science in finished form because this seemed to him calculated to induce awe, belief and reassurance, rather than to stimulate "expectant inquiry." He attacked the misdirected veneration of the achievements of the ancients and the related assumption that these could not be surpassed or improved, because such attitudes "tend wholly to the unfair circumscription of human power, and to a deliberate and factitious despair, which not only disturbs the auguries of hope, but also cuts the sinews and spur of industry, and throws away the chances of experience itself."¹¹

One of the general signs which Bacon took as justifying hope is the *progressivity* of science, which he saw prefigured in the cumulative advance of the mechanical arts. He contrasted this with the continual vicissitudes in the history of that sort of philosophy which, instead of fruits and works, seeks conviction and produces contention.

All the tradition and succession of schools is still a succession of masters and scholars [disciples], not of inventors and those who bring to further perfection the things invented. In the mechanical arts we do not find it so: they, on the contrary, as having in them some breath of life, are continually growing and becoming more perfect.¹²

11. *Novum Organum*, Book I, Aphorism 88, as translated in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. Spedding, Ellis, and Heath (London, 1857ff.), IV: 86. For fuller treatment of the themes of this and the following paragraphs, see my essays, "Active Experience vs. Wish-Fulfillment in Francis Bacon's Moral Psychology of Science," *The Philosophical Forum* 9 (1979): 78-99, and "Bacon and Hobbes: The Conception of Experience in the Scientific Revolution," *Science/Technology & the Humanities* 2 (1979): 92-110, which are extended in the articles cited below, note 28.

12. From the Preface to *Instauratio Magna*, as translated in *Works* IV: 14.

This progressivity, like utility itself, is an indication for Bacon that the knowledge involved is rooted in reality. "Knowledge which is founded in nature has, like living waters, perpetual uprushings and outflowings, while knowledge based on opinion can, of course, vary but never increase."¹³ A tradition based on authority never rises higher than its original founder.

The self-corrective and cumulative character of trades and crafts is grounded in the continual recourse of these arts to practice as 'proof' in the sense of testing. The relation of one thinker or generation and the next is mediated by a primary involvement in practice, the individual engagement with particular problems. In this sense Bacon distinguished two types of continuity "touching the tradition [or handing on] of knowledge, the one Critical, the other Pedantical. For all knowledge is either delivered by teachers, or attained by men's proper endeavours."¹⁴

A critical tradition, of which the mechanical arts and Baconian science are examples, and Jeffersonian republicanism perhaps another, depends for its continuity on the repeated initiative of individuals who bring their heritage to the test of their own experience. It stands in marked contrast to the passive sort of tradition in which, as Bacon said, followers make a 'leader of opinion' great, like ciphers coming after an integer, in that "they have never given a valid assent to the general opinion, for this results from an act of independent judgment."¹⁵

This broad analogy of Baconian and Jeffersonian ideas, which may or may not be a reflection of direct influence, will help to underline a crucial point about the role of the 'pursuit of happiness' in Jefferson's idea of a republic. It is not that government should be directly concerned with the happiness of the people (a characteristic assumption of 'benevolent' absolutism), but rather that it should be responsive to, and indeed rely on, their concern, their pursuit. The determination of what that happiness is to include is precisely part of the people's own concern, and in Jefferson's words from the Declaration there is an emphasis not so much on " . . . to effect their safety and happiness," as on the preceding phrase, "as to them shall seem most likely to . . ."

The constitutive reference of the American polity to the pursuit of happiness of each present generation, which can of course include their care for the welfare of their posterity, represents a fundamental acknowledgement of the possible positive value of the qualitative changes and emergent realities which time brings. The American conception of a republic marks a radical break with classical republicanism in a number of respects, one of the most dramatic

13. From *Redargutio philosophiarum*, not translated in *Works*, but as "The Refutation of Philosophies" in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, ed. Benjamin Farrington (Chicago, 1966), p. 127.

14. From *The Advancement of Learning*, *Works* III: 413.

15. From *Cogitata et Visa*, as translated in *Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, p. 95.

being the reversal of the attitude toward time as the medium of change and chance.

J. G. A. Pocock has argued that for classical republicanism time meant only instability and decay. "In the Polybian 'mixed government' we recognize the universality of the Aristotelian polis," he claims. "We recognize also that the aim of politics is to escape from time; that time is the dimension of imperfection and that change must necessarily be degenerative." This entails a strict opposition between 'virtue'—in the classical republican and stoic sense—and 'commerce'.

The doctrine that the integrity of the polity must be founded on the integrity of the personality, and that the latter could be maintained only through devotion to universal, not particular goods, had committed both ethical and political theory to a static ideal. The concept of the citizen or patriot was antithetical to that of economic man, multiplying his satisfactions and transforming his culture in a temporal process: it encouraged the idea . . . that only a Spartan rigidity of institutions could enable men to master the politics of time.¹⁶

Instead of recognizing the fundamental break which American independence meant as a revolution of the republican ideal, Pocock insists on an historical continuity of the classical 'paradigm' through Machiavelli, Harrington, Bolingbroke and 'the Country party' to the American revolutionaries, particularly what he calls "Jeffersonian mythology."¹⁷ This last link is based in the alleged opposition of agricultural and commercial ways of life, and overlooks the intimate interdependence of the two, which Jefferson not only perceived but sought to further.

I have criticized Pocock's construction of the supposed historical continuity of republicanism, the illusion of a persistence of the paradigm of republican virtue, at length elsewhere.¹⁸ The classical model sketched by Pocock is of interest here in that its incompatibility with the 'pursuit of happiness' suggests how fundamentally ideas of the state must have been affected by the new significance and dignity assumed by individual interest and initiative, both in the 'private' socioeconomic sphere and in political participation. The Revolution in America presupposed and sought to reinforce the consonance of private pursuits and public good, as exemplified by Jefferson's consistent championing of the rights of commerce. His appreciation of the rewards of commerce as a

16. "Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought," in J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (New York, 1971), pp. 88, 90.

17. For "Jeffersonian mythology" see Pocock, pp. 97f. Such misconceptions are cleared up, and the relations between agriculture and commerce approached on a sound basis, in Joyce Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," *Journal of American History* 68, no. 4 (March 1982), and "What is still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?" *William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (April 1982).

18. "American Independence: Revolution of the Republican Ideal," in *The American Revolution and Eighteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York, 1983).

way of life must be seen as contributing to his conception of the pursuit of happiness.

If the American Revolution, as I believe, introduced a new conception of the polity into history, it was in part because, like Baconian science, it broke through a traditional orientation of experience to the past. A new sense of the reality of possibility gave experience an active relation to an essentially open future. Bacon had written, "Men's anticipations of the new are fashioned on the model of the old. The old governs their imagination. Yet this is a completely fallacious pattern of thought."¹⁹ We can illustrate the relation between the 'new science' of the seventeenth century and this new sense of possibility, that is, the reorientation of experience to the future, by pursuing a further elaboration of Bacon's thought in Hobbes.

Hobbes distinguishes two principal modes of experience or thinking. Prudence, the mode of practical thought appropriate to the classical conception of the political sphere, which is taken by Hobbes as the model of passive experience, depends on inferring from given appearances or effects to their possible, that is, conjectured, causes. Based on the recall of previous associations of events, such experience is essentially past-oriented in its approach to the future. "The other [mode of thinking] is, when imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when we have it."²⁰

Hobbes's immediate point is that inference from a cause that is in our power to a possible, that is, realizable, effect is necessary knowledge, or science, in a way that inference from effect to possible cause cannot be. But Hobbes's underlying insight links the capacity for science not so much with the urge to practical control (which is as true of prudence, shared by animals), but rather with man's distinguishing trait of curiosity. All thinking or regulated "discourse of the mind" for Hobbes "is nothing but Seeking, or the faculty of Invention." In the reorientation of experience from passive to active that is connected with the Scientific Revolution, this seeking is directed to an open future that is no longer *supposed to conform*—expected and instinctively 'required' to conform—to the terms of the past.

Such an openness to possibility, to what can be achieved by imagination and endeavor, allows Jefferson to say to Price, with regard to government "wherein the people are truly the mainspring," "our motto is truly '*nil desperandum*'"²¹ As he wrote in a letter two years later, "It is part of the American character to consider nothing as desperate; to surmount every difficulty by resolution and contrivance. . . . Remote from all other aid, we are obliged to invent and to execute; to find means within ourselves."²²

19. *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, p. 96.

20. *Leviathan*, ch. 3. ed. Macpherson (Baltimore, 1968), p. 96. Spelling modernized.

21. February 1, 1785, *Papers* VII: 631.

22. To Martha Jefferson, March 28, 1787, *Papers* XI: 251.

The 'progressive' nature of republican government in the new sense thus corresponded to a striving, resourceful character in the American people. Hope and curiosity, imagination and initiative, resourcefulness and resolution: these are universal human characteristics. But within a particular historical psychological constellation they can take on a new quality and role. Human nature is, to a considerable degree, historical in its constitution and influenced by ideas, including ideas about human nature. We have examined the role of the 'pursuit of happiness' in Jefferson's political thinking and traced its homology with the desire for real knowledge in Bacon's conception of science and its advancement.

The integration of the pursuit of happiness into the psychological as well as legal foundation of the modern state goes back, not to Bacon, however, but to Hobbes. It was Hobbes who first conceived of the state as guaranteeing the pursuit of happiness as a 'natural' or 'inalienable right,' and who first saw the state as relying for its stability and legitimacy on a spirit in its citizens which was rooted in the pursuit of happiness. To appreciate fully Hobbes's undeniable but indirect and scarcely acknowledged contribution to the American, and particularly the Jeffersonian, conception of republican government, we must follow both the legal and the psychological strands of foundation: the constitutional status of the pursuit of happiness as a right, and the trait of mind that gives reality to the pursuit and makes possible its role in maintaining a stable polity.

To understand the connection between the two strands, we must begin with Hobbes's conception of human nature, which, like Bacon's, was both an analysis and, in the aspect of interest here, an ideal projection. As in his critique of past-oriented prudential experience and the natural predisposition of the mind that is reflected in that mode of experience, here too, in his elaboration of the active, initiative propensity of human nature, Hobbes could find resources for his conception in Bacon.

II. THE HAPPINESS OF PURSUIT

In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon is concerned not only with motivating science, but with understanding motivation and the psychological basis of 'advancement' in human activity generally. In anticipation of the contrast between Pedantical and Critical types of tradition with particular reference to "the *progression* of knowledge," he writes, "since the labour and life of one man cannot attain to perfection of knowledge, the wisdom of tradition is that which inspireth the felicity of continuance and proceeding."²³ The wiser sort of tradition or handing on of knowledge ensures that it "is delivered as a thread to be spun on," that insight and motivation are conveyed as well.

23. *Works* III: 403.

One might expect that in this context Bacon would refer either to a self-less concern for posterity, or the higher egotism of that regard for posterity known as fame, but he is content here to concentrate on the method of delivery. For insight into the “felicity of continuance and proceeding” from the point of view of the individual, we must turn to the conception of ‘pleasure in proceeding’ which Bacon develops in his ‘Georgics of the Mind,’ which serve “to instruct and suborn action and active life.” There Bacon argues for a “priority of the Active Good” which he says is “much upheld by the consideration of our estate to be mortal and exposed to fortune.” Moreover, he adds,

The pre-eminence likewise of this Active Good is upheld by the affection which is natural in man towards variety and proceeding; But in enterprises, pursuits, and purposes of life, there is much variety; whereof men are sensible with pleasure in their inceptions, progressions, recoils, reintegrations, approaches, and attainings to their ends.²⁴

In Eden before the Fall, work had been only “for exercise and experiment, and not matter of labour for the use,” and this self-sustaining quality has survived at least with respect to intellectual effort: “Only learned men love business as an action according to nature, taking pleasure in the action itself, and not in the purchase.” Intellectual pursuits provide the model for ‘pleasure in proceeding,’ in which appetite is itself enjoyable and satisfaction leads to new desire: “Of knowledge there is no satiety, but satisfaction and appetite are perpetually interchangeable.”²⁵

Bacon applies this model, however, to human desire generally. It is this character of life which he seeks to vindicate, in his practical ethics or ‘Georgics of the Mind,’ by countering and redirecting basic tendencies of stoicism. Bacon pits a rather stoic Socrates against a Sophist in debate, “Socrates placing felicity in an equal and constant peace of mind, and the Sophist in much desiring and much enjoying.” After weighing both sides, Bacon supports the Sophist to the effect that ‘to abstain from the use of a thing that you may not feel a want of it; to shun the want that you may not fear the loss of it; are the precautions of pusillanimity and cowardice.’²⁶

Bacon’s crucial departure from stoicism can be seen in his conception of how to learn from experience, to which he ironically assimilates the stoic idea of ‘suffering’ by an adroit reversal of its intention. For a stoic, ‘suffering’ means undergoing and enduring external necessitation, but with an inner superiority and indifference to it. Bacon speaks rather of “a wise and industrious suffering, which draweth and contriveth use and advantage out of that which seemeth adverse and contrary.” In effect this is the sort of undergoing which complements the undertaking or initiative aspect in that form of experience

24. *Works* III: 424f.

25. From *Advancement*, Book I, *Works* III: 296, 272, 317.

26. From *Advancement*, Book II, *Works* III: 427.

which leads to science, since the advantage which industrious suffering draws from adverse experience depends on “the exact and distinct knowledge of the precedent state or disposition.”²⁷

It is this undergoing that is implied in the famous Baconian maxim: “Nature to be commanded must be obeyed,” which is the basis of his claim that “human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the cause is not known the effect cannot be produced . . . and that which in contemplation is as the cause is in operation as the rule.”²⁸ This correlation of cause-and-effect with means-and-end provides the starting point for Hobbes’s conception of science as knowledge of effect by way of knowledge of cause or production, which I have shown to be related to a new sense of possibility and future-orientation of experience. The basis of that relation is to be found in Hobbes’s elaboration of Bacon’s germinal idea of ‘pleasure in proceeding.’

In Hobbes this idea is expanded and deepened in an empirical psychology that is centered in the conception of *conatus* or ‘endeavor’. Here the natural integration of feeling and motive, of pleasure and appetite, which is basic to Hobbes’s account of sensation and thinking as well as willing, is analyzed with insight. Instead of attempting to deal with the subtleties and difficulties of Hobbes’s grasp of mental processes here,²⁹ we can content ourselves with one passage which reflects the positive interdependence of pleasure and active desire or pursuit, not at the subliminal level of *conatus* (that is, infinitesimal impulses to act which Hobbes conceives of as competing and combining as motives develop) but at the level of conscious striving.

In chapter 11 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes focuses on “the difference of Manners,” “those qualities of man-kind that concern their living together in Peace,”

To which end we are to consider, that the Felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost aim,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Moral Philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end, than he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the later.³⁰

For Hobbes this predisposition of human nature leads to a fundamental premise for the establishment of political order: “And therefore the voluntary actions, and inclinations of all men, tend, not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life; and differ only in the way.”

It may be surprising to have Hobbes’s notorious phrase, “I put for a general

27. *Works* III: 434.

28. *Novum Organum*, Book I, Aphorism 3, *Works* IV: 47.

29. See my essays. “Hobbes’s Causal Account of Sensation,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 18 (1980): 115–130, and “Vico and the Continuity of Science: The Relation of his Epistemology to Bacon and Hobbes,” *Isis* 71 (1980): 609–20.

30. *Leviathan*, p. 160. Spelling modernized here and in subsequent quotations from this work.

inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of Power after power," offered as a gloss on 'the pursuit of happiness.' This is in part because a sinister construction has been put on Hobbes's use of the term 'power' as if it meant coercive power over others, where his meaning is mainly psychological and concerns an expansive 'sense of self.'³¹ The general meaning of 'power' in Hobbes, which holds in this context, is "present means, to obtain some future apparent Good."³² The desire of "Power after power," as predicated of man in general, reflects the desire to assure "the way of his future desire" and thus leads quite naturally to general consent in a common coercive power which can keep all individuals in awe and order, as part of its basic function as a power for securing present and future good for those individuals.

If we can understand how the open-ended character of human desire is related to the foundation of the state for Hobbes, we should gain further insight into the pursuit of happiness and the happiness of pursuit that are presupposed by Jefferson in the *Declaration of Independence*. Civil peace for Hobbes is the precondition of all meaningful human pursuits, and even the attaining and keeping of peace is conceived by him in terms of endeavor. (Compare Jefferson's "Peace is my passion.") The constituting of a common coercive power or sovereignty releases individuals from the state of nature, that is, from the constant expectation of conflict, in that it makes it safe and thus rational to follow what he calls "the first, and Fundamental Law of Nature; which is, *to seek Peace, and follow it.*"³³

In Hobbes's definition, "A Law of Nature, (*Lex Naturalis*,) is a Precept, or general Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same." In the state of nature the operative rule is "'That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps and advantages of War.'" It is by insight into their own best interest in the long run that men "are commanded to endeavour Peace" and led to transfer or alienate certain natural rights (*Jus*, "liberty to do, or to forbear") to the common power, in order better to enjoy and use other natural rights which Hobbes says must be thought of as inalienable.

"Whensoever a man Transferreth his Right, or Renounceth it; it is either in consideration of some Right reciprocally transferred to himself; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby." By conceiving of the constitution of common power or sovereignty as a transfer or mutual renouncing of certain natural liberties on the part of all individuals, Hobbes introduces the deliberate fiction of the 'social contract' as a voluntary act, with the proviso: "and of the

31. See Hobbes, *Thomas White's De Mundo Examined*, trans. Harold Whitmore Jones (London, 1976), pp. 466–69, where 'potentia' is rendered as 'potential'

32. *Leviathan*, p. 150.

33. *Leviathan*, p. 190. Following paragraphs, pp. 189, 192.

voluntary acts of every man, the object is some *Good to himself*." A contract constitutes a mutual binding of wills—or persistent endeavors—over time. The social contract is an open-ended one, entered into to secure future (apparent) good, hoped for and expected.

While a man, to this end, can be understood to give up his natural right to the use of force, for example, he cannot be understood to "lay down the right of resisting them, that assault him by force, or take away his life." Self-preservation is an inalienable right. But the life which is made secure by sovereignty is more than mere existence. "The motive and end for which this renouncing and transferring of Right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a mans person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it."

In the preceding chapter of *Leviathan*, "Of the Natural Condition of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery," Hobbes had characterized the state of nature as a condition in which "there is no place for Industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain," and had concluded, "The Passions that encline men to Peace are Fear of Death, Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them." The civil state makes the future reliable to the extent that individual industriousness can be motivated by the expectation of attaining the goods of "commodious living" through one's own efforts.

Similarly, at the outset of the chapter, "Of the Office of the Sovereign Representative," where Hobbes speaks of "the end, for which he was trusted with the Sovereign Power, namely the procuration of the *safety of the people*," he adds, "By Safety here is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawful Industry, without danger or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himself." In a parallel passage in *De Cive* he writes of "safety" as the preservation of life "in order to its happiness. For to this end did men freely assemble themselves and *institute* a government, that they might, as much as their human condition would afford, live delightfully."³⁴

At the same time Hobbes holds that government "can confer no more to [its subjects'] civil happiness, than that being preserved from foreign and civil wars, they may quietly enjoy that wealth which they have purchased by their own industry." Moreover, in *Leviathan* Hobbes stipulates that "this is intended should be done, not by care applied to Individuals . . . but by a general Providence, contained in public Instruction, . . . and in the making, and executing of good Laws, to which individual persons may apply their own cases."³⁵ Government should provide for the happiness of the people only by making their pursuits secure.

There have been several attempts recently to show the importance of Hobbes

34. *Leviathan*, p. 376, cf. *De Cive*, ch. 13, para. 4.

35. *Leviathan*, p. 376.

for the founding of the American republic. The affinity of principles is greater with Hobbes than with Locke or the classical republican tradition, and extends not only to Hamilton, Madison and the *Federalist*, but also, and quite centrally, to Jefferson and the *Declaration*.³⁶ One could pursue this affinity further with regard to natural equity, inalienable rights, and the civil (not natural) basis of property, for which Hobbes is the indispensable source of ideas that proved crucial to the conception of the republic realized through the Revolution.

The essential point here is that the state for Hobbes secures something like a natural right to endeavor, to life not as survival but as "a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another." By definition, the goods that are the object of this 'pursuit of happiness' could not be determined by the state or by a consensus, or by anyone for anyone else. A clear implication of Hobbes's conception of desire is that even the individual concerned cannot determine, once and for all, the good that he pursues, for defining our ends and interests is itself part of the pursuit, of experience seen as endeavor.

A further implication, disturbing to many, reflects a paradox in Hobbes's conception of endeavor in his empirical psychology. The object of desire is the efficient cause of desire, that is, desire is a passion or passive response rather than a voluntary action, yet objects are not desired because they are good but good because desired. This circularity represents not inconsistency but insight on Hobbes's part, since it reflects an undeniable feature of human experience. Recognition of this circularity in experience is an essential factor in the relativism proper to true tolerance of diversity of values. It also supports an openness to the future which anticipates that goods and goals unknown to the present will emerge from human activity.

With their appreciation of the interdependence of pursuit and pleasure, Bacon and Hobbes introduced a tendency, later brought to full fruition by Dewey and other pragmatists, to relativize the distinction between means and ends, and to deny the intrinsic superiority and the fixity of ends. A similar trait has been noted in the Jeffersonian conception of human practice—and submitted to sustained criticism—in *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*. For Daniel Boorstin "Jeffersonians [are] men immersed in action, who were reticent and inexplicit about the ends of their own activity."³⁷ In what Boorstin

36. See the essay cited in note 18, which was first given as a paper in 1976 at the Bicentennial Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Frank M. Coleman, *Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations* (Toronto, 1977) has a critical, but superficial and leveling view both of Hobbes and of the 'constitutional foundations.' A far better treatment is George Mace, *Locke, Hobbes, and the Federalist Papers: An Essay on the Genesis of the American Political Heritage* (Carbondale, 1979), which claims that Hobbes is more relevant than Locke not only for Madison and Hamilton but for Jefferson as well. See my reviews of these two works and of Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge, 1979), in *The Eighteenth Century: A Current Bibliography*, n.s. 6, for 1980. Tuck is illuminating on Hobbes, but mistaken in contending that the influence of natural rights theory was finished by Rousseau.

37. *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston, 1960), p. 148. Subsequent quotations are from pp. 149, 197, 199f., 53, and 226. See also pp. 198, 203, 214 and 239ff.

sees as a new sort of theodicy, actually one characteristic of the Enlightenment,³⁸ “the Jeffersonian explained evil, not as intended to magnify good, but as designed indirectly to promote activity.”

Boorstin links this orientation with pragmatism, but sees it as a spirit which “stifled the very desire of men to know the goal toward which they were moving.” “Jeffersonian political science . . . was not concerned with duties because it has left the moral ends of the human community vaguely implicit in nature.” Boorstin notes that “concepts of the ‘public interest’ . . . were strikingly absent from Jeffersonian political thought,” but construes this simply as an inadvertent flaw, not a deliberate revision of republicanism. Claiming that “Jefferson never seriously suggested that cosmopolitanism and breadth of mind might fit a man to discover the proper ends of society,” Boorstin fails to recognize that Jefferson had discarded the premise of classical political thought that *the* proper ends of society could and should be determined.

Similarly Boorstin finds “strikingly little discussion of happiness in the humanistic sense of the well-being of the individual” in Jeffersonian writing, perhaps because by ‘humanistic’ Boorstin means ‘normative’, while Jefferson felt that setting goals of individual pursuit was precisely the concern of the “unique individual” which Boorstin accuses him of ignoring. “Even the concept of happiness was virtually emptied of its personal meaning,” Boorstin claims, but this rather reflects a Jeffersonian tendency to define happiness only formally in public terms since its ‘personal’ meaning was to be just that.³⁹

A tug-of-war between public service and private fulfilment is projected in Jefferson’s letters throughout his career. For example, assured that he has now done his part for his country, he writes to Monroe in 1782,

If we are made in some degree for others, yet in a greater are we made for ourselves. It were contrary to feeling and indeed ridiculous to suppose a man has less right in himself than one of his neighbors or all of them put together. This would be slavery and not that liberty . . . for the preservation of which our government has been changed.⁴⁰

38. E.g. Immanuel Kant, “Ueber das Misslingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee,” in *Werke*, ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt, 1966), VI: 105–24, which follows up the argument of “Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte,” *Werke* VI: 85–102, esp. pp. 92, 101f., that justifies the loss of Eden on these grounds. The moral order of the world is not to be judged by contemplative reason, standing back from its entanglements, since our obligation to act is part of the reality. As already for Leibniz, and for Johnson as a critic of ‘philosophical’ theodicy, man’s relation to providence must be practical not intellectual. See my essays, “Readings of *Rasselas*: ‘Its Most Obvious Moral’ and the Moral Role of Literature,” *Enlightenment Essays* 7, no. 1/2, (Spring 1976): 17–39, and “Johnson and Hume Considered as the Core of a New ‘Period Concept’ of the Enlightenment,” *Transactions of the Fifth International Congress on the Enlightenment I (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century. 190)*, pp. 189–96.

39. In his dialogue, “My Head and My Heart,” in the context of a defense of American sociability, Jefferson emphasizes the respect for privacy: “There is not a country on earth, where there is greater tranquility; where the laws are milder, or better obeyed; where every one is more attentive to his own business, or meddles less with that of others.” To Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786, *Papers X*: 447.

40. May 20, 1782, *Papers VI*: 185f.

That liberty is essentially private. It is the liberty which entered the world of political thought with Hobbes, who derived it both from natural right and from 'the silence of the laws'. In Montesquieu this personal liberty, secured by civil law, has become 'political liberty'. The classical republican identification of liberty with political life in the sense of dedication to the public good has been completely reversed. The very idea of a public welfare that requires the suppression or sacrifice of private interest has become questionable.⁴¹

The [Spartan or Roman] republican conception of virtue, like the stoic philosophical conception, is defined by its antagonism to just the sort of appetite that is celebrated as basic to human life by Bacon, Hobbes and their Enlightenment 'followers'. Desire, fed by an active imagination, leads to the proliferation of artificial needs. Instead of seeing this process as a threat to the integrity of the personality and attempting to undermine it by an internal discipline—an approach which Rousseau adopted at certain points—most prominent writers of the Enlightenment affirmed the open-ended character of desire and urged that it be controlled and corrected only in and through experience and social intercourse.⁴² The ongoing social constitution of selfhood was not only finally appreciated as a fact, as a determinability that could not be avoided by any absolutization of autonomy, but the socially interdependent and open-ended experiential character of the self provided the basis for a profound understanding of individuality.

Pursuit includes an element of effort, the meeting and overcoming of resistance, which itself gives a certain value to activity. Lessing represented this Enlightenment sense of endeavor or enterprise when he wrote:

Not the truth in whose possession any man is, or thinks he is, but the honest effort he has made to find out the truth, is what constitutes the worth of a man. For it is not through the possession but through the inquiry after truth that his powers expand, and in this alone consists his ever growing perfection. Possession makes calm, lazy, proud.⁴³

The 'happiness of pursuit' certainly borrows something from the pleasurable anticipation of a goal, but also involves enjoyment of the effort itself.

The pursuit of happiness can be misconstrued as a chase after an ever receding goal only if one identifies happiness with the end, the cessation, of pursuit, or what Hobbes termed "the repose of a mind satisfied." It makes

41. In chapter 21 of *Leviathan*, pp. 266f., Hobbes shows that the 'liberty' which is celebrated by the classical republican tradition is not that of individuals, but of states, their constituted power "to resist, or invade other people." In a letter of October 31, 1823, Jefferson wrote, "The government of Athens, for example, was that of the people of one city making laws for the whole country subjected to them. That of Lacedaemon [Sparta] was the rule of military monks over the laboring class of the people, reduced to abject slavery." *Writings* XV: 482. See my paper, "The Critique of Classical Republicanism and the Understanding of Modern Forms of Polity in Vico's *New Science*," *Clio* 9 (Spring 1980): 393-418.

42. See the essays cited in note 38 preceding.

43. "Eine Duplik," in Lessing, *Werke*, ed. H. G. Göpfert (Munich, 1970-79), VIII: 32f.

a great difference whether one sees desire in a negative or a positive light, as a state opposed to or akin to fulfilment. In the passage quoted, Lessing, as a good Leibnizian, conceived of perfection as an open-ended progressive quality, a denial of the perfected, closed off, finished;⁴⁴ this idea of *perfectio* as a process is characteristic of the Enlightenment.

Passages embodying this perspective could be cited from Montesquieu, Diderot, even Rousseau, from Johnson or Burke as well as Hume, from Schiller or Herder as well as Lessing. But there is one figure, usually considered crucial to the Enlightenment, who poses an obstacle to this general characterization: Locke. The conative psychology that was so essential to empiricism in Bacon and Hobbes, and the corresponding conception of human nature, are far less evident in Locke than in Leibniz. This is particularly important for the topic under consideration here because Locke has been claimed recently as the prime source of Jefferson's idea of the pursuit of happiness. A confrontation with this opposing interpretation of 'pursuit' will provide an apt conclusion.

III. 'HAPPINESS' VS. PURSUIT

In *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*, Garry Wills devotes a chapter to analyzing the term 'pursuit', giving emphasis to "elements of determination and necessity," as in the phrase "'necessity determines to the pursuit of bliss.'" His main source of examples, this one included, is a single chapter from Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. This work, Wills suggests, and not the political treatises, was the significant Locke for the eighteenth century, the one who formed a triad with Bacon and Newton. A 'Newtonian model' determines the conception of pursuit focused on by Wills, the causal necessitation of a universal gravitation of wills that are irresistibly moved by the objects of desire.⁴⁵

In the chapter headed 'Necessary'—from the phrase 'when in the course of human events it becomes necessary'—Wills claimed that "the Declaration's opening is Newtonian. It lays down the law."

Out of a sequence of observed results, a pattern emerges, and is stated as a law.

The revolution of the colonies, like the revolving of heaven's bodies, is a process open to scientific observation and description. Jefferson has come to describe it.⁴⁶

44. I emphasize this neglected aspect of Leibniz in a review in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 433–38.

45. *Inventing America*, p. 241. Contrast Hamowy (note 7 preceding), pp. 511–16.

46. *Inventing America*, p. 94. In his discussion of 'pursuit' Wills quotes a telling passage from Bacon's *Advancement*. "It is order, poursuite, sequence, and interchange of application, which is mighty in nature." But Wills reduces the laws of nature, including those of the 'state of nature,' to laws of physics or mechanics far too literally to catch the liveliness and power of the original metaphor.

Accordingly Wills devotes that chapter to a discussion of ‘mechanical philosophy’ in the eighteenth century, as if in explanation of the Declaration’s opening.

In an earlier paper I have argued, on the contrary, that this reference to ‘necessity’ in the course of human events is an appeal to the law of nature in the sense of the natural right of self-preservation, applied not to an individual but to a people in that ‘state of nature’ that prevails between nations. In the same vein Alexander Hamilton had argued earlier, in Hobbesian terms, that “when the first principles of civil society are violated, and the rights of a whole people are invaded, . . . men may then betake themselves to the law of nature. . . .”⁴⁷

We might note in passing that Hamilton adopts this argument from Blackstone and contrasts it with doctrines supposedly taken by his opponent Seabury from the sinister ‘Mr. Hobbes’ This should suggest how Hobbes came to have no overt influence in Revolutionary America, although his ideas, working through Priestley or Blackstone, Hume, Hutcheson or Locke—and often in a direction that cut across the main tendencies of these writers—had a decisive impact. This is also the case with Locke’s conception of the causal necessitation that determines ‘pursuit’, for Locke’s mechanics of motivation derives directly, but tacitly, from Hobbes.

I would not disagree when Wills claims that Locke’s denial of ‘freedom of the will’ is not only consistent with but material to an understanding of pursuit. As he says, “The will is determined by its object.” There is, however, a subtle but important difference in the way this idea is taken by Hobbes and by Locke, leading to a major difference in their conceptions of pursuit. Locke understands motivation principally in terms of ‘uneasiness’, that is, in negative terms:

What determines the will? The motive, for continuing in the same State or Action, is only the present satisfaction in it; The motive to change is always some *uneasiness*: nothing setting us upon the change of State, or upon any new Action, but some *uneasiness*. This is the great motive that works on the Mind to put it upon Action, [i.e.] *determining of the will*.⁴⁸

In the long chapter ‘Of Power’, on which Wills bases his argument, Locke adopts a quasi-Hobbesian conception of motivation, but deprived of the open and forward-urging quality that characterizes ‘endeavor’ in Hobbesian psy-

47. See the beginning of the essay cited in note 18 preceding. The passage from Hamilton is quoted in Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford, 1970), p. 10, cf. pp. 15–22. In a letter to J. B. Colvin, September 20, 1810, *Writings* XII: 419, Jefferson says, “The law of self-preservation authorizes the distressed to take a supply of force. In all these cases, the unwritten laws of necessity, of self-preservation, and of the public safety, control the written laws of meum and tuum . . .” that is, civil laws of property.

48. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1979), p. 249. This is para. 29 of Book II, Ch. 21, to which further references will be made by paragraph within parentheses in the text. On ‘uneasiness’, para. 31–34.

chology. For Hobbes *conatus* is not reducible to a self-preservative urge nor is it regulated by an essentially negative ‘uneasiness-principle’.⁴⁹ The determinist implications of the causal conception of motivation thus are far more restrictive in Locke than in Hobbes, and Locke himself is clearly not happy with such implications. He revised the chapter at several stages in later editions, introducing a different conception of freedom, which is mixed, most uncomfortably, with the residue of the Hobbesian conception.

The new approach may seem to complicate, but in fact breaks with, the model taken from mechanics or gravitation theory, and it does this by introducing the notion that the mind can suspend motives that are weighing or pulling on it. This is a variant of the *epochē* which classical sceptics and stoics claimed to be able to exercise on their own passions and desires. In contrast to Hobbes, then, for whom the will is simply the last desire, the cumulative result of the process of deliberation as a libration of competing (mutually corrective and interacting) motive objects or projected courses of action, Locke sees the will as “perfectly distinguished from desire” (§30). Thus, while it may seem a plausible maxim that ‘the greatest good determines the will,’ Locke concludes “that *good*, the *greater good*, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the *will*, until our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us *uneasy* in the want of it” (§35).

In the maxim which Locke is correcting, the Hobbesian relativist definition of ‘good’ was presupposed: ‘good’ was what was desired, the ‘greater good’ that which exerted the greater attraction (cf. §42). Locke has introduced a new normative element, a determination of ‘good’ from without, and this is decisive for all those passages cited by Wills, though Wills either fails to see this or omits to acknowledge it. Wills’s interpretation is thus damaged because Locke has in effect brought about an opposition between his ideas of ‘happiness’ and pursuit.

“Wherever there is *uneasiness*, there is *desire*,” writes Locke, “for we constantly desire happiness; and whatever we feel of *uneasiness*, so much, it is certain, we want [i.e. lack] of happiness” (§39). This shows more than how removed Locke is from any idea of the happiness of pursuit. Locke sees in the unavoidable concern with happiness the possibility of leverage to make what *he* considers to be ‘the greatest good’ a predominating determinant of the will, that is, a more constant cause of uneasiness. “How much soever Men are in earnest, and constant in pursuit of happiness. [Wills cites this statement as the first use of the formula]; yet they may have a clear view of good, great and confessed good, without being concern’d for it or moved by it, if they think they can make up their happiness without it” (§43).

In the preceding paragraph Locke had reaffirmed the Hobbesian perspective. “What has an aptness to produce Pleasure in us is that we call ‘good’, . . . for

49. Many writers on Hobbes, from Dilthey and Tonnies on, confuse his use of the term with that of Spinoza, who conflates *conatus* with the urge to self-preservation.

no other reason, but for its aptness to produce Pleasure . . . in us, wherein consists our *happiness*" (§42). It is apparent that this can only be made consistent with the succeeding paragraph if we understand that the "great and confessed good" is rather known to be apt to produce great happiness not to the one concerned but to someone else (like Locke) who 'knows what's good for' the other person.

Locke is in fact talking about lukewarm Christians who, "satisfied of the possibility of a perfect, secure, and lasting happiness in a future state," are nonetheless "not moved by this greater apparent good." He wants them to use the stoic-sceptic capacity to stand back from the motives that are actually working on them, so as to achieve "a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness" (§51, another of Wills's examples, torn from its context). They must not only interrupt but break through the constant determination of pursuit.

Wills elides the main bent of Locke's composite approach in order to assimilate to the 'Newtonian model' the attraction which ultimate good—bliss beyond all earthly pursuits—*should* (but evidently does not) exert on the human will. "Freedom is the capacity," Wills writes, "to resist the pull of things with a small 'mass' of happiness but great proximity, in order to be true to the ultimate goal of 'real' happiness." Although remote, 'true and solid happiness' should exert a greater pull because of its magnitude, Wills would have the model imply. But then he must simply overlook the fact that this model has no way of accommodating such a 'should' "Pursuit' is here used [he claims] as response to the gravitational tug of a determining object. In the push-pull pain-pleasure world Locke describes, the attraction of happiness gives that constant, that *determination* of reality, on the basis of which one can build a science of human motion."⁵⁰

I make no objection to such a program of 'human science' In an earlier essay I maintained that Hobbes's conception of motivation, which leads him to a denial of 'free will' far more consistent than that of Locke, also provides a sound basis for understanding and improving human freedom.⁵¹ But Hobbes's view of the social world on the model of a mechanics of interacting motive forces, attractive and repulsive, is not a "push-pull pain-pleasure world" such as Locke describes. Locke was only led to posit his second conception of freedom because his own version of motivation-modelled-on-mechanics made man seem more the victim of experience. Hobbes, on the contrary, with his parallel application of the concept 'endeavor' in his adaptation of Galilean mechanics and in his analysis of mind and motivation in terms of 'inner motions', far from reducing the latter to the former, showed how freedom

50. *Inventing America*, p. 242.

51. "Materialism and Freedom," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 7 (1978): 193–212, esp. pp. 202ff.

could and must be understood as adequate determination of our motives by our experience and of our actions by our motives.⁵²

In this respect, as in others, Leibniz was very much a follower of Hobbes, as is evident in his critical responses to Locke and to Samuel Clarke. The point of the 'endeavor' concept in the analogy between mechanics and motivation is nicely brought out by one of his answers to the latter:

properly speaking, motives do not act upon the mind, as weights do upon a balance; but it is rather the mind that acts by virtue of the motives, which are its dispositions to act. And therefore to pretend, as the author does here, that the mind prefers sometimes weak motives to strong ones, and even that it prefers that which is indifferent before motives; this, I say, is to divide the mind from the motives, as if they were outside the mind . . . and as if the mind had, besides motives, other dispositions to act, by virtue of which it could reject or accept the motives.⁵³

Where Locke maintains that, "whilst we are under any uneasiness, we cannot apprehend ourselves happy, or in the way to it; pain and uneasiness being, by every one, concluded and felt to be inconsistent with happiness" (§36), Leibniz counters that "it is essential to the happiness of created beings; their happiness never consists in complete attainment, which would make them insensate and stupefied, but in continual and uninterrupted progress towards greater goods."

The consistent Hobbesian conception of freedom not from but through the determination of our motives and actions, as grounded in the concept 'endeavor', thus fully anticipates Jefferson's idea of the pursuit of happiness and its analogues in the Continental Enlightenment. Initiative and risk-taking are as essential to this sense of endeavor as is being determined or driven. In his dialogue, "My Head and My Heart," Jefferson counterposes calculation of possibility against enthusiasm, relating the first to the effort to avoid pain, the second to the urge to positive pleasure, and has the Heart claim credit

52. In "Of Liberty and Necessity" Hobbes answers the charge that his view of human action would make deliberation or consultation useless: "It is the consultation that causeth a man, and necessitateth him to choose to do one thing rather than another, . . . and therefore consultation is not in vain, and indeed the less in vain by how much the election is more necessitated." Hobbes, *Body, Man, and Citizen*, ed. R. S. Peters (New York, 1962), p. 256. I have argued that Schiller, in a critical inversion of Kantian transcendentalism, arrives at a similar identification of freedom and determination, "The Morality of the Sublime: Kant and Schiller," *Studies in Romanticism* 19 (Winter 1980): 497-514, esp. pp. 513f.

53. Para. 15 of Leibniz's answer to Clarke's Fourth Reply, Leibniz, *Selections*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York, 1951), p. 241. I touch on this aspect of Leibniz's continuity with Hobbes in "The Separation of Reason and Faith in Bacon and Hobbes, and the *Theodicy* of Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42, no. 4 (October-December, 1981): 607-28. See Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, tr. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 169, 172 and 186, on 'endeavor' and pp. 164-66, 183 and 188-89 on 'uneasiness' or 'disquiet'.

for the success of the Revolution: "We put our existence to the hazard, when the hazard seemed against us, and we saved our country."⁵⁴

Even before the Revolution he had derived the colonists' rights from their emigration, "rights thus acquired at the hazard of their lives and loss of their fortunes." Early settlers of the New World had responded to the call '*plus ultra*,' which drew them beyond the limits of settled experience, the Straits of Gibraltar of the known political world. In a sense they had sought out a 'state of nature' in exercising

a right, which nature has given to all men, of departing from the country in which chance, not choice, has placed them, of going in quest of new habitations, and of there establishing new societies, under such laws and regulations as, to them, shall seem most likely to promote public happiness.⁵⁵

A natural, inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness was affirmed in their venture.

54. To Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786, *Papers X*: 451. Jefferson is clearly both 'head' and 'heart'; his richly ambivalent relation to stoicism needs further study. See his letter to John Adams, April 8, 1816, *Writings XIV*: 467.

55. "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," *Papers I*: 122.