"THE REVOLUTIONARY AS PROPHET"

by

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ABSTRACT

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The period surrounding the American Revolution was rich in the writing of political thought. Although there was a great amount of bloodshed and strife throughout the era, the Revolutionary War was as much a war of ideas as anything else. Propaganda abounded enflaming the hearts and spirits of the American Patriot cause. But writing that went beyond propaganda to the realm of rich theory also appeared in abundance. After the war ended some of the same political theorists who wrote during the Revolution set out to transform their ideas into action, left as they were with the task of creating new republican governments.

Two men who were as prolific and creative as any of their contemporaries in the realm of political theory were John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Both men were united in their support of the Patriot cause and fought the ideological battles of the Revolutionary War side by side. Once the war ended, however, the two men became divided in their views on the formation of the government and on their visions of the future of the newly created republic.

This work is an attempt to trace the development of

the political thought of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, to compare their philosophies, and to examine their expectations of the future of their country. The focus is on political theory, not political leadership, but equally important are their attempts to transform thought into action through the formation of federal and state plans of government.

The first two chapters examine the development of and changes in the political theory of Jefferson and Adams. Central to both men's theories was the philosophy of John Locke and the other philosophers of the Enlightenment era. Locke's theory of natural rights influenced both men, but both Adams and Jefferson carried Locke's ideas beyond theory into the realm of practical application in the formation of state constitutions and plans of government. Throughout his life Jefferson held true to his view of man as an inherently rational and moral creature who would generally make the right decisions given the proper education. He wrote his plan of government with those beliefs in mind. Adams with his Puritan upbringing wrote his plan of government keeping in mind his less optimistic views of man's continuous struggle between passion and reason.

The third chapter is a comparison between the two theorists' political views, their writings, and their plans of government. Both sought to expand the political base thereby disseminating political power, but they did so for opposite reasons. Whereas Jefferson fought to include more

people in the political system because of his complete faith in them, Adams did so because of his distrust of everyone, rich or poor, in or out of government.

The final part of this work is an examination of Adams' and Jefferson's visions of this country. Both were generous in their correspondence and in other writings in expressing their hopes and dreams for the emerging nation. An examination of their works has led to some interesting and perhaps useful speculations about the United States--how it has developed in contrast to the hopes of two of its founders, how well or badly it has lived up to the dreams of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, both of which will be set forth in the last chapter.

The contributions of Adams and Jefferson to the founding of this country have been recounted many times before. However, it is in the area of theory and ideology that both men wished to be remembered. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute in small part to that desire.

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CHAPTER I

JEFFERSON THE THEORIST

In the epitaph that Thomas Jefferson wrote for himself he stated that he wished to be remembered as the author of the Declaration of Independence and the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, as well as for being the father of the University of Virginia. It is notable that his service as President of the United States and Governor of the state of Virginia went unmentioned. By virtue of these words it is evident that Jefferson considered his greatest accomplishments to be in the realm of political theory and education, not in the area of politics and leadership.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to trace the development of Jefferson's political thought and its subsequent practical application during the period surrounding the American Revolution. It was during these years, from 1769-1781 that Jefferson attempted to transform political thought into action in the creation of improved governments and the restructuring of an emerging society.

A Renaissance man in the true sense of the word, Jefferson was an avid reader and a perceptive observer of the natural and social worlds around him. Through his observations, his reading, and his consideration of the problems of man and man's relation to his world, Jefferson developed a political philosophy based in part on Enlightenment theory, in part on moral sense philosophy, and in part on his own

views of colonial American society. Although he was greatly influenced by the writings of John Locke, Jefferson restructured many of Locke's theories to meet the problems of his time, and he carried his own philosophy beyond the theoretical level to its practical application. Where the ideas of Locke and Jefferson overlap, it will be so noted, and where they differ, it will be indicated.

In his efforts to apply his theory to the restructuring of American society, Jefferson experienced both successes and failures. The problems of proposing unusual ideas in a manner acceptable to eighteenth century colonial Virginia cannot be underestimated. Both his failures and his successes will be discussed, since the emphasis of this chapter is on political thought, not on accomplishment in the political realm. Politics and the political process will be discussed only as they relate to Jefferson's attempts to transform political thought into action.

Throughout his life Jefferson struggled between his desire to remain a private citizen devoted to family and farm and his need to influence the formation of a newly developing country. He claimed that he never wished to be a political leader, but he was profoundly interested in establishing a new society in America, a society based on the principles of democracy as he defined them. These principles will be discussed at some length in this chapter.

To historian Dumas Malone " . . . the essence of [Jefferson's] greatness lies in the fact that he applied to

the shifting problems of his age an enlightened and humane philosophy."[1] In no other period were the fundamentals of this philosophy so clear. "Intellectually he exemplified more conspicuously than any of his fellows the liberal and humane spirit, the incessant scientific curiosity and zeal for universal knowledge, and the fundamental belief in the powers of human intelligence which characterized what historians call the Enlightenment."[2]

Thomas Jefferson in his own time was considered an enlightened political thinker and writer. It is important to remember that he lived in a conservative, colonial Virginia, and his ideas must be evaluated in the context of that eighteenth century society. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss those ideas, trace their development, and evaluate them in that context.

Jefferson matured and was educated in what is now called the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment, a time when the characteristic ideas and attitudes of rationalism had spread from a small group of advanced thinkers to a relatively large educated public. Two major themes in formal philosophy became especially important to the "philosophes" of the eighteenth century, and both were to become the basis of Jefferson's political theory: first, in political philosophy, the development of the social contract theory from Hobbes through Locke,

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[1]Dumas Malone, Jefferson and His Time, vol. 1: Jefferson the Virginian (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), p. xii.

[2]Ibid., p. xv.

and second, the concept of "natural rights." The importance of the thinking and writings of John Locke in the development of both of these concepts cannot be overlooked.

In his Two Treatises on Government published anonymously in 1690 Locke outlined his theories on man, society, and their relations to government. Locke begins his explanation with the proposition that "all men are originally in a state of nature, 'a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other man.'"[3] This state of nature is a state of equality, but not of unbounded license, a society of men, as distinct from a state of government or a political society.

Locke continues his discussion by stating that there are certain problems inherent in this state of nature. One of these is man's tendency to violate the rights of other men. To Locke the remedy for this problem is civil government, "wherein men by common consent form a social contract and create a single body politic."[4] This contract is not between ruler and ruled, but between equally free men, and the purpose of it is to preserve the lives, freedom, and property of all men, their "natural rights." Whoever attempts

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[3]Locke, John, Two Treatises on Government, quoted in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1967 ed., S.v. "Locke, John."

[4]Ibid.

to gain absolute power over another man puts himself in a state of war with the other. Furthermore, men are capable of determining when they are being unjustly treated, and when this occurs, the contract is broken.

Once men are united under civil government in any society, they relinquish some of their natural rights including the legislative and executive rights that they originally held under the laws of nature. Since the compact is between equally free men in society, sovereignty rests with the people. "The sovereign, in the form of a legislative body, an executive, or both, is the agent and executor of the sovereignty of the people. The community can act only by the rule of the majority, and everyone is bound by it."[5] Since it is the people who establish the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, an absolute monarch is incompatible with civil society.

Although Locke's theories are compatible with either a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy, he believed that a constitutional monarchy with executive power vested in the hands of the monarch and legislative powers vested in an assembly elected by the people is the most satisfactory form of government. Once the executive violates the social contract, the people have the right to depose him and establish a new government. The right to rebellión, however, is warranted only under extreme conditions when no other alternatives are possible.

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[5]Ibid.

Locke did not believe that men would lightly avail themselves of this power, "for men will suffer and endure much before they resort to rebellion."[6]

Although Jefferson's political theory relies heavily on the theory of John Locke, he redesigned the concept of the natural rights of mankind in accordance with his own views of eighteenth century Virginian society. He believed as did Locke that all men are created free and equal and that the people, in this case, of Virginia are the source of all authority. But Jefferson held his own notion with regard to exactly who "the people" were. Certainly the people did not include everyone. Nor did Jefferson's concept include all adult males. To Thomas Jefferson the people were limited to that homogenous group of free, white, educated, male landholders of Virginia. He certainly did not believe that the power to govern should be in the hands of the common rabble.

Yet Jefferson, unlike the majority of his political colleagues, recognized the fact that "the people" did not compose the majority of Virginian society, and he was aware of the need for change. To expand participation in government, the political base necessarily had to be broadened. Therefore, in his lifetime he worked tirelessly to increase the number of landholders and educated men in order to disseminate political power and enlarge the number of people entitled to political influence.

Thomas Jefferson was an influential political thinker

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[6]Ibid.

and writer, but he was also a politician who had to struggle for power and influence throughout his career. His political life commenced in 1769 at the age of twenty-six with his election to the Virginia House of Burgesses. He soon aligned himself with Richard Henry Lee, Patrick Henry, and George Washington, the young Patriots of the day. There was a great deal of anti-British sentiment among these young men, who in 1769 were out of power and looking for issues that would enable them to seize it. What followed during the next few years was a struggle whereby those out of power, the Patriots, managed to grasp enough influence from time to time to assure the passage of anti-British resolutions asserting their right to self-taxation, the right of petition for redress of grievances, and the right of the colonies to unite in such petitions.

By 1774 when the news of the Boston Tea Party and the subsequent closing of the port of Boston had reached Virginia, the leadership of the Virginia Assembly was in the hands of the younger radical element. The Assembly led by the Patriots immediately took a stand against the Boston Port Bill, voted its support for Massachusetts, and suggested unification via the Continental Congress.

Jefferson, at this time, was not standing idly by. Already blessed with a gifted pen he proceeded to write the Albemarle Resolves in which he alleged that the colonists were bound by no laws passed without their consent; that the rights to complete freedom did not originate in the British Constitution; that these rights were held "as the common rights

of mankind." He then proceeded to recount some of the infractions of these rights by Great Britain.[7] These views certainly were considered radical for the day, and they were published in a small pamphlet entitled A Summary View of the Rights of British America in which Jefferson was able to expand on principles he was able only to outline in the Albemarle Resolves.

The Summary View "is noteworthy more for its boldness and fervor than for its historical precision and literary grace."[8] As a contemporary indictment of British policy it is most distinctive in its emphasis on philosophical fundamentals and on its prophetic quality as a forerunner of the Declaration of Independence in which some of the charges against Britain reappear.

The Summary View was Jefferson's first denial of the authority of Parliament over the colonies. At this point, Jefferson saw the relationship between the colonies and the Mother Country as being the same as that between Scotland and England from the accession of James I to the Act of Union, and between Hanover and England in his own time "having the same executive chief but no other necessary political connection."[9] His emphasis in the treatise was on what Parliament could not do, and he proclaimed colonial rights in a sweeping way.

Jefferson stated that the ultimate authority rests

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[7]Thomas Jefferson, Resolutions of Congress on Lord North's Conciliatory Proposal: Jefferson's Draft Resolutions, Julian P. Boyd, and others, eds., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 19 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 1:227-28.

[8]Malone, p. 182.

[9]Ibid.

with the people, and although there was no general statement of natural rights, his argument was based on that theory. He grounded his argument on the nature of things, on the colonists' natural right to establish laws and regulations as the early Saxons did, "who to Jefferson exemplified English liberty in its purist form."[10]

Jefferson emphasized the existence of a compact between the monarch and the colonists, Locke's social contract, but in fact was more interested in Parliament's meddling in internal colonial affairs than in any wrongdoings of the King. "His chief aim was to overthrow parliamentary authority which had been universal in practice and was wrong in principle, and at the same time to safeguard self-government."[11]

Although it appears from this pamphlet that as early as 1774 Jefferson was contemplating some type of status change with regard to Great Britain, he certainly was not advocating complete independence. For Jefferson, like Locke, believed that rebellion was warranted only under extreme conditions. In the declaration, however, was an important resolve that Virginia would join with the other colonies to extract her rights. This was the first such declaration of unity, the first declaration which went beyond provincial to continental interests.

In 1774 Jefferson was appointed to the Continental Congress. Throughout that summer and during much of the

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[10]Ibid., p. 185.

[11]Ibid., p. 186.

following year, Jefferson joined with the Patriots in their struggle for independence as well as in their concern with who should govern and how to maintain order should a split occur with the Mother Country. During that time it became obvious to him that the battle with Britain would have to include more than the aristocrats of society if the colonies were to emerge as the ultimate victor. At the same time, he also was concerned that some order be maintained in society during the transition. By the spring of 1776, with the Patriots once again in control of the Continental Congress, Jefferson was able to approach the problem of natural versus civil rights in two of the most important documents of his career.

Thomas Jefferson was never known for his oratorical abilities. A shy man not blessed with a forceful voice or manner, Jefferson was at his best with pen in hand working within a committee. By 1776 he already had established himself as a gifted writer, and in June he was appointed to a committee along with John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert T. Livingston to prepare a resolution of independence from Great Britain. Later in his life Jefferson was to write that his Declaration of Independence addressed no new ideas and said nothing that had not been written before. "Neither aiming at originality of principles or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the

occasion."[12] His purpose in writing the document was to restate the sentiments of the day "in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, a justification of the actions contemplated by the Congress."[13] It is important to note that in the Declaration of Independence Jefferson altered Locke's doctrine of man's natural and inalienable rights in one notable respect. Locke included the right to property among those natural rights of mankind. Jefferson, having considered this doctrine over a period of many years, chose not to include the right to property as an inalienable right. To him the right to property was a civil right to be guaranteed by society and the government of that society, not a right inherent to the individual. However, he did consider the pursuit of happiness to be an inherent right of man.

Jefferson was neither original nor unique in his emphasis on happiness as the ultimate purpose of government. In America George Mason had spoken of it in his Virginia Declaration of Rights written in 1774, for instance. According to historian Garry Wills, however, Jefferson's belief was grounded in the philosophical writings of the eighteenth century Scottish moral sense philosophers, especially Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid. These philosophers were on this one important point philosophically opposed to John Locke. The Lockean triad of natural rights consisted of life, liberty, and property,

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[12]Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825, Albert Ellery Bergh, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 20 vols. in 10 (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1905), 10:343.

[13]Ibid.

with property being central. Francis Hutcheson, however, did not consider property an inalienable right, but rather an "adventitious" right, a right grounded in the need for social intercourse. In Wills' eyes it was Francis Hutcheson who was the "principal delineator of inalienable rights in Jefferson's milieu."[14]

This is not to say that Jefferson completely repudiated Lockean philosophy. However, when Jefferson delineated inalienable rights in his Declaration of Independence he rejected the central idea in the Lockean triad and substituted Hutcheson's emphasis on happiness. In addition, Jefferson carried this philosophical idea one step further by making the concept of happiness a political goal.

To the eighteenth century moral sense philosopher the pursuit of happiness was the "basic drive of the self, and the only means given for transcending the self."[15] The word itself had far-reaching implications. It was the bonne-heurre of Voltaire, but it was also "a general tendency to fit all haps, a condition suited to the world, quite 'happy' in its use by men who took a pragmatic, mechanical working view of life."[16]

The theory that government exists for the happiness of the people governed was nothing new to Jefferson. What is

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[14]Garry Wills, Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1978), p. 231.

[15]Ibid., p. 247.

[16]Ibid., p. 249.

unusual is the measurement of it and the application of this norm to Parliament's claims. It was Francis Hutcheson who encouraged the actual measure of happiness, but it was Jefferson who made happiness "a hard political test of any reign's very legitimacy, not a vague yearning of the individual."[17]

To Jefferson true happiness could be found only within society by doing acts of public good. Since that was so, man's pursuit of happiness would lead him to desire the greater happiness of the larger system. This provides the basis for all social organization including the state. "It is the pursuit of one's own happiness that is the only efficient motive force for spreading happiness to others, and on this fact of human nature governments must be established, judged, altered, or abolished."[18]

Jefferson, while relying heavily on Locke and Enlightenment theory, adopted some of the theory of the moral sense philosophers and rewrote that theory to meet the needs and challenges of his own environment. That Jefferson was able to unite the Continental Congress behind his Declaration is a tribute not so much to the creativity of his philosophy, for that in itself was not new, but to the manner in which he stated his Declaration. He was able, like no one else of the age, to express thoughts and philosophies commonly known to most educated men in a new and passionate manner. The Declaration of Independence, a clear and simple document,

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[17]Ibid., p. 251.

[18]Ibid.

was Jefferson at his literary best.

Throughout the time period in which Jefferson created his Declaration of Independence, he could not ignore the problem of who was to govern once independence was declared. He was aware of the need for new state constitutions even before the Continental Congress voted on such a resolve prior to his arrival to that body in 1776. Thus, in the spring of that year, one month before the writing of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson proposed a bill in the Virginia House of Burgesses creating a new constitution for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

While serving in the Continental Congress Jefferson had retained his seat in the Virginia assembly, and during the spring of 1776 he viewed the whole object of the controversy with Great Britain to be the establishment of new governments, both on the national and the state levels. "Should a bad government be instituted for us," he wrote, "in the future it has been as well to have accepted at first the bad one offered to us from beyond the water without risk and expence of contests."[19]

The Virginia Constitution, as proposed by Jefferson, was his first concrete effort to apply the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and it did, in fact, contain most, if not all of the leading principles to which his entire career was dedicated. Primary among those principles were the ideas of Locke as incorporated by Jefferson:

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[19]Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Nelson, May 16, 1776, Boyd, 1:292.

the people as the source of authority in any society; the principle of government existing to protect individual rights; a statement of religious freedom and of freedom of the press. But Jefferson included many additional doctrines of his own in his Constitution, ideas that were considered unusual if not radical for his era. These included the widening of suffrage and the equalization of distribution of representation in the legislative branch; just treatment of the Indians; the use of western land to ease the friction between the colonies and to promote nationality; the encouragement of immigration and the lowering of barriers to naturalization which would enable the country to develop economically as well as numerically; the elevation of civil over military authority as a check on military power; the abolition of privilege and prerogative; a statement against capital punishment, since it is a violation of the inalienable right to life; the abolition of primogeniture to increase the number of landholders and, thus, the number of people entitled to participate in the political process.[20]

Jefferson's first draft also contained the following provisions with regard to the formation of the government: a bicameral legislature, the lower house created through proportional representation and the upper house appointed by the lower house; an executive bound by the acts of the legislature and having no veto power, pardoning power, or

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[20]Thomas Jefferson, The Virginia Constitution: First Draft, Ibid., 1:337-47.

war powers; a Supreme Court. The Constitution also included provision for the purchase of Indian lands with public funds, the right of the people to bear arms, and a provision for the repeal of the Constitution by unanimous vote of both houses of the legislature should it become necessary.

Jefferson's Constitution was not adopted in any of his draft forms, and he was bitterly disappointed over the Virginia Convention's failure to remold society in accord with his republican principles. Not discouraged, Jefferson set out to reframe the whole body of law to achieve by legislation what he had not been able to accomplish in the framing of the Constitution. Throughout the period from 1776 to 1779 he introduced a series of bills meant "to reform the entire structure of law so as to strip it of all vestiges of its earlier monarchical aspects."[21] Of the many bills that he proposed, Jefferson considered four to be of particular importance in the creation of the republic: the bill to extend the right to an education to the less wealthy, the bill to repeal the laws of entail, the bill to abolish primogeniture, and the bill to restore the rights of conscience.[22]

Behind Jefferson's desire for the reform of society was his basic political theory borrowed from John Locke.

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[21]Ibid., 2:305.

[22]Thomas Jefferson, Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, Bergh, 1:73-74.

However, unlike Locke, Jefferson stressed the importance of education for the well-being of society. Since men are created equal and are the only source of authority and political power in society, they necessarily must be knowledgeable about the world in order to properly exercise their political power. "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion by education."[23] Thus, Jefferson proposed his Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge.

The first provision in the bill called for elementary schools, free to the children of every citizen. It emphasized the importance of education "as a safeguard against tyranny."[24] It went into detail as to the creation of school districts, the subjects to be taught, the building of schools, and the financing of them. What was new in the bill was not the provision for public education, but "the object of seeking out men of genius and virtue and of rendering them 'by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens.'"[25] Jefferson's education bill implied an intellectual elite, but

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[23]Thomas Jefferson to William Charles Jarvis, September 28, 1820, Ibid., 15:278.

[24]Thomas Jefferson, A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, Boyd, 2:527.

[25]Ibid., p. 524.

an elite existing without regard to "wealth, birth, or other accidental condition or circumstance."[26] Jefferson's elite would be created through the public education of free white males. The bill, however, never passed.

In the eighteenth century political influence as practiced through suffrage was directly dependent on the ownership of land. Jefferson believed deeply that the landed aristocracy had to be replaced by a new class of small landholders in order to place more control in the hands of a greater number of people. To broaden the political base, he proposed A Bill to Abolish Primogeniture and A Bill to Repeal the Laws of Entail, both of which were passed in 1785.

> I am conscious that an equal division of property is impracticable. But the consequences of this enormous inequality producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind, legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property, only taking care to let their subdivisions go hand in hand with the natural affections of the human mind.[27]

To further alleviate inequality in land ownership he advocated exempting land from taxation below a certain point, and taxing "the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise."[28] Furthermore, Jefferson believed that "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."[29] Thus, although the

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[26]Ibid., p. 534.

[27]Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, October 28, 1785, Ibid., 8:682.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

right to property was not in itself a natural right, as it was to Locke, the inequalities generated by unequal division of property within society were violations of the pursuit of happiness, one of man's inalienable rights as stated by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson firmly believed that the "small landholders were the most precious part of a state,"[30] and that Virginia as well as the national government should make certain that as few as possible would be without at least some land. He believed that those who own land hold a direct interest in the maintenance of order in society and will be willing to fight to protect both their land and that order. The more landholders there are, the more people there will be who are willing to protect their property, and thus, the safer liberty will be for all of the people. "If every individual which composes their mass participates of the ultimate authority," wrote Jefferson, "the government will be safe."[31]

Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom passed in amended version in 1785. The theory behind this bill is traceable directly to Locke's Letter Concerning Toleration published in 1689. Locke was not the first to advocate religious toleration. However, his plea was powerful, direct, and passionate, and it related directly to his argument for

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[30]Ibid.

[31]Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Bergh, 2:207.

the liberty of person and of conscience, the so-called natural rights of man. To Jefferson the restoration of the rights of conscience were of the utmost importance in the creation of his new society. Jefferson believed that man's religious beliefs do not "diminish, enlarge, or affect [his] civil capacities" and he should not suffer on account of them.[32] The bill passed, but not without much contesting.

As creative as Thomas Jefferson was, there existed for him one enormous problem that he was never able to resolve to his own satisfaction: the problem of slavery and the related issue of the free black man's place within white America.

Jefferson was a slaveholder throughout his life, but he never advocated the institution. In fact, he attempted to discover a way to eradicate all vestiges of slavery, an institution which he considered abominable. "There is nothing I would not sacrifice to a practicable plan of abolishing every vestige of this moral and political depravity," he wrote.[33]

The key word, however, was "practicable." Freeing the slaves en masse was not to Jefferson a practicable solution to the problem. First of all, he, like most of his contemporaries in both the North and the South, constantly

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[32]Thomas Jefferson, A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, Boyd, 2:546.

[33]Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Thomas Cooper, September 10, 1814, Bergh, 14:184.

feared slave uprisings.[34] Granting freedom to the black man was certain to encourage such uprisings, he believed. Second, Jefferson did not think that the black man and the white man could ever live peaceably together.[35] Thus, some means had to be found to return the black man to his continent of origin.

As early as 1776 Jefferson began proposing legislation to solve the problem. In that year he proposed A Bill Concerning Slaves. This bill recommended that "no persons shall, henceforth, be slaves within this commonwealth, except such as were so on the first day of this present session of Assembly, and the descendants of the females of them."[36] Thus, the bill forbade the entry of new slaves into the colony, but did not abolish the institution as it existed in 1776. The bill also called for the eventual deportation and colonization of all black people since Jefferson, as well as most other political thinkers of the day, believed that "nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government."[37]

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[34]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, January 22, 1821, Lester J. Cappon, ed., The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 2:570.

[35]Jefferson, Autobiography, Bergh, 1:72-73.

[36]Thomas Jefferson, A Bill Concerning Slaves, Boyd, 2:470.

[37]Jefferson, Autobiography, Bergh, 1:72-73.

Regarding his slave bill, which eventually passed in 1785 in an amended version, Jefferson stated the following:

> The bill on the subject of slaves was a mere digest of the existing laws respecting them, without any intimation of a plan for a future and general emancipation. It was thought better that this should be kept back, and attempted only by way of amendment, whenever the bill should be brought on. The principles of the amendment, however, were agreed on, that is to say, the freedom of all born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age. But it was found that the public mind would not yet bear the proposition . . .[38]

Thus, although Jefferson detested the institution of slavery, he was unable to conceive of the notion of mass emancipation. As unusual as he was for his day, as much as he wanted to find a solution to the problem, he was forced to leave that solution to future generations. To Jefferson the black members of Virginian society were not among "the people" to whom were vested the equal rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Another large group of people excluded from Jefferson's vision of "the people" was women. In his grand scheme for "universal" education, he never advocated the education of women. "A plan of female education has never been a subject of systematic contemplation with me," he wrote.[39] However, he did educate his own daughters. Yet in all of his writings, he never made provision for women to participate in the political process. In this respect he was not in opposition with the majority of his generation.

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[38]Jefferson, A Bill Concerning Slaves, Boyd, 2:472.

[39]Thomas Jefferson to Nathaniel Burwell, Esq., March 14, 1818, Bergh, 5:165.

It was while Jefferson was in France during the 1780's that his "earth belongs to the living" concept emerged. Although Jefferson believed that it was the responsibility of his generation to create a new republican society in America, he never believed that the laws he and his own generation made were unalterable or that any living generation had the right to enact laws for the generations to come. Jefferson believed that each generation inherited a debt-free world and was entitled to create its own body of laws. Thus, the Virginia constitution that he drafted and the laws that he proposed were to serve only as a framework by which future generations could create a world applicable to their needs and the changes which necessarily occur through the passage of time.

Jefferson did not believe that such changes would or should occur peacefully. He witnessed two major political revolutions first-hand, one in America and one in France. In spite of the violence and misery he knew to be inherent in such disputes, he never wished that American society would become so self-satisfied that it would not continue to question its leaders and fight for a voice in their decisions. Resistance, after all, means awareness, and awareness breeds participation.

> The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the atmosphere.[40]

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[40] Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, February 22, 1787, Cappon, 1:173.

Upon hearing of Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts he wrote: "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."[41]

Thomas Jefferson, unlike John Locke, believed that democracy, not monarchy, was the superior form of government. Yet, he did not believe that democracy could succeed everywhere it was tried. He was convinced that only in America, where there was space to grow, where economic conditions were conducive to it, and where everyone would have a stake in maintaining the order of society could democracy flourish. However, Jefferson's concept of democracy was not democracy in its pure form. It was democracy limited by geography and existing conditions.

First of all, Jefferson believed that "the people" had much to learn before they could be expected to be intelligent, informed participants in their government. Until they were educated and knowledgeable in the democratic process, their participation necessarily would be limited to electing the lower officials who in turn would elect the higher officials to carry out the most important and vital of decisions affecting society.

Second, as the country grew, Jefferson realized that pure democracy would become increasingly difficult, if not

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[41]Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787, Boyd, 12:356.

entirely impossible. Thus, he advocated representative democracy with broader participation occurring as society progressed. Pure democracy was practicable only on the town meeting level, which he advocated as "the wisest invention ever devised by wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government and for its preservation."[42]

To those of us living in twentieth century America, Jefferson's concepts of democracy and popular participation in government seem decidedly limited. He could not conceive of blacks or women as equal participants in government. He excluded illiterate, uneducated, nonowners of property from the political process.

Yet, Jefferson's ideas on democracy and popular participation exceeded by far what most of his contemporaries considered as safe or even possible in any society. He attempted to increase popular participation in government through his Virginia Constitution and his proposed legislation. He advocated the abolition of slavery in an economy highly dependent on the institution. He advocated religious freedom in a society that still considered non-Christians to be heretics. And he advocated a Revolution against Great Britain at a time when the concern for social stability was a major issue.

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[42]Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816, Bergh, 15:36.

In spite of the dangers of democracy of which he was constantly aware, Thomas Jefferson never wavered in his faith in popular participation in a democratic form of government. In this respect and by eighteenth century standards, he was truly an unusual political thinker.

CHAPTER II

ADAMS THE PURITAN

John Adams, Jefferson's political contemporary and life-long friend, was a totally different kind of man from Jefferson both in character and in thought. In this chapter an attempt will be made to trace the development of Adams' political thought and the changes that occurred in that body of ideas during Adams' life.

In order to do so one must also examine the events surrounding Adams, his role in those political events, his private life, and his character. For Adams was a complicated man, always struggling between the desire to be recognized as a leading thinker and shaper of political events and the desire to retain some semblance of a private life. Adams' political thought was most characterized by change, and this change in turn was directly influenced if not completely the result of events in his personal and professional lives.

Once again politics and the political process will be discussed only as they relate to Adams' political thought, its development, and its changes. Yet, unlike Jefferson, Adams' political thought was directly connected to political events. Adams' terms as Vice-President and President will not be discussed as these bear little on the discussion of the development of his political thought. His major writings will be analyzed in some detail in connection with the events

of his personal life, specifically in terms of his personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his life and the political events around him. It is only by looking at Adams' works in this manner that his political theory can be fully understood.

Throughout his life Adams' overriding concern was the maintenance of order and stability in American society.[43] A product of the eighteenth century Enlightenment as well as of New England Puritanism, he truly believed that man's constant struggle was between passion and reason, that people got along with each other only with difficulty. Growing up as he did in Puritan Massachusetts in a religious household, John Adams fervently believed that man was inherently sinful and, thus, doomed from birth to a life of struggle between good and evil. The battle between man's passion and his reason was an important theme in Adams' political writings and is evident in all of his major works. Thus, his political thought was influenced as much by his personal experience and religious background as it was by his readings. However, in spite of his gloomy vision of mankind, he was never one to ignore events in the real world. Thus, Adams continually tempered and manipulated his body of political thought as the world around him changed.

Despite his pessimistic view of mankind as a whole he

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[43]John R. Howe, Jr., The Changing Political Thought of John Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. xii.

was surprisingly optimistic about America. The key to this conviction was "his abiding belief in American virtue," in the morality and uniqueness of American society as a whole.[44] These convictions were in turn attributable to Adams' belief in the cyclical nature of history.

John Adams saw America as a rising empire in a world where all great nations rise and fall in historical cycles. Though Adams interpreted history in terms of the rise and fall of successive empires, he combined this notion with one of gradual progress.[45] To Adams progress was defined by "the advance of human liberty and the decline of tyranny."[46] Adams' concern with the quality of the American character, the structure of society, and the meaning of America's historical experience all had implications on his political thought. For Adams believed that "government bore an intimate relation to society, and unless the two were reconciled no state could long remain secure."[47]

Between 1760 and 1790 Adams' assumptions about the moral condition of the American people and the make-up of society altered significantly. From a belief in moral virtue and social cohesion, Adams made an about-face and began viewing

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[44]Ibid., p. 29.

[45]Ibid., p. 39.

[46]Ibid., p. 40.

[47]Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 569.

America as a land of moral declension and social conflict.[48] In short, what occurred during Adams' lifetime was a gradual realization that "no society would ever be truly egalitarian, and he attempted, as no other Revolutionary quite did, to come to terms with this fact of social and political life."[49] With the changes in those beliefs based on his observations of the world around him came changes in his political thought. Both influenced each other; both will be discussed below in that context.

Early in his life John Adams admitted his ambition and desire for esteem and recognition.[50] He was able to combine this need with his desire to aid his country in its historical progression beginning in 1761 when his patriotism was awakened "by the revolutionary implication of James Otis' stirring constitutional argument in the writs of assistance case."[51] It was in that year that Adams gained a place in the Braintree Town Meeting and began his political career with excitement and enthusiasm. His early concerns were local in character, but that began to change in the mid-1760's.

In 1765 Adams wrote the "Braintree Instructions," a document which went beyond purely local concerns by "setting forth the town's grounds of opposition to the Stamp Act."[52]

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[48]Howe, p. xiii.

[49]Wood, p. 569.

[50]Peter Shaw, The Character of John Adams (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 36.

[51]Ibid., p. 43.

[52]Ibid., p. 49.

But it was his "Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law" written in the same year also as a response to the Stamp Act that was the real indication that Adams had broadened his political concerns beyond the local domain.

Adams' "Dissertation" was a newspaper essay, a form well suited to him. "The role playing called forth Adams' literary bent (his style was vigorous if ponderous), while the legal aspect perfectly suited his philosophical approach to the law."[53] In the essay he speaks of certain "rights" derived from God and inherent in nature. Among these rights are the rights to knowledge and self-government. "Rulers are no more than attorneys, agents, and trustees for the people," wrote Adams. If this trust is violated as he felt it had been by Britain, "the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have deputed and to constitute abler and better agents, attorneys, and trustees."[54]

There was nothing particularly original in these works. They are almost verbatim quotes from John Locke's Two Treatises on Government. But they do demonstrate the influence of Locke and the Enlightenment on Adams' political thought, and they also demonstrate that Adams was capable of acting as a man of "selfless public virtue."[55]

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[53]Ibid., p. 50.

[54]John Adams, "Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law," Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams, 10 vols. (Boston, 1850-56; reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 3:456.

[55]Shaw, p. 50.

In addition, Adams' primary interest of the 1760's, that of defining and defending American liberties against Great Britain is apparent in this essay.

> We further recommend the most clear and explicit assertion and vindication of our rights and liberties to be entered on the public records, that the world may know, in the present and all future generations, that we have a clear knowledge and a just sense of them, and with submission to Divine Providence, that we never can be slaves.[56]

During the next few years a pattern was established in Adams' life that was to recur throughout the remainder of his active years. Soon after the publication of his "Dissertation," Adams realized that the esteem and respect that he so desired and felt he deserved in the form of an elected office were not to come his way. Thus, in 1766 he expressed a disinterest in politics and withdrew to Braintree.[57] Throughout much of his life Adams ran from politics when he felt he had been scorned only to return to the limelight at a more opportune time. This occurred in 1766 and again in 1771.

In 1774 Adams was elected to the Continental Congress. Although not an early advocate of independence, his sympathies were definitely with the Boston Radicals and against Governor Hutchinson. In 1773 he had welcomed the Boston Tea Party, and he did participate in the planning and the act. Always fearing man's passion overtaking his reason, Adams favored restraint, initially, proving here as later, that he was often

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[56] J. Adams, "Dissertation," C. F. Adams, 3:467.

[57] John Adams, "Diary" and "Autobiography", Ibid., 1:337.

a man of words rather than of action.

In Congress Adams was gratified by the support for Boston shown by the other delegates. Initially he favored accommodation with the Mother Country, and in 1775 Adams began his "Novanglus" essays as a response to the developing events around him.

In "Novanglus" Adams reiterated his belief that the early settlers came to America as much for a love of universal liberty as for religious freedom, and that it was the responsibility of the present generation to maintain that love and to maintain its rights against Britain. Truth, liberty, justice and benevolence were the basis of law, and the colonists, a virtuous people, must fight for their virtuous cause.[58] To Adams the current struggle was a continuation of the historical cycle begun by the early settlers, and if successful it would mean a progression in society marking an advancement in liberty and a decline in tyranny. Adams believed that there were but two kinds of men in the world: slaves and free. "The very definition of a freeman is one who is bound by no law to which he has not consented."[59] To Adams the Revolution was in its simplest form an exercise in virtuous conduct.[60]

In "Novanglus" Adams stated that Parliamentary power was limited to that which was freely granted by compact and consent,

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[58]John Adams, "Novanglus", Ibid., 4:14-15.

[59]Ibid., p. 28.

[60]Howe, p. 45.

specifically the regulation of external trade. In addition, he set forth a legal and moral argument for the colonial cause. Adams recounted in great detail the history of the conspiracy by the governors of Massachusetts, Governor Hutchinson being singled out for his ambition and vanity. The Whigs, on the other hand, were notable for their personal sacrifice and virtue. Adams depicted the conflict in simple terms, between good and evil. Furthermore, he displayed an early pessimism about human nature in these essays that would increase in intensity in the years to follow. One additional point must be mentioned about "Novanglus."

> Whereas the "Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law" had begun as an organized effort and had been adapted to the exigencies of the Stamp Act agitation, "Novanglus" set the pattern for the rest of Adams' extended political writings by both beginning and ending in disorganized response to developing events.[61]

The essays ended with the Battles of Lexington and Concord when Adams became convinced that accommodation with the Mother Country was no longer possible. At this point Adams began tirelessly to convince Americans that independence was the only course, a course that he saw as a series of steps: "the assumption of governmental power by the provincial governments, the raising of a Continental army, and finally a formal renunciation of the king's prerogative."[62]

With the coming of his belief in the necessity for independence Adams' thoughts and concerns turned away from

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[61]Shaw, p. 84.

[62]Ibid., p. 83.

individual rights to the maintenance of order in society. He feared anarchy, the passions of man overriding his reason, and he particularly was concerned that order be maintained in a society where the people were being encouraged to defy authority. To insure the continuing stability of American society Adams saw the need for the formation of new state governments. Adams further believed that those who formed these new governments must keep certain principles in mind, especially, that liberty, equality, and fraternity, while founded in nature, must be understood by those who govern and be cautiously applied.[63]

The creation of new governments would not be an easy task. "From the beginning, I always anticipated that we should have more difficulty and danger, in our attempts to govern ourselves and in our negotiation and connection with foreign powers than from all the fleets and armies of Great Britain," wrote Adams.[64]

At this point Adams viewed the individual states as holding the primary role in government; the Continental Congress existed only to facilitate cooperation among the states. However, he was "willing to accord the central government the leading role in matters of defense and foreign affairs and in the regulation of intercolonial disputes."[65] In the realm of domestic affairs, the states were superior, and all Congressional authority would be derived directly from them. After

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[63]J. Adams, "Diary," and "Autobiography," C. F. Adams, 2:312.

[64]Ibid., 3:13.

[65]Howe, p. 65.

his experience with a colonial government far removed from the control of the people, Adams was eager to have the central government highly accountable.

Adams had definite ideas regarding the formation of state governments, and he was eager that some form of new government be instituted as soon as possible to replace the colonial regime. "Any form our people would consent to institute would be better than none," wrote Adams, "even if they placed all power in a house of representatives and they should appoint governors and judges."[66] However, Adams hoped that the English Constitution would be preserved, and he favored a form of government close to what was known to all of the people. As early as 1775 Adams had contemplated the design of state government and wrote that he hoped that no hereditary powers should ever exist, that three branches of a legislature would be preserved, that there would be an executive independent of the senate, a council, and a house, and above all things, an independent judiciary branch.[67]

In theory, Adams did not advocate the abolition of monarchs throughout the world. "The truth is, that neither then nor at any former time, since I had attained maturity in age, reading, and reflection, had I imbibed any general prejudice against or in favor of kings."[68] Some societies by virtue of their stage of development require a monarch.

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[66] J. Adams, "Diary," and "Autobiography," C. F. Adams, 3:17.

[67] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[68] Ibid., p. 154.

Others, like America, require a republican form because the country has reached the stage in its historical cycle where it is capable of democracy, its citizens virtuous and moral.

At this point Adams was content with his own life, confident in his role as a political leader, and respected by his political contemporaries. He, in turn, respected them and was still convinced that America was a land of virtuous people capable of self-government. It was only natural, therefore, that he saw the necessity for popular participation in government, that is participation by "the people." But like Jefferson, he never intended to include the common rabble in self-government. Nor did he wish to include women. His confidence and admiration were extended only to landholders, in his view the solid citizens of Massachusetts.

"Thoughts on Government" published in 1776 contained more political philosophy plus more specific plans for state governments. This work was Adams' attempt to translate "what he thought he and other Americans had learned about themselves and their politics into basic social and political science that were applicable to all peoples at all times."[69] The result was "the only comprehensive description of American constitutionalism that the period produced--the finest fruit of the American Enlightenment, the bulky, disordered conglomeration of political glosses on a single theme."[70]

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[69]Wood, p. 568.

[70]Ibid.

In "Thoughts on Government" Adams set forth specific principles of governmental organization. It should be comprised of three branches and include full and free representation in the House of Commons, a Council chosen by the House, and a chief executive chosen by the Council and the House. All three branches should be independent of each other, and elections should be held annually.

In this grandiose work Adams declares that the happiness of society is the end of any government, and the best government is the one which communicates happiness to the greatest number of people. Happiness in the eighteenth century referred to the state of hap in the broad context of society, not to a personal, individual happiness. The Lockean influence is once again apparent. However, unlike Locke, Adams believed that of all the different forms of government, the republican form is the best since it is most directly responsive to the people, and consequently, it encourages those living under its constitution to become dignified, brave, enterprising, sober, industrious, and frugal.[71]

Adams, like Jefferson, transformed his political theory into concrete application by drafting a constitution for the state of Massachusetts in 1779. At the beginning, Adams echoes the Enlightenment philosophers by stating that all men are born free and equal with the inalienable rights of property, of defending their lives and liberties and of seeking safety

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[71]John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," C. F. Adams, 4:199.

and happiness. He adds that it is the duty of everyone to worship God, and all men are entitled to do so "in the manner most agreeable to the dictates of their own consciences."[72] To enable men to do so the legislature should provide at public expense places of worship and religious education. It is obvious at this point that Adams did not advocate separation of church and state.

The constitution continues with a statement that the people have the right to self-government and shall "exercise and enjoy every power, jurisdiction, and right which is not, or may not hereafter be by them expressly delegated to the United States of America, in congress assembled."[73] All power and governmental authority is derived from the people, and elected officials are accountable to the people. Since government is instituted for the common good, for the protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness of the people, they have a right to institute government and change it as required.[74]

Adams called for free elections and stated that all male inhabitants meeting suffrage requirements have the equal right to elect their leaders. Once again ownership of property was a suffrage requirement that Adams did not wish to eliminate.

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[72]Ibid., pp. 211-20.

[73]Ibid., pp. 223-24.

[74]Ibid., pp. 224-25.

He continues the constitution with a list of rights to which he saw all members of society entitled. Included in these rights are the right to protection. In turn, however, each member of society contributes his share in the form of personal service as required by the state. Property, an inalienable right, cannot be forcibly taken.

Adams also included freedom of the press, the right to assemble freely, and "freedom of deliberation, speech and debate" in his constitution. The remainder of the delineated rights include the following: no taxation without legislative authorization, no excessive bail, no quartering of soldiers without the consent of the owner, and the right to impartial judges who "shall hold their offices as long as they behave themselves well."[75]

Adams was quite specific as to the form the government should take. There were to be three independent governmental units: an executive, a legislative, and a judicial branch. The two branches of the legislature would be called the senate and the house. The first magistrate would be a strong executive authority with the right of veto, would hold the title of "His Excellency" and would be elected annually. All officials would be eligible for office only if they were of the Christian religion. Thus, although Adams believed that everyone should be able to worship God as he pleases, only "Christian believers" would be eligible to hold political office.

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[75]Ibid., p. 229.

Adams was a firm believer in the necessity of a bill of rights being included in every state constitution, and this article should secure "freedom of speech, impartiality, and independence at the bar" so that everyone would have the benefit of truth and law.[76]

From May of 1775 until the spring of 1776 Adams fixed his attention upon securing the construction of state administrations. Throughout the Second Continental Congress, he had one plan in mind: to establish state governments, form agreement among them, and declare independence from Britain. His plan was formulated so that there would be no lapse in governmental authority and, consequently, order would be maintained in society.[77]

Adams saw a very definite relationship between governmental systems and the societies they were meant to regulate. "If governments were to be successful, their constitutional structure could not be drawn at random, but only with careful reference to the peculiar circumstances of the society involved."[78] The differences in detail between the forms of government suggested in "Thoughts on Government" and laid out in Adams' constitutional draft are primarily due to the fact that Adams drew up "Thoughts on Government" with the southern states in

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[76]John Adams to Benjamin Rush, November 4, 1779, Ibid., 9:507.

[77]John Adams to Patrick Henry, June 3, 1776, Ibid., 9:387.

[78]Howe, p. 80.

mind, "while the constitution he intended for the quite different conditions of Massachusetts society."[79] Yet both of them contain principles which Adams thought relevant to all of the American states. The governments must be popular republics with the supreme power residing in the people. At the same time he urged that the new governments be as much like the colonial regimes as possible to help ease the transition. Yet, he urged that every vestige of monarchy and heredity be abolished. His overriding concern was to expand and guarantee the role of the people in the political process. His stipulations on voting were to him not stringent, but rather broad in scope. "Adams was anxious to withhold the vote only from the ragtag part of society not capable of maintaining its own economic independence."[80] In this respect Adams followed traditional eighteenth century political thought which assumed that the balance of political power in any society must follow the balance of property.

As much as Adams was convinced, at this point, that he lived in a virtuous society, he saw the need for provisions to be made for the passions of the people too. He never wavered in his belief that uncontrolled passions in men could lead to anarchy and that men could not be trusted with too much power. "Only under a rule of law, protected against violation by personal ambitions, could freedom for the individual and stability

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[79]Ibid., p. 82.

[80]Ibid., p. 86.

for society be maintained."[81] Also, only under governments in which the people had full voice could impartial laws replace individual ambition as the governing principle. To Adams the real authority to make and repeal laws constituted the real source of political influence. Legislative power had to be impartial or fragmented so no one group would be given too much power or influence.

The executive was the keystone of Adams' political system. Even with the recent memory of colonial governors, Adams felt that the peoples' rights and liberties could not be preserved without a powerful executive. He had to be given adequate power and authority to maintain his independence from the legislature, but at the same time, he was an important balancing agent to it. To maintain his power he was given the veto power as well as the sole power of political appointment, control of the militia, the granting of pardons, and the control of the disposition of money. The strong executive was the capstone of Adams' political system. "His function was to serve as spokesman for the public welfare against the appeals of special interests, and to act as a balance to the assembly."[82] The only safeguard against unlimited power was his frequency of election and a time limit to his holding office.

Adams' emphasis on the formation and the strengthening

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[81] Ibid., p. 90.

[82] Ibid., p. 98.

of state governments and his faith in the virtues of the American people continued until about 1780. Beginning at about that time and continuing until 1790 important changes in Adams' political thought occurred. Differences in his personal circumstances stemming from his problems of living in Europe during those years coupled with the changing political events and disruptions at home, specifically Shays' Rebellion, encouraged Adams to reassess his basic belief in the goodness of the American people, the form of government best suited to them, and the role of the federal government in the running of the country. While in Europe serving his country, doing what he saw to be his patriotic duty, Adams suffered a series of humiliations culminating in his recall to the United States which left him resentful of his countrymen and doubtful of their inherent virtue. Cut off as he was from direct contact with the occurrences in his native land, Adams began to view Americans in a negative light, as beginning a decline in their historical cycle.

The 1780's began auspiciously enough with Adams attempting to negotiate treaties of commerce and peace in Europe. It was at this time that he began to see the importance of a stronger central authority in America to handle foreign affairs. "If there is no common authority, nor any common sense to secure a revenue for the discharge of our engagements abroad for money," wrote Adams, "what is to become of our honor, our justice, our faith, our universal moral, political, and commer-

cial character?"[83] Independence would not be a blessing if the United States did not show the world that it was united in deed as well as name.

Thus, it was with a great deal of satisfaction that Adams first read the draft of the United States Constitution which called for a strong central government. "I read it with great satisfaction, as a result of good heads, prompted by good hearts; as an experiment better adapted to the genius, character, situation, and relations of this nation and country, than any which had ever been proposed or suggested."[84] It was not perfect, however. Adams feared the power of the Senate, and thus, he advocated more power to the Executive and less to the upper house of the legislature. He also advocated a longer Presidential term because he feared the foreign influence that might occur with frequent elections and changes in the cheif executive.[85] He did not advocate a hereditary executive, but he feared the system as outlined in the Constitution. He was, however, very pleased with the separation of powers as they were outlined.[86]

At about this time (1786-1787) Adams wrote his three

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[83]John Adams to Secretary Livingston, July 18, 1783, C. F. Adams, 8:108.

[84]John Adams, Inaugural Speech to Both Houses of Congress, March 4, 1797, Ibid., 9:106.

[85]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, December 6, 1787, Cappon, 1:214.

[86]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, March 1, 1789, Ibid., 1:236.

volume Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States. In this work are expressed Adams' broadest ideas about society, government, and the American commonwealth. It is important to note that his concern in this work shifted from an emphasis on state governments to a national focus. Adams' theory that human nature and passions require control by government is foremost in this three volume work. With the turmoil of Shays' Rebellion in 1786 Adams now believed that the United States was no longer above such human passions and squabblings.

Ideally the control of the government should be in the hands of all the people. In complex societies, however, one class of ambitious men, the aristocracy, has always managed to secure power. In America, the aristocracy was composed of men with better education, better placement (family) and notoriety. The two houses of the legislature existed to isolate the aristocracy in its own upper house. If there were a unicameral legislature, the aristocracy could seize power. This would not occur in a bicameral system. Rather, the aristocracy would become useful, balancing the opposing forces in government.

"Adams, without advocating anything new, in adhering to the old idea of a social balance, set himself at odds with another 'emerging American myth,' that of equality."[87] Adams warned his countrymen that the aristocracy was dangerous because it consisted of superior men. This concept was offensive to

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[87]Shaw, p. 210.

the Democrats and contributed to Adams' rejection by them.

The Defense was full of ambivalences and contradictions. Adams both praised and attacked the American people, displaying a mixture of disillusionment and faith. "Adams' pronouncements reflected not only the ups and downs of his career, but also a philosophical conundrum over the special virtue of Americans."[88] He advocated a strong executive in the first volume. By the last volume, however, Adams is attempting to right the balance in favor of the upper house. "This, together with opposing the king without hating him and championing the people without loving them, aroused suspicions about Adams' republicanism."[89]

As the 1780's drew to a close some fundamental changes were beginning to occur in Adams' political thought. These changes were the consequences of his observations of changes in American society. Even though he was abroad throughout most of the 1780's, Adams tried to keep a watchful eye on America. He wrote and questioned his friends; he observed his own mistreatment by the American Congress.

> In the failure of the American people to maintain their independence from French influence, to set their economic affairs in order, to band together and compel Britain to respect them, and to continue the orderly regulation of their society, he saw evidence of a disturbing decline in public morality.[90]

As America continued to grow economically as well as in popu-

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[88]Ibid., p. 211.

[89]Ibid., p. 214.

[90]Howe, p. 130.

lation Adams saw his country reaching maturity very rapidly. He saw society separating into the haves and the have-nots, and the moral struggle that once characterized the Revolution declining. By 1789 Americans were no different from anyone else.

What frightened Adams was what he saw as the increasing inability of Americans to live under a popular government. The immediate inspiration for his reassessment of American society was Shays' Rebellion in 1786, but his attitude was confirmed by what he saw as the decrease in religion and education as effective guarantors of the social order. "The great change in Adams' political thought, then, lay not in a growing conservatism but in his increasing mistrust of the behavior of mankind."[91]

Adams originally had viewed government as an expression of the virtue of the people. Gradually, he looked to government to foster and renew virtue as shown by the clause in the Massachusetts Constitution encouraging literature and the arts. "Without significantly changing the method of representation or the form of government, Adams gradually elevated government over the people, a trend that later culminated in his 'Discourses on Davila.'"[92] This great change in Adams' political thought is most apparent in the third volume of the Defense.

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[91]Shaw, p. 216.

[92]Ibid., p. 217.

In it Adams is writing in more universal terms, progressing from speaking of Americans to speaking of man in general, from American politics to universal principles. It is a picture of gloom. To Adams America had already begun the downswing in its historical cycle.

At this point Adams began to fear the democracy more than the aristocracy. "Intemperance and excess are more indulged in the lowest ranks than in the highest," he wrote.[93] On the other hand, the aristocracy when properly managed are "the best men, citizens, magistrates . . . they are the guardians, ornaments, and glory of the community."[94] In sum Adams was beginning to despair over human nature in general and over his countrymen in particular.

Adams' darkening views of democracy and his fellow man were further expressed in his "Discourses on Davila" essays written in 1790. Whereas in his earlier writings Adams expressed the view that America could avoid corruption by maintaining its republican institutions, he now wrote that America required its own natural, nonhereditary aristocracy for survival. "If, like France, it failed to encourage its superior men by offering them recognition in the form of title, its very existence would be threatened."[95]

"Davila" can also be viewed as a study of human psychology.

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[93]John Adams, Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States, C. F. Adams, 4:344.

[94]Ibid., 6:65, 73.

[95]Shaw, p. 231.

While attempting to argue the need for titles to maintain order and respect in government, Adams returned to his theory of emulation that he had first expressed years before while teaching in Worcester. "A desire to be observed, considered, esteemed, praised, beloved and admired by his fellows, is one of the earliest as well as keenest dispositions discovered in the heart of man."[96] Furthermore,

> man is activated less by fear, hunger, or any other primitive impulse than he is by "the passion for distinction." Approaching this truth from a political perspective, he now went so far as to claim that the desire to do better and thereby shine in others' eyes was more effective in controlling a population than "human reason" or "standing armies."[97]

This was the reason for titles. When given the proper respect and emulation by virtue of titles, men would have something to aspire toward and respect. While continually denying his own ambition and need for emulation, Adams had built a theory making it the basis of all human behavior.

By 1790 Adams saw society increasingly divided between the wealthy aristocracy and the poor democracy. He no longer believed that every man was created equal. "Nature has ordained that no two creatures are exactly alike or perfectly equal," he wrote.[98] They may be subject to equal laws, but they are

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[96]John Adams, "Discourse on Davila," C. F. Adams, 6:232.

[97]Shaw, p. 232.

[98]J. Adams, "Davila," C. F. Adams, 6:285.

not equal in person, property, education, or even opportunity, for the aristocracy always has the advantage in all of those areas. Adams was hardly in tune with the times with this philosophy, for it was written during the French Revolution which had inspired and fired the imagination and revolutionary fervor of many of his countrymen. The closest he approached this new spirit was in calling for an end to class hatred. Adams then

> spiced his call for accommodation with a view of man certain to alienate both of the classes to which he addressed himself: "Let the rich and poor unite in the bonds of mutual affection, be mutually sensible of each other's ignorance, weaknesses, and error, and unite in concerting measures for their mutual defence against each other's vices and follies."[99]

Viewing the French Revolution firsthand Adams began to find noteworthy the unruliness of the people, not their virtue. He feared social tumult, and in France his fears were confirmed in a short time. He feared that this same innovation could spread to America, and, thus, he wrote his Davila essays as a warning to his countrymen that what was needed was authority and control, not chaos. He especially stressed the need for strong, balanced government and titles as instruments of control and as safeguards against the passions of the people. Ironically, while looking for the esteem that had continually alluded him throughout his political career,

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[99]Shaw, p. 236.

Adams managed to alienate a large number of his countrymen and fellow political leaders with his ever-darkening views on his country.

Adams shared the commonly held belief of his time that political parties were incompatible with representative government. "There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other," he wrote.[100] He also feared corrupt elections, something he saw as inevitable. "Elections cannot be long conducted in a populous, oppulent, and commercial nation without corruption, sedition, and civil war," he wrote.[101] Adams viewed political parties and corrupt elections bred by them as the greatest political evil under the Constitution. To him this foreshadowed the necessity of removing government from the direct influence of the people. Once again he was not in tune with the times.

By 1801 Adams' view of American society was very pessimistic. His views were attributable in part to events in his own country, but also to the political situation in Europe. Adams believed that the cause of liberty had been reversed in Europe, due mainly to the French Revolution which in his mind had produced "all the calamities and desolations to the

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[100]John Adams to Jonathan Jackson, December 2, 1780, C. F. Adams, 9:511.

[101]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, November 15, 1813, Cappon, 2:401.

human race and the whole globe ever since."[102] In addition, religious revivalism was on the increase both abroad and in America, and general toleration was decreasing. At home Adams saw the regard for truth diminishing and other evils increasing.

> A general relaxation of education and government, a general debauchery as well as dissipation, produced by pestilential philosophical principles of Epicurus, infinitely more than by shows and theatrical entertainments; these are in my opinion, more serious and threatening evils than even the slavery of the black, hateful as that is.[103]

With the moderation of party animosity that occurred from about 1806, Adams began to hope once again that domestic unity would increase.

> For the first few years after 1800, Adams' analysis of American politics was guided by the assumptions he had developed during the 1790's: with all effective national sentiment gone, the country would continue divided between two factions. Control of the government would shift from party to party on a recurring twelve year cycle raising a new crisis at each interval.[104]

In the middle of the decade his fears began to temper after his alienation from the high Federalists, the gradual accommodation with the Republicans, and the moderation and political unity that he observed during the terms of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe.

As the end of Adams' life approached he continued to

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[102] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, August 28, 1811, C. F. Adams, 9:635.

[103] John Adams to George Churchman and Jacob Lindley, January 24, 1801, Ibid., 9:93.

[104] Howe, pp. 229-30.

worry over the evils of unchecked power.

> The fundamental article of my political creed is that despotism, or unlimited sovereignty, or absolute power is the same in a majority of a popular assembly, an aristocratical council, or oligarchical junto and a single emperor. Equally arbitrary, cruel, bloody, and in every respect diabolical.[105]

Power must never be trusted without a check.

By the end of his life Adams was cautiously hopeful as to the future of his country. He continued to hope for improvement and the gradual amelioration of humankind. He had lived his life in hopes of earning the esteem and admiration of his fellow Americans. By the end, however, Adams was convinced that he would not be remembered in a positive light. This belief as much as any outside event encouraged his generally dark views.

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[105]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, November 13, 1815, Cappon, 2:456.

CHAPTER III

OPTIMISM VERSUS PESSIMISM

Both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson devoted much of their lives to the same cause, the struggle for a free and independent United States and the subsequent strengthening and organization of the newly formed country. This was a revolutionary enterprise. Never before had a government been founded on the will and rights of the people it governed; never before was a government formed to be strictly accountable to its people.

During the period before and during the Revolutionary War, the two men worked together to accomplish their goal of independence. The fact that they held widely different views concerning the nature of man as well as the nature of government did not become an issue between them or to the public until after the goal of independence was reached. It was only then, when democracy was a reality and the United States was being governed by its citizens, that their differing views became not only an issue dividing the two friends, but also a problem along with issues of foreign policy that divided the country into two political factions.

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the political thought of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Although their differences exploded after the formation of a Constitution during their respective Presidential administrations, these differences were always in existence. They are apparent in

their early writings as well as in their later correspondence. However, it was in this correspondence that the two men discussed their differences in depth.

In order to compare and discuss the political thought of the two men, it is necessary first to discuss their respective views on man and government in general, together with the influences on them. Once this has been accomplished, one can delve into each man's works and examine their similarities and their differences.

Once again the scope will be limited to political thought; the political leadership of the two men will not be examined. Their correspondence late in life, however, will be referred to at some length, as these exchanges focus heavily on their political philosophies both past and present.

Thomas Jefferson's political ideas were grounded in the strong belief in man's equality, integrity, and inherent moral sense, as well as his capacity for learning and understanding. The fact that man is inherently moral makes it possible for men to live together in society, according to Jefferson.

"Like Locke, Jefferson believed that man was both a moral and a rational creature."[106] Because he was both moral and rational he had the capacity and the desire to learn and to understand. It was for this reason that Jefferson both espoused and labored for "universal" public education, that

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[106]Alan Pendleton Grimes, American Political Thought (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 152.

is to say, education for all free white males. For Jefferson believed that well-educated people would not often be misled, and that they would be in fundamental agreement on the issues of the day. "The successful operation of democracy, therefore, depended to a large extent upon the education of the populace."[107] Thus, through education, the people would be better informed about tyranny and would therefore be better able to protect themselves and their country against it.

It was through education, too, that man would be able to achieve his natural right to happiness, for happiness, it would be shown, is the result of a "good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits."[108] Through education and therefore an understanding of man's true interests, man would be better able to realize happiness. Thus, ignorance was not only a barrier to the efficient running of a democracy, but also to man's pursuit of happiness.

> If an individual knew and understood the laws of morality, he would practice them; if an individual practiced the laws of morality, he would advance considerably in his pursuit of happiness. Though man possessed innately a moral sense, education advanced him in an understanding of his rights and responsibilities.[109]

Jefferson's conception of the relationship of morality and education and its relation in turn to government served as the basis of his political thought.

John Adams, on the other hand, strongly believed in the

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., p. 153.

inequality of man rather than in the equality that Jefferson espoused. To Adams man was not the rational, moral creature that Locke and Jefferson envisioned. Although he believed like his contemporary that certain laws of nature existed by God's creation, he was inclined to see the world as a less harmonious and more inequitable place than Jefferson.

It is important to recognize that John Adams was as much a product of his Puritan background as he was a follower of Locke and the Enlightenment. Thus, his convictions and views were more often than not touched by the Puritan view of man's constant struggle between morality and sin. In fact, Adams saw man as more prone to sin and the universe more inclined toward damnation than did Jefferson. As a result, his observations from nature and from nature's laws tended to emphasize discord over harmony, pessimism over optimism.

John Adams recognized the need as well as the right to a secular and a religious education, stating at one time that "knowledge is among the most essential foundations of liberty."[110] However, he did not believe that education alone would conquer human appetites, passions, and prejudices.[111] And although in his view every man has an equal right to knowledge, it can "never be equally divided among mankind,

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[110]John Adams to Samuel H. Parsons, August 19, 1776, C. F. Adams, 9:434.

[111]John Adams to Samuel Adams, October 18, 1790, Ibid., 6:416.

any more than property."[112] Furthermore, although knowledge broadly disseminated can improve mankind, it may be applied to bad purposes as well as to good. "There is no necessary connection between knowledge and virtue," wrote Adams, "for conscience, too is essential to morality."[113] The problem is that man's conscience can never be trusted, for his selfish interests will more often than not win over his more altruistic inclinations.

Jefferson's political thought was based on his conception of man's rational, moral nature, the nature assumed by Locke. Endowed with an inherent moral sense and a capacity to learn, he is also endowed with natural rights. To Jefferson as well as Locke none of these rights is the product of society or government, for they exist apart from both, solely on the basis of man's existence on earth, by virtue of his birth into what Locke calls his state of perfect freedom. The rights to life and liberty, however, in addition to being natural rights are also "inalienable rights." Although certain other natural rights such as the legislative and executive rights have to be relinquished once men are united under political systems, the inalienable rights do not have to be relinquished under the social contract existing between the governors and the governed. In his Summary View of the Rights of British America written in 1774, Jefferson began defining these

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[112]John Adams to John Taylor, April 15, 1814, Ibid., 6:517.

[113]Ibid., p. 520.

inalienable rights, refining them further two years later in the Declaration of Independence. To Jefferson the basis of government lay in its defense of these inalienable rights, and any law that in any way infringes on these rights is contrary to democracy.

Jefferson's thinking always leaned toward expanding an individual's freedom of thought and action, resting "ultimately on his faith that free inquiry would indeed conquer error, that man was basically moral, and that educated people would come to agreement on fundamentals."[114] It was this faith in reason and in man that enabled him to be such a staunch defender of the rights of man against any form of repressive government. And because Jefferson believed that the majority would be reasonable and would guard against infringing on the rights of others, he believed democracy to be the best form of government.

In spite of Jefferson's unfailing trust in his fellow man, he did not hold the same trust for those men once they were in government. Like Adams he felt that there was a natural tendency for those in power to abuse that power entrusted to them. As a result, he believed that government should always be kept close to the people, "since government inclined to abuse power as it became further removed from those it governed."[115] Thus, he believed that local government should be placed first, state government next, and the national

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[114]Grimes, p. 156.

[115]Ibid., pp. 157-58.

government last in terms of scope of powers granted to them. The closer the government was to the people, the more likely the people would be to check its abuses, for the people must be the guardians of their own liberty.

Adams' political thought, in turn, was grounded not only in his Puritan background, in his belief in man's constant struggle between passion and reason, but also in his observations of the events around him. Always fearful of the masses and concerned over the maintenance of order in a society in transition, Adams' skepticism of man's inherent morality and good sense was augmented by his observation of Shays' Rebellion and the French Revolution.

Adams reacted to Shays' Rebellion in 1786 with emotion, horror, and pessimism. The rebellion in central Massachusetts in which mobs of farmers attempted to forcibly prevent the county courts from sitting and then tried to capture the federal arsenal at Springfield occurred in response to rampant inflation, heavy taxation of land, and general economic woe. Adams interpreted these bold acts of frustration and civil unrest as proof of declining American virtue and as the peoples' inability to live peaceably under popular government.[116] The French Revolution which followed in 1789 served to reinforce and darken his views on mankind.[117]

Jefferson, upon hearing of the news of civil unrest in

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[116]Howe, p. 108.

[117]Ibid.

Massachusetts, reacted with typical optimism. To Jefferson the rebellion demonstrated a healthy concern of the Massachusetts farmers over the maintenance of their freedom and the mismanagement of their government. To William Stephens Smith, Jefferson wrote the following: "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."[118]

Jefferson, in France, serving as minister plenipotentiary at Versailles, viewed the French Revolution as a continuation of man's fight for freedom and democracy, calling it "the most sacred cause that man was engaged in."[119] While living in France he had become acutely aware of the oppression of the French citizenry by the monarchy. "If all the evils which can arise among us from the republican form of our government from this day to the day of judgment could be put into a scale against what this country suffers from its monarchical form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would proponderate," he wrote.[120] Thus, he was unable to view the French Revolution as anything but a clearcut contest

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[118]Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787, Boyd, 12:356.

[119]Henry Steele Commager, William E. Leuchtenburg, and Samuel Eliot Morison, The Growth of the American Republic, 6th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1:300.

[120]Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins, August 4, 1787, Boyd, 11:684.

between monarchy and republicanism that would end in improved conditions for the French citizenry if it were successful.

To Adams these two dramatic events demonstrated his fundamental belief that selfish man seeks his own gain at the expense of his neighbor unless there is power in the government to restrain him. Therefore, he sought to elevate government over the people as a way of controlling man's selfish, violent impulses. And he, like Jefferson, believed that selfish men in government would abuse their powers unless they, too, were checked. Thus, he, too, advocated a system of checks and balances. Unlike his Southern friend, however, Adams' system put class against class in hopes of equalizing the pressure of selfish interests that necessarily existed in any class-ridden society.

Adams' system was founded upon his belief in the existence of a class struggle between the aristocratic and the democratic elements of society. Adams strongly believed in the inevitability of the existence of an aristocracy and in the necessity of segregating this element in its own portion of the government. It was not until late in the lives of both Adams and Jefferson that they were able to air their differences on this matter in their correspondence. Their individual views on aristocracy were fundamental to their political thought, and a discussion of those views must necessarily be included in any examination of it.

To John Adams equality among men was more a dangerous myth than a reality. Adams was too astute an observer of his

world to believe that everyone was truly equal. In fact he believed that it was dangerous even to think so, for to do so would be contrary to the natural history of man. There were too many inherent differences in individuals for everyone to be equal in every way.

Although children were born to equal rights, they were not born to equal opportunity because they were born to different fortunes and "to very different success and influence in life."[121] It was not true, therefore, that everyone was born to equal influence in society, to equal property, or to equal advantage. "Inequalities are part of the natural history of man," said Adams.[122]

To Adams an aristocrat was defined as any man "who can command, influence, or procure more than an average of votes, every man who can and will influence one man to vote besides himself."[123] There are well born in every society, and America was, in that respect, like any other society. Furthermore, an aristocrat is born, not created, for "birth and wealth together have prevailed over virtue and talents in all ages."[124] Riches are always honored, and wealth and good looks more favored and respected than wisdom and goodness.

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[121] John Adams to John Taylor, April 15, 1814, C. F. Adams, 6:452.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., p. 451.

[124] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 9, 1813, Cappon, 2:352.

Asked Adams, "What chance have talents and virtues in competition with wealth and birth and beauty?"[125] To him there were five pillars of aristocracy: beauty, wealth, birth, genius, and virtue. "Any one of the three first, can at any time over bear any one or both of the two last."[126]

It is interesting to note in examining Adams' theory that throughout his life he felt that he never received the acclaim he deserved. He saw himself as both virtuous and talented and resented what he viewed as his country's lack of appreciation for him. It was natural then that he attribute this lack of success to his "common" birth. He felt doomed by his background, his lack of wealth and good looks. In his view he could not compete in the real world with men of wealth and beauty. No matter how long and how hard he strove he could not equal the acclaim that came so easily to others simply by virtue of their being born to better circumstances.

Jefferson, in replying to his friend's commentary on the aristocracy, differentiated between what he termed the "natural" and the "artificial" aristocracy. Jefferson's natural aristocracy was grounded in "virtue and talents," as opposed to the artificial aristocracy founded on birth and wealth lacking both virtue and talents. To Jefferson, then, Adams was indeed an aristocrat of the "natural" variety because of

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[125]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, September 2, 1813, Ibid., 2:371.

[126]Ibid.

his virtue and talents. Adams, however, never viewed himself as aristocratic in any way, but certainly must have viewed Jefferson, the successful, acclaimed plantation owner, in that light.

Jefferson continues his commentary as follows: "The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and the government of society."[127] Furthermore, government should provide effectively for the pure selection of this natural elite to hold the offices of that government. The artificial aristocracy, on the other hand, is mischievous and should be prevented from any ascendancy in government.

Both men agreed on the existence of an aristocracy or an elite among man. However, they differed totally in their ideas on how to handle this elite in society. Since Adams believed the aristocracy to be an inevitable part of society, he felt that a place had to be made for this elite in the political system. Thus, in the national and state governments, it would be placed in the Senate of each legislative body. In other words,

> Aristocrats were to be represented in the upper house of the legislature because aristocrats would seek to further the interests of the aristocrats in the state; the common people were to be represented so that they might further their interests; together, aristocrats and common people might check each other's purely selfish class interest and through compromise and selective policy arrive at a program in the public interest. It was this basic approach which Adams developed at length in his Defense of the Constitutions of the United States.[128]

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[127] Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, October 28, 1813, Ibid., 2:388.

[128] Grimes, p. 147.

Jefferson, on the other hand, believed that "giving them [the artificial aristocracy] power in order to prevent them from doing mischief, is arming them for it and increasing instead of remedying the evil."[129] Furthermore, it was not necessary to protect the wealthy from the other element of society because enough of them would filter into every branch of government that they would be able to protect themselves.

To Jefferson the best remedy was

> exactly that provided by all our constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the aristoi from the pseudo-aristoi, of the wheat from the chaff. In general they will elect the real good and wise. In some instances, wealth may corrupt and birth blind them, but not in sufficient degree to endanger society.[130]

In time the pseudo or artificial aristocracy would be eradicated with the passage of laws abolishing entails and privilege of primogeniture. Also, by educating those worthy by virtue of talent not birth, "worth and genius would thus have been wrought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts."[131] Therefore, the most qualified would be in the position of power, regardless of birth or wealth.

Thus, Jefferson's political system was based upon his

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[129]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, October 28, 1813, Cappon, 2:388.

[130]Ibid., pp. 388-89.

[131]Ibid., p. 390.

belief in the natural rights of man and in a faith that when properly educated, the people were the best guardians of their rights. Since those governments were best which responded to the popular will, Jefferson sought to keep government close to those it governed, and looked to the state and local governments as the basis of the system. Since the greater distance between the federal government and the people encouraged abuses, it should be delegated only a minimum of powers and be carefully restricted in the exercise of them. To both Adams and Jefferson the happiness of those governed was the object of any government, but Jefferson believed that this goal was best achieved by a minimum of government founded upon democratic principles and held accountable to the people it governed.

Adams, in contrast, conceived the government to be a watchguard over the excesses of man. He was distrustful of the common man as well as the aristocracy, and he believed each had to be subject to a system of checks and balances. Neither could be trusted once in government, so each should be accountable to the other rather than to the common electorate. To Adams the goal of government was the maintenance of order in society as well as the happiness of the individual.

The influence of John Locke and the Enlightenment "philosophes" is apparent in the writings of both men. In fact, certain of the early writings of Adams and Jefferson are remarkable in their similarity of intent and content. Particularly striking in their sentiments are John Adams' "Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law" written in 1765 and Thomas

Jefferson's Summary View of the Rights of British America published in 1774.

Both of these works were written in response to specific events, the passage of the Stamp Act in the case of Adams, and the Boston Tea Party and the subsequent closing of the port of Boston in the case of Jefferson. Both include a claim for and discussion of man's natural rights, especially the right to self-government. Both recount some of the infractions on these rights by Great Britain, and both include an emphasis on the existence of a social contract between the monarch and the colonists. Most important, however, is the fact that each of these documents is its respective author's first denial of the authority of Parliament over the colonies, and each was the first real indication that its author had broadened his political interest beyond purely local concerns. Although the two documents were written nine years apart, they demonstrate each man's growing concern with the status of the American colonies and hint at the need for some alteration of that status.

During the years surrounding the Declaration of Independence the concerns of the political leaders throughout the colonies turned toward the creation of new state governments to aid in the maintenance of order and stability in a society in flux. "The Revolution furnished Americans an opportunity to give legal form to their political ideals as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and to remedy some of their grievances through state constitutions and through legislation."[132]

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[132]Commager, Leuchtenburg, and Morison, 1:207.

Indeed, they rejoiced at the prospect. "How few of the human race have ever enjoyed an opportunity of making an election of government, more than of air, soil, or climate for themselves or their children!" exclaimed Adams.[133] Jefferson agreed with his colleague. "It is a work of the most interesting nature and such as every individual would wish to have his voice in."[134]

The excitement of creating new state constitutions was so great, in fact, that "even the business of the Continental Congress was stifled because so many delegates--including Jefferson--left for home to take part in the paramount activity of erecting the new state governments."[135] Since none of the political leaders of the day, as John Adams said, thought of consolidating this vast continent under one national government, the creation of state governments became of paramount importance. "Nothing--not the creation of [the] confederacy, not the Continental Congress, not the war, not the French alliance--in the years surrounding the Declaration of Independence engaged the interests of Americans more than the framing of these separate governments."[136] State constitutions were a way of legitimizing the Revolution, and the building of a permanent foundation for freedom became the essence of it. State constitutions were necessary, also, for the practical

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[133]John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," C. F. Adams, 4:200.

[134]Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Nelson, May 16, 1776, Boyd, 1:292.

[135]Wood, p. 128.

[136]Ibid.

considerations of waging a war against Great Britain.

Thus, the thoughts of both Adams and Jefferson turned to the formation of state governments. Each man, while aiding in the breaking-up of one system of government, was already contemplating the reorganization of another based on a republican ideology. In the process each man drafted a constitution for his own state, and Adams additionally wrote a plan of government for Jefferson's Virginia at the request of Richard Henry Lee. An examination of the plans of government and constitutions written by Adams and Jefferson shed some light on several important similarities as well as the radical differences that began to become apparent in the political thought of each of them, for the plans of government written by the two men were the first concrete applications of the political theories each developed during the Revolutionary era.

John Adams, who had advised John Penn of North Carolina and Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant of New Jersey regarding the framing of constitutions for those states, really drew up two plans of government for Virginia, the second being an elaboration of the first.[137] The first plan was written in November of 1775 in a letter to Richard Henry Lee, who had requested of Adams that he write down his ideas on state government. It is a brief sketch which Adams intended as a base that could be modified to suit the differing needs of the various states. Included in the plan were the following basic principles:

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[137]Boyd, 1:333.

the government would consist of three separate branches, an executive, a legislative, and a judicial branch, each independent of and balancing out the other two; free representation of the people in the lower house of the legislature; an upper house chosen by the lower house; a governor chosen by the legislature for a specific duration of time; a strong executive branch with the power of veto, appointment, and command of the militia, and, finally, the eventual possibility of the "people at large" choosing their governor and legislature directly "as soon as affairs get into a more quiet course."[138]

Adams' second plan resulted from a conversation between George Wythe and Adams in Philadelphia in January 1776 in which Wythe requested that Adams write his ideas more fully. This plan eventually became part of "Thoughts on Government" published in 1776. In this plan Adams reiterated his belief that "the happiness of society is the end of government" and "the form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or, in one word, happiness, to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best."[139] He then discusses in greater detail than in his letter to Lee the desirability of a legislature chosen by the people or their representatives and the need for three separate branches of government. In addition he calls for a system of public education and discusses the desirability of the states holding the primary role in government, rather than the federal government as he later

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[138]John Adams, "Autobiography," C. F. Adams, 1:185-87.

[139]John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," Ibid., 1:193.

advocated.

The constitution which Adams drafted for the state of Massachusetts in 1779 differed in some details from the plan he devised for Virginia, for he intended his constitution for the differing conditions that existed in Massachusetts society. One specific detail that differed in the two plans, for instance, concerned the choosing of the upper house of the legislature. In the plan he devised for Virginia, he suggested that the lower legislative body, which was elected by the voters, appoint the upper house. In the Massachusetts constitution, however, he called for the direct election of the Senate by the qualified voters.

As different in small detail as the two plans were, the plans of Massachusetts and Virginia were similar in one very important respect: they were both very much like the governments that were in existence during the colonial days, governments to which the citizens already were adjusted. Therefore, the transition in government could proceed easily and rapidly with no lapse in governmental authority.

On the other hand, Jefferson's constitution for the state of Virginia of which there are three separate drafts was a radical departure from what the colony had been accustomed. All three drafts include a list of grievances against the king which Jefferson altered for use in the Declaration of Independence. In addition his constitution includes a statement of religious freedom, the broadening of suffrage, and other departures from the colonial government (See Chapter I,

pp. 14-15 for further discussion). The point where Jefferson departed the most from the colonial regime and conflicted the most significantly, therefore, with Adams involves the role of the executive.

The executive was the capstone to Adams' system of government. Adams saw a powerful executive as vital to the preservation of liberty. Thus, he was given a great amount of power, including the veto power, power over the militia, pardoning power, power of appointment, and the power over the dispersal of funds. Since he possessed so much power, he was directly accountable to the will of the people, at least in theory, as he was elected directly by them.

Jefferson's executive served a function more equal in power to that of the legislature than Adams'. In all three of his constitutional drafts Jefferson lists the restrictions on the executive, rather than delineating the powers as Adams did. Included in this list of restrictions are the following: the governor would possess no veto power, no power of dissolving or adjourning the legislature, no war-making power, no power to raise the armed forces, no pardoning power, and no power over the coining or regulation of money. All of these restrictions were powers which Adams' executive possessed.

These major differences in executive power are directly attributable to both men's views on the basic nature of man and his given role in government. Thomas Jefferson's confidence in the educated man, his strong belief in his inherent equality and integrity encouraged him to place the powers of government in the hands of a broad political base. Always suspicious

of those same men once they were in government, he favored a system whereby government could be kept close to the people and directly responsible to them. Yet, until the political base was broadened sufficiently, Jefferson favored the election of the executive by the lower house of the legislature.

John Adams' pervasive distrust of the common man, his belief in the inequality of man, his view of the world as an unharmonious place, and his concern with maintaining stability in society convinced him of the need for controlling the masses by means of a powerful government headed by a strong executive. This elevation of the government over the people is in direct contrast to Jefferson's desire to keep the government as close to the electorate as possible. It is not surprising, then, that the two men, so opposite in belief and temperament, while working toward the same goal managed to conflict so greatly on the issue of state government.

The states adopted their new constitutions in a variety of ways. The Constitution of Virginia which eventually was adopted was not one of Jefferson's drafts. Much to Jefferson's dismay it was framed by a legislative body without any specific authorization and promulgated by it without popular consent. This fact was of great worry to Jefferson, for he was concerned with separating fundamental principles and "the natural rights of mankind" from ordinary statutory law.[140] Because it was written by a legislature with no more power than any legislature

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[140]Wood, p. 275.

of the past or future the Constitution was not unalterable. For this reason Jefferson saw the need for a separate constituting body and a council of revision to make the Constitution "permanent" and to deny the legislature "the power to infringe this Constitution."[141] Jefferson was convinced that the Constitution of Virginia as it was adopted was defective because it was not created by a special convention and was alterable by the ordinary legislature.[142]

Such was not the case with the Constitution of Massachusetts. A constitutional convention was elected and over a period of several years, a new constitution was written, mostly by John Adams' hand. His draft, adopted on 2 March 1780 by the convention, was then submitted to the people. "Citizens were invited to discuss the constitution in town meetings, to point out objections and suggest improvements, to vote on it article by article, and to empower the convention to ratify and declare it in force if two-thirds of the men aged twenty-one and upward were in favor."[143] In this way the entire constitution was declared ratified and in force on 15 June 1780.

The Constitution of Massachusetts written by John Adams is still in effect, although amended out of all resemblance to John Adams' constitution of 1780. Jefferson's constitution was

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[141] Ibid., p. 276.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Commager, Leuchtenburg, and Morison, 1:209.

never adopted as he wrote it, although he exerted his influence (from far-off Philadelphia) on the creation of the one eventually adopted.

By the time the state governments were functioning smoothly the differences in political thought between Jefferson and Adams were increasing rapidly. Those differences were to become more obvious in the years ahead. They would bring the two men into sharp political confrontation, placing them at opposite ends of the political spectrum and temporarily destroying their long friendship. Although the two leaders reconciled toward the end of their lives, their views on mankind, the country they had helped to found, and its place in the world surrounding it remained in conflict. It was these differences that made their late correspondence so lively and interesting. It was these differences, too, that contributed to the division of this country into two political parties, the traditions of which still remain a part of contemporary political thought.

CHAPTER IV

DREAMS VERSUS REALITY

With their departures from political life, John Adams' in 1801 and Thomas Jefferson's in 1809, both men retired to their respective homes to live out their remaining days. Although they were away from the public eye and happily separated from the politics of the day, the two men remained acute observers of both the American political scene and world events, and both expressed their thoughts on those events, as well as what they saw as America's place in the world. As they grew old they were able to exchange their thoughts through the mail and to debate philosophical and practical points. Both Adams and Jefferson lived long enough so that they could look back on the years surrounding the Revolution, recall their hopes for the new republic, compare them to the reality of their day, and speculate on the future of this country in particular, democracy in general, and the future of civilization.

This final chapter will attempt to piece together through existing evidence the two men's hopes and dreams and compare them to certain realities of American society in the 1980's. Although Adams and Jefferson left a rich philosophical base in their writings to accomplish this task, some speculation on the part of this writer will be necessary. This will not be an exercise in "if history," for that is a futile and worthless endeavor. But to compare the current reality with the

some light on the successes of this country in becoming the democracy envisioned by those who fought for its establishment, and also on its failures. Although much of this chapter will be "intellectual history," that is, a continued discussion of political thought and philosophy, certain concrete issues will be addressed.

Both Adams and Jefferson held certain beliefs as to what a government should do and how it should function. This will be discussed and related to the twentieth century reality. Both Adams and Jefferson, but especially Jefferson, envisioned specific educational systems. This issue too will be addressed. And finally, the concepts of equality and happiness will be discussed; that is to say, happiness in the 1980's compared with the eighteenth century meaning in general, and Thomas Jefferson's definition as it was used in the Declaration of Independence. Since both men believed governments exist to bring happiness to those they govern, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of how successful the United States government has been in achieving this goal.

Throughout his life Thomas Jefferson remained optimistic about the progress of this country in particular and civilization in general. In his eyes the American Revolution had sparked the growth of democracy around the world, and he believed that that growth would continue. "The flames kindled on the fourth of July 1776 have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism," wrote

Jefferson near the end of his life. "On the contrary they will consume those engines and all who work them."[144] His faith in his countrymen, in their minds and spirits, remained strong. There was no doubt in his mind that the United States would continue to prosper, but he knew that in one important respect it would necessarily be different from that which he had originally envisioned.

When Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and his Virginia constitution in the 1770's, he believed that a democratic society was possible only in an agrarian country of small landowners and farmers. He envisioned America as a land of producers and exporters of raw materials. From Europe America would import all of its manufactured goods.

He started to change his mind with the disruptions in trade that began to occur around the time of the War of 1812. These disruptions forced him to see the necessity of American self-sufficiency in a world where commerce could be so easily disrupted. Thus, he wrote contentedly in 1812 that in Virginia every family was "a manufactory within itself, and is very generally able to make within itself all the stouter and midling stuffs for its own clothing and household use."[145] Only the finer things need be imported from the north, not from England. "Experience has taught me that manufactures are now as necessary

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[144]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, September 21, 1821, Cappon, 2:575.

[145]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, January 21, 1812, Ibid., 2:290-91.

to our independence as to our comfort," he wrote.[146] Not only was Jefferson flexible enough to admit the need for manufactures, but furthermore, he was able to see the disruptions in commerce resulting from the war in a positive light, forcing the United States to develop improved manufactures and thereby to become much more self-sufficient.[147] Representative democracy, he soon learned, could work in a nonagrarian as well as in an agrarian society.

John Adams vacillated in his views on the accomplishments of the Revolution and the future of democracy worldwide. His views typically ran the gamut from guarded optimism to acute pessimism. Part of this vacillation can be attributed to his continued orientation to what he viewed as history's cyclical nature.

Adams viewed the American Revolution as he viewed history in general, that is, as part of a cycle. Interpreting history as he did in terms of the rise and fall of successive empires coupled with the notion of the gradual progress of humanity, Adams saw the Revolution as an exercise in virtue. The Revolution was fought "to preserve the honor of our country and vindicate the immemorial liberties of our ancestors," he wrote. "Independence was not an object of predilection and choice, but of indispensable necessity."[148] Thus, the Revo-

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[146]Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Austin, January 19, 1816, Bergh, 14:392.

[147]Ibid.

[148]Richard Buel, Jr., Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 167.

lution was the continuation of an historical cycle that had begun with the arrival of the first white settlers in America, not a battle of ideology.

After the Revolution Adams could never decide whether America had reached the apex of its upward swing and was beginning its inevitable decline, or whether the country would continue to emerge as a rising empire. For example, after Shays' Rebellion in 1786 Adams was convinced that the country was beginning its downward cycle and that all would be lost in the years ahead. "You and I have been indefatigable labourers through our whole lives for a cause which will be thrown away in the next generation," he wrote despairingly to Jefferson in 1787.[149] By 1814, however, he was somewhat more optimistic about the future of democracy and the progress of mankind. He wrote accurately that his time had been a time of important experiment in government which would be studied by generations to come. He continued as follows: "I have no doubt that the horrors we have experienced for the last forty years will ultimately terminate in the advancement of civil and religious liberty, and ameliorations in the conditions of mankind."[150] He admitted in 1815 that the eighteenth century, in spite of its errors, had been the most honorable to human nature. For all of its wars and suffering, knowledge

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[149]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, October 9, 1787, Cappon, 1:203.

[150]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1814, Ibid., 2:435.

had increased and had been diffused, the arts had improved, and most importantly, so had the condition of man.[151]

By 1821 Adams once more feared for the progress of society. The world was in turmoil and so was the soul of Adams. "Must we, before we take our departure from this grand and beautiful world, surrender all our pleasing hopes of the progress of Society? Of improvement of the intellectual and moral condition of the World? Of the reformation of mankind?"[152] The people of the world were not advanced enough intellectually to understand the workings of a free government, thought Adams. But he held the guarded hope that this condition could change, and with that change the condition of mankind would continue to improve.[153]

The United States has indeed prospered, as Jefferson firmly believed, but not without difficulty. Both Adams and Jefferson were correct in fearing that the country would become divided over the issue of slavery, for a long and bloody war did indeed ensue. There has been an abundance of civil strife in the two hundred years of this country's existence. The kind of unrest that the country experienced with the student unrest and ghetto violence of the 1960's was similar to that which Jefferson most expected and understood as necessary for the success of democracy. It is the kind of violence,

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[151]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, November 13, 1815, Ibid., 2:456.

[152]John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 19, 1821, Ibid., 2:572.

[153]Ibid.

too, that would have struck fear in the heart of John Adams. Again, as he did during Shays' Rebellion, Adams would have seen men's passions overtaking their reason, the triumph of mob violence over democratic government. Jefferson, on the other hand, would have viewed the unrest as the peoples' interest in protecting their democracy, his faith remaining in those people as the only censors of their governors.

> I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for the moment, but will soon correct themselves. The people are the only censors of their governors and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty.[154]

But what of the structure and policy of this government? Is it at all close to what either man saw it to be? Before attempting to answer this question, it is necessary to review each man's "thoughts on government," their views on particular aspects of government such as purpose, size and scope, power structure, and bureaucratic structure.

To Jefferson the people were the source of all power, created as they were, free and equal. "The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property, and in their management."[155] Democratic governments exist to bring happiness to the greatest number of people possible. Laws are intended to protect and

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[154]Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington, January 16, 1787, Boyd, 11:49.

[155]Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816, Bergh, 15:36.

defend men's liberties and rights, and not to hinder him in any unnatural way.

> No man has a natural right to commit aggression on the equal rights of another; and this is all from which the laws ought to restrain him; every man is under the natural duty of contributing to the necessities of the society; and this is all the laws should enforce on him; and no man having a natural right to be the judge between himself and another, it is his natural duty to submit to the umperage of an impartial third.[156]

Thus, upon entering society, man need not relinquish any of his inalienable rights; he need only make a contribution to that society equal to the protection given him by its government. However, those in power in the government must be watched carefully. Therefore, Jefferson favored a system of checks and balances within government.

Adams sought to elevate government over its citizens. Fearing the masses, he sought to protect people from their own passions by instituting a strong government with a powerful executive as its mainstay. Adams too feared power because "power naturally grows because human passions are insatiable."[157] In fact, he feared the power of the upper classes as much as he feared the passions of the "democracy." Thus, Adams' system of government put class against class in hopes of equalizing the selfish interests of both classes. The purpose of government then was to protect the classes from each other, the people from themselves, and to make property secure for all.

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[156]Thomas Jefferson to Francis W. Gilmer, June 17, 1816, Ibid., 15:24.

[157]John Adams to Roger Sherman, July 18, 1789, C. F. Adams, 6:431.

The reality of power existed in the eyes of both men. How was this power to be divided? Jefferson believed that the concentration of power destroys great nations. Thus, he sought to decentralize both the power and the functions of government.

Since the people were the source of all authority, power in government must radiate upward from them. Once again it is necessary to keep in mind just who the people were. As stated in Chapter I, to Jefferson the people consisted of that group of free, educated, white, male landowners, a group which composed only a minority of the American population. Thomas Jefferson was aware of this fact, and, so, throughout his life he favored the broadening of suffrage, and, thus, the increased diffusion of political power. Since the number of landholders had to be enlarged, Jefferson proposed bills to abolish primogeniture and to repeal the laws of entail that had been central to Virginian colonial society. Since these same new landholders must additionally be educated to properly exercise their new political power, Jefferson favored education for them at the taxpayers' expense. Through that education a new "natural aristocracy" would be created, an elite grounded in virtue and talents that would, when mature, assume the role of government leaders.

It was not sufficient, however, to disseminate power to more people if the functions of government were to be concentrated on high. Thus, Jefferson favored a type of government most responsible to the local citizenry, a particular kind of representative democracy. To the national government went the

defense of the nation. To the state government went the protection of civil rights, the laws, the police, and the administration of the state in general. To the counties went the functions of purely local concern.

> It is by dividing and subdividing these republics, from the great national one down through all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm and affairs by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best.[158]

Jefferson rarely swayed in his strong belief in the limited and enumerated powers of the federal government. He generally supported the state governments in all of their rights, and he did not believe in the so-called implied powers of the national government. Thus, he opposed the creation of a national bank, since it was neither "necessary" nor "proper," and he believed that a constitutional amendment was necessary for both the appropriation of money for internal improvements and for the ratification of the Louisiana Purchase. Through these checks, balances, and restrictions Jefferson believed that eventually the powers of the state and federal governments would reach perfect equilibrium.[159]

By the end of the eighteenth century when the Federalists led by Adams and Hamilton were in power, Jefferson had grown to believe that the federal government was becoming much too strong. He deplored the Alien and Sedition Acts, declaring them to be unconstitutional, and he denied the borrowing

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[158]Thomas Jefferson to Cabell, date unknown, Bergh, 2:xxiii.

[159]Thomas Jefferson to Peregrine Fitzhugh, Esq., February 23, 1798, Ibid., 10:3.

power of the federal government. These events foreshadowed dire consequences for the country, he mused. "In the rapid course of nine to ten years, our general government has swallowed more of the public liberty than even that of England."[160] Later he was to say of the continuing broad interpretation of the implied powers of the federal government as follows: "Should this construction prevail, all limits to the federal government are done away."[161] Until the end of his life Thomas Jefferson favored a government "rigorously frugal and simple."[162] He opposed any standing army until quite late in his life, favored less bureaucracy, free commerce, but with protective tariffs, and the protection of the natural rights of the citizenry. With all of its imperfections, however, Jefferson believed the government still to be the best so far.[163]

As noted in the previous chapters, John Adams began his philosophical discussions on the state versus the federal government with a belief in the predominance of the former over the latter and shifted to the opposite side as time went on. After the Colonies had declared their independence from Great Britain, Adams saw a great opportunity to establish new governments

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[160]Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, November 26, 1798, Ibid., 10:65.

[161]Thomas Jefferson to Judge Spencer Roane, October 12, 1815, Ibid., 14:351.

[162]Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, January 26, 1799, Ibid., 10:77.

[163]Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington, August 4, 1787, Boyd, 11:678.

with the states being given the primary roles. During this period Adams saw the continental government as existing only to help provide cooperation among the states. He was "willing to accord the central government the leading role in matters of defense and foreign affairs and in the regulation of inter-colonial disputes," but as far as purely "domestic affairs," the states were superior.[164] Adams believed at that time as did Jefferson, that Congressional authority was derived from the states. "After the recent experience with a colonial administration far removed from control by the people, Adams was anxious that American governments in the future be kept closely accountable."[165] The majority of political power must rest with the states.

As Adams' faith in the so-called "democracy" (as opposed to the "aristocracy") declined, his belief in the need for a stronger central government rose. As he observed the changes in American society and his own personal situation in France became less satisfying, he became more anxious about the well-being of America and about the peoples' ability to live in a democratic society.

> In the failure of the Americanpeople to maintain their independence from French influence, to set their economic affairs in order, to band together and compel Britain to respect them, and to continue the orderly regulation of their society, he saw evidence of a disturbing decline in public morality.[166]

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[164] Howe, p. 65.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid., p. 130.

With that decline in virtue came an inability for successful democratic self-government and the need for a stronger central authority.

Thus, in the late 1780's John Adams changed his focus from the state governments to the national government. As Adams viewed the situation, Congress needed more power in the area of commercial regulation, but he was still reluctant to increase its power on domestic matters. He was initially not enthusiastic over the convention to alter the Articles of Confederation. By 1788, however, circumstances had combined to switch Adams' political perspective from the individual states to the continent as a whole and to change his mind about the proposed new central government.[167] As he viewed the paralysis of Congress, parochialism among the individual states, and conditions in Europe (the threat of war between France and her neighbors), he grew to believe that the only safeguard against all of these evils was a strong central government.

Whether he favored the balance of power in the hands of the states as he did early in his career, or with the federal government as he did later, John Adams, like Thomas Jefferson, believed that political power must be diffuse. However, there was an important difference in the reasoning behind this belief. Whereas Jefferson's belief in the need for a broader political base stemmed from his utter confidence in the inherent virtue and moral sense of the people, Adams'

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[167]Ibid., p. 152.

developed from his fear of them. Adams feared the common rabble as well as the elite. He feared elected officials as well as those who elected them. Thus, he sought to fragment governmental power so that no one had too much influence, and he sought to keep government strictly accountable to the people for the same reason.

Once again, the people to Adams were not the common rabble. Political power must necessarily follow property, for the property owners were the solid citizens of Massachusetts. Since Adams saw the need to expand and guarantee the role of these people in the political process, suffrage had to be broadened to exclude only those incapable of maintaining their economic independence.

As noted in the previous chapter, Adams believed that in spite of all the attempts by government to equalize power, men would never be equal in influence. The "artificial aristocracy" would prevail; beauty and wealth would forever win over virtue and genius. As he aged, his fear of the aristocracy was surpassed only by his distrust of the democracy.

By the time Adams became President in 1797 his fear of the masses was extreme, as was his distrust of foreigners. For that reason he welcomed the Naturalization Act of 1798 which increased the required period of residence for citizenship from five to fourteen years. He favored the Alien Act passed in the same year which gave the President the power to expel foreigners by executive decree, although he never availed himself of that privilege. Under the Sedition Act also passed

in 1798, ten people critical of Adams' handling of the government, most of them Republican editors, were conveniently got out of the way by heavy fines or jail sentences.

Throughout his life Adams retained his faith in a primarily agrarian rather than a manufacturing economy. He believed the country would remain primarily agrarian, with "manufactures and commerce but secondary objects, and always subservient to the other."[168] He also retained his aversion to banks and speculation and a fear of extensive economic development. He died cautiously optimistic about the future of civilization in general and American democracy in particular.

The federal government of the 1980's is certainly not the simple and frugal piece of machinery that Jefferson envisioned. In power it is closer to Adams' vision, probably even surpassing that. Structurally, one could go so far as to call it a veritable nightmare. In size alone it has grown to what Jefferson would have considered to be an alarming size. In 1940 paid civilian employment of the federal government topped the million mark. By 1967 that figure had tripled from the 1940 figure.[169] Thus, the number of people employed by the United States government in a civilian capacity in

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[168]John Adams to John Luzac, September 15, 1780, C. F. Adams, 7:255.

[169]U.S., Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the U.S., Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 102.

the 1960's had reached a number nearly equal to the entire white population of the entire United States in 1790![170] The 1980 figure, however, had dropped somewhat, standing at approximately 2.9 million.[171]

The executive branch of the government is by far the largest, consisting of a record thirteen executive departments and fifty-seven independent establishments and governmental corporations.[172] Perhaps Adams would have found this fact gratifying. The budget of the entire government has exploded from a 1789-91 figure of $4,419,000 to an estimated 1982 fiscal year figure of $739.3 billion.[173]

Even John Adams, who favored a strong central government, would certainly be shocked by the incredible size of and power wielded by the United States government of the 1980's. Yet both men would be pleased with the system of checks and balances that have been retained over the years. The basics are still there. The presidential veto, the ability of Congress to override that veto, and the power of the Supreme Court to safeguard the Constitution still exist.

However, one cannot automatically assume that since the

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[170]Ibid., p. 15.

[171]U.S., Office of Personnel Management, Monthly Release, Federal Civilian Work Force Statistics, January 1981, p. 6.

[172]U.S., Office of the Federal Register, United States Government Manual 1980-81 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980), pp. v-vii.

[173]Historical Statistics, p. 1104. U.S., Bureau of the Budget, The Budget of the United States Government, 1982 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 22.

two men favored a more frugal government that they would necessarily have been opposed completely to the current situation. Since both believed that governments exist to protect the natural rights of their populaces, one must examine how successful this huge governmental machine has been in doing so before making such a judgment. Although such a task would require an entire book, mention of certain areas of governmental intervention can be useful in helping to determine the success or failure of government in protecting the natural rights of its citizens.

Neither Jefferson nor Adams could possibly have foreseen the changes brought about by the size of this nation and the complex technology existing in the twentieth century that necessitates more governmental intervention. At least some of the huge regulatory system that is a part of the federal government operates to protect the basic right to life of the American public. Two examples are the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Thus, although Adams and Jefferson envisioned a simpler government, they also envisioned a simpler world. Most likely, both would have recognized the necessity of a more complex government had they been able to envision today's complicated society, but probably not one as grandiose and complex as the current system.

A tremendous change has additionally occurred in those who vote and consequently those who govern. Suffrage has been broadened to the point that generally the only requirements for

voter registration still in existence are that one be eighteen years of age, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the place where one votes. Today people of all races and both sexes vote. "The people" in contemporary American politics are no longer solely white, male, educated landholders.

Although more people than ever are eligible to vote, fewer and fewer people are voting. The trend toward lower voter turnout began with the Presidential election of 1964 and culminated in 1980 when only 52 to 53 per cent of those eligible to vote cast ballots in the lowest turnout since 1948.[174] Although dissatisfaction with those candidates on the ballot has been cited as a factor in this trend, political analysts surmise that two other factors may be just as important, and these factors are exactly those which Jefferson considered so vital to active political participation.

The first of these factors is age. Polls show that young people vote in fewer numbers than any other group.[175] This may be due in part to the transitory nature of their lives. More likely, however, is that this group of voters, at least in times of peace when there is no military draft, has less of a stake in the outcome of an election. Jefferson firmly believed that those with an interest in society (landholders in the eighteenth century) would be the most willing to fight to

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[174]Steven B. Roberts, "Low-Turnout Trend Hurts Democrats," New York Times, 10 November 1980, sec. D, p. D8.

[175]Ibid.

protect the social order and would, therefore, participate the most in the governmental process.

Education is the second important determinant in voter participation. "Political analysts say that less educated voters are more intimidated by the mechanics of voting and the decline of political parties. And straight-ticket voting has made the whole process more confusing to those with less schooling."[176] Thomas Jefferson believed education was vital for the proper exercise of political power. As circumstances have turned out, although the right to vote cannot be withheld on the basis of educational attainment, it is the educated voter who exercises his right to vote most consistently.

Whether it is the "natural aristocracy," the "artificial aristocracy" or any aristocracy at all that wields the most power and influence in the United States is an interesting point of debate. Certainly no one can argue that birth, good looks, and most especially wealth are a tremendous asset to any political career. One need only look at the Kennedy or Rockefeller family for validation of this point. Yet in so doing, one must recognize the fact that these families, which John Adams would most likely consider to be aristocratic on the basis of birth and wealth, are really more akin to Thomas Jefferson's notion of the "natural aristocracy." Just as Jefferson would have imagined, the early Kennedys, for instance, were poor immigrants who eventually succeeded in business and politics by virtue

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[176]Ibid.

of their own talents and dealings.

Many similar success stories exist which need not be discussed here. More important is the fact that there have been strides of a different nature in the diffusion of political power. Although it has been a long and slow journey, there are now women and minorities participating in government, holding important positions on the federal, state, and local levels. This fact once again demonstrates Jefferson's theory that people of talent and intelligence will be selected to hold offices of government. Although Thomas Jefferson never envisioned the different races living and working together peacefully, the diffusion of power into different segments of society would have pleased rather than alarmed him. As for John Adams, he would have been happy with the diffused power structure, but still distrustful of everyone in or out of power. Watergate would have come as no surprise to him.

Issues of foreign policy and America's role and position in a hostile world became of primary importance to both Jefferson and Adams during their respective Presidential administrations. It was still early in the life of the Republic when Adams assumed the Presidency and with it the problems of an unstable world coupled with a changing, growing America. Thus, in 1798 when Adams was inaugurated, he found himself in a difficult situation. France had become a frighteningly aggressive nation, capturing American ships and otherwise interfering with the delicate balance of commercial power in existence at the time. This situation would eventually cause a split in the Federalist

party pitting Adams and Alexander Hamilton against each other over the issue of war with France.

John Adams favored a diplomatic approach to the problem, hoping to avoid an unnecessary and costly war with France. Just fifteen years before, he had considered France to be America's closest ally, believing that this country and Great Britain could never be close again. Thus, although he was aware of the changes in the world scene, he was reluctant to plunge into another war, especially with America's former ally. He managed to avoid just that.

Yet Adams was wise enough to recognize that the rest of the world might not be so cautious. He was well aware that no European power wished to see the United States become too powerful too fast and that care should be taken to avoid entanglements with Europe. "Let us treat them with gratitude, but with dignity," he wrote in 1779. "Let us above all things avoid as much as possible entangling ourselves with their wars or politics."[177] He trusted no country, and, thus, advocated a strong defense. Under Adams and his navy secretary, the United States Navy became an efficient fighting force and Congress revived the Marine Corps.

Adams was reluctant for the United States to assume a major international role, but he predicted that this country would one day become involved in both Latin American and European affairs.[178] He advocated commerce with all and war with

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[177]John Adams to the President of Congress, April 18, 1780, C. F. Adams, 7:151.

[178]Howe, p. 229.

none, and most importantly, he urged America to unite against any foreign power or influence.[179]

Thomas Jefferson also chose the diplomatic route during his second Presidential term when Great Britain and this country were feuding over commercial rights. He believed that the United States should be free to trade globally, "cultivating peace and commerce with all."[180] He believed in fact that America possessed the "natural right" to trade with her neighbors and that any nations which attempted to deprive her of this right risked war.[181] Thus, he favored a strong defense, especially after the War of 1812, knowing full well that our commerce on the ocean and in other countries must be paid for by frequent conflict. He also believed, like many contemporary politicians, that a strong military capability is the best defense. "The power of making war often prevents it," he wrote in 1788, "and in our case would give efficacy to our desire for peace."[182]

Jefferson believed in the separation of the hemispheres as much as he did in the segregation of the races. "America has a hemisphere to itself. It must have its separate system of interests which must not be subordinate to those of Europe."[183]

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[179]John Adams to Secretary Jay, November 30, 1787, C. F. Adams, 8:463-64.

[180]Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, November 4, 1788, Boyd, 14:328.

[181]Ibid.

[182]Ibid.

[183]Thomas Jefferson to Baron Alexander Von Hombold, December 6, 1813, Bergh, 14:22.

Thus, he supported the Monroe Doctrine, and he advocated that America refrain from meddling with European affairs. "Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cross-Atlantic affairs."[184] He continued in this vein stating that the United States should constantly strive to make her hemisphere free, and to do so she needs Great Britain on her side. Thus, he chose to avoid war with Great Britain in 1798, even when such a war would have been popular.

Although traditionally opposed to a standing army, after the War of 1812 Jefferson began to see the need for one, especially if America were to uphold the principles of the Monroe Doctrine. He also rightly foresaw the United States as the great world power of the future, but he hoped that this power would be cautiously exercised. "I hope our wisdom will grow with our power and teach us, that the less we use our power, the greater it will be."[185]

Both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were staunch supporters of public education for at least a selected group of people throughout their lives. However, it was Jefferson who worked the harder of the two to overcome the greater opposition to public supported education that existed in Virginia. He proposed bills, devised specific plans, worked tirelessly to muster support,

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[184]Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, October 24, 1823, Ibid., 14:477.

[185]Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Leiper, June 2, 1815, Ibid., 14:308.

and lived to see only a part of his dream of the future come to fruition.

John Adams in turn supported the idea of public education and recognized the importance of a general education, but he never fought for the reality of it in the same manner as his Virginian friend. This was due in part to the differing circumstances that existed in Massachusetts and Virginia. Even in the eighteenth century

> Massachusetts had won an enviable reputation in its early development of public education at the town level (which Jefferson had vainly hoped to emulate) and Harvard College provided society with its natural aristocracy; indeed, Adams had never faced a glaring lack of education or public apathy such as Jefferson was combating in Virginia.[186]

Adams, like Jefferson, recognized the importance of an educated populace in the political process. He stated as early as 1765 that ignorance is one of the two great causes of the ruin of mankind, that people have a right to knowledge, and that even the poor have a right to an education. "Wherever a general knowledge and sensibility have prevailed among the people, arbitrary government and every kind of oppression have lessened and disappeared in proportion," he wrote.[187] Later he stated that "knowledge is among the most essential foundations of liberty."[188] However, he never believed like

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[186] Cappon, 2:480.

[187] John Adams, "Dissertation," C. F. Adams, 3:448, 456, 457.

[188] John Adams to Joseph Hewley, August 25, 1776, Ibid., 9:435.

Jefferson that education alone could conquer human appetites, passions, and prejudices.[189]

Although Adams never expected education to be the panacea for American woes, he favored additional public supported education to what existed in post-Revolutionary Massachusetts. "The whole people must be willing to take upon themselves the education of the whole people, and must be willing to bear the expenses of it," he wrote. Furthermore, there should not be any district of one square mile without a school maintained by the people.[190] In addition, higher education too should be publicly supported. "Free schools, and all schools, colleges, academes, and seminaries of learning, I can recommend from my heart," he wrote in 1811.[191] Adams confessed, however, that he never deliberately reflected on exactly what subjects should be taught in an institution of higher education. When in 1814 Jefferson requested Adams' advice on such an institution, asking him to specify "the particular sciences of real use in human affairs" and "bring them within the views of a just but enlightened economy," Adams replied rather despairingly. "Education! Oh Education! The greatest grief of my heart, and the greatest affliction of my life![192] He did, however, jot down

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[189]John Adams to Samuel Adams, October 18, 1790, Ibid., 6:416.

[190]John Adams to John Jebb, September 10, 1785, Ibid., 9:540.

[191]John Adams to Benjamin Rush, August 28, 1811, Ibid., 9:639.

[192]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 5, 1814, Cappon, 2:434. John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1814, Cappon, 2:438.

some of his ideas which compared favorably to Jefferson's. Subjects to be studied should include grammar, rhetoric, logic, ethics, mathematics, the classics, philosophy, chemistry, geography, astronomy, history, languages, and the arts. Theology and metaphysics could be safely omitted.[193]

Jefferson took the idea of public education much closer to heart than did Adams. In fact, one of his favorite dreams was educational reform. Although this dream was only partially fulfilled and many of his efforts were frustrated throughout his life, he never lost hope that one day Virginia would have a system of public education which would include schooling for all white males from the grade school through the university levels.

Thomas Jefferson was thirty-five when he drafted the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge in 1778. The bill declared that laws wisely formed and honestly administered assure the greatest happiness, and, in turn the best laws

> whence it becomes expedient for promoting the publick happiness that those persons, whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they would be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental condition or circumstance.[194]

What was new in the bill was not the idea of public education, for that already existed in places like Massachusetts.

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[193]Ibid., pp. 438-39.

[194]Jefferson, Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, Boyd, 2:527.

What was new was the object of seeking out men of genius and virtue and bestowing upon them the right to govern their fellow men. In other words, the bill implied the establishment of Jefferson's "natural aristocracy," an intellectual elite but "without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental condition or circumstance."[195]

The bill provided for three levels of education: elementary or ward schools for all children; district schools for the most gifted, those deserving of higher education; and the university for the elite of the natural aristocracy. The bill detailed how to set up the school districts, what subjects to teach, and the building of the schools. Jefferson hoped that the bill on education "would have raised the mass of the people to the high ground of moral responsibility necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government."[196] But even with James Madison's support in the legislature, the bill, labeled by Jefferson as "the most important bill in our whole code," failed to pass.[197] Instead, Jefferson had to accept the act passed in 1796 which provided for elementary schools for poor children, but only on an optional basis.

Still he did not give up. Almost forty years later in

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[195]Ibid., p. 534.

[196]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, October 28, 1813, Cappon, 2:390.

[197]Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, August 13, 1786, Boyd, 10:244.

1817 Jefferson drafted another bill, the Bill for Establishing a System of Public Education, his final attempt in his campaign begun in 1778. It seemed as though Jefferson were giving the legislature a final opportunity to establish a desperately needed system of public education. "Again Jefferson's comprehensive plan met with defeat, but the real loss was suffered by the Commonwealth which set up no bona fide public school system until the 1870's."[198] Jefferson concluded that the members of the Virginia legislature did "not generally possess information enough to perceive the important truths, that knowledge is power, that knowledge is safety, and that knowledge is happiness."[199]

After these defeats, Jefferson concluded that the real hope for reform and modernization in education lay at the university level. However, even earlier he had seen the need for reform in higher education. During the Revolution he attempted through legislation (Bill Numbers Seventy-nine and Eighty) to convert the College of William and Mary to a state institution. When the legislature rejected this opportunity, Jefferson concluded that a new institution was needed, one based "on a plan so broad and liberal and modern, as to be worth patronizing with the public support, and to be a temptation to the youth of other states."[200]

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[198]Cappon, 2:478.

[199]Ibid.

[200]Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Ibid., 2:479.

In 1814 Thomas Jefferson wrote a plan that eventually led to the establishment of the University of Virginia by legislative act in 1819. "In accordance with his basic philosophy that every citizen should receive some education at the public expense depending on his occupation and condition of life, Jefferson divided the population into two classes, 'the laboring and the learned.'"[201] Elementary schools would prepare the laboring class for their pursuits in life and the learned class for higher learning in colleges and universities. All branches of useful science "ought to be taught in the college or 'general schools', arranged in three departments": language, mathematics and philosophy.[202] The university, or "professional school" in which "each science is to be taught in the highest degree it has yet attained" were outlined as (1) fine arts, (2) military and naval architecture; agriculture and veterinary; medicine, pharmacy, and surgery; (3) theology and ecclesiastical history; municipal, and foreign law.[203]

The University of Virginia was created by an act of the Virginia legislature on January 25, 1819 confirming the site in Charlottesville, Jefferson's choice. He was chosen soon after as rector of the university-to-be, and in that position he oversaw the planning, the design, the construction and the

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[201] Ibid., 2:480.

[202] Ibid., 2:480-81.

[203] Ibid., 2:481.

program of education of the university. When it opened its doors to students in 1825, "the university's curriculum was broadly conceived to provide a liberal education in the 'useful sciences' as well as in the humanities, in modern languages, as well as classics, and to offer training for professions."[204] Unfettered by medieval tradition, the University of Virginia would set an example that would be emulated in the years to come. Indeed, this impressive university was the grand finale of Thomas Jefferson's life, and in his epitaph which he, himself, composed, he asked to be remembered for his founding of it.

Two points of discussion remain before this chapter can be drawn to a conclusion: the myth of equality and the concept of happiness, or more specifically, the pursuit of happiness. Both of these concepts were of great importance during the Enlightenment, and both remain points of controversy today.

John Adams never even pretended to believe that all men are created equal. In fact he considered this to be a dangerous myth. People were not born to equal wealth, beauty, intelligence or other circumstances, and thus, they could never really be considered equal. These differences in people had to be recognized and then taken into consideration in the political system. To do otherwise was to ignore nature's rules.

Did Thomas Jefferson really believe what he wrote in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal?

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[204] Ibid., 2:482.

Garry Wills argues in his book Inventing America that he did indeed believe in the literal equality of man, black or white, rich or poor. He supports his argument in part by quoting from Jefferson's A Summary View in which Jefferson states that every individual in America is equal to every individual in Britain in virtue, understanding, and bodily strength.[205] Other evidence is presented to support this view, but this writer was not convinced. Although he detested the institution of slavery, Jefferson continued to hold slaves, never believing that full manumission was a possibility in America. He was also convinced of the basic inferiority of the black man, cataloging these inferiorities in Notes on the State of Virginia.[206] Throughout the rest of his life he never seems to have changed his mind on this important point. Thus, this writer is convinced that Jefferson believed all white men to be created equal in their rights, not literally equal. Jefferson never resolved the issue of the black man or slavery in his own mind, and he never even considered the rights of the other half of white society, that is to say, women, a point which Wills neglects to discuss.

Today the myth of equality has been somewhat shattered, but it remains in part. No one today would venture to say that all are created equal and mean it literally. Theoretically, however, all people of both sexes are born to equal rights.

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[205] Wills, p. 208.

[206] Ibid., p. 218.

But since they are not born to equal opportunity for such reasons as economics or intelligence, some would question whether in practice all people do indeed possess equal rights. The question has no simple answer and will probably be discussed as long as this country exists.

And what of happiness? As stated in Chapter I it is important to recognize the fact that Thomas Jefferson included in his list of inalienable rights the pursuit of happiness, as opposed to property or happiness for its own sake. In fact, Jefferson made the pursuit of happiness a hard political test of any government's very legitimacy, not some vague individual yearning.[207] The pursuit of happiness, then, was not merely some vague aspiration of the individual. Jefferson meant "to state scientific law in the human area--natural law as human right. In that little word 'pursuit,' as it was actually used from Locke's time to Hutcheson's, we have a shorthand for the linked doctrines of determined will and free act."[208] The pursuit of happiness, then, is the basic drive of the self, and the only means for transcending the self. It follows that the pursuit of happiness can lead to individual happiness, a necessary step to the ultimate goal, the happiness of society. No one is entitled by natural law to happiness for its own sake, but everyone is guaranteed that right, the pursuit of happiness for the betterment of society. It is for this reason that democratic governments exist, according to both Jefferson

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[207] Ibid., p. 251.

[208] Ibid., p. 247.

and Adams, that is to say, to bring happiness to the greatest number of people as possible. A government then is judged successful in so far as it allows the greatest number of people their right to pursue happiness.

Today the concept of happiness, in this writer's view, has taken on a far more personal meaning. Happiness has become one of the most important of life's goals, if not the supreme goal of life to almost everyone.[209] People interpret happiness in a personal way by viewing their own circumstances. They look to themselves and ponder their degree of happiness, what in their lives brings them the most happiness, and which things the least. Although it is theoretically true that individual happiness can lead to happiness in the larger context of society, the average person most likely does not consider this possibility or even concern herself with it. America in the 1980's has turned away from the 1770's and even the social activisim of the 1960's to the concerns of basic economic survival, away from the idea of society's betterment and toward the betterment of self.

It is to this government's credit that it continually allows for this shift. Whether the individual pursues happiness for its own sake or for the sake of society, the government still guarantees him his inalienable right to do so. For this reason, it is the conclusion of this writer that this government can be judged successful, if the pursuit of happiness is used as

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[209] Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Happiness."

the test of its success. Although many would say there exist some restrictions to that pursuit of happiness by the government (those concerned with the amount of government regulation and intervention in our daily lives, for instance), the basic right to pursue happiness is still a right guaranteed to every member of this society, so long as he does not infringe on the natural rights of another person. Whether or not it is the most successful of all governments that were, are, or ever will be cannot be realistically determined, for happiness cannot be scientifically measured.

The United States was the first modern nation that was founded on the will and the rights of the people it governed. It was also the first nation that was founded to be strictly accountable to those it governed. Both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams agreed on the importance of those two principles. Both hoped that the country would remain true to those tenets. As the country expanded in geographical area and population, it was almost inevitable that some decline would occur in the area of accountability of government to its people. A similar decline in the importance of the will and the rights of the people is not inevitable. This country may not be what either man envisioned it to be in all respects, but it remains the first representative democracy founded in the modern age, proving as both Adams and Jefferson believed that man is capable of and entitled to self-government.

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